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ETHNO-NATIONALISM IN AUSTRALIA'S BALKAN COMMUNITIES: THE GREEK-MACEDONIAN CONFLICT IN MELBOURNE

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Abstract:

This thesis assesses the enduring relevance of ethno-nationalism on Southeastern European diaspora. Seven decades have passed since diverse ethnic groups with historic rivalries from Southeastern Europe have settled in large numbers in Australia. Yet as recently as 2020, diaspora groups, namely Greeks and Macedonians, have demonstrated a level of susceptibility to conflict when political events take place in their homeland even though they have little direct impact to them in Australia. By employing the theoretical framework of Benedict Anderson's long-distance nationalism, in conjunction with Maria Todorova's Balkanism discourse this thesis aims to determine the extent in which Southeastern Europe's fault lines have been reproduced in Australia. The deep history of the Balkans, in conjunction with contemporary history of Australian migration come together in this research to present a unique and local case study of the Greek and Macedonian communities in Melbourne Australia.

Introduction:

In March 2018, the Greek and Macedonian communities of Melbourne, Australia, experienced a fresh wave of ethnic tensions. Flag burnings, hateful vandalism, and protests erupted after international news broke that Athens and Skopje had found common ground on a potential resolution to their long-standing name dispute. The media described the reactions of the two communities as "ugly racial tensions" (Smith, 2018a) and warned of potential escalation into violence, reminiscent of conflicts in the 1990s. The pre-migration histories of the Greek and Macedonian diaspora undoubtedly form the root cause of their adversarial dynamics. However, reducing these reactions to a simple causational relationship between diaspora and homeland disregards the deeply entrenched history of these communities in Melbourne. The Macedonian Question has had its own discourse in the city Melbourne and the state of Victoria for over 70 years, transforming the regional issue into a localised dispute.

The conflict between the Greek and Macedonian diaspora in Melbourne is unique. It provides valuable insight into how the complex history of Southeastern Europe intersects with the local history of settlement and identity formation, creating a situation where the conflict is both a product of its Balkan legacy and a foundational aspect of Melbourne's migrant history. The aim of this thesis is to bring these two histories together, illustrating that although diaspora conflict tends to have its roots in pre-migration history, it, like its people, eventually naturalises into the host country, part and parcel with the settlement process.

Thus, this thesis seeks to answer the question: to what extent have the ethnic fault lines of Southeastern Europe been reproduced within Australian's Balkan communities? Related sub-questions include: how did Southeastern Europe's fault lines emerge in Australia? How have post-migration developments in the homeland impacted existing tensions? How does the diaspora's reaction to the Prespa Agreement compare to Macedonia's declaration of independence? The working hypothesis of this thesis is that the ethnic fault lines between Greek and Macedonian communities in Melbourne are a continuation of events that have taken place in Southeastern Europe. Over time, however, these conflicts have taken on a localised form, shaped by their settlement patterns, identity formations, and new developments in the homeland, primarily fought on Australian soil.

Methodology

This thesis employs a qualitative research approach to assess the endurance and relevance of ethno-nationalism among Southeastern European diasporas in Australia, focusing on the Greek and Macedonian communities in Melbourne. By analysing historical events in Southeastern Europe alongside contemporary events in Australia, this thesis seeks to understand how ethno-nationalist conflicts of the Balkans have manifested and are sustained within the Australian context. The methodology integrates historical analysis and discourse analysis, alongside theoretical frameworks, to evaluate the extent to which the region's ethnic fault lines are reproduced in Australia.

The research design is structured around three main research questions: (1) How have the ethnic fault lines of the Balkans emerged in Australia? (2) How have post-migration developments in the homeland impacted existing tensions in the host country? (3) How does the diaspora's reaction to the Prespa Agreement compare to Macedonia's declaration of independence? Each chapter corresponds to these research questions, ensuring alignment between the research objectives and the study's structure.

Data collection methods include archival research and media analysis. Archival sources will encompass historical documents, government reports (e.g., the National Inquiry into Racist Violence, 1991), census data, and legal or judicial reviews. These documents provide insight into the policies and sociopolitical contexts that shaped diaspora relations. Media analysis will draw on newspaper articles from Australian and ethnic media (e.g., *Neos Kosmos*, *The Age*, SBS), along with political speeches and statements from both Australian leaders and diaspora communities.

The analysis will focus on post-war migration patterns of Greeks and Macedonians and how these contributed to the replication of ethnic tensions. Key historical events, such as the Greek Civil War and the dissolution of Yugoslavia, will be examined to understand their role in shaping diasporic identities and their contribution to tensions that persist in Melbourne today. Discourse analysis will explore how language and representation have been used to assert identities, rights, and claims in public spaces such as soccer clubs and churches. Events like soccer rivalries and protests will be examined as manifestations of ethno-nationalism.

