

# **The EU as a Global Conflict Manager**

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## 10 EU conflict management in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia

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### Introduction

The failed European attempts to handle the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s were, according to the large majority of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) scholars, the first real push for European foreign policy makers more actively to seek to develop a common European Union (EU) approach to dealing with violent ethnic conflicts in the Union's near abroad. The atrocities in the Western Balkans had illustrated the inadequacy of the tools available to the Union at the time and left the EU embarrassed. After the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) came to the rescue of the EU for the second time over Kosovo in 1999, the EU was eager to develop its own conflict management capabilities, and consequently did so with the Yugoslav experience in mind and reflecting past and present failures, as well as a few successes, in the Western Balkans. The EU's approach to violent ethnic conflicts thus arguably being born and bred in the Balkans, the Union's experience in this region is therefore an important aspect of any debate on the EU's potential future global role as a conflict manager. This chapter examines the EU's capabilities and recent track record in dealing with the ethnic conflicts in the Western Balkans and demonstrates how the EU's successes and failures in this respect are a function of its own capabilities as well as the specific contexts in which the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Macedonia have evolved.

The chapter proceeds as follows. We first discuss the early EU experiences with conflict management in the region in the 1990s. This is followed by a discussion of the EU capabilities brought to bear in the EU's CFSP missions in the Western Balkans and an analysis of the contextual factors of each conflict and the ways in which they have shaped the outcomes of the EU's conflict management efforts.<sup>1</sup>

### The EU and its Balkan failures

Based on its principle of respect for state sovereignty and its own experiences of ethnic conflict management, the European Community's (EC) initial response to the Yugoslav crisis was to seek to keep the Yugoslav state intact and in this way to contain the problem. European leaders faced with ethnic conflicts in their own countries expressed fears that if they supported the dissolution of Yugoslavia, this could encourage ethnic minorities elsewhere in the region and beyond to push for independence, ultimately resulting in increasing levels of ethnic violence across Europe. From the beginning of the conflict in Yugoslavia, the EC attempted to take a neutral stance and was reluctant to recognise any one side as the aggressor. Instead, it insisted that the United Nations (UN) impose a general arms embargo on all

the Yugoslav republics. This was an approach which meant that, not only did the EC fail to send in peacekeeping troops to stop the violence, but also by failing to recognise that the Yugoslav National Army was now effectively the armed forces of Serb nationalists, the arms embargo removed the Croat and Muslim ability to legally defend themselves against the aggressors (Morris 2004; Kintis 1997).

The EC instead supported President Milošević's plan to reconstruct the Yugoslav federation within its existing borders, and attempted to use its power as an economic heavyweight to broker a peace agreement by offering aid to those who cooperated and threatening to withhold it from those who did not. As violence broke out in 1991 first in Slovenia and later Croatia, the EC continued this strategy of attempting to contain the conflict, but by the end of the year the violence had spread to Bosnia. The EC responded to the increasing violence in Bosnia by freezing all financial aid to the region and sending in its troika of Foreign Ministers (later replaced by a single EC negotiator, Lord Carrington) on a number of peace negotiating missions. Following the repeated rejection of these efforts and the increasing humanitarian crisis in Bosnia, the EC, against the advice of its own chief negotiator Lord Carrington (and the UN Secretary General and the United States (US)), in December 1991 declared itself ready to recognise Slovenian and Croatian independence provided that certain conditions on minority protection, peaceful settlement of border disputes and guaranteed government control of their territories, set by the arbitration commission for independence, were met. Germany, however, disregarded the joint EC position and proceeded to recognise the two republics independently, despite the fact that Croatia did not meet the EC conditions. EC recognition of both countries followed shortly after, ignoring not only Croatia's non-compliance but also (and perhaps more importantly in this respect) its own diplomatic negotiator, the independence standards it itself had promoted and thus, effectively, its attempt at a common foreign policy. This undermined the EC's competence and credibility as an international actor not only to its members, allies and observers but also to the warring parties on the ground. The Serbian side especially questioned the EC's credibility as a neutral mediator and when trade embargoes against Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia were lifted, while the embargo against the Serbs was kept intact, the Serbian delegation withdrew from the negotiations and the EC peace efforts collapsed (Kintis 1997; Silber and Little 1996).

