Literature Review

The role of regional organisations in managing memories of disputed territories

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**Part 4 of 6: The European Union –
Resolving Internal and Managing External Conflicts**

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The European Union – Resolving Internal and Managing External Conflicts

Staying within Europe, this discussion explores how culture and heritage have been used as a form of 'soft power' for the European Union in managing both internal and external conflicts. Through a literature which describes the 'Europeanization' of existing narratives of the past, this section questions what happens to other complex, often conflicting, pasts of individual ethnic, regional or national groups.

The European Union (EU) is a regional organization that faces the problems of disputed territories on two dimensions: internal and external. The internal dimension is associated with the past of the countries that form part of the EU and the difficult history of their relations (incorporating such problems as changing borders, the replacement of populations, minorities and stateless nations). The external dimension is associated with the role that the EU wishes to play in the solving of conflicts in the parts of the world it is engaged with (such as territories close to the EU borders, like the South Caucasus, Ukraine, Moldova, Kosovo or Cyprus and territories outside Europe like Palestine or Kashmir).

According to Michael O. Slobodchikoff from the School of Government and Public Policy at the University of Arizona: 'International organizations have been shown to be effective at mediating conflicts, yet little work has been done to examine how effective international organizations are at resolving conflicts among their own member states or future member states.'[1] His study examines territorial disputes in the EU and determines that the EU is very effective at managing territorial disputes among its member states and very effective at resolving territorial disputes among candidate states that wish to become members of the EU (Slobodchikoff 2010). He found that the pre-Copenhagen Criteria conflicts of the 'old' member states tended to be both less intense and non-contiguous than the disputes among those states whose accession came after the Copenhagen Criteria.

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[1] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259972398_How_Effective_are_International_Organizations_at_Resolving_Territorial_Disputes_among_Member_States_A_Look_at_the_European_Union

When returning to the history of the EU as a regional organization, we should not forget that the EU is an organization that was established after World War II, with its primary goal being to never allow wars to happen again. European integration has therefore been commonly viewed as an extremely important factor leading to the peace and stability of Europe (Diez 2008; Diez, Stetter, Albert 2008; Higashino 2004; Wallensteen 2007). Prior studies of European integration have determined that one of the original goals of the European Community was to achieve lasting peace in Western Europe after World War II, and more specifically to develop a lasting resolution to the Franco-German conflict (Wallensteen, 2007). In fact, one of the early architects of European integration, Jean Monnet understood that one of the only ways to avoid war in the future was to integrate. The first stage of this integration process was French steel workers using German coal within a common market, but Monnet saw that integration would begin at an economic level evolve in to the political arena (Niemann, Schmitter 2009).

The European Community did help to lessen the tensions between France and Germany through economic interdependence and the spill-over effects of that, and this success helped to bolster the idea that further integration was necessary to achieve peace and stability in Europe. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the former communist countries in Europe became independent, but were unstable. Thus, scholars argued that Europe would achieve lasting peace and stability by further integration to the east (Higashino 2004; Tocci 2008).

Once the EU became fully established, norm diffusion emerged as one of the most effective ways in which integration could bring about peace and stability. This is due to the fact that as states adopt European norms, in particular those of peace and territorial integrity, freedom of movement, non-corrupt governance, the single market and robust human rights, those states become more democratic, which in turn leads to peace and stability (Hensel, Goertz, Diehl 2000; Maoz, Russett 1993). Thus, the EU uses integration as a means of norm diffusion (Noutcheva 2007; Coppieters et al.,2004; Slobodchikoff 2010; Tocci 2008). The use of norm diffusion was especially prevalent in the post-Cold War period, as the EU began to focus on

creating not just a stable and peaceful Europe, but a stable and peaceful Europe with a shared identity comprised of similar norms. Although territorial integrity and the absence of territorial conflict were always important to the EU, it was not until after the end of the Cold War that the European norms relating to territorial integrity, democracy and human rights could be spread to Eastern Europe as a way of achieving peace and stability throughout Europe (Diez 2008; Diez, Stetter, Albert 2008).