This research faces limitations due to its reliance on secondary data and media sources, limiting direct engagement with community members. Biases in historical sources, particularly from community media, will be addressed through cross-referencing and

applying a critical lens. Ethical considerations include maintaining objectivity and avoiding the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes or escalation tensions by upholding an objective and balanced approach throughout the research.

Literature review

This literature review explores several interconnected themes, given the multidisciplinary approach of this thesis. It examines existing literature on nationalism, focusing particularly on its role in nation-building in Southeastern Europe during the post-Ottoman era. It also provides an overview of the Greek and Macedonian dispute, highlighting its intrinsic connection to nation-building processes in the region. Further, it delves into academic works expanding on Benedict Anderson's concept of long-distance nationalism, as well as literature on the conflict and multicultural dynamics of Australia's Balkan communities.

Zlatko Skrbiš (1999) defines ethno-nationalism as a phenomenon characterised by the powerful attachment to one's ethnic identity, which often involves using historical, cultural, and ancestral claims to foster a sense of distinct national belonging. Clifford Geertz (1963) coined the term *primordial sentiments* to express the strong attachment people feel towards their ethnic identity. In contrast to this primordial perspective, Benedict Anderson's seminal work on nationalism describes nations as *imagined communities*, on the basis that they are constructed rather than a natural occurrence (1986). Modernisation theorists such as Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm (1992) attribute nationalism to 18th-century modernisation processes. However, Anthony D. Smith (1985) challenges this notion, arguing that nations are rooted in pre-modern ethnic identities, symbolism, and myths. Loring Danforth in his work on the Macedonian Question, stresses the importance of a balanced approach that recognises both the constructed aspects of nationalism and the pre-existing identities and traditions from which they draw (1995:16).

Paschalis Kitromilides (1989) applies Anderson's concept of *imagined communities* to the development of national consciousness in the Balkans, tracing the origins of nationalism in Southeastern Europe to the late 18th century, coinciding with the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Kitromilides argues that Balkan nationalism emerged through a shift from religious (millet) identities to national ones, with language and culture becoming defining features,

driven by Enlightenment ideas, thus aligning with Anderson's theory that nations are socially imagined and products of modernity. This transformation laid the foundation for modern national consciousness in the Balkans. Kitromilides notes that Balkan nationalists sought to give their states a "long pre-statehood history of nationality" (1989, p. 15), integrating the region into the broader modernisation and nation-building processes of Europe. Ivo Banac (1984) and Vassilis Mylonas (2012) highlight the role of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires in creating *historical fragmentation*, leading to competing national narratives in the region. Mylonas further argues that the collapse of the millet system led to a pursuit of ethnically homogeneous nation-states, resulting in ethnic unmixing and forced population transfers. Rogers Brubaker (1996) posits that post-Ottoman Balkan nationalism and citizenship laws were shaped by the concept of *jus sanguinis* (the law of blood), fostering exclusionary practices. These exclusionary practices, which often amounted to quasi-colonial policies, saw these new post-Ottoman states increasingly view ethnic 'others' as a threat to the imagined homogeneous national body (Papadopoulos, 2016). Ultimately, post-Ottoman nation-building in the Balkans was based on the illusion of ethnically homogeneous societies (Triandafyllidou et al., 1997).

Anna Triandafyllidou describes Southeastern Europe, or the Balkans, as a region characterised by shifting ethnic boundaries, diverse traditions, and numerous conflicts over centuries (Triandafyllidou et al., 1997). These dynamics of ethnic and religious antagonism became integral to the competing nation-building processes of the post-Ottoman states. This often led to perceptions of the Balkans as inherently prone to chaos and violence. Maria Todorova's concept of *Balkanism* captures these narratives, showing how the Balkans have been stereotyped as a region of chronic instability and backwardness by outsiders (Todorova, 2008). Todorova believes the Ottoman legacy is the most influential historical legacy that impacts these negative perceptions today (2009:162). This stereotyping dates to the early 19th century, with the Balkans being viewed as the chaotic successor to the Ottoman Empire (Malešević, 2012).