By 1992 full-scale military conflict had broken out in Bosnia. The EU had recognised the country's independence but rejected the request of Bosnian President Izetbegović to send in peacekeeping troops. Instead, the EU and the UN co-hosted another round of peace negotiations, later rejected once again by the Serb delegation. Further sanctions were imposed on Yugoslavia (now consisting of Serbia and Montenegro) and both trade and weapons embargoes remained in force. Under EU pressure, the UN sent protection forces to Croatia, Bosnia and Macedonia, under the assumption that the presence of international troops would calm down nationalist aggression and that the humanitarian purpose of the mission would foster respect for the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR). The mandate, however, entitled the troops to use force only in 'self-defence', leaving the soldiers on the ground without a mandate to provide the protection the mission's name indicated, or to 'create the conditions for peace and security required for the negotiation of an overall settlement of the Yugoslav crisis', the purpose of the mission according to Security Council Resolution 743 of February 1992. The inability to prevent large-scale disasters such as the 1995 atrocities in 'UN protectorate' Srebrenica, demonstrated yet again the complete failure of the European-led conflict management efforts.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, the US sidelined the EC by sending in the Contact Group of Five to reach an agreement. After NATO's military intervention presidents Milošević,

Tudman and Izetbegović agreed to the US-brokered Dayton Peace Agreement, ending the war in Bosnia (Kintis 1997; Morris 2004; Pentland 2003).

In the beginning of the 1990s the EU was unable to reconcile the conflicting views of its member states, who disagreed not only on what to do and how to do it, but also on the very nature of the problem. France, a historical ally of Serbia and a centralised state itself, favoured keeping the Yugoslav state intact; Italy supported this approach largely due to its strong links with the Yugoslav government; whilst Germany, itself unified only a few months earlier and influenced by a strong public opinion, supported the moves for independence in Slovenia and Croatia and with traditionally strong ties to Croatia through the many ethnic Croats living in Germany, stressed what it called ‘its moral duty to help other nations coming out of an era of Communism’. The Netherlands, Belgium, Italy and France favoured an early UN intervention in Yugoslavia assuming that the conflicting parties would then agree to a ceasefire. France pushed for the Western European Union (WEU) to take action, but without support from any other members. The United Kingdom (UK) was reluctant to send in troops, in the light of its recent experiences in Cyprus and Northern Ireland, which had proved the difficulty of withdrawing troops once they were sent in; and Germany was still forbidden from sending troops to any area out of NATO. These are only a few examples of how EU member states perceived the nature of the problem as well as its solution very differently.

The disagreements among its member states left the EU perceived as an indecisive, inconsistent and effectively weak international actor, dismissed by US President Clinton as ‘incompetent’ in the handling of the Yugoslav crisis. This was at least partially due to the EU’s structural deficiencies. It is, however, important to stress that what the EU was lacking more than anything in the early 1990s was the political will of its member states to act – and to act in unison. The EU’s early failures in Yugoslavia were arguably because it was not only unable but also unwilling to take the joint decisions required to stop the fighting (Faucompret 2001).

The Dayton Agreement did not put an end to violent conflict in the former Yugoslavia, which culminated in violent clashes between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Serbs in the Kosovo province in 1998–99. The EU, still unable to put weight behind its warnings to President Milošević, was once again sidelined by a US-led NATO intervention. The Kosovo crisis underscored yet again the main structural shortcomings of EC (and later EU) conflict management in the Western Balkans in the 1990s; the EU struggled with its own inexperience in providing ‘soft’ as well as ‘hard’ security, it lacked the military strategy and strength to back up its threats and the infant CFSP was simply not ready to deal with a problem as complex as the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The EU did, however, go through a learning process in the Balkans. After the Dayton Agreement the EU gradually began a more coherent and effective response to political stabilisation and economic recovery in the region. The EU assumed a modest role in the first three years of the international protectorate in Bosnia and Herzegovina and contributed significantly in terms of humanitarian aid and assistance in the post-conflict reconstruction in the wider region, but it was not until after the Kosovo campaign that the EU re-emerged with a comprehensive vision for the Western Balkans and a renewed claim to the leadership it had so boldly, yet prematurely, proclaimed in 1991. Today the EU, heavily engaged in conflict prevention, management and resolution, is widely recognised as one of the most, if not the most, important international actors in the region (Cameron 2006; Faucompret 2001; Silber and Little 1996). That this is a reflection of the Union’s commitment to the region and its success in managing the conflicts in BiH and Macedonia after the Yugoslav wars is what

we demonstrate in the following section when we analyse the capabilities that the EU has brought to bear in the region since 2003. In so doing, we focus on the two police missions and the two military conflict management operations in BiH and Macedonia. We leave out, at this stage, the appointment of EU Special Representatives (EUSR) in each country, and also exclude the more recent EU Rule of Law Mission to Kosovo.

## **Assessing EU conflict management capabilities in the Western Balkans**

### ***The EU police mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina***

In 2003 the EU Police Mission (EUPM) in BiH became the EU's first ever Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) mission. The mission, which is still ongoing, is the longest running CSDP mission so far. It is part of a comprehensive programme of measures aimed at establishing the rule of law in BiH. The mission succeeded the UN's International Police Task Force. It set out to strengthen the operational capacity and joint capability of the law enforcement agencies engaged in the fight against organised crime and corruption in BiH; to assist and support in the planning and conduct of investigations in the fight against organised crime and corruption in a so-called 'systematic approach'; to assist and promote development of the criminal investigative capacities of BiH; to enhance police-prosecution cooperation; to strengthen the police-penitentiary system cooperation; and to contribute to ensuring a suitable level of accountability.