Memory Politics in the European Union

Any state wishing to enter the EU had to adapt to the policies dictated by the memory being preserved by European institutions and to the moral narratives of the past (including the Holocaust narrative) that were functioning within the EU at that time (Himka, Michlic 2013). This process of adaption is closely interlinked with the adoption of certain values that have been defined as 'European', namely democratization, multiculturalism, tolerance, mobility and the abolition of state borders, human rights protection and recognizing the rights of the victims of war, intolerance and racism (see also Huyssen 2011 on the relationship between the notions of human rights and memory). The Europeanization of memory is a process that involves adapting national memory to a pan-European common value model.

Krzysztof Kowalski and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa (2016) distinguish two stages in this process. The first took place in the 1980s, and at the beginning of the 1990s, when narratives of Europe's magnificent and idyllic past and the grand heritage of ancient Greece and Rome dominated. These narratives began to change in the 1990s, when the postcolonial critique intensified, and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that had experienced communist life began to strive for integration with the EU. This focused attention on the 'dark side' of European history, while, at the same time, setting European institutions a new and difficult task: finding a common denominator for European memory that would be common to so many different countries with different histories. At the end of the 1990s, a new European memory politics emerged: though there are many different pasts in Europe, Europeans should have a

common way of interpreting them – through the prism of values historically embedded in Europe. However, as Zdzisław Mach has stated: 'Everything which we might wish to call 'European heritage' and use as the basis of a common European identity would be immediately claimed by some Europeans in the name of their nation or region' (2016: 269). This means that it is not possible to create a common European identity. However, it is possible to create a common European platform for supporting pluralism and the democratic exchange of memory narratives (see Hilmar 2016, Rigney 2012).

As for the internal dimension of the question of disputed territories, European politics of memory (together with the process of 'Europeanization of memory') has turned out to be crucial. Every study of social memory needs to take into account the context within which narratives of the past and their transmission takes place. In the case of the EU, it is the Second World War that is perceived as a key event in the history of Europe, because it shaped Europe's contemporary internal borders and international relations and influenced the European nations' mutual perception of one another. Memories of the violence that individuals and societies in Europe experienced also include recollections of displacement on a massive scale. As a result of World War II, millions of people were forced to leave their local homelands. The loss of a place of origin and need to move to a completely different place with no possibility of returning to the former world has been an experience shared by millions of Europeans, but also a sphere of collective oblivion for millions of other people (see Törnquist-Plewa 2016). The memory of resettlement includes two aspects of human experience: the loss of a homeland and the process of adapting to a new place. This is in fact a 'double resettlement' – firstly, the departure (or death) of the pre-war inhabitants of a given place, and secondly, the arrival of new people who have experienced such a resettlement themselves. This means that people lived in a kind of 'memory vacuum' because the process of transmitting memory about their place of origin was interrupted, as were memories of the place where they came to live. Each forced migration was slightly different, but all of them, as noted by Andrei Demshuk (2012), that were linked in some way to the memory of displaced Germans shared some common components. Individual human

experiences were also very similar because after each forced migration, the victims had to come to terms with the fact of their own loss. In addition, forced migrations often provoke the establishment of a political restitution movement. The narrative of mass resettlements as an important element of European memory is often accompanied by a parallel demand to recognize resettlements as a crime against humanity. This demand is raised by the European Union of Exiled and Expelled People, which was founded in 2007 in Trieste, which gathers together organizations of displaced persons from various countries[2]. It is not a widely known organization and its narrative barely penetrates the European public sphere at all. This does not mean, however, that resettlement is not present in European memory narratives. Displacement has affected millions of Europeans, and the memory of lost homelands is still being cultivated (although it is weakening from generation to generation).

The International Policy of the European Union and Peace Building Initiatives

As Michelle Pace (2008) from the University of Birmingham mentions, there are several views regarding the EU's role in border conflicts. Underlying all these perspectives is the belief that the EU, through membership or association, helps to transform the nature of border conflicts from lines of conflict to lines of cooperation. Some analysts highlight the EU's discursive framework, which offers political leaders opportunities to legitimize policies aimed at reducing conflicts. Others argue that, as an economic giant but a political dwarf, any influence the EU as a regional organization may have is limited to financial aid and trade programmes. Applying the model of EU paths in border conflict transformation developed by Albert, Diez, Stetter (2004), Pace (2008) investigated the EU perspective on border conflicts, which includes an analysis of

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[2] *European Union of Exiled and Expelled People* (https://www.facebook.com/European-Union-of-Exiled-and-Expelled-People-EUEEP-180809545287651/) consists of 13 associations from 9 states: Austria (*Gottscheer Landsmannschaft Klagenfurt, Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft in Österreich*), Cyprus (*Kyrenia Refugees Association Adouloti Kerinia*), Finland (*Pro Karelia ry*), Germany (*Landsmannschaft Ostpreussen e.V., Landsmannschaft Schlesien Nieder und Oberschlesien e.V., Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft – Landesgruppe Baden-Württemberg e.V.*), Great Britain (*Famagusta Association of Great Britain, Lobby for Cyprus*), Hungary (*Magyarok Vilagszovetsege – World Federation of Hungarians*), Italy (*Unione degli Istriani – Libera Provincia dell'Istria in Esilio*), Poland (*Związek Wypędzonich z Kresów Wschodnich R.P.*) and Ukraine (*'Kholmschyna' Kyiv Veteran's Human Rights Society of Deported Ukrainians*)..

the conceptualizations of five conflict cases among core actors in EU institutions, namely the Commission, the Council, the European Parliament (EP) and Member States Representative offices.

Works by both Higashino (2004) and Albert, Diez, Stetter (2004) ultimately indicate a need to spread the norm of territorial integrity to new states through the accession process. Doing so can ensure that Europe can remain peaceful and stable despite political changes in the rest of the world. However, it is logical to question whether the EU is able to genuinely diffuse the norm of territorial integrity to Eastern Europe to ensure peace and stability or whether states wanting to join the EU are merely trying to temporarily resolve territorial disputes to become members of the EU. I shall now address this question by referring to two discussions, one on the EU as a 'normative power' and the other, on norm diffusion.

Taking the conceptual framework adopted in Albert, Diez, Stetter (2004) as a reference point, the methodology selected for inquiring into EU decision-making processes relating to border conflicts (including conceptualizations of the five conflicts among core actors in EU institutions) aims to investigate and establish the conditions under which and the processes through which the EU as a regional organization can, through membership or association, help to transform the nature of border conflicts from lines of conflict to lines of cooperation.

According to the Oxford research group,[3] the EU has expanded the role it plays in preventing conflicts and building peace, but its institutional practices remain insufficiently conceptualized. Drawing from a neo-functionalist interpretation of its own history grounded in its strong self-perception, the EU has started to use its own internal model of governance as an approach for resolving protracted disputes, through deconstructing highly political issues into technical meanings in order to achieve mutually acceptable agreements. This can be illustrated by examining the EU's approach to normalizing relations between Kosovo and Serbia, which was based on facilitating dialogue. However, the EU's role as regional peacebuilder can suffer

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[3] https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/blog/the-european-union-and-conflict-resolution

drawbacks as a result of internal turbulence caused by Brexit and other lingering disintegrationalist forces.

The EU's peacebuilding approach is different to that of other international actors, mainly due to contextual factors relating to how it has transformed internally, how its complex institutional and multi-layered governance works and what capacities, norms and practices it invokes in dealing with external situations. In the past ten years, the EU has expanded its conflict resolution and peacebuilding roles to incorporate neighbouring regions and beyond. However, analysis of the EU's peacebuilding work has found the EU's practices to be entirely reliant on traditional instruments of security governance, such as conflict prevention and mediation, crisis management and post-conflict stabilization and also normative frameworks such as those grounded in human rights, human security and civilian protection. This is largely because scholars have argued that the EU's peacebuilding framework cannot yet be regarded as a coherent intellectual project since it relies on existing liberal peacebuilding frameworks associated with restoring security, strengthening the rule of law, supporting democratic processes, delivering humanitarian assistance and supporting economic recovery.