Benedict Anderson (1998) expanded his theory of *imagined communities* to explore the intersection between nationalism and diaspora. Anderson introduced the concept of *long-distance nationalism* to describe how diaspora communities remain engaged with the political issues of their homelands from abroad. Anderson notes that long-distance nationalists can support their homeland's political causes without facing the consequences of their actions,

creating a dynamic where they benefit from their host countries while remaining actively involved in the politics of their homelands. This phenomenon creates what Anderson calls a "serious politics that is radically unaccountable" (1998, p. 74). Zlatko Skrbiš (1999) argues that long-distance nationalism has adapted to the globalised world, sustained by intergenerational transmission, and strengthened by the complementary processes of ethno-nationalism and globalisation. Schiller (2005) also notes that long-distance nationalism emphasises racialized identities and shared descent, maintaining ties to the homeland through metaphors of "blood ties" (Brubaker, 1996), even for those who may no longer speak their ancestors' language. Loring Danforth (2001) argues that for many immigrants whose identities were denied in their homelands, diaspora politics offers the freedom to express an identity that was previously suppressed. Dmitry Chernobrov, (2022) in his study on Armenian and Azerbaijani diasporas during the Karabakh war in 2020, found that discursive conflicts on the web are becoming more common than physical altercations. Similarly, Australian academic Ghassan Hage (1998) has highlighted the relevance of discursive conflict in a multicultural setting. Hage has previously referred to instances of discursive conflict, such as the use of graffiti, specifically between Macedonians and Greeks in Australia, emphasising the utility of public space as a platform for ethnic communities to assert their presence in contested areas.

In Australia, the topic of Balkan conflict has usually focused on the dynamics of adversarial groups. Loring Danforth, in his work on the Macedonian Question spends a considerable amount of research focusing on the Greek and Macedonian diaspora in Melbourne Australia and measures the extent ethno-nationalism impacts their relations. Joy Damousi (2015) touches on the conflict between Greeks and Macedonians in Australia in her work on the effect the Second World War and Greek Civil War had on post-war migrants and their settlement. Skrbiŝ, in his work on long-distance nationalism uses as a case study Slovenians and Croatians in Australia (1998). There is also a notable contribution by Michalis Michael (2015) who wrote on the incongruencies of non-Turkish Ottoman diaspora in Australia. The more complete library in relation to Balkan communities in Australia belongs to the niche study of Balkan diaspora’s involvement with the soccer clubs. The persistence of ethno-nationalism within Balkan diaspora communities is most evident in arena of soccer. Roy Hay (1998) emphasises that post-war migrant soccer clubs were crucial in shaping ethnic identity and fostering solidarity among communities, yet these clubs also served as arenas where long-standing Balkan conflicts were re-enacted. Kieran James (2023) and Loring Danforth

(2001) further illustrate how these soccer rivalries mirrored broader political and historical disputes, including ideological and historical divides. Bilic Kamparmark (2018) describes soccer as having a *Janus-faced* nature, simultaneously fostering community pride while intensifying ethnic divisions. Collectively, these studies show that soccer in Australia's Balkan diaspora is more than just a sport and it serves as a battleground for expressing national identity and revisiting historical conflicts.

Theoretical framework:

Benedict Anderson's concept of *long-distance nationalism* serves as the primary theoretical underpinning for this study, offering a lens through which to understand the nationalist activities of diaspora communities. Anderson highlights that the "communications revolution" profoundly impacts the experience of migration, allowing diaspora members to remain connected to their homeland and actively participate in its politics (1998:68). This connection fosters *long-distance nationalism*, defined by political engagement that is deeply rooted in ethnic identity but is radically unaccountable (1998:74). Anderson further notes that these diaspora members, often positioned comfortably in post-industrial states, such as those in Melbourne, may be among the most fervent nationalists, financing and supporting political agendas from afar (p. 73). This type of nationalism emerges in part due to the "ethnicization of political life" in host countries, which provides space for these sentiments to flourish (1998:73). Consequently, *long-distance nationalism* can create a persistent, unrelenting political presence that influences both the homeland and the host society, demonstrating how diaspora members fashion their identities in an ongoing, transnational context.

Anderson also introduces the notion of *self-exile*, wherein diaspora members consciously choose their separation from the homeland yet remain deeply engaged in nationalist activities from afar. He states that "exile is the nursery of nationalism," as it allows individuals to fashion an "embattled ethnic identity" without facing the immediate risks associated with political action in their homeland (1998:74). These dynamics effectively nurture a form of nationalism that is intensified by the distance, enabling diaspora members to adopt a heroic stance, unbound by the consequences typically faced by those directly within the homeland.

In addition, Maria Todorova's discourse of *Balkanism* (2009) is employed to assess the extent to which historical fault lines have been replicated within Melbourne's diaspora communities. Todorova's framework suggests that the external perception of the Balkans as a region

defined by conflict and division often becomes internalised by Balkan communities themselves, reinforcing a sense of perpetual antagonism and fragmentation. By combining Anderson's *long-distance nationalism* with Todorova's concept of *Balkanism*, this study examines how these ethnic and national rivalries are not only sustained but also reimagined in Melbourne, revealing the persistence of historical divisions and the degree to which these fault lines are replicated in the diaspora setting.

Chapter 1: How did Southeastern Europe's fault lines emerge in Australia?