EUPM derives its legitimacy from United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1396 and a decision by the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) to accept EUPM to follow the UN police mission in BiH. The mission personnel comprises staff from EU member and non-member states. EUPM is a crisis management operation and as such has a unified command structure within the single EU institutional framework, comprising the European Council and its Secretary General/High Representative (SG/HR), the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the EUSR for BiH. The Head of Mission/Police Commissioner, who leads EUPM and is in charge of day-to-day operations, communicates with the SG/HR through the EUSR. Apart from technical and professional assistance and training, EUPM is also involved in the creation and consolidation of new institutional structures. Following an invitation by BiH authorities the EUPM refocused its mission in 2004 to support the BiH police reform process to develop and consolidate local capacity and regional cooperation in the fight against organised crime (European Council 2008c). On 26 April 2010, the Council welcomed a reduction in the mission's mandate and size and a further refocusing of the mission's mandate to primarily support the fight against organised crime and corruption (EEAS 2012b).

### ***Operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina***<sup>3</sup>

In 2004, the European Council (2004c) decided to take over responsibility from NATO for militarily securing the conditions for the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The initial budget for common costs was €71.7 million to be administered through the ATHENA mechanism, which relies on financial contributions by EU member states determined on a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) basis. Both EU member and non-member states participate in this operation. The United Nations Security Council authorised European Union Force (EUFOR) Althea as a legal successor to NATO's Stabilisation Force (SFOR)

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in the country. UNSCR 2019 extended the mandate of EUFOR Althea until 15 November 2012 (EEAS 2012a).

Perhaps more than any other CSDP operation to date, Operation Althea exemplifies the importance of cooperation among the international organisations making up Europe's security architecture. The EU takeover from NATO was only possible following the work of NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilisation Force (SFOR) and the resulting improvements in the security environment on the ground. Moreover, the EU operation was able to rely on NATO assets and capabilities through the Berlin Plus arrangements between the two organisations. NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe was appointed Operation Commander for Operation Althea, and Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE) simultaneously became the EU Operation Headquarters (SHAPE 2004a). The command structure of Operation Althea underlines the close cooperation between NATO and EU: under the political control and strategic direction of the EU's PSC, the EU Operation Headquarters are located at SHAPE in Mons, the EU Command Element at the Allied Joint Forces Command in Naples, and the Headquarters of EUFOR at Camp Butmir in Sarajevo. The EU Command Element at the Allied Joint Forces Command is a particularly crucial element in the coordination process with NATO as it ensures that the EU's operations in the Balkans conform to the EU's regional approach, on the one hand, and cooperate closely with NATO activities in the Balkans, on the other. In addition, the EU closely coordinates its military mission with its police mission. As both are meant to contribute to the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, cooperation is also essential with the PIC, the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and other international actors engaged in the region: primarily, the UN and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

#### ***Operation Concordia in Macedonia<sup>5</sup>***

Operation Concordia, launched in 2003, also followed on from a previous international mission, in this case NATO's operation Allied Harmony. The purpose of this mission was to ensure sufficient levels of security and stability in Macedonia to enable the implementation of the 2001 Ohrid Agreement. Concordia derived its legitimacy from a request by Macedonian President Trajkovski and UNSCR 1371. The operation fell within the remit of EU military conflict management operations and was the first ever CSDP deployment of military forces. It comprised 400 soldiers from 26 countries, including non-EU contributor states. Operation Concordia was the first case for EU–NATO cooperation under the Berlin Plus agreements, i.e. the EU made use of NATO capabilities. Initially only expected to last for six months, Operation Concordia was extended at the request of the Macedonian government until December 2003. Command of the operation rested with the EU Force (EUFOR) headquarters. The budget of €6.2 million was contributed by the EU with non-common costs covered by participating states. As part of the day-to-day management structures, a Committee of Contributors had a consultative role in its decision-making procedures.

#### ***Operation Proxima in Macedonia***

In 2003 Operation Proxima became the second EU police mission in the Balkans. The establishment of the mission followed an invitation from Macedonia's Prime Minister (PM). Its implementation was closely linked to the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement. The mission was extended beyond its initial 12 months following another request by the Macedonian

PM and was completed in December 2005. The mission personnel comprised staff from EU member and non-member states. Operation Proxima was deployed to five locations across Macedonia to monitor, mentor and advise Macedonia's police force and promote so-called 'European policing standards'. The budget was €7.3 million for start-up costs and €7 million for 2004 running costs to be financed from the Community budget. For the 12-month extension a budget of €15.95 million was agreed.

