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# **The EU’s Promotion of Democracy in the Balkans: The Power of Simulation and the Simulation of Power**

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# The EU's Promotion of Democracy in the Balkans: The Power of Simulation and the Simulation of Power

## Abstract

*This paper seeks to investigate the EU's democracy promotion and statebuilding policies in the Balkans through the use of Jean Baudrillard's conceptions of 'simulation' and 'hyperreality' as a response to the crisis of representation. It does this to suggest that the assertion of the power of the EU in the Balkans cannot be fully understood in traditional terms of imperial hegemony. Rather, it is suggested that the EU seeks to simulate its own position of power through the use of foreign policy issues, particularly that of 'member state-building' in the Balkans. It further argues that, in the process, the EU exports forms of non-representative governance - the simulation of government - in the states that are being externally built and integrated into the European Union. This framework is also used to raise some broader questions over Baudrillard's view of 'simulation' as blurring the distinction between 'reality' and 'fantasy' – Does it make any difference to the people of Bosnia whether the EU's semi-protectorate regime is a product of simulation or of representation?*

## Introduction: The Reality of Simulation

This paper follows Baudrillard's view that the 'dissolution of the political subject', i.e. the end of political projects of Left and Right, has created a crisis of representation and that the location of power is no longer clear, that in fact, political elites can no longer generate and externally project power, only simulate it.<sup>1</sup> In the absence of any connection with the masses, with their own society, elites are unable to give policy-making a broader social meaning, enabling them to engage and mobilize social support for a political programme.<sup>2</sup> Baudrillard's framework enables the articulation of a critique of traditional Realist or Critical understandings of democracy export as

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Baudrillard's *Forget Foucault* and the accompanying interview with Sylvère Lotringer, *Forget Foucault* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1987).

<sup>2</sup> These points are made in Baudrillard's *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, where he clarifies that without political engagement, 'without this minimal participation in meaning, power is nothing but an empty simulacrum' because 'Quite simply, there is no longer any social signified to give force to a political signifier' (*In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities Or, The End of the Social* (New York: Semiotext(e), pp.27 and 19).

dissimulation, feigning ‘not to have what one has’, i.e., as a pretence that policy is not driven by self-interest or the needs of capital accumulation,<sup>3</sup> through an understanding of policy practice in terms of simulation, which ‘is to feign to have what one hasn’t’: i.e., the pretence that there are clear instrumental interests and ideological values being asserted by the EU.<sup>4</sup>

For Baudrillard, the framework of theoretical understanding is therefore radically different, based on the importance, not of a presence (of interests, of representation) but of an absence (a lack of social connection between elites and society and therefore of a lack of social power). The key point that Baudrillard makes is that the framework of grasping reality as dissimulation – the Critical or Realist critique of claims of ‘value-based’ policy-making alleged to be concerned with the promotion of democracy, human rights and good governance – ‘leaves the reality principle intact, the difference [between the real and the illusory] is always clear, it is only masked’. However, ‘simulation threatens the difference between “true” and “false”, between “real” and “imaginary”’ because ‘the simulator produces “true” symptoms’ or effects.<sup>5</sup> According to Baudrillard, ‘the spectre raised by simulation’ is that the effects of power may exist but that ‘truth, reference and objective causes have ceased to exist’.<sup>6</sup>

This would seem to suggest an exercise of power which lacked strategic direction and the traditional attributes of the political subject or agent of power, including those of instrumental rationality and clear self-interest. Baudrillard suggests that what drives power is less political self-interest (the product of the politics of representation) and more the politics of simulation: the attempt to hide power’s inability to cohere and project self-interest. Simulation is the attempt to overcome, bypass or evade political elites’ lack of connection with their own societies. Baudrillard suggests a double technique of simulation, firstly the denial of the reality

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Rita Abrahamsen, *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2000); Barry Gills, ‘American Power, Neo-Liberal Economic Globalization and ‘Low Intensity Democracy’: An Unstable Trinity’, in Michael Cox et al (eds) *American Democracy Promotion: Impulses, Strategies, and Impacts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.326-344, or Steve Smith, ‘US Democracy Promotion: Critical Questions’, in *ibid*, pp.63-82. For useful critiques of traditional IR theorizing, using Baudrillard’s framework, see, for example, Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State and Symbolic Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and François Debrix, *Re-Envisioning Peacekeeping: The United Nations and the Mobilization of Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), esp. pp.9-15.

<sup>4</sup> *The Precession of Simulacra*, reproduced in *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), p.5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.

of the power of elites ('the simulation of death') and secondly the exaggeration of the power of others or of events in and of themselves (the construction of the 'hyperreal').