"Exile is the nursery of nationality"

(Anderson,1998, p59)

This chapter examines how ethnic fault lines of the Balkans emerged in Australia, arguing that post-war migration was the biggest factor in their reproduction. Recent encounters and memories of war among Greek and Macedonian post-war migrants, particularly concerning the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and the unresolved Macedonian Question, which were pivotal in the original conflict, significantly contributed to the continuation of conflict from the Balkan Peninsula. For most Macedonians and Greek migrants arriving from the region, the historic struggle over identity and nationhood was a prominent aspect of their experience during the Greek Civil War. This created the perfect conditions for reproducing ethnic fault lines between Macedonians and Greeks in their new setting. In this light, post-war migrants functioned as conduits for the transportation of the Balkan's legacy of conflict to Australia.

After the Second World War Australia embarked on its ambitious migration program to address its population insecurities (Damousi, 2015:46). Long had Australia implemented assisted passages engineered for the maintenance of its predominantly British population (Jupp, 2007:17). But when Australia's first Immigration Minister, Arthur Calwell, was unable to attract British migrants to maintain this balance, he was forced to broaden the definition of 'white' to include Southern and Eastern Europeans of non-English speaking backgrounds (Jupp, 2007). The fixation on attracting white settlers corresponded with Australia's notorious White Australia Policy, and in line with this policy the expectation of newly arrived migrants was that they would assimilate into the dominant culture and national identity (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity, 1999) so to become 'good Australia's' as soon as possible (Hay, 1998:53). However, for post-war migrants who had recently experienced war and trauma, shedding their cultural identities and starting anew proved to be a difficult task (Damousi, 2015).

Migrants arriving to Australia from Southeastern Europe in the post-war period, particularly Greeks and Macedonians, continued *imagining* themselves as part of their former national collectives. To invoke Anderson's use of Lord Acton, their exile became 'the nursery of [their] nationality' (1998:59). This was especially true for many Macedonians, as the social context of Australia facilitated their connection to their national Macedonian identity, quite the contrary outcome to that of cultural assimilation. The process of re-imagining their

identities coincided with the pressures of integration under Australia's restrictive White Australia policies, which prioritised cultural assimilation (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity, 1999).

This chapter explores how, within this setting, post-war migration of Greeks and Macedonians to Australia was influenced by historical contexts and recent memories (or traumas) of war which remained inescapable even in their new environment. The establishment of their communities significantly shaped the formation of their identities, laying fertile ground for the reproduction of ethnic fault lines that have come to characterise the Balkan peninsula.

Community profiles and migration patterns

The Greek and Macedonian communities in the state of Victoria are the largest in Australia. According to the 2021 census there were 181,184 people with Greek ancestry in Victoria, of which 46,623 are born in Greece (Victorian Government, 2024a). Conversely there were 49,429 people who have Macedonian ancestry, of which 19,025 were born in North Macedonia (Victorian Government, 2024b). Post-war migration is the foremost cause for their significant presence in Melbourne today. Additionally, these communities represent the largest Balkan communities in the state of Victoria (Victorian Government, 2024c).

Before post-war migration, the presence of Macedonians in Melbourne was relatively minor, with only a few *pechalbari* (seasonal workers) arriving in the 1920s (Hill, 2001:572). Most of these temporary migrants came to permanently settle in inner-city suburbs like Fitzroy, Collingwood, Preston, and Richmond (Radis, 1990:85). Greek migration to Victoria, on the other hand, dates to the 1840s, primarily absorbing people from the Ionian Islands who came during Victoria's Gold Rush (Janiszewski and Alexakis, 2017). Like the Macedonian *pechalbari*, these Greek fortune seekers chose to stay, laying the foundation for the future Greek community. By 1887 the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne Victoria (GOCMV) was established, becoming the preeminent Greek institution in the state (Allimonos, 2001a:399). The establishment of the city's first Greek Orthodox Church soon followed in 1901 (Allimonos, 2001a: 399). The 1901 census recorded 181 Greek-born Australians in Victoria, which eventually rose to 1,656 by 1933 (Allimonos, 2001a:399). Notably, migrants that arrived in Victoria from the Dodecanese were not recorded as Greek-born, as these islands were not within Greece's fixed borders yet (Allimonos, 2001a:399).

Unrecorded Greeks during this period also included those arriving from Asia Minor in the interwar years, following their expulsion from the collapsing Ottoman Empire (Allimonos, 2001a: 399). Overall, 50 per cent of all Greek settlers prior to the post-war period came from Ithaca, Samos, Lesbos, and Macedonia (Allimonos, 2001a: 399).