### **Making sense of context: the Western Balkans as background for EU conflict management in BiH and Macedonia**

For a number of reasons, it makes sense to examine the context of the EU's conflict management efforts in BiH and Macedonia together. Both countries have a shared history in Yugoslavia and more generally in a region in which peoples and states share a range of historical, cultural and political experiences. Moreover, the conflicts in both countries are a result, in significant part, of the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Even though BiH and Macedonia were affected by this process in different ways, with different intensity, and at different times, there are nonetheless tangible links between the countries and interdependencies between their conflicts. For reasons of space we focus specifically on the two military operations (Concordia and Althea) and assess the degree to which domestic, regional and international factors proved conducive to their success.

#### *The domestic level*

##### *Domestic support for Operation Concordia*

When Operation Concordia was launched in Macedonia in 2003 the domestic situation in the country had already much improved since the crisis two years earlier. There had been genuine signs of political compromise. The Ohrid Agreement and the subsequent elections had resulted in the main Albanian political party now being represented in government; and overall, political and security relations between the conflicting parties were improving. The Macedonian authorities, now representing both ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians, fully supported Operation Concordia. The operation was launched upon explicit invitation from the government and the domestic authorities greeted its deployment with enthusiasm (Council Decision 2003/7537/CFSP, 18 March 2003, Council of the EU 2003g; International Crisis Group 2005b).

In his welcoming speech, President Boris Trajkovski explained the government's motivations behind its invitation and its support for the CSDP operation:

The successful ending of this mission will mark the termination of the last phase of the process of the consolidation of the security. It will mean taking on our own responsibility for the internal stability and fulfilment of one of the preconditions for membership of the Republic of Macedonia in the European Union and NATO [ . . . ] This mission offers us a chance to develop a particularly close collaboration with the EU Forces from the moment of their establishment, a chance that we do not intend to miss [ . . . ] Our ambition is full membership in the Union, and I would like to see this mission, and our joint efforts in promoting stability, as a step in that direction. The more of EU we have in Macedonia, the more of Macedonia there is in the EU.

(Trajkovski 2003)

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An interviewee from the European Commission delegation to Macedonia confirmed the widespread domestic support for the operation and explained the government's enthusiasm for Concordia in a similar way:

Concordia was a symbol of Macedonia's ambition to establish tighter links with the EU in all areas, including full membership in the Union. It was one dimension of the European integration of Macedonia and a symbol of an ever-closer union and partnership between the EU and Macedonia. By inviting the EU to launch (the) military mission, Macedonia signalled its willingness and ability to adopt the logic, norms, patterns of behaviour and regulations associated with European integration into its political, security and defence system.<sup>6</sup>

The high level of domestic support for the operation at the state level was shared also at the sub-state level (Mace 2004). The relationship between the EU forces and the Macedonian population was good, as an observer explained:

In the sphere of improving the social and economic situation of the country, Concordia conducted civil military cooperation projects in the villages of former crisis areas, with the aim of improving the living conditions of people. These projects helped the members of Concordia to establish close relationships with the local population that contributed to improving their mutual rapport.<sup>7</sup>

Colonel Pierre Augustin (2005), the operation's representative from France, has stressed the importance of what he called the operation's 'systematic contact with the ethnic communities'. In particular, he has highlighted that:

The combination of light and heavy teams performing missions strongly reinforced a palpable deterrence in addition to establishing the perception of the EUFOR as an integrated force dedicated to restoring public confidence. Building this confidence set the foundation for the information collection effort and proved essential to restoring a peaceful environment lost following the events of 2001. EUFOR has become a federating security element in the daily life of the ethnic communities. Immersion and openness of these patrols in the FCA (former crisis area) has been elemental.

(Augustin 2005: 58)

Mace (2004) has suggested that the handover from NATO to the EU and the continuity of the approach between the two operations helped Concordia quickly win the trust and confidence of domestic parties in Macedonia. The following will return to the link between the two organisations at the international level, but it is important to note that this operational connection made Concordia look more robust – both in the eyes of the domestic authorities and the different ethnic communities. Consequently, there was substantial domestic support for Operation Concordia from all the key state and sub-state actors in Macedonia (Cascone 2008; Howorth 2007; Mace 2004).

The high level of domestic support was essential for EUFOR's success in Macedonia. The fact that the EU force had political support from the authorities and communal support from the population made it easier for the operation to achieve its goals in a timely, efficient and effective manner. The fact that there was domestic support also for the wider EU-led international effort to manage the political conflict through the implementation of the Ohrid



Agreement and the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) to bring Macedonia on track for EU membership meant that Concordia was able to contribute also to this wider process of managing the underlying conflict. Finally, the fact that the EU troops were never challenged militarily meant that they never decided to apply force. In this way, domestic support proved a necessary condition for the Concordia's overall success. The only spoilers to the operation and limitation to its overall success were a few of its own staff involved in criminal activities in the country.