Firstly, Baudrillard argues that: 'Every form of power, every situation speaks of itself by denial, in order to escape, by simulation of death, its real agony. Power can stage its own murder to rediscover a glimmer of existence and legitimacy.'<sup>7</sup> This paper will argue that the EU itself is a product of power's attempt to deny itself – in this case, the attempt to deny the power that exists at the level of the national governments of EU member states.<sup>8</sup> The EU by necessity enacts, in an exaggerated form, the techniques of simulation of its member states, whose 'crisis of representation' - or inability to present and project a socially-rooted 'idea of the state' or clear political project or purpose<sup>9</sup> - it magnifies. In effect, the EU is a gigantic simulacrum as the product of the denial of power and reproducer of this process of denial through the politics of simulation.

Secondly, Baudrillard argues that power hides its incapacity through the exaggeration of the problems which it confronts, through the production of the hyperreal:

The only weapon of power, its only strategy against [its collapse], is to reinject realness and referentiality everywhere, in order to convince us of the reality of the social, of the gravity of the economy and the finalities of production. For that purpose it prefers the discourse of crisis...<sup>10</sup>

He argues that 'hyperreality and simulation are deterrents of every principle and of every objective' because policy is no longer organized around objective social threats and social problems. The response to power's disappearance in the play of simulation is the reliance on crisis, 'it [power] gambles on remanufacturing artificial, social, economic, political stakes'.<sup>11</sup> It will be suggested here that the construction of the hyperreal has been central to the dynamic of legitimacy of the EU, where alleged crises in the Balkans have continually necessitated new EU activity and mandates and institutional developments on the grounds that 'European values', 'European

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.37.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, James Heartfield, 'European Union: A process without a subject', Bickerton et al (eds) *Politics without Sovereignty* (London, UCL Press, 2007), pp.131-149.

<sup>9</sup> For Barry Buzan's concept of the 'idea of the state', see his *People, States and Fear*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed (Harlow: Pearson, 1991), pp.69-82.

<sup>10</sup> *The Precession of Simulacra*, p.42.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp.43-44.

identity’, or ‘European security’ are at stake in these developments. The EU exaggerates the forms of simulation apparent in member states’ own attempts to use foreign policy to develop ‘ethical identities’<sup>12</sup> - making foreign policy the centre of its ideological and institutional attempts to constitute itself as a substitute symbol of political community to the nation-state. For the EU, every external measure, from trade regulations to foreign aid, to the sending of troops abroad,<sup>13</sup> comes attached with the necessity of expressing the EU’s alleged shared ‘identity’ and ‘values’ in the increasingly shrill and desperate simulation of these absent factors.

Baudrillard suggests that a framework of simulation throws light on the reality of power and its practices. The understanding of political practices and policies as simulation enables them to be grasped more deeply in their material relationship to the ‘crisis of representation’ than a Critical or Realist perspective which would understand the discourses of the ‘export of democracy’ as a conscious fiction which seeks to dissemble reality (i.e., to lie about deeper economic and political motives and interests).<sup>14</sup> Of particular concern for this paper, is the difference between simulated ‘truth effects’ of political power and traditional acts of political power. It could well be suggested that the effects of simulation are the same as if they were traditional assertions of interest-based power.<sup>15</sup> What difference does it make, for example, to the people of Bosnia, whether the EU is pursuing ‘real’ interests or simulating its political existence and its policy-making? How can very real protectorate powers to export democracy be understood in terms of simulacra and simulation?

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<sup>12</sup> This can be seen in the focus on a wide range of ‘other’-orientated foreign policy frameworks, from the ‘first great war of interdependence, the struggle for climate security’ (Margaret Beckett, UK Foreign Secretary, ‘Climate Change: The Gathering Storm’, Annual Winston Churchill Memorial Lecture, British American Business Inc., New York, 16 April 2007), to the concern with threats from failed states, to humanitarian crises, to the war on terror. See, for example, *David Chandler, Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-building* (London: Pluto, 2006), esp. ‘The Ethics of Empire in Denial’ Chapter 4.

<sup>13</sup> The extent to which every external expression of EU ‘concern’ rapidly degenerates into a question of (crisis of) EU values was only too adequately demonstrated in the EU’s assumption of the leading role in the UN peace mission following the Israeli incursion into Lebanon in 2006. The EU’s attempt to simulate shared values, led to the dispatch of troops as an exercise in simulation (there was no intention of using them to constrain either the Israeli forces or Hezbollah and therefore no idea what equipment if any was required). See further, Chandler, ‘Moral Grandstanding in the Middle East’, *Spiked*, 1 September 2006 (<http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php?site/article/1598/>)

<sup>14</sup> As Baudrillard states in the fictional quote from Ecclesiastes at the opening of *The Precession of Simulacra*: ‘The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth – it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true.’ p.1.

<sup>15</sup> I would like to thank Zaki Laïdi for raising this question after reading the formative thoughts for this paper.

Baudrillard appears to argue that the policies of political simulation would be little different, despite the fact that the political stakes are illusory (hence, simulation as threatening the distinction between the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’). For example, he states that: ‘war is not any less heinous for being a mere simulacrum – the flesh suffers just the same, and the dead ex-combatants count as much there as in other wars’.<sup>16</sup> It will be suggested here that, in fact, there is a difference between simulation and interest-based policy-making and that simulation, precisely because it stems from the weakness of the political actor, (while no less real) can be seen to be a much more arbitrary and ad-hoc process of policy-making.