The most significant waves of Greek and Macedonian migration occurred after 1950. In 1952, Australia extended assisted migration program to include Greeks (Allimonos, 2001b: 418). Many of those arriving to Victoria during this period were directly impacted by the Second World War and the Greek Civil War (Damousi, 2015). Between 1950 and 1959 a total of 486 Macedonians arrived in Victoria (Victoria Government, 2024b). Macedonian migration to Australia during this period mostly comprised of displaced people from northern Greece, with only a minor number of arrivals coming from Bitola and Ohrid in Yugoslavia (Radis, 1990:84). In 1959 the Macedonian community established the first Macedonian Orthodox Church outside of Macedonia, St. George, in Fitzroy (Hill, 2005:575). In stark contrast 8,228 Greeks arrived during the same period (Victorian Government, 2024a). Overall, arrivals from northern Greece increased during the post-war period, while there was a noticeable decline in the arrival of islanders that had characterised pre-war migration patterns (Tamis, 2004:65). Between 1955 and 1959, the Greek government implemented regional restrictions for migration, leading to the largest influx from Kozani, Kastoria and Florina (Allimonos,2005:418) This cohort of migrants would play a significant role in perpetuating the tensions between the two communities.

The 1960's saw a significant increase of Macedonian migration to Victoria, with 4,678 arrivals between 1960 and 1969 (Victoria Government, 2024b). These migrants were primarily seeking family reunification and economic opportunities (Radis, 1990). Greek arrivals during this period were significantly higher, totalling 24,115 (Victorian Government, 2004a). The largest influx of Macedonian migrants occurred between 1971 and 1980, with 5,462 arrivals, mainly from Yugoslavia (Victorian Government, 2024b), driven by political instability and economic conditions (Radis, 1990). In comparison, 5,998 Greeks arrived during the same decade (Victorian Government,2024a), reflecting a more balanced migration pattern between the two groups during the 1970s.

Migration from northern Greece

The arrival of Macedonian and Greek migrants originally from northern Greece between 1950 and 1970 is a consequential component in the reproduction of the regions' ethnic fault lines in Melbourne. Migrants from northern Greece were particularly conducive in the transportation of conflict to Australia, due to the unreconciled issue surrounding Macedonian identity being most prominent in that region. This was further compounded by said migrants' exposure to the Greek Civil War, which was particularly brutal in northern Greece as it hosted most of the communist's strong holds (Damousi, 2015:78). The recent memory of these new Australians accelerated the pervasive legacy of conflict in the region and continued to polarise within and in between the two communities (Damousi, 2015:77).

The Greek Civil War is a significant chapter of the Macedonian Question. Following Greece's annexation of Macedonia in 1913, a result of its success in the Balkan Wars 1912-13, the Greek state during the early 20th century implemented aggressive Hellenization policies in northern Greece that targeted local Slav speaking populations into forced cultural assimilation and removal (Danforth, 1995:53). Loring Danforth notes that the population exchange between Greece and Turkey following the Asia Minor Catastrophe in 1922 facilitated Greece's process of ethnic unmixing (1995). As a result of Greece's policies of resettling Christian populations from the former Ottoman Empire, namely Pontians, the Greek population in Macedonia rose from 21 per cent to 70 per cent by 1928 (Danforth, 1995:54). These demographic shifts consolidated Greek control over the region (Danforth, 1995:55). What has been described as 'internal colonialism' (Mazower 2002, Papadopoulos 2016) has remained a major source of injustice for Macedonians from the region, who did not identify as Greek. These policies persisted, becoming particularly brutal during the dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas (1939-1941) who classified such ethnocultural differences as a threat to Greece's national interests (Neofotistos, 2020:19). The events leading up to, and the Greek Civil War itself were consequential for the formation and consolidation of Macedonian national identity (Danforth, 1995: 75).

The only political party to acknowledge the existence of a Macedonian identity was the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). Prior to the Second World War, the notion of Macedonian identity was not yet widespread (Danforth, 1995:75). In many ways, the policies of internal colonisation and marginalisation are often identified as contributing to

Macedonian's participation in the civil war on the side of the KKE (Papadopoulos, 2016). The Greek Civil War was fought between pro monarchist- right-wing forces and anti-monarchist-left-wing (communist) (Neofotistos, 2020:5). Along with being the only party in Greece that had recognised Macedonian national identity, the KKE was also the only party to have a policy on the Macedonian Question (Rossos, 1997:42). Many Slav-speaking Macedonians who had come to self-identify during this time (Neofotisistos, 2020:5) fought with the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE), the military wing of the KKE (Rossos, 1997:43). Macedonian partisans are believed to have made up over a quarter of the DSE in 1947, increasing to two-thirds by mid-1949 (Rossos, 1997:44). Areas such as Florina and Kozani were ravaged by the civil war, hosting significant strong holds of the KKE (Damousi, 2015, Papadopoulos, 2016). These severe conditions saw the forced evacuations of 28,000 children under the age of 15 to Eastern Europe, which has come to be known as the *pedomazema* (child gathering) and constitutes one of the darkest chapters in Greece's history (Damousi, 2015:142).