#### *Domestic support for Operation Althea*

In BiH too the security situation when EUFOR was deployed in 2004 had much improved since the end of the war in 1995. However, the legacy of the war had left the former parties to the conflict wary not only of each other, but also of the EU's capability as a conflict manager. There was a shared sense that 'Europe' had failed Bosnia during the war. An International Crisis Group (ICG) report from the time when Operation Althea was launched explains this domestic scepticism: 'Due to its failure to act unanimously and decisively during the war, the EU is still viewed with considerable suspicion in Bosnia' (ICG 2005b: 50).

Unlike the EU, NATO had proved itself as a credible security provider in BiH. The majority of domestic authorities and large parts of the population believed that the NATO presence had played a significant role in preventing the return to war. A new international military deterrent was therefore deemed necessary, but the potential handover to an EU operation raised domestic concern. European troops had a tarnished reputation in the country after the mostly European UNPROFOR had failed to protect civilians on all sides during the war. The wariness of the EU's political commitment and its military capability, although shared across ethnic divisions in the country, was particularly strong among Bosnian Muslims. One interviewee remembered how when British diplomat Robert Cooper attempted to reassure Bosniak PM Adnan Terzić that the EU would make sure the security situation did not deteriorate, Terzić looked at Cooper and said: 'That is what you said last time. I guess I will just have to trust that you will do it this time.'<sup>8</sup>

This initial domestic scepticism about the EU's ability as a military conflict manager, however, must not be mistaken for lack of domestic support for Operation Althea. On the contrary, the domestic fear that it would fail demonstrates a high level of domestic support for EUFOR's purpose: to prevent more violence. The majority of the population and the political leadership wanted peace. Although the political context in the country was difficult, all sides wanted to prevent further violence and therefore supported the operation, once it became clear that it would be NATO's replacement. The Presidency, representing all three constituent peoples of BiH, thus, eventually welcomed the NATO-EU transition and 74 per cent of the country's population supported the EU force, once the troops were deployed (Budin 2006). The domestic-level opposition that the operation has encountered during its deployment has been from a criminal minority and not from the majority of the population or the political leadership.

It is important to make a distinction between domestic support for EUFOR and domestic support for the EU, which have not always gone hand in hand. Whereas EUFOR overall has received a high level of domestic support, the EU has at times been unpopular in the country. It is also important to recognise that the highest domestic authority in BiH is in fact the international Office of the High Representative (OHR), which has effectively run the country since the Dayton Agreement. Because the HR is mandated to sanction any so-called 'anti-Dayton behaviour' and EUFOR's own mandate is annexed in the Dayton Agreement,

domestic support for the operation is to some extent institutionalised through the constitutional arrangements of BiH. Although the relationship between the different HRs and EUFOR Commanders has varied over time, the state structures of post-Dayton BiH have by law limited any potential political obstruction to the EUFOR operation. This is not to say that without these structures EUFOR would have met much higher levels of domestic opposition, but rather to underline that domestic support could to some extent be facilitated by the OHR. At the sub-state level EUFOR also enjoyed a good relationship with the local population and has focused much attention on fostering this relationship (Council of the EU 2009b; Friesendorf and Penska 2008; GFAP 1995; OHR 2009). In the same way as in Macedonia, domestic support for the operation has played an important role in the success of EUFOR Althea, which has so far only been compromised by one incident in which it failed to properly coordinate a raid.

### *The regional level*

During the violent break-up of Yugoslavia, the instability affected the entire Western Balkan region. The conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular, actively involved regional actors: Serbia (then Yugoslavia) and Croatia (Glenny 2001; Silber and Little 1996). When the Macedonian crisis broke out in 2001, the situation in the region was different. This conflict was for the most part contained within the Macedonian territory and fought out between domestic state and sub-state level actors. Although it is still disputed to what extent the National Liberation Army (NLA), the armed wing of the ethnic Albanian rebels in the conflict, were aided from Kosovo (Mace 2004; Vankovska 2002).

At the launch of operations Concordia (2003) and Althea (2004), unsettled status issues with regard to Kosovo and the Serbia–Montenegro state-union were generating wider concerns about the stability of other borders and geopolitical entities in the region. In BiH, the status of Republika Srpska was (and still is) disputed and in Macedonia there were fears of insecurity, in particular, on the border with Kosovo (ICG 2005a). By March 2009, the regional security context in the Western Balkans had changed. As one interviewee put it:

In the Western Balkans, regional security is no longer in danger. Serbia and Croatia are focusing on EU accession. They are not interested in interfering in Bosnia. Albania and Montenegro are stable. So are Kosovo and Macedonia, although there may be some isolated violence with regard to Serbia–Kosovo relations regarding the northern part of Kosovo, and this could spill over the Macedonian border. But all in all – the situation is stable. This is not the EU's achievement as such, but the EU has succeeded in changing the focus and priorities on the national political agenda in these countries towards EU membership. This is now the first priority.<sup>9</sup>