This is a process with little real relationship to either the policy object (in this case, the Balkans) or the simulator (the EU) itself. This lack of coherence or social grounding in either the object or subject of policy-making is reflected in the apparent autonomy manifested by the bureaucracy of the EU itself. This autonomy of the bureaucracy, brought into sharp focus by Baudrillard’s framework, reveals the ‘truth’ of the mechanisms of power at play, and the way in which the practice of democracy promotion in Balkans reveals the lack of ‘reality’ of both the EU (as a coherent actor) and of the Bosnian state as a constructed fiction (a simulacra). This autonomy is particularly highlighted where the power of the EU is most overt, in the position of the EU Special Representatives, which wield executive power over Bosnia and (with the impending settlement) Kosovo.

### **Enlargement: The ‘mission’ of the EU?**

Europe’s ‘mission’ to bring democracy, peace, human rights and good governance to the Balkans reveals its lack of mission. The mission to transform and save the Balkans relies on the techniques of simulation, not just the simulation of the EU itself as a political actor bearing the trappings of a sovereign state, but also the denial of the EU’s power, or rather the denial of the power of the EU member states, and the construction of a hyperreality of Balkan crisis.

According to the April 2005 report of the International Commission on the Balkans, chaired by Giuliano Amato, former Italian prime minister, *The Balkans in Europe’s Future*:

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<sup>16</sup> *The Precession of Simulacra*, p.70.

If the EU does not devise a bold strategy for accession that could encompass all Balkan countries as new members within the next decade, then it will become mired instead as a neo-colonial power in places like Kosovo, Bosnia and even Macedonia. Such an anachronism would be hard to manage and would be in contradiction with the very nature of the European Union. The real choice the EU is facing in the Balkans is: Enlargement or Empire.<sup>17</sup>

This quote sharply sums up the dilemma facing Western Europe, or the EU, with the end of the Cold War – how to relate to and manage its new eastern ‘empire’. The response of the EU has been to engage in external regulation and relationship management interventions but at the same time deny that it is exercising its authority over the region. It is entirely appropriate for the international commission to pose the EU’s policy choices as ‘statebuilding’ or ‘empire’ and it is this dilemma, this denial of power, which has driven the enlargement process. This denial of the new West/East hierarchy of European power, and the EU’s de facto ‘empire’ to the east, has taken the form of democracy-promotion and statebuilding and the rapid extension and drawing out of the enlargement process to the Balkans.

Where the international commission is slightly out of step with reality is in the assertion that the question of ‘Enlargement or Empire’ was one being posed in 2005. In fact, it was essentially resolved in 1999 when, with the end of the Kosovo war in April, the European Union headed the beginning of an ambitious international experiment in statebuilding and democracy promotion in the Balkan region. Statebuilding has enabled the EU to project its power in the therapeutic framework of the liberal peace, of the capacity-building and empowerment of its eastern neighbours, rather than posing the questions of political responsibility which are raised with empire. Instead of posing the question of Europe’s imperial mission – in concrete terms, what Europe stands for and what Europe represents in relation to a Balkan reality - statebuilding and democracy promotion shifts the focus to the governing regime of the potential candidates.

Statebuilding through democracy promotion involves no less expenditure of resources than empire, in fact, if anything, statebuilding is more invasive and regulatory. The EU has not been hesitant to intervene, merely reluctant to assume political responsibility for intervention. The statebuilding process of EU enlargement

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<sup>17</sup> International Commission on the Balkans, *The Balkans in Europe’s Future*, April 2005, p.11. Accessed at: <http://www.balkan-commission.org/activities/Report.pdf>.

has been able to be highly regulatory precisely on the basis that the regulatory mechanisms invest political responsibility in the candidate countries while denying the EU's domination.

In the process of enlargement, the two drives of simulation – internally, with regard to the EU's purpose and coherence, and externally, with regard to the Balkans - intervention in the hyperreal (creation of the hyperreal) and denial of power (denial of the real) come together in a particularly forceful way. The EU's experiments in shifting the political responsibilities of power away from Brussels have been described as implying no less than the 'reforming and reinventing [of] the state in South Eastern Europe'. As the European Stability Initiative observed:

A new consensus is emerging among both regional and international actors that the most fundamental obstacle to the advance of democracy and security in South Eastern Europe is the lack of effective and accountable state institutions. Strengthening domestic institutions is increasingly viewed as the key priority across the diverse sectors of international assistance, as relevant to human rights and social inclusion as it is to economic development and democratisation.<sup>18</sup>

This is argued to be the special mission of the EU, the Commission argued that its focus on exporting democracy to the region through building the capacity of state institutions and civil society development reflected not only the importance of this question and the clear needs it had identified, 'but also the comparative advantage of the European Community in providing *real added value* in this area'. It would appear that the Balkan states were fortunate in that their wealthy neighbours to the West had not only identified their central problems but also happened to have the solutions to them already at hand.<sup>19</sup>