With the defeat of the communist forces in 1949 Slav speaking Macedonians "were seen as a dangerous and devious category posing a potential threat to state integrity within an imagined homogenous national body" (Papadopoulos, 2016). Tens of thousands of Macedonians had fled to the People's Republic of Macedonia in Yugoslavia and eventually to Australia, Canada and the United States (Neofotistos, 2020:5). Many were stripped of their citizenship, while their land was redistributed to nationally minded Greek settlers (Neofotistos, 2024). The Greek state continued its policy of forced assimilation of those who remained in Greece, forcing them to abandon their Macedonian identity and instead adopt Greek cultural norms (Neofotistos, 2024). Many were unable to return and those who remained were subject to forced assimilation, systemic control over education and discriminatory employment practices, making it increasingly difficult to define the Macedonian minority in the region (Neofotistos, 2020).

These circumstances, coupled with Greece's restrictive emigration policies during this period, contributed to a significant outflow of people from northern Greece. As a result, it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of Macedonians arriving in Australia who identified as Macedonian rather than Greek. According to Con Alliminos 30 per cent of the 14,000 Greeks that arrived in Australia under the assistance scheme until 1960 originated from northern Greece (Allimonos, 2001b: 418). In Melbourne this had the effect of entire village populations from Florina and Kastoria being relocated (Tamis, 2005:63). According to Tamis,

villages such as “Akritas, Agiasma, Agia Sotira, Skopia, Triantafyllia, Polypotamos, Palaistra, Kotas, Ydrousa, and Perasma” were transplanted in Melbourne’s northern suburbs (Tamis, 2005:63). According to Joy Damousi (2015) Australia’s new migrants arriving from northern Greece comprised of three groups; those who spoke a Slavic language and identified as Macedonians, those who spoke both Slavic and Greek but identified as Greek; and finally, those who arrived from Yugoslavia with an unambiguous Macedonian identity. Initially, the first two groups often mixed socially (Damousi, 2015:75), evident in their shared community organisations and soccer clubs, namely, Heidelburg Alexander, established by migrants from Florina (Danforth, 2001:371). According to Danforth (1995) most Macedonians in Melbourne, irrespective of whether they arrived from Greece or Yugoslavia, say that before they came to Australia, they had no idea that others like themselves that existed on the other side of their border (1995). Only after migrating to Melbourne had they come to such a realisation, and the Macedonian diaspora slowly began the process of constructing a common Macedonian national identity (Danforth, 1995).

Census discrepancies for Macedonians

There has been significant discrepancy regarding who belonged to which group among those arriving from northern Greece. This stems partly from Australia’s limited approach to recording complex identities. Australia’s primary census question until 1986 regarding people of migrant backgrounds only concerned their country of birth, and it was not until 1986 the census began to ask questions about ancestry and what languages were spoken at home (Hay, 1998:54). Thus, any Macedonian’s recorded in the census that were born in Greece more than likely were documented to be Greek. Furthermore. Macedonians arriving from northern Greece did so on Greek passports, while those arriving from Yugoslavia carried Yugoslav passports (Danforth, 1995). Additionally, many Macedonian migrants were apprehensive about openly declaring their identity due to lingering fears of the Greek state, which maintained a presence in Australia through its consulates (Hill, 2001).

Fears of the Greek state’s reach in Australia were not unfounded. Irene Veljanova (2010) and Radis (1990) have noted that Macedonian post-war migrants continued to fear repression by the Greek state even while in Australia. Some feared for the lives of family members back in Greece, who were concealing their Macedonian identities from the Greek government (Radis, 1990:89). Many joined Greek organisations to maintain appearances, despite not being fully

accepted by fellow Greeks (Radis, 1997). It is also believed that Greek consulates in major Australian cities, including Melbourne, pressured Macedonians by threatening the safety of their families back home and restricting their ability to return to them (Radis, 1997, Veljanova, 2010). As a result, many Macedonians only privately supported their national movement while avoiding public declarations (Danforth, 1995).

Price discusses how fear and apprehension among Macedonians have led to inaccuracies in Australia's census data, noting that who were openly loyal to the Macedonian cause tended to have no remaining ties in Greece (Price, 1996). James Jupp (1995) acknowledges these factors but suggests that their impact on the reliability of the data is limited. However, Veljanova remains insistent that the extent of fear and apprehension among Macedonian respondents has been understated (2010). Furthermore, Australian census data did not differentiate among the various groups that constituted the former state of Yugoslavia (Hay, 1998:53).