Neither Operation Concordia nor Operation Althea has been challenged by any actors at the regional level. The operations have also not been actively supported by regional actors. By and large, both operations have been free from regional interference. As the quote above illustrates, none of the regional actors has had an interest in hindering these operations or indeed interfering with the security situation in Macedonia or BiH during these deployments. The presence of the EU force in both countries was accepted by all the regional security actors in the Balkans. Political support, in the sense that these actors accepted and did not seek to hinder the operations, is indeed widely perceived as a necessary condition for their success. This issue was often raised by interviewees, in particular in BiH, with

reference to the way in which regional interference to some extent had caused the failure of the UNPROFOR's attempt to militarily manage the conflict in BiH a decade earlier.<sup>10</sup> These interviews also supported the argument presented in the quote above that the Stabilisation and Association Process, which now offers the prospect of EU membership to the whole region, has changed the political and security agenda in the Balkans. The prospect of EU membership, for which all the countries in the region have a declared desire, has increased the Union's leverage through its conditionality policy. This in turn has positively affected regional security and thus indirectly discouraged actors in the region from interfering with the two CSDP operations.

### ***The international level***

For both Operation Concordia and Operation Althea, the most important international security partner was NATO: first, because both operations had operational support from and access to NATO assets through the Berlin Plus arrangements; and second, because both operations took over responsibilities in the field from previous NATO operations. NATO had completed three operations (Essential Harvest, Amber Fox and Allied Harmony) in Macedonia before the EU launched Operation Concordia. Likewise, NATO had undertaken two operations (IFOR and SFOR) in BiH prior to Operation Althea. In both countries, NATO had engaged at the height of the crisis and facilitated a significant improvement in the overall security situation throughout its deployments. At the termination of its operations in both countries, NATO transferred most of its authority and responsibility for security to the EU (and some to local authorities). In this process the EU benefited from NATO's operational experience in both planning and undertaking its many operations in the Balkans, which were not limited to these two countries (Cascone 2008; Howorth 2007; Mace 2004).

The relationship between the EU and NATO was of paramount importance for the preparation, deployment and implementation of both these CSDP operations. Apart from relatively minor turf battles the two organisations worked closely, professionally and well together during both Operation Concordia and Operation Althea. With regard to Concordia, Mace (2004) has argued that the relationship between the two was good, although competitive at times. Cascone (2008) has made the case that these operations were successful and useful tests for NATO–EU cooperation, but he stresses that the coordination between the two organisations in the Balkans was for the most part practical coordination in the field, facilitated more by individual member states of the two organisations pushing for a coherent message than by a genuinely joint EU–NATO approach towards conflict management in the region.

A smaller NATO presence remained in both countries after the official termination of its Peace Support Operations. NATO kept a Senior Civilian Representative and a Senior Military Representative in Skopje to help the government with security sector reform and adaptation to NATO standards for the Partnership for Peace and eventual NATO membership (Mace 2004). The situation was much the same in BiH where NATO opened a new NATO Headquarters (HQ) in Sarajevo when it officially terminated the SFOR operation. The new NATO HQ led by a Senior Military Representative was intended to provide advice on defence reform and assistance to the Bosnian authorities in reforming the armed forces and eventually moving towards a single military force. NATO HQ Sarajevo was also tasked with certain operational tasks in relation to counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing with the EU and ensuring force protection and support to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the detention of persons indicted for war crimes (NATO 2004).

For the purpose of this analysis it is important to recognise that the international presence in both countries was coordinated so that EU and NATO representatives would continue to be in close contact. For example, the two organisations were co-located in Camp Butmir outside Sarajevo for the first few years of Operation Althea. In both countries the respective EUSRs were in charge of coordinating the international community, which also reinforced cooperation. Overall, the coordination and cooperation was good, although to some extent it depended on personalities and personal rapport between specific Heads of Missions. For example, several interviewees pointed out how it benefited NATO–EUFOR–OHR/EUSR cooperation in BiH that EUSR (and HR) Paddy Ashdown had both a political and military background. As one interviewee explained: ‘Paddy’s military background was helpful. It made it easier for him to cooperate with military people at all levels.’<sup>11</sup>

The role of individuals is often underestimated in the CSDP literature. However, as Friesendorf and Penska (2008) have suggested with regard to EUFOR Althea, personalities and how well different individuals work together are of utmost importance to success. Another important factor with regard to inter-organisational cooperation between NATO and the EU in Macedonia and BiH was the fact that the NATO operations in both countries had large European contingents, which ensured a degree of unofficial institutional memory shared across the official NATO–EU divide. After all, many of the member states of the two organisations and indeed in the two operations were the same. This does not necessarily mean that member states always behave consistently in different organisations (or in different operations), but it has facilitated a greater cooperation in these two cases. For example, the UK, which had played a significant role in IFOR and SFOR, took the lead in Operation Althea. Furthermore, a significant number of NATO staff stayed on under the EU flag in both Concordia and Althea. These important details are sometimes neglected in the literature, which often refers to the two organisations as further apart than they were in reality on the ground.