The EU also conducts an active international policy with a global reach and is often described by theoreticians of international relations as a 'non-military power' (Nye 2004, Piskorska 2017, van Ham 2010) that is attempting to influence other countries through the use of 'soft power'. The source of this 'soft power' is culture and ideology (including political values) that are attractive to outsiders. When a given country or organization promotes its own culture effectively, this allows it to take the role of a creator of the desires of others, as well as enjoy the respect due from being able to act, for example, as a conciliator (see Turczyński 2013, Wojnicz 2019). European culture and heritage are important components of soft power and play an important role in shaping the EU's position in the international arena (Piskorska 2017: 215-219). This is primarily due to that position's historical expansiveness, but also to a policy that makes 'European values' and historical experience (together with the contemporary memory politics within EU's member states) the basis for legitimizing the EU's position as an actor seeking to

resolve global conflicts. As far back as 2003, when the first European Security Strategy was adopted, we are already dealing, as Beata Piskorska describes it, with the 'Self-identification of the EU as a normative power, and even 'force for good'' (2017: 223). When trying to mediate in conflicts between countries, the EU uses political, diplomatic and stabilization instruments, as well as cultural and educational ones (this especially applies to the Eastern Partnership, which covers six countries formerly part of the Soviet Union). As Piskorska (2017: 369) states 'Cultural diplomacy understood as the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations has long been an important element of the external activity of the European Union in Eastern Europe'. At the same time, she notes that 'cultural diplomacy was often included in the structures of ministries of foreign affairs, which led to the politicization of this sphere of state activities, and could even lead to cultural imperialism' (Piskorska 2017: 369). The discourse stating that the EU countries' past provides a basis for giving advice on conflict resolution and reconciliation is widely recognized. We can see cases in which this is being used by non-EU actors to encourage European institutions to get involved in resolving particular conflicts. One example of this is Fatima Agha Shah's position on the need for the EU to become involved in finding a solution to the Kashmir issue. She writes that the EU countries 'also have first-hand experience of conflict-resolution, having successfully resolved their own disputes after the end of the Second World War, leading to the formation of the European Communities, now known as the European Union' (Agha Shah 2009: 142). However, other researchers, including EU citizens, are more critical of this type of discourse: 'the emphasis on development and human rights thus underpins a neo-imperialist 'civilizing mission' attitude: as Europe managed to overcome its 'bitter past', it views itself uniquely situated to 'teach' or lecture others (…)' (Pasture 2018: 564). The question of whether European countries possess the right to propose conflict resolution is particularly ambiguous when such assistance is offered to former European colonies. Nevertheless, this has not prevented the EU from trying, for many years, to incorporate the promotion of a peaceful way of resolving conflicts in disputed territories into its foreign policy.

The idea of pursuing a common foreign policy was first introduced in 1991 by the Maastricht Treaty. This new form of activity was defined as the Common Foreign and Security Policy and appeared in every one of the subsequent treaties regulating the functioning of the EU, including the latest, the Lisbon Treaty of 2007. The basic principles that guide the EU in international relations are set out in Article 21 as, inter alia, strengthening and supporting democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law, as well as maintaining peace, preventing conflicts and strengthening international security (see Turczyński 2013: 99-100). Analyses of sessions of the European Council have shown that the most frequently discussed issues were related to the Muslim states in the Middle East and North Africa, and the second key area was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (see Gordon, Pardo 2015; Bouris, Kyris 2017). Great importance is also attached to the situation in the Balkans (see Skara 2014) and in the Eastern European countries covered by the Eastern Partnership (see Turczyński 2013: 139-141). The interrelated issues of protecting individual states' territorial integrity and preventing border changes are of particular importance, so the question of the methods used for establishing new borders are crucial (see Carter, Goemans 2011). This approach defined the EU position during Russia's conflicts with Georgia (over South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and with Ukraine (over Crimea, Donbass and the Lugansk Region). The activities of the EU are closely analysed by international conflict researchers. Such experts have described the organization as a 'moral power' in the conflict between the South Caucasus States (see Vasilyan 2014) or as a 'normative power' in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict (see Veebel, Markus 2018).

The EU's normative and moral influence were also visible during the organization's expansion at the beginning of the twenty-first century. EU integration was conducive to the establishment of cooperation between individual countries, but also created the need to establish a dialogue and seek agreement on a common difficult past. In the days of communism, when the Eastern European countries who later joined the EU were in the same political bloc, conflicts over the past lay dormant. In fact, the authorities did everything in their power to remove them from collective memory. However, after the fall of communism, social recollection

processes uncovered old conflicts and created a strong desire to compensate any victims and commemorate them. Moreover, the incorporation of the new member states into the European discourse, which resulted in the 'Europeanization' of existing narratives of the past, not only achieved the EU's objective of closer integration with Western Europe but also thrust memory of regional conflicts to the margins of public discourse. Focusing on narratives leading from the World War II through the communist period to unification with Western Europe fosters a sense of Europeanness but, at the same time, eliminates the complex, often conflicting, past of individual ethnic, regional and national groups within East-Central Europe (Lebow, Kansteiner, Fogu 2006). During communism, it was not only the memory of both ethnic and national conflicts that were relegated to the realm of social oblivion but also other elements of the past, such as the question of large-scale population resettlement and the memory of territories lost after the war. However, after the countries of East-Central Europe joined the EU, national trauma slowly began to change into nostalgia, as in the case of memory of the Hungarian territories lost after the First World War (Gerner 2007) or the German territories of Silesia, Pomerania and Prussia that were lost to Poland or memory of the Polish eastern borderlands lost after the World War II (Demshuk 2012, Traba 2007). Gradually, the issue of national and ethnic minorities has also been addressed in individual countries in East-Central Europe, although the approach to this varies widely across Europe. However, although tensions between minority and majority group (some of which relate to ethnic territories) may continue to exist in European countries, a detailed analysis of the situation shows that these tensions 'no longer seem to threaten pan-European stability and security' (Dembinska, Maracz, Tonk 2014: 371).

Cooperation between the countries of the former communist bloc proved to be crucial not only to the internal EU dimension of their geopolitical security, but also to the dimension of this security relating to external countries. This has also raised the issue of cooperation on the borderlands within the EU and on the borderlands between the EU and external countries. The policy of establishing close relations between border communities (based not only on economic but also cultural cooperation) has resulted in the creation of a specific border culture both within

the EU and on either side of the external borders of the EU, for example, between Russia and Finland, or Poland and Ukraine (Kiiskinen 2012). The memory of the common past shared by the inhabitants of the borderlands, which are currently divided between different countries, has become the basis for cooperation in such areas as the protection of monuments and relics, places of worship and cemeteries, educational and cultural exchanges, and support for cultural activities (e.g. for museums).

In the academic literature, the EU is primarily described as an organization that requires the promotion of values associated with concepts such as democracy, human rights, respect for cultural diversity and reaching agreement through dialogue. The legal and political recognition of these values means that all countries either belonging to or aspiring to join the EU or aspiring must seek cooperation and reconciliation with the rest of Europe's countries, even if they share a very difficult past. The EU also recognizes the inviolability of the inter-state borders drawn on the modern map of Europe, which means that any changes of belonging of the disputed territories to the particular state are unacceptable. The EU is also trying to promote its internal approach to solve territorial and memory-related conflicts outside the EU and outside Europe, but its primary tools are 'soft power' and, to a lesser extent, political pressure.

This is the key starting point for researchers on regional organizations activities within the framework of DisTerrMem project. The activities of European and non-European regional organizations are based, on the one hand, on values defined as specific for a given region (or cultural areas), and on the other hand on global models of peaceful international actions. We intend to examine what hidden assumptions and ideologies are behind the actions taken and how conflict and post-conflict situations are defined in various political, social and cultural conditions. We would also like to consider how the heritage of European colonialism influences the legitimacy of European organizations' activities outside the continent and how they are perceived in different parts of the world. We also plan to investigate whether models of deliberation and peaceful conflict resolution developed in Europe are cultural relevant in other

parts of the world and if the European organizations think about cultural appropriation of the means they propose.