The extent to which the Macedonian diaspora privately or publicly displayed their national sentiments relates to Benedict Anderson's position of the maintenance of long-distance nationalism, which persists irrespective of geographical distance (1998). The ongoing fear of the Greek state among Macedonians speaks to the deep-rooted traumas of persecution they faced (Papadopoulos, 2016). This shows a clear continuation of the Greek state's quasi-colonial legacy of forced assimilation and persecution of Macedonians in northern Greece (Papadopoulos, 2016). Whether these pressures come from foreign diplomats or community members living among them, they contribute to the legacy of Balkan nation-building processes of homogenization far removed from their geographical source (Anderson, 1998).

The tendency of diaspora to conceal their identity due to political repression has been noted before by Shain and Barth (2003) and has also been demonstrated in the experiences of Croatian migrants in Australia at the time. The Croatian experience mirrors that of the Macedonians, as identifying as Croatian was problematic in Australia as well due to the absence of a Croatian nation-state after 1945; instead, Croatia was part of the multinational federation of Yugoslavia (Hay, 1998:58). Additionally, Hay highlights the contested nature of Croatia, meant that claiming a Croatian identity could be perceived as dangerous, especially for those with family in Yugoslavia or plans to return. This contestation is shaped by centuries of debate over its boundaries, and historical fragmentation of the Balkans (Todorova, 2009)

Identity formations and negotiations

To further complicate the inaccuracies in census data regarding Macedonians, many migrants from Florina came to identify as Macedonians (not Greeks) while in Australia, or as Anderson might put it, while *in exile* (1998). With the abandonment of the White Australia Policy and the introduction of Multiculturalism in Australia in the 1970s (Human Rights Commission, 1991) new freedoms were afforded to migrants in Melbourne. These liberties, combined with personal experiences, led many Macedonian migrants from northern Greece from the same village or family to form dialectical identities from one another, becoming divided and polarized due to individual identity negotiations (Ting-Toomey, 1999) The subjectivity of these experiences resulted in varied conclusions regarding personal identity, whether Greek, Macedonian, or both, increasing divisions among villages and families over this contentious issue (Radis, 1990:89).

Loring Danforth's (1995) ethnographic research cites several examples of individuals from Florina that engaged in complex identity negotiations, with the case of Ted Yannas standing out as particularly illustrative. Born in Florina, Ted arrived in Australia with a Greek identity but eventually became a Macedonian patriot (Danforth, 1995:186). Ted's father left Greece in 1954 after the confiscation of their family home, and in 1967, Ted and his family reunited with him in Melbourne. Initially living with his uncle Nikos, who had fled Greece during the civil war after enduring torture and imprisonment, Ted's formative experiences were shaped by the struggles of his family. While in school, he met another boy from Florina who spoke only Macedonian, fostering Ted's connection to his heritage (1995).

In the 1970s Ted married Vera, a Macedonian woman whose family also originated form Florina (Danforth, 1995187). Vera's father had fought with the communists during the civil war and fled to Yugoslavia, where she was raised. These experiences, among others, led to Ted developing a distinctly Macedonian identity, comparing his past identity as a Greek to being a janissary. Janissaries during the Ottoman period were Christian children taken at birth from their families and forced into Islamic conversion to serve the Sultan (Danforth, 1995:190). Additionally, Ted's conversion resulted in his estrangement to his brother, Jim, who unlike Ted defiantly identified himself as a Greek. Jim happens to be married to a Greek woman, whose father, like Vera's father fought during the civil war, but against the communists. Vera refers to Jim's father-in-law as a Greek spy. Jim blames the communists, not the Greek state, for the destruction of their village and accuses Ted and his new friends of

trying to “bring the hatred back from the Civil War” (Danforth,1995:196). A noteworthy quote of Jim’s is his comparison of Ted’s conversion to ‘an Australian disease’ (1995, p196).

The case of the Yannas family illustrates the profound impact and disruptiveness of the nationalist conflict between Greeks and Macedonians has on individuals from northern Greece (1995). What’s interesting in the case of the Yannas siblings is that although they are relatively free to pursue any identity of their pleasing, they still choose to identify as either Greek or Macedonian. Danforth makes a note of this, suggesting that just as hegemonic nationalist politics in the Balkans forces upon its people homogenised group categorisations, so too does the hegemonic policy of Multiculturalism (Danforth, 1995:200). This makes Anderson’s concept of *long-distance nationalism* relevant for, as he puts it “an embattled ethnic identity is to be fashioned in the ethnicized nationstate that he remains determined to inhabit” (1998, p74). Thus, when considering this thesis research question, of the extent to which Balkans ethnic fault lines have been reproduce in Australia? We can conclude that both Australia’s white Australian policies, which marginalised migrants, and its multicultural policies, which ethnicized migrants facilitated the reproduction of historic fault lines of the region.