A final issue which must not be overlooked in the international context of operations Concordia and Althea is the role of the US, both within and outside NATO. The Balkan wars of the 1990s had left the US with a powerful reputation in the region. The US had made it clear that it had the capability to act and that it was willing to use it. Whether one agreed with its actions, America was (and still is) recognised throughout the region as an important actor – in particular, with regards to matters of security. In BiH, for example, the US was long perceived as the only trustworthy guarantor of peace. As the ICG wrote six months before the launch of Operation Althea:

Most Bosnians – the Bosniaks in particular – see the US as playing a major part in maintaining the peace and unity of the country. Serb and Croat citizens acknowledge that without the US presence, the political and security situation might deteriorate.

(ICG 2004: 6)

The empirical accuracy of this observation was demonstrated in February 2004 (two months into the Althea deployment), when the collective BiH Presidency, which represented all three parties to the conflict, formally asked the US authorities to consider maintaining a base in the country (ICG 2004). However, the Bush administration was eager to downscale its military contributions to the NATO operations in the region (Mace 2004). It had repeatedly expressed its distaste for NATO’s involvement in nation-building in BiH. On the other hand, the US needed to ‘ensure that its political investments in the region pay off’ (ICG 2004: 3). This made the US support the EU takeover in BiH, once the Berlin Plus had been negotiated

and successfully tested in Macedonia. For the US, Operation Concordia was in this way a trial run for Operation Althea. The following quote illustrates this:

EUFOR carried out a 'live fire' exercise there (Macedonia). Here was no threat to a safe and secure environment, and no operations that carried any risk other than traffic accidents or alcohol poisoning by the troops on Friday night. But it offered a benign environment in which the EU could find out the complexities and challenges of mounting a real operation, without any risk of failure. The exercise was successful as EUFOR confronted important issues as communications, logistics and operational mobility and found solutions.<sup>12</sup>

Within the NATO–EU relationship a good relationship between the US and the EU proved essential for the negotiation and successful implementation of the Berlin Plus arrangements and, in effect, to facilitate the necessary operational support for the successful undertaking of the operation at the tactical level. With regard to the relationship between the EU and the US, the UK has played an important part in both these two cases. In negotiating the Berlin Plus and the terms for Concordia, the UK, which had led NATO Operation Essential Harvest, played an important bridging role between the US and the EU (Mace 2004). The fact that the UK had already proved itself to the Americans in IFOR and SFOR helped muster up the necessary US support.<sup>13</sup> These are but some examples of how, in the Balkan operations, the EU often became its own partner, either through EU member states and institutions represented in the field or through their advocacy in international negotiations and arenas. In this way, the EU could affect the international context in which its CSDP military conflict management operations operated.

There were many other international actors involved in conflict management in both Macedonia and in BiH, but NATO, the US within it, was the Union's single most important international security partner in the Balkans. At the tactical, the operational and the strategic levels, NATO's support for these operations was crucial to their success. The UN was important in so far as it authorised the mandates for both operations. Although the UN had deployed peacekeepers in both countries in the past (before NATO), these were withdrawn long before operations Concordia and Althea were on the drawing board. The UN, in operational and tactical terms, did not as such have a direct impact on the success of Concordia and Althea, although it was conducive to the success of both operations that they cooperated and coordinated their activities well with the UN and other non-military international partners in the field.

### **Conclusion: capabilities, context and EU conflict management in BiH and Macedonia**

Current EU capabilities appear to be sufficient to take on tasks of the kind required in the Western Balkans at present. The EU was able to mobilise sufficient personnel, hardware and funds to sustain them. It had the institutional framework and instruments available to make the necessary decisions and proved itself capable of a certain level of cooperation and coordination within its own structures as well as with third parties. This relatively positive assessment of EU conflict management capabilities in the Western Balkans after 1999, however, cannot necessarily be taken as a general indication of the readiness of the Union to manage conflict elsewhere and with a similar degree of success. While it is undoubtedly true that the 'CFSP, through the position of the HR for CFSP, has experienced in a very short time a substantial improvement in its coherence and visibility' (Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet 2002: 278),

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improved coherence and visibility do not necessarily translate into effectiveness. With respect to the Western Balkans one could question whether the Union has indeed been successful. In Macedonia, for example, it could be argued that early-stage conflict management, despite the mobilisation of significant resources, failed, and that it was only once the violent conflict had erupted that the EU (through conflict management measures) succeeded in brokering a deal between the fighting factions.

Taking into account the complexity of the situation the EU had and has to deal with in the Western Balkans and the intensity of the conflicts it had to manage (in post-Dayton BiH and in Macedonia) the Union has demonstrated that it has developed an institutional framework and a set of policies that enable it to make quicker decisions, provide adequate funds and personnel, and to cooperate and coordinate activities with third parties in ways that enhance its own capabilities and maximise the chances of successful conflict management. It is equally important in this context to bear in mind that since the failure of conflict management in the early and mid-1990s, the Union's capabilities have been improved significantly, enabling it now to undertake both civilian and military operations, i.e. being able to back up its diplomatic efforts with credible threats of force where necessary. This evolution of expertise both at the HQ and ground level demonstrates a significant process of lesson-learning at the institutional and operational level of EU conflict management capabilities.

These constantly improving capabilities of the EU were brought to bear in a context that was overall conducive to success. At the sub-state, state and regional levels, the EU was in a position to elicit sufficient support for its efforts to succeed. While such support, partly based on the experiences in the 1990s, was not always immediately and fully forthcoming, the EU had sufficient capabilities and deployed them adequately to overcome resistance and obstruction. This is clear with regard to managing conflict-related violence: there has been no violence in BiH or Macedonia since the deployment of the EU's police and military missions. State-building efforts more generally have been more successful in Macedonia than in BiH, but even in BiH the 'Dayton state' has so far held together and in fact has seen some key improvements to its functionality. The international context, too, has been one that has been overall supportive of the EU's efforts. Cooperation with US and NATO, in particular, worked well.

Thus, the EU's relative operational success of late in the Western Balkans has its sources not only in improved capabilities. In our view, the Union's experience in the Western Balkans cannot be generalised or exported easily. The distinct advantage that the EU has in this region is that its policy of conditionality is much more effective *vis-à-vis* countries where the promise of closer association with, and potentially accession to, the EU is credible and where both political elites and the general public are ready to make significant compromises in order to attain what many believe to be the only option for a viable future. In other words, the success of EU conflict management in the Western Balkans must be seen in a larger context, in which conflict management is only one element in a comprehensive EU approach to a region. As Javier Solana pointed out as early as 2000,

[t]he European Union is uniquely placed for comprehensive action in the Western Balkans [and is] the only institution capable of comprehensive action, ranging from trade, economic reform, and infrastructure, humanitarian assistance, human rights and democratisation, justice and police to crisis management and military security.

(Solana 2000)

Without the clear long-term commitment of the EU to the Western Balkans' prospect of EU membership, the incentives for political elites and the various ethnic groups they represent would be less powerful and thus the Union's ability to elicit short- and long-term compliance, which has been a major factor in the success of its conflict management missions so far, diminished.

## Notes

- 1 For background on the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, see Rodt's Chapter 12 on EU military conflict management in this volume.
- 2 It is estimated that between 7,000 and 8,000 Muslim men and boys were killed by Serb nationalists in Srebrenica in 1995 (Glenny 2001; Silber and Little 1996).
- 3 See also Rodt's Chapter 12 on EU military conflict management.
- 4 The Operations Field Commander was EUFOR military staff, but also part of the command structure of this particular operation. He reported to the EU Operation Commander, in this case NATO's Deputy Supreme Allied Commander for Europe. The EU Military Committee monitored the conduct of the operation and received reports from the Operation Commander as well as providing the first point of call for him in relation to the Council. Even though the Operation Commander simultaneously had a position within the NATO command structure, he only reported to EU bodies and the chain of command remained under the EU's political control and strategic direction. In contrast to the EUPM, the EUSR to Macedonia, Alexis Brouhns, was not part of the command chain, but acted, together with the SG/HR, as the primary point of contact for Macedonian authorities and as key liaison for EU commanders in the field. This was in many ways similar to what had happened one year earlier in relation to the EU's Operation Concordia taking over from NATO's Operation Allied Harmony in Macedonia.
- 5 See also Rodt's Chapter 12 on EU military conflict management below.
- 6 Interview, representative from the European Commission delegation to Macedonia, 30 April 2009.
- 7 Interview, representative from European Commission delegation to Macedonia, 30 April 2009.
- 8 Interview, representative from the European Commission, 7 May 2009.
- 9 Interview, representative from the European Commission, 7 May 2009.
- 10 Interviews, representatives from BiH Council of Ministers, 29 June 2006; Interview, representative from the European Commission delegation in BiH, 30 June 2006; Interview, representative from the OHR, 30 June 2006.
- 11 Interview, representative from the European Commission, 7 May 2009.
- 12 Interview, senior Western diplomat, 17 July 2009.
- 13 Interview, representative from NATO, 2 February 2007.