The result of the EU's simulation of its 'mission' is the problematisation of the Balkans, of both the states and the societies which it exercises power over. It is important to note from the start the artificial and somewhat forced nature of the justifications for the EU's state-building project. The problems identified in the governance sphere were not with the formal mechanisms of democratic government

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<sup>18</sup> EastWest Institute and European Stability Initiative, 'Democracy, Security and the Future of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe: A Framework for Debate', April 2001, p.18. Accessed at: [http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi\\_document\\_id\\_15.pdf](http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_document_id_15.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> 'The Stabilisation and Association Process and CARDS Assistance 2000 to 2006', European Commission paper for the Second Regional Conference for South East Europe, 2001, p.9. Available at: [http://www.seerecon.org/region/documents/ec/ec\\_sap\\_cards\\_2000-2006.pdf](http://www.seerecon.org/region/documents/ec/ec_sap_cards_2000-2006.pdf).

or the electoral accountability of government representatives but were concerns that went beyond procedural questions of ‘free and fair elections’ to the administrative practices and policy choices of governments and the attitude, culture and participation-levels of their citizens. Regarding institution-building, the European Commission asserted that:

The lack of effective and accountable state institutions hampers the ability of each country to co-operate with its neighbours and to move towards the goal of closer integration with the EU. Without a solid institutional framework for the exercise of public power, free and fair elections will not lead to representative or accountable government. Without strong institutions to implement the rule of law, there is little prospect that states will either provide effective protection of human and minority rights or tackle international crime and corruption.<sup>20</sup>

Where, only a few years previously, free and fair elections were seen to be the main indicator of representative and accountable government, institution-building was now held to be the key to democratic development. According to the Commission, strengthening state institutions was vital for ‘assuring the region’s future, being as relevant to human rights and social inclusion as it is to economic development and democratisation’.<sup>21</sup> While the Balkan states met the traditional democratic criteria, necessary for the incorporation of new members, such as Spain and Portugal, into Europe-wide mechanisms in the past, they were now held to fail to meet the new, more exacting, standards which are being laid down for membership of European bodies at present.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the second aspect of governance, civil society, the Commission was even more forthright in its condemnation of the aspiring members involved in the Stabilisation and Association process:

...none of the countries can yet claim to have the level of vibrant and critical media and civil society that is necessary to safeguard democratic advances. For example, public and media access to information, public participation in

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Hugo Storey, ‘Human Rights and the New Europe: Experience and Experiment’, *Political Studies*, vol.43, Special Issue, (1995) pp.131–151.

policy debate and accountability of government and its agencies are aspects of civil society which are still largely undeveloped in all five of the countries.<sup>23</sup>

In this case, the applicant states from the Balkan region could apparently not even make a 'claim' that they could safeguard 'democracy' in their states without external assistance in the form of democracy promotion and capacity-building. In fact, the Commission was clearly concerned by society in the region as much as by government, arguing that the aim of its new programmatic development was necessarily broad in order 'to entrench a culture...which makes forward momentum towards the EU irreversible'.<sup>24</sup>

The process of constructing a Balkan hyperreality in order to construct the EU's mission is that of simulation. The precondition for the EU's 'member state building' in the Balkans is the formal and informal subsumption and subordination of the region. The Balkans are already integrated into the EU and this is precisely the problem posed by the region: its 'real' regional subordination to the EU. It is the dependency of the Balkan states on EU policy-makers and EU policy that makes the process of 'integration' necessarily an exercise in simulation and makes simulation necessary. The simulation of policy-making creates a hyperreality of Bosnia and Kosovo where the discursive language of choice is that of crisis.<sup>25</sup> The EU actively seeks to deny its political subjectivity not by taking responsibility for policy but by denying it's power to make policy and in so doing reveals it's 'real' lack of political subjective capacity. The EU's 'inability to produce the real' is reflected in its creation of the Balkan threat – the hyperreal – simulating the EU's incapacity to take political responsibility for its power at the same time as multiplying its 'truth effects', its interventionist impact in the region.

The politics of emergency and the discourse of crisis is a simulation, but a real and necessary one. Europe's 'big challenge' in another context, where power was confident of its capacity and its project, would be no challenge at all. As former international High Representative and EU Special Representative from 2002 to 2006,

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<sup>23</sup> 'Regional Strategy Paper 2002–2006: CARDS Assistance Programme to the Western Balkans', European Commission, 2001, pp.10-11. Available at: [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/see/docs/cards/sp02\\_06.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/docs/cards/sp02_06.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> 'The Stabilisation & Association process: First Annual Report', European Commission, Brussels, 4 April 2002, p.8. Available at: [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/see/sap/com02\\_163.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/sap/com02_163.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Baudrillard, *The Precession of Simulacra*, p.42.