These hegemonic assumptions are not the only determining factors in how one may come to identify with a group. In the case of the Yannas brothers and others from northern Greece, there is also an ideological divergence linked to the legacy of the Greek Civil War which becomes evident when Jim defended his Greek identity. Jim, who married a pro-monarchist’s daughter, perceives the communists as those that destroyed their village. Furthermore, he considers the Macedonians as divisive agents, even in the present. Ted, on the other hand, is married to the daughter of a Macedonian communist, which influenced his perception of the Greek state as the oppressor of his people. In contrast, Ted has chosen to cite older histories of subjugation, evident in his comparison of himself to a janissary who betrayed his people. In this fashion, Ted evokes the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, comparing the oppression of Macedonians by the Greek state to subjugation of Christians by Turks (Danforth, 1995:190). The Yannas brothers’ perception of wrong and right are products of ideological constructions shaped by their personal predicaments and interpretations of history, influenced by their personal experiences.

There is also something to be said about Jim’s assessment of Ted’s conversion as “an Australian disease.” Aside from the clear dismissal of Ted’s situation as an illness, and thus

inherently bad, there's significance in the fact that he contracted this "disease" in Australia. This brings relevance to Anderson's use of Lord Acton's quote again, that "exile is the nursery of nationalism" (1998, p59) which underpins his theory on *long-distance nationalism*. Ted's identity negotiation is profoundly impacted by his personal experiences in Melbourne. The contributions of Melbourne to Ted's Macedonian identity are on an equal footing, if not more responsible for how he has come to be a Macedonian patriot. The ethnicization prevalent within migrant societies, such as Australia, reinforces hegemonic nationalist discourse of the Balkans, intent on categorising groups in homogenised entities (Danforth, 1995). This situation provides migrants with ambiguous ethnic identities, particularly for those from Florina, who have limited options in how they may identify.

Overall, the reproduction of Southeastern Europe's fault lines in Australia emerged primarily through post-war migration, where recent memories of conflict, such as the Greek Civil War and the unresolved Macedonian Question, shaped the identities of Greek and Macedonian migrants. These migrants brought with them a legacy of ethno-nationalism, creating conditions that led to the reproduction of these historical tensions in their new environment. While the origins of these fault lines lie in the Balkan Peninsula, local conditions in Australia, particularly in Melbourne, have allowed these conflicts to take on a distinct, localised form. The persistence of ethnic identity negotiations, as illustrated by individual cases like that of the Yannas brothers, shows how these historical divisions adapt to new sociopolitical contexts. This chapter highlights how the ethnic fault lines of Southeastern Europe were transplanted into Australia, becoming deeply rooted in the diasporic experience and continuing to influence inter-communal relations today. This conclusion links directly to the main research question by demonstrating how these tensions, while initially shaped by pre-migration histories, have evolved and adapted within the Australian context.

Chapter 2: How have post-migration developments in the homeland impacted existing tensions in the host country?

'I felt the collapse of Yugoslavia through football. Football matches became the performances of nationalistic euphoria….' (Volcic, 2011, pp115-116)

This chapter examines how the dissolution of Yugoslavia impacted Australia's Balkan communities in the 1990s, particularly focusing on the intensification of inter-communal conflict between Macedonians and Greeks in Melbourne following the declaration of independence by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) in 1991. The analysis will first examine instances of pre-existing conflict between Greeks and Macedonians and assess how tensions typically manifested before Macedonia's declaration of independence. This will be followed by an examination of how these dynamics changed in the aftermath of Macedonian's declaration so to understand how new geopolitical events in the homeland heightened preexisting ethnic tensions. Additionally, an assessment of diaspora's homeland government's role, namely as active players in fanning ethno-nationalist sentiments, and how this impacts Multiculturalism and by extension social cohesion.

Australia in the 1990s had entered its 20th year since the abandonment of its White Australia policy, which previously emphasized the cultural assimilation of migrants into the dominant Anglo-Australian identity. Since the 1970s Australia had been transitioning to a Multicultural society (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1991) and the radical break from White Australia, fought for by migrants, allowed for greater freedom in expressing cultural heritage (1991). Multiculturalism, however, was not universally embraced by Australian society and instances of conflict between migrant communities rooted in historical rivalries and ethno-nationalism drew significant condemnation from critical pundits and provided them with ammunition when questioning the viability of the Multicultural experiment (Michael, 2015).

This chapter will be explored how the conflict manifested prior to 1991, and then examining how the declaration of independence in 1991 animated nationalist sentiments and heightened ethnic conflict. This chapter argues that tensions in the homