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JISB Interview: The European Union and Statebuilding in the Western Balkans

Lord Paddy Ashdown

Christopher Bickerton and David Chandler interviewed Paddy Ashdown, international High Representative and EU Special Representative to Bosnia-Herzegovina, May 2002–January 2006, at the House of Lords, 5 July 2006. He is currently working on a book distilling the lessons of his experience of statebuilding in the region.

Keywords Balkans; Bosnia-Herzegovina; EU enlargement; European Union; statebuilding

JISB: Few people have the hands-on experience in international statebuilding which you have gained in your four years as head of the Office of the High Representative, responsible for overseeing the Dayton process in Bosnia-Herzegovina. What do you see as the key lessons learned from your experience?

PA: We have completely failed to learn important lessons from the international experience of statebuilding. We have been undertaking international statebuilding since the end of the Second World War and the number of interventions which have been successful is actually quite high. We are now taking decisions on whether to intervene in the UN Security Council about every six months and the international community, usually with US leadership, has been undertaking statebuilding missions about once every two years since the end of the Cold War. Some of these interventions have been relatively successful: East Timor, over time; Bosnia, though not to start with; Haiti, perhaps; El Salvador, certainly; and there are others. However, we still make these high profile cock-ups.

Whether or not it should have been done, leaving aside the legalities, the American military operation to roll up Iraq was an astonishing success. But the US-led statebuilding operation was a copybook example of how not to do this. We lovingly reproduced all the mistakes we have made before. The key issue is how we codify this experience. We can't build states 'by numbers', there is no 'one size fits all' blueprint to follow, but I think we do, nevertheless, need to establish and codify a kind of institutional memory as to how we go about this in a more

successful way. The book which I am working on at the moment will be an attempt to do that.

The key issue is that we now know reasonably well what kind of actions can increase the chances of success and what kind of actions will diminish the chances of success. The problem is that we always seem to choose the latter rather than the former. Let me pick out the key issues, leaving aside the question of the legality of intervention and so on.

Firstly, we forget that although you can successfully fight modern high-tech wars in a matter of weeks, statebuilding takes decades. I think Afghanistan is probably a 30 year project. When our politicians plunge us into these interventions they nearly always say 'Troops home by Christmas', metaphorically speaking, giving the impression that we can do this quickly. We know this is driven by the electoral cycle, but the fact is that you must be prepared to commit over a long period probably as much or more resources as you committed during the war. In the days and weeks after the conflict probably more troops are necessary than were needed during it; Iraq is a classical example in this respect.

You have to be prepared to deal with the situation holistically. You cannot do statebuilding by force of arms alone, by just controlling the security space. It is necessary to act on the economy, to act on civil society, create a judiciary, create a rule of law etc. Unless you are prepared to look at the question holistically, success will not be possible. Unless you are prepared for a long-term project rather than a short-term one, it will not work. Unless you can mobilize the political will to make this happen, whether from a broad coalition or a narrow one, it will not be done.

Secondly, we lovingly forget that item number one, always and I can think of no exception to this, is the rule of law. It is not elections, I'm afraid. There are pressures of legitimacy to have elections fairly early on in the process but if you have elections before you establish the rule of law then all you do is elect the criminals who ran the war and you inculcate into the system that you create an extension of the corrupt classes that benefited from war in the first place. What you create is not a democracy but a criminally captured space. That is what we had in Bosnia: we made the rule of law number one only seven years in and into that space moved all the corrupt forces that ran the war and took it over. Corruption is now in the marrow and bone of Bosnian society. In Kosovo, we paid more attention to policing and strengthening the rule of law, for example with the establishment of CIVCOM (European Council Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management) in May 2000. Nevertheless, we still took too long.

The rule of law comes, first of all, by dominating the security space. You need to dominate the security space post-conflict and then transit that into the rule of law. That probably means that your troops, in the first instance, need to be prepared to fill the gap before an international civilian police task force arrives or a domestic one is established. It is necessary to have something close to martial law at the beginning; if not, you lose control. Yet, the US deliberately disbanded the entire Iraqi army, with too few troops to do the job, so they had no

mechanism to be able to control the space. From that point on they lost control of the situation.

Thirdly, probably the best way to get your troops home early is to reform the economy. If we had done economic reform in the first year in Bosnia we would have had the economy growing in the way that it is now. We made the economy priority number one when I went there in 2002 and it is now growing at 5 per cent. Getting the economy going is essential. This means liberalizing the economy and stripping out the barriers to business. It does not mean massive investment, as you do this by altering the supply side. Economic reform needs to come very early, in my view, even before elections.

Fourth, as a rule of thumb, I don't believe that you can build peace in one nation unless you have at least the acquiescence, if not the active support, of the neighbouring states. We managed to build a chance for peace in Northern Ireland when we recognized that Dublin had a right to a say in what went on and they were incorporated into the process. The chances of building peace in Bosnia became eminently greater when political and personnel changes in Croatia and Serbia, post-Tudjman and Milosevic, produced governments which, with every right to interfere, were more constructive in their approach and more cooperative with the international community. Yet we go into Iraq and, at the same time, appear to do everything we can to provoke neighbouring states such as Iran. We sometimes have to deal with unpleasant people, whether in Iran, or previously in Serbia, but you cannot take an island of instability within a sea of instability and hope to be able to cope with it. With regard to Iraq, the key problem of the Middle East is the Palestinian problem. The fact that the Americans were not prepared to do what was necessary to have a just solution in Palestine has meant that they have paid the price in Iraq.

These are just some of the key lessons. However, they do not appear to have been learnt. For example, in Afghanistan today we have one twenty-fifth the number of troops and one fiftieth the amount of aid, per head of population, than we put into Kosovo. We may still make a success of it, who knows? It does not look very good at the moment but success is still possible. You cannot draw linear connections between inputs and outputs but there is a connection between them: if, to start with, you put in too few troops to dominate the security space it will become more of a problem afterwards.

It seems that there are these recurring problems despite the fact that the solutions to deal with them are available. Is their recurrence then a technical problem of institutions not communicating with each other or is there some other underlying problem?

There is political short-sightedness: a combination of hubris, nemesis and amnesia. Hubris followed by nemesis can be seen in the ideologically driven Bush administration, which threw all the plans about how to handle post-war Iraq out of the window and handed Iraq over to the Defense Department at the Pentagon. The State Department had much more knowledge about the conditions

in Iraq on the ground but were told to not get involved. The Defense Department took it over, governed on the basis of ideology and failed, to no great surprise. Some of this is ideologically driven and hubristic to say the least. Some of the problems are just pure amnesia. There are plenty of people around who know these things, the practitioners who have done it, the Andy Bearparks (Head of the Coalition Provisional Authority operations and infrastructure in Iraq) for example, and plenty of others, but you don't bother to ask them.

No one has yet brought together in a single place the customs and practice that are likely to be successful. I will argue in my book that there is a case for a Staff College in which you would teach some of these techniques. This does not mean you can do statebuilding by numbers but there are things you can do to increase the chances of success and it is important to pass this knowledge on. By the way, that does not mean just passing it on to the senior diplomats or senior generals. This is quintessentially a junior officer's 'war', it is the lance corporal in charge of the detention centre who can destroy your moral credibility or the young non-commissioned officer who cannot control his men, when they respond to one of their mates being killed at a road block. It is the young man or woman of 24 who is sent out to govern an Iraqi town or to run the Office of the High Representative (OHR) office in Brcko – those are the people who have to take the decisions. Creating an institutional memory at the top will not be sufficient; you have to bring this into the training right down to the bottom levels of your political class, diplomatic class and military class. We simply have not approached this in a systematic way.

Two things can happen. Perhaps we are going to burn our fingers one last time in Iraq and then never do this again. That would be a tragedy in an interdependent world. I do not believe that we have reached the end of the era of large-scale wars and that we will only be left with small intra-state wars. I think that there is a perfect storm gathering out there and that large-scale war will return unless we are very careful. One of the ways that you can prevent that from happening is by dealing with the small-scale conflicts that build up to it. I also think that in an interdependent world there are times when you absolutely have to intervene because of the effect on world peace or the peace of the region if you do not. Either we will say 'never again' after Iraq and, particularly, Afghanistan or, alternatively, we will learn how to do it properly and people will understand that this is not some rare phenomenon that occurs in rare circumstances but is absolutely part of the bloodstream of modern international diplomacy and modern international affairs.

You talk about sequencing, of addressing a number of political, social and economic questions prior to elections. But doesn't the circularity of the 'standards before status' problem with regard to Kosovo's independence suggest that political problems cannot properly be resolved without autonomy for the domestic political process?

You cannot build states by numbers. There is not a do-it-yourself manual, and I am certainly not going to write one. You have to use judgement and I am arguing here about best case scenarios; judgements have to be tempered by realities as you find them on the ground. I think that Europe would be extremely ill-advised to do anything with regard to Kosovo's independence before they have established the rudiments of an effective rule of law.

The truth, however, is that interveners in a foreign country are going to be asked the question of legitimacy. They have to deal with the people. The Americans made a mistake in trying to just deal with the exiles that had no standing within the Iraqi population. One of the key messages of my book is that the absolutely essential battleground for success is that of public opinion, internationally, but especially that of the country you are working in. If you cannot bring public opinion behind you then you cannot succeed. You have to deal with people who carry some public support and are the voice of the people, even if they are unpleasant people and you have to hold your nose and do it.

Now it may be that in the early days you have to run a protectorate. I think we should often be more straightforward and say: 'Sorry guys, this is a protectorate'. They exist from time to time, and for good reasons. After World War Two we established a protectorate in Germany. Germany is no less a democracy today because of this. Maybe I will argue in my book that there is a case for bringing back UN trusteeship, there is a really interesting argument to be made there. Perhaps we should be a bit more straightforward about this. However, the point is that whether you are running a protectorate or not, it is still necessary to deal with, to speak to, and be responsive to, those who represent the people. To start with, you may be able to do that through wise choices but eventually you are going to have to legitimize this and elections are the only way to do it.

It is nearly always going to be the case that you are going to have to have elections sooner than you might like in order to give yourself legitimacy, but the longer you can leave it the better. Do you know when the first elections were in Germany? After five years. In Japan, they were held after seven years. Of course, here there were clear military victories. One of the lessons is that if there is a clear outcome to the war it is far easier to build peace afterwards. The contested outcome in Bosnia and elsewhere is one of the reasons for problems. Without a clear defeat both sides try to use the peace process to continue their war aims.

In Afghanistan it was not easy, there was no decisive defeat, in that the Taliban melted away, also we had only a limited number of troops. The Loya Jirga constitutional assembly was convened pretty early, but we probably had to do that to give ourselves some legitimate people to talk to. These are merely recommendations of perfection. I recognize fully that they will not always apply.

Let's look more closely at the statebuilding process in the Balkans. Could you tell us how you view the process, particularly in relation to the enlarged role of the European Union?

I'm worried that the Balkans are going to go backwards. I think we're in for some very tough times, with pre-election conflict in Macedonia, Serbia-Montenegro breaking up, the Serbs feeling very isolated, Vojislav Seselj's Radical Party is gaining in popularity, Bosnia may be taking a step back. I don't look at this catastrophically; I think this is what happens when you move through these processes. There are periods of progress and there are setbacks but each peak is higher and each trough is higher than the last. I think that, in the short-term, the Balkans are going to go through some quite difficult times but, in the long-term, the big thing we did in Bosnia was that we moved very fast to get Bosnia in through the gates of Europe before those gates were shut, leaving Bosnia behind. I readily admit that in order to do that I had to be pretty brutal and you have to recognize that you do create dependency every time you do this. I think my successor as international High Representative, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, is absolutely right in now saying: 'Yes, OK, now you are through the gates you are on your own. You are on the road to Europe and we are not going to do anymore of this for you.' Indeed, if anything, I would have done it a little bit earlier.

In your 'double-hatted' position of international High Representative and EU Special Representative, how did you find managing the transition away from direct management by the Office of the High Representative to the process of integration into EU structures?

Transition phases are always very interesting. We started the significant down-scaling of the use of the Bonn powers, which gave the High Representative the authority to impose legislation and to dismiss obstructionist politicians and officials, in my second year. We used the powers I think 72 times in the first year, 20 of those left over from my predecessor, 30 times in the second year, twice in the third year and none in the fourth. The whole process was to build up the magnetic 'pull' of Brussels to take over from the 'push' of the Bonn powers. It has been a very interesting period, considering how you shift weight from one foot to another. This has been a matter of internal organizational change as well. The tiny cell which started off within the Office of the High Representative as the EU Special Representative's staff is now going to grow to take it all over.

It marks a process which I would propose for all statebuilding missions in countries undertaking post-conflict reconstruction. I think that you divide the post-war reconstruction into two phases. The first is that of stabilization where you make peace sustainable and, for all practical purposes, irreversible. The next stage, once this is complete, is statebuilding. One phase may well run into the other. The phase at Dayton was the stabilization phase and the phase of statebuilding is the Brussels phase and what we saw during my mandate was a shifting between the two phases.

There was no real statebuilding in Bosnia prior to my appointment in 2002. That was because their first task was stabilisation. Thanks to that work I could make my task, not stabilisation, but statebuilding. There were some moves in

this direction but very minimal ones, for example, the establishment of the Independent Judicial Commission, but I cannot think of any state institutions which we built before 2002. My job was to try and build the institutions of a light-level state governing a highly decentralized country.

Could you explain a bit more the difference on the ground between the ‘pull’ of Brussels and the ‘push’ of the Bonn powers?

Let’s take the average citizen. Does the average citizen of Bosnia-Herzegovina have a perfect idea of what Europe is like? Absolutely not, they think Europe is full employment, visa free travel and full shop windows. But, if you go back to the beginning of the journey of, say, Poland that’s exactly what the average citizen thought there too. In Bosnia the people don’t know about Stabilization and Association agreements and monetary stabilization, what they know is that Europe will be good for them because they can travel, they can get more jobs, and can buy the things they want in the shops. They are no different from anyone else.

For politicians the shift has been very important. Just reflect on the fact that none of the big questions addressed on the road to Europe – for example, VAT, the unification of the army, the unification of the customs, the unification of intelligence services and the creation of a centralized judiciary – none of these policies was imposed as a result of the Bonn powers, not one of them. They all happened because it was necessary to pass the legislation in order for Bosnia to join NATO and the EU. So the magnetic pull of Brussels was already the reason why Bosnia was undertaking these measures, not the push of Bonn powers.

In terms of the political process within Bosnia, does it make much difference whether these externally drawn-up policies are imposed with a stick or with a carrot?

Yes, it makes a huge difference. If it is imposed with a stick then the consequence is dependency. By the way, this is not just dependency on behalf of the Bosnians. The international community was dependent on the Bonn powers too. There were several occasions when the IMF would find it too difficult to persuade the Bosnians about policy in a courteous manner so they would come up to me and say ‘This is really important, please use the Bonn powers’. I would say: ‘Certainly not. Why should I?’ The international community became dependent on the use of the Bonn powers but so did the Bosnians.

Why have all our attempts to create a civil society failed in Bosnia? The answer is because we do it for them. People have said to me: ‘Why should we stand up as citizens and fight against government abuses when you do it for us Paddy?’ There is a very famous Bosnian saying: ‘It is easier to beat thorn bushes with other people’s pricks’ – we kindly offered ours to beat their thorn bushes with. Of course they used them. You don’t have to be Bosnian to do that. I remember speaking to Guiliano Amato, at that time prime minister of Italy, during the

preparations for joining the Euro in the late 1990s. He said to me: 'Joining the Euro is wonderful. It forces me to do the things I could never get away with otherwise with regard to reforming the Italian economy.'

For a Bosnian to use external forces to do the things which is necessary is understandable. However, the result is that you create a dependent society and the truth is that they are suddenly discovering now that this is not going to be there for them and that if they want to get into Europe they have to do it themselves. Bosnia is therefore going through a difficult time. It takes a great deal of strength to be able to say: 'No, we are not going to do this. You have to do it yourself.' We have to be patient enough for the country to set back a bit when this happens.

How do political institutions become more independent though the 'pull' of the EU accession process?

They have more independence because they are no longer supported by the use of the High Representative's powers. Europe has said that if reforms are imposed via the High Representative's powers then Bosnia cannot join. The politicians still might argue that these policies are an imposition from Europe but you do not have to go to Bosnia to find that. You can find that in our own country too. The things that politicians know to be necessary they often blame Europe for making them do. If it is a deficiency for Bosnia it is a deficiency for all for us. This is one of the advantages of the European state.

While it might be argued that policies imposed from Europe do not assist in strengthening the Bosnian state's relationship with society, it is a chicken and egg question. The state cannot have a strong relationship with society until there is a civil society and a civil society will not be created until foreigners leave, so one way or another you have to cross this chasm. Yes, it is dangerous, it is like a rope-bridge, it is not very pleasant but I cannot think of another way around it. This is one of the reasons why the European Union has been the world's most successful peacebuilding and statebuilding institutional mechanism, far more successful than the United States.

The EU has the 'carrot' as well as the 'stick', in fact, these are part of the same process. If you do not carry out the policies you cannot get in. Believe me, if you go to Bosnia and ask people about the EU, they might argue that it is not relevant to them, but ask them if they want visa-free access they will say that they would do anything to achieve this. This is what it means to them. Here we are sitting in the House of Lords, we can just as easily talk of the limited or compromised nature of democracy in our own country. All you have to do is spend a year in Bosnia to see how bloody complicated the whole matter is, you have to make lots of compromises.

Another issue is that though this is a quintessentially political exercise, and not a diplomatic one, we keep sending diplomats out to do these things. It is about moving public opinion, making compromises, doing political deals, it is a job which requires political skills, more than diplomatic ones. Let's wait and see

what happens in Bosnia; things are not going well at present with Milorad Dodik and the Republika Srpska leadership. What will happen in the 2006 elections? Maybe we will get more of the same and Dodik will stay in power. But there has to be a time when Bosnian public opinion says: 'You guys are not taking us to Europe', and we have not finished our job until that time arrives. They have to do it themselves. The EU, thank God and at last, has said to Dodik: 'If you do not deliver on police reform then you cannot join Europe.' Maybe they do not want to. You have to have the patience to allow them to make mistakes.

It is not the case that the population of these states is necessarily involved in the process. Did the people of Poland rush around saying we must create a judiciary up to European standards? Of course they did not. They want to get what Europe can offer. Europe is a union of standards as well as a union of ideas. It is the standards that matter. By the way, they are also the standards you will need to create a modern liberal democratic state; there is nothing inimical to the interests of Bosnia about this process.

Is Europe acting in a quasi-imperialist fashion? Yes, but the difference is that it is up to people to say no if they want to. This is still persuasion, it is not coercion. I think it is perfectly legitimate for Brussels to say: 'Guys here are the rules, if you want to join the club you have to conform to the standards. If you conform to them fine, but if you do not want to you do not have to join.' It was very difficult for the Republika Srpska parliamentary assembly to agree to abolish their army and put it at the disposal of state institutions, but *they did it, not me*. It was a free vote in the Bosnian Serb parliament, I did not impose it. I may have told them it would be a good thing and that if you want to get into NATO you have to, but it was they who took the final decision.

The choice between the road to Europe and international isolation, 'Brussels or Belarus', may not be a very appealing one. There is no viable alternative perhaps but there are some people in Republika Srpska who would take it to the line and say they would rather be isolated than join Brussels if that means merging the army and police. You and I may not see a viable alternative, but they certainly do and they have to be free to make that choice if they choose to do so. You could find means and reasons for criticizing this, if you wish, but look at the fruits of this approach. It is non-coercive, it is giving a helping hand, a hand up not a hand-out, and it has been phenomenally successful as a statebuilding mechanism to bring about liberal democracies in countries that formerly had Soviet-style systems. It is not a bad record and I cannot think of an alternative way of doing it.

Do we always behave in a perfect fashion? No, of course we do not. I used to have Bosnians coming up to me and saying: 'Why should we do this?' I would say: 'Well, if you do not do this you will not get this chunk of money'. They might get angry: 'How dare you say that? Are you blackmailing us?' I would respond and say: 'Excuse me, this is my electorate's money. If you think my electorate are going to allow me to go on pouring money down a black hole in Bosnia-Herzegovina for you to pay five or ten times as many politicians as you need, then you are mistaken. We are a democracy too and we have to answer for the use of that

international money.' I think that that is quite right, if you do not do what is required then you do not get the money. Sorry, it is our money and we are entitled to say what we will use it for. Once it is explained, then Bosnian politicians understand that this is fair and that it is the reality.

This process may not be perfect but I'm not sure that anyone has a better idea. 'What has the EU ever done for us?' Well what about starting with peace amongst warring nations? I remember going to see Douglas Hurd, the British foreign secretary until 1995, and begging for international intervention in 1994. He said: 'No. In the Balkans they have always lived like that, they have always fought each other, we need to build a fire-break around the thing and let it burn itself out.' I said: 'Douglas, you are a civilised, educated man, what is wrong with your history? If there is one group of nations who have always fought each other, with incalculable costs of death and destruction, for a thousand years, it is us, not them. If the European Union can find a framework to enable us to live in peace how can you deny it to these people?' So, with peace, democracy, higher standards of economic management, it is not a bad collection of things. Have you got a better idea?

In a global world, when we need protection from various global threats, the EU is the world's first operating test-bed for supranational institutions and we are going to need more of them. One of the big challenges for our time is the exodus of power from nation-states on to the global stage where nobody controls it. The global stage is a lawless space, no less than Afghanistan; that is why the terrorists use it. By the way, 60 per cent of the money that was used to fund 9/11 went through the Twin Towers. Unless we can find means of having global governance chaos will increase. Governance has to follow power and migrate to the global level. If it does not, you will have chaos and conflict; so supranational institutions are a vital protective mechanism. The EU provides this.

Is there a problem then if the EU is suffering 'enlargement fatigue'?

My fear is that the magnetic 'pull' from Brussels is weakening. The sound I hear in the chancelleries of Europe is the sound of running feet, away from the Thessalonki commitments to the region. If that happens then the Balkans could return to its old state. By the way, this is the argument I am making, in public speeches and in private, all the time: Europe could be left with an abscess in its middle. The western Balkans is not Turkey. This is not a question beyond our present borders, but unfinished business within our borders and we have to realize that failure here could be very bad for the Balkans and very bad for Europe.

Just last week I was in Paris and you find French politicians arguing that they are not prepared to go to their people and say this. They argue that their voters will not understand or support the perspective that we should have more of these states inside the EU. I personally think that this argument could be won if politicians would stand up and make it. The problem is that there are not many

politicians who are doing this now. It worries me very much that the magnetic pull of Brussels could weaken. We have to recognize that the European Union is the only glue which holds the Balkans on the road to Europe at all. If you take that way, the whole process is not irreversible, especially in the present circumstances with problems in Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and so on.

Serbia's former foreign minister, Goran Sivilanovic, argues that 'enlargement fatigue' does not exist, that it is the excuse European leaders give for their inability to convince their own population about enlargement. Is this your view?

Absolutely right. I hear the phrase, much used in Paris now, 'absorption capacity', but the west Balkan countries taken together are smaller than the population of Romania and with the GDP just a little bigger than Luxemburg. This is a tiny morsel for Europe to swallow. When they talk of 'absorption fatigue' what they mean is the failure of politicians to persuade their people. It is an un-led public opinion which is moving in the wrong direction. Goran is entirely right; these are excuses.

Conditionality does not work if the promise of membership is not a credible one. My view is that we should make it an active element of European policy to bring the western Balkans in. There is no point in the European Commission standing on the sidelines with their arms crossed, as they initially did with Poland, saying: 'There is the goal. We are just umpires.' They are not, they are players on the field. They should be actively making it happen. I'm not in favour of weakening conditionality. The western Balkans must come up to full European standards. I'm not in favour of making special cases, but I am in favour of helping them to achieve this. This means the European Commission playing a more active role and being more muscular in its application of conditionality.

Classically, the Commission refused to get involved in the constitutional talks in Bosnia, because they said it was not what they did with Hungary and Romania. It was crazy. The country has 13 prime ministers. Surely to become a member of the EU some minimum standards of functionality are required. So, for the most important reform Bosnia has to make, we could not use the most important leverage we had, which was the Stabilization and Association process. Fortunately, the Commission is changing its view on that, otherwise this would be the triumph of bureaucracy over common sense.

I do not think that the role of the EU in statebuilding is entirely hostage to its internal political problems. I have always been in favour of 'widening' before 'deepening'. But I think 'deepening' is more important than 'widening' now. Europe used to say that Bosnia is dysfunctional but I always used to reply that it is not half as dysfunctional as Brussels. There is a question of the functionality of the European institutions in their present form. After this last round of enlargement the next task will be to deepen the functionality of Europe. But

prior to this we must accept the case for the western Balkans, which is a relatively tiny morsel and unfinished business within our present borders.

What is the successful end point of statebuilding, a strong independent state or a state which is subordinate to the structures of supranational institutions, such as the EU?

The successful end point is to have a state and liberal democracy as a form of government, where the rule of law applies to all and the people of that country have the right to decide what they want to do. If a country can find a better way of creating this than by using the instruments and mechanisms of the EU then they can help themselves, that is fine.

That is why I think that it is immoral, even if it is not illegal, to intervene on behalf of democracy. It is up to the nation to decide if they want to be democratic. It is moral and legal to intervene on behalf of justice and the rule of law, but the decision on whether a nation wants to be a democracy or not is up to them. My view is if you give them justice and the rule of law then they will always choose democracy. But it is their choice, not ours. We should not be using force to impose our theory of government on other nations.

There is something inherently contradictory, we have to confess, in intervening on behalf of democracy, because intervention is in-itself non-democratic. On the other hand, this is not a matter of theory. Let's look at what has happened. Is Germany less of a democracy because of our intervention? Or Austria because of the post-war intervention? We had a period of tutelaged democracy and today Germany is arguably one of the most democratic countries in Europe. Did Japan suffer from a similar process of external tutelage? It is the end product of this which matters, it seems to me.