Paddy Ashdown argues, the Balkans are a 'relatively tiny morsel' for the EU to swallow, with their tiny populations and tiny economies.<sup>26</sup> The EU has already spent Euro 2 billion in Kosovo since 1999 and will provide a further Euro 1.5 billion to finance its proposed office of the International Civilian Representative. The EU's formal assumption of the management of Kosovo is being described as 'the moment of Europe'. Kosovo is a re-run of Bosnia as declarations are made of Europe's mission. This is simulation as the values and purpose of the EU are not at stake in Bosnia and Kosovo.

In fact, this is a double simulation, firstly, evading where the EU's values and purpose are in question - i.e., within the member states of the EU whose populations are unlikely to be able to vote on any new version of the European Constitution - and, secondly, evading the 'real' political power and responsibility exercised over the Balkans and recreating the Balkans as a 'hyperreal' foreign and external challenge to the EU. Kosovo, 'crisis what crisis' argues the Russian ambassador to the UK, who states that there are plenty of de facto states without de jure recognition.<sup>27</sup> What is the lurking dark threat of 'inaction' over Kosovo? The EU is in a rush to give Kosovo its 'independence' to legitimise its regulation and integration of Kosovo through the process of denying its own power and simulating its 'death' as an imperial actor through Kosovo's 'emancipation'.

Within this framework, the process of hoops of 'integration' for Balkan states to jump through, such as the Stabilization and Association process, can be seen not so much as about integrating the Balkans as attempts to distance the Balkans from the EU; in other words, attempts to avoid the questions of the capacity of the EU to represent reality, to assert real power and responsibility over the region. Bosnia is a new type of state, being built through this process of simulation. Bosnia is a powerful example of the reality of the effects of simulation, of the EU's need to simulate the exercise of power by distancing power and political responsibility.

To all intents and purposes Bosnia is a member of the European Union; in fact more than this, Bosnia is the first genuine EU state where sovereignty has in effect been transferred to Brussels (no other state is as integrated as this one). The EU

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<sup>26</sup> Paddy Ashdown, 'The European Union and Statebuilding in the Western Balkans', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol.1, no.1, 107-118, p.118.

<sup>27</sup> Yury Fedotov, speaking on BBC Radio 4, 3 April 2007. See also, Russian President, Vladimir Putin's remarks, regarding Kosovo: 'We hear only one answer. That we need to hurry. But hurry where? What is happening that requires us to be in such a rush?' cited in Luke Harding, 'The new cold war: Russia's missiles to target Europe', *Guardian*, 4 June 2007.

provides its government; the international High Representative is an EU employee and the EU's Special Representative in Bosnia. The EU administrator has the power to directly impose legislation and to dismiss elected government officials and civil servants. EU policy and 'European Partnership' priorities are imposed directly through the European Directorate for Integration. The EU also runs the police force (having taken over from the United Nations at the end of 2002) and the military (taken over from NATO at the end of 2004) and manages Bosnia's negotiations with the World Bank. One look at the Bosnian flag - with the stars of the EU on a yellow and blue background chosen to be in exactly the same colours as used in the EU flag - demonstrates the Bosnia is more EU-orientated than any current member state.

However, the EU has distanced itself from any responsibility for the power it exercises over Bosnia; formally Bosnia is an independent state and member of the United Nations and a long way off meeting the requirements of EU membership. After over ten years of state-building in Bosnia there is now a complete separation between power and accountability. This clearly suits the EU which is in a position of making policy with regard to the tiny state without either admitting it into membership of the EU or presenting its policy regime in strict terms of external conditionality. Bosnia is neither an EU member nor does it appear to be a colonial protectorate, the relationship does not appear to be one of formal equality or one of formal inequality - in fact, the relationship between the two (and their separation as separate entities) is hard to locate. Power seems to have no location, to have disappeared, through this process of denial and simulation.

### **Promoting 'independence' and 'democracy' in the Balkans?**

The EU works best when it is in denial of its power and of political responsibility - this denial is the source of its legitimacy (as the simulated state of 'Europe' - post-sovereign, post-national, post-interest-driven).<sup>28</sup> The EU needs Kosovo to have

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<sup>28</sup> As Zaki Laïdi argues: 'Power - understood in its widest sense - is conceived and experienced less and less as a process of taking over responsibilities, and more as a game of avoidance... Social actors avoid taking on their own responsibilities...because, in the absence of a project of meaning, responsibilities are measured only in cost terms.' *A World without Meaning: The Crisis of Meaning in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1998), p.13. For Baudrillard, 'We are at the point where no one exercises power or wants it anymore', therefore the practice of power is simulation, the defence of elites is to allege that power is 'being democratized, liberalized, vulgarized, and, more recently, decentralized and deterritorialized, etc.' *Forget Foucault*, p.55.

‘independence’ and sovereignty (as Bosnia does), so the exercise of power can be presented as ‘empowering’ – as facilitation, as ‘state-building’, as capacity-building, increasing the independence, autonomy, democratic accountability, human rights, rule of law etc in the Balkans.

But the EU has portrayed the Balkans as alien and as problematic; as hyperreal, as ‘in crisis’. The export of the solutions of freedom, autonomy, democracy, self-determination only reveal the simulation involved in denying power and simulating the existence of Balkan crisis. The simulation of executive and legislative powers under EU control as ‘democracy-promotion’ flows from the simulation of the Balkans as alien and crisis-ridden. The mission of simulation results in the dialectic of distancing and domination.

This dialectic of simulation was revealed in the initial 1995 settlement where the Bosnian parties formally invited the external powers to develop their own mandates, creating the simulation of sovereignty rather than the ‘reality’ of a protectorate.<sup>29</sup> As Baudrillard writes in *The Precession of Simulacra*, in terms of the external export of democracy to Bosnia:

From now on, it is impossible to ask the famous question: “From what position do you speak?” – “How do you know?” – “From where do you get the power?”, without immediately getting the reply: ‘But it is of (from) you that I speak’ – meaning, it is you who speaks, it is you who knows, power is you.<sup>30</sup>

This process of external power imposed on the basis of the will of the Bosnian people as manifested not through representation but simulation (through the will of the EU Special Representative) was clearly articulated in EU SR Paddy Ashdown’s inaugural speech of May 2002:

I have concluded that there are two ways I can make my decisions. One is with a tape measure, measuring the precise equidistant position between three sides. The other is by doing what I think is right for the country as a whole. I prefer the second of these. So when I act, I shall seek to do so in defence of the

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<sup>29</sup> Bosnia is probably a better and clearer example of what Cynthia Weber describes as the end of sovereignty as a meaningful referent and the exchangeability of the signifiers ‘sovereignty’ and ‘intervention’ (*Simulating Sovereignty*, pp.126-7) than her studies of US intervention in Grenada and Panama.

<sup>30</sup> Baudrillard, *The Precession of Simulacra*, pp.77-78.

interests of all the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, putting their priorities first.’<sup>31</sup>

Here representation - the representation of Bosnian voters through the ballot box and expressed in the electoral support for three ethnic parties - is explicitly seen to be a problem for Bosnian society, as preventing the will of the people from being collectively manifested.<sup>32</sup> In order for Bosnian people to be truly represented ‘as a whole’, Ashdown argues it is necessary that he acts as their representative against the political parties (held to be unrepresentative). The Bosnian electorate and their will are simulated by Ashdown and at the same time the alien and external power of the EU SR is denied; he is not imposing his or the EU’s will, but merely the will of the people.

This denial of power was taken even further in the shift (under Ashdown’s rule) from the power of the Office of the High Representative to that of the EU Special Representative, which was dressed up in the emancipatory language of democratization, away from the ‘push’ of the Bonn powers to the ‘pull’ of Brussels. Here the imposition of EU policy proposals is reposed as a voluntary choice deriving from the desire to ‘join’ Europe, rather than the imposed external oversight of the Dayton settlement. This simulation now means that Bosnian politicians are forced to ‘freely’ choose to implement EU programmes rather than having them imposed by edict. In 2006, Ashdown was interviewed on whether the shift from ‘Bonn to Brussels’ made any difference from the point of view of Bosnian representatives and citizens:

Yes, it makes a huge difference. If it is imposed with a stick then the consequence is dependency... 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... They have more independence because they are no longer supported by the use of

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<sup>31</sup> Ashdown, ‘Inaugural Speech by the new High Representative for Bosnia & Herzegovina’, Bosnian State Parliament, 27 May 2002. Available at: [http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/press/presssp/default.asp?content\\_id=8417](http://www.ohr.int/ohr-dept/press/presssp/default.asp?content_id=8417).

<sup>32</sup> From the beginning of the Dayton process, there was an assumption by international interveners that the Bosnian people could never be constituted on the basis of representation. The marginalisation of the people of Bosnia from their own political system by external powers was summed up in the first High Representative, Carl Bildt’s observation that: ‘No-one thought it wise to submit the constitution to any sort of parliamentary or other similar proceeding. It was to be a constitution by international decree.’ (Carl Bildt, *Peace Journey: The Struggle for Peace in Bosnia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), p.139.

the High Representative's powers. Europe has said that if reforms are imposed via the High Representative's powers then Bosnia cannot join...

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.<sup>33</sup>

Here, Ashdown forwards a subtle distinction between direct imposition, where the EU potentially bears direct policy-responsibility and the policy of indirect imposition, where Bosnia's elected representatives are held to be freely choosing certain policy prescriptions. The difference between these approaches may be important for the EU but makes little difference to Bosnian representatives or to the Bosnian public who are confronted with proposals drawn up by external actors. In neither framework is there any genuine debate between Bosnian parties or any role for local actors in the development of policy-making. In fact, in the case of imposition by the High Representative there is at least the clarification of power relations between the EU and the Bosnian state, even if there is the practice of simulation in the assertion that the external bureaucrat is merely ruling in the interests of the Bosnian people themselves.

Bosnia's formal international legal sovereignty gives the appearance that it is an independent entity, voluntarily engaged in hosting its state capacity-building guests. Questions of aligning domestic law with the large raft of regulations forming the EU *aquis* appear as ones of domestic politics. There is no international forum in which the contradictions between Bosnian social and economic demands and the external pressures of Brussels' policy prescriptions can be raised. However, these questions are not ones of domestic politics. The Bosnian state has no independent or autonomous existence outside of the EU 'partnership'. There are no independent structures capable of articulating alternative policies. Politicians are subordinate to international institutions through the mechanisms of governance established which give EU bureaucrats and administrators the final say over policy-making. The

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<sup>33</sup> Ashdown, 'The European Union and Statebuilding in the Western Balkans', pp.113-115.

Bosnian state is a phantom state (a simulacra); but it is definitely not a fictional creation. The Bosnian state plays a central role in the transmission of EU policy priorities in their most intricate detail. The state here is an inversion of the sovereign state. Rather than representing a collective political expression of Bosnian interests - expressing self-government and autonomy - 'Westphalian sovereignty' in the terminology of state-builders - the Bosnian state is an expression of an externally-driven agenda.

The more Bosnia has been the subject of external state-building and democracy promotion, the less like a traditional state it has become. Here, the state is a mediating link between the 'inside' of domestic politics and the 'outside' of international relations, but rather than clarifying the distinction it removes the distinction completely. The imposition of an international agenda of capacity-building and good governance appears internationally as a domestic question and appears domestically as an external, international matter. Where the representative sovereign state clearly demarcated lines of policy accountability, the state without sovereignty blurs them. In fact, 'the politics of the real' - political responsibility for policy-making - disappears with the removal of sovereignty.<sup>34</sup>

Democracy, in so far as it can be said to exist in the form of elections etc, has no relationship to policy-making. The simulation of representation in Bosnia and Kosovo could now be said to be complete under the reign of the EU democracy exporters and state-builders. The EU's exercise of its power creates simulated states in its own image, where the death of representation, disappearance of power and the existence of bureaucracy isolated from society, takes its most grotesque forms.

### **Arbitrary Power: the EU 'Special Representatives'**

In the Balkans the EU Special Representative in Bosnia, who also holds the Office of the High Representative, and the EU's Special Representative in Kosovo, who will assume the position of the International Civilian Representative, represent only

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<sup>34</sup> As Cynthia Weber notes, this understanding is problematic within the 'logic of representation', where 'a boundary "truly" exists between sovereignty and intervention, and this boundary insures the distinction between these two terms.' *Simulating Sovereignty*, p.127.

arbitrary power. There powers are arbitrary both vis-à-vis the EU and vis-à-vis Balkan society.<sup>35</sup>

The EU Special Representatives operate (there are nine at present, ten with the finalization of the post-status arrangements in Kosovo) under the direction of the EU's 'High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy' (CFSP). Javier Solana, is currently the High Representative for CFSP. The post is often termed the EU's Minister of Foreign Affairs (a post which is alleged to have failed to become a 'reality' with the failure of the Constitutional treaty).

Why plan for a post of Minister for Foreign Affairs when the EU planned no other 'Ministerial' positions? (The Council of Ministers is composed of national government ministers, its rotating Presidency is held by national prime-ministers. It is only the Secretary-General of the Council, the head of the Council Secretariat - the High Representative for CFSP - who holds a simulated Ministerial post, neither representative of a national government, nor elected as a European representative, as are the members of the European Parliament.) The EU's Special Representatives are the simulation of government representatives of the EU which lacks a genuine government of its own.

While in the realm of internal EU politics there is little clarity where political responsibility lies, whether at the level of member states or in EU forums, it seems that the further EU power stretches away from Brussels the more it appears capable of simulating itself as an independent political entity (not a composite of member nation states). It is only in the international arena that the EU comes into its own, where its representatives take on political power which is separated from the national governments comprising the EU. In fact, it is only in the international arena - where the EU is most free to simulate state-like attributes - that individuals have the authority to represent the EU as an independent political entity (and reveal the hollowness/truth of this simulation to its full extent).

Nowhere is the power of the EU as an independent actor standing independently and above its member governments, felt more powerfully than in the Balkans, where the HR and prospective ICR have executive authority to make

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<sup>35</sup> This puts EU democracy promotion in a different light to that of national governments who are at least accountable to their electorate. For example, George W. Bush's defeat in the 2006 mid-term elections was largely on account of the public perception of his failed policies with regard to Iraq. In the EU there is much less oversight over the policy actions and no direct electoral accountability for policy failings. I am grateful to Christopher J. Bickerton for this point.

legislation and sack elected local political representatives. In one way, the EU's Special Representatives symbolize the end of representation. The EU is the embodiment of the rejection of sovereignty yet it's 'representatives' represent sovereign power in Bosnia and Kosovo. They represent sovereign power without sovereignty. They represent neither the people of Bosnia and Kosovo nor the EU. Rather, the simulated nature of both the EU as a policy actor and the Balkan states as objects of democratization and empowerment produces a relationship of ad hoc and arbitrary power.

This power is arbitrary in the sense of having no fixed or cohered relationship to society. This flexibility has been exemplified by the extension of the powers of the High Representative since Dayton, one incumbent explaining that his process was one which has no fixed limits: 'if you read Dayton very carefully...Annex 10 even gives me the possibility to interpret my own authorities and powers'.<sup>36</sup> The pattern of ad hoc and arbitrary extensions of international regulatory authority was initially set by the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) itself as it rewrote its own powers and those of the High Representative at successive meetings. The most important of these were the initial strategic six-monthly review conferences: at Florence, in June 1996; Paris, in November 1996; Sintra, in May 1997; Bonn, in December 1997; and Luxembourg, in June 1998.

In Bosnia the EU SR clearly manifests the imploding nature of the continual play of simulations, where every issue is held to manifest the 'values' of the EU and the crisis of Bosnia. In fact, the tying of reform to EU membership has made nearly every policy issue one of crisis for both parties. This was clearly manifest in the regular crises over cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) where negotiations on membership for several states were suspended over allegations of a failure to cooperate and the bureaucratic imperative of cooperation meant that many alleged war criminals voluntarily surrendered and were waved off to The Hague with full military and political honours, seen as heroes, not so much for their role in the war, but for their willingness to sacrifice their freedom for the country's entry to the EU.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> 'Interview with Carlos Westendorp', *Slobodna Bosna*, 30 November 1997. Accessed at: <http://www.ohr.int/press/i971130a.htm>.

<sup>37</sup> See, Chandler, 'Rough justice, EU-style', *Spiked*, 1 April 2005. Accessed at: <http://www.spiked-online.com/Articles/0000000CA97C.htm>.

Ashdown, in particular, has been held to have overplayed his hand in seeking to use the EU (and NATO) to support his reform plans by seeking to make policy-reform a pre-condition for progress towards membership. This was highlighted, in particular, with the issue of police reform which dominated the last years of Ashdown's term. Ashdown wanted the abolition of entity-based police forces and the centralisation of police authority. However, he was on a very weak footing in linking his plans with EU membership, overpoliticizing the issue of reform, and perpetuating the hyperreality of crisis over the reform process.

While Ashdown invoked the leverage of the 'pull of Brussels' to impose these major reform proposals, it was clear that he was acting independently of Brussels and the wishes of the European Commission. The Commission viewed Ashdown's actions as destabilizing Bosnia's relations with the EU and considered the EU Special Representative to be on weak ground politically, as the Swiss, German and Belgian models, which had been specifically looked at in more detail, definitely did not follow the centralised approach intended for Bosnia. The European Commission were reluctant for Ashdown to use the issue for a political showdown and gave the Bosnian representatives evasive signals, encouraging opposition to the proposals, and were pleased to see Ashdown's radical plans eventually watered down.<sup>38</sup>

The political reflections of this are manifest in local political 'representatives' who do not need to (and cannot) take responsibility for policy-making, knowing either that the EU will impose its will by diktat or back down and change its policy proposals so as not to risk the enlargement process. Because all that remains of the domestic political process is simulation, so-called 'policy-making' – the assent to external will – becomes a simulation exercise and therefore either a crisis in the relationship between Bosnian representatives and the Special Representative or between Bosnia and the EU. Therefore, this process is much more problematised than a 'real' exercise of political decision-making (one of representation) which necessarily involves compromise and negotiation around problems arising from and related to that society.

The simulation of the EU's power and purpose, results in the operation of power relations which are continually in contradiction with 'reality', continually

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas Muehlmann, 'Police Restructuring in Bosnia-Herzegovina: An Example of an Internationally-led Security Sector Reform Process', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol.2, no.1 (forthcoming 2008).

confronting reality with simulation and the creation of hyperreality. Thus one self-creating 'emergency' follows another, as the fictional hyperreal portrayal of Bosnia and Kosovo – of 'resistance', of 'parallel structures', of the power of nationalists – are held to confront the fictional portrayals of the mission of the EU – of the need to reform to meet EU standards, of the implementation of the *acquis*, of empowerment, capacity-building and greater 'ownership'. *These recurring crises are real not despite the fact that they are simulated, but precisely because they are simulations.* The inevitable crises of EU policy-making in the Balkans reveal the truth of the inability of the EU to regulate and integrate the region through long-term strategic policy-making.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has argued that Baudrillard's concepts of simulation and hyperreality are useful to provide insights into the European Union's policy-making process with regard to democracy promotion and statebuilding in the Balkans. The use of this framework suggests that the EU, as a simulacra, lacks the capacity to coherently assert the power of its member states. It further suggests that the EU's domination of the Balkans takes the form of a denial of power and exaggeration and overpoliticization of the relations between the EU and the Balkan potential members, through the hyperreal construction of the problems of enlargement. It further suggests that the outcome of the process of simulation is less the export of democracy than the export of power in an ad hoc and arbitrary manner and in the creation of states which are simulated – which are ciphers for external power rather than linked to their own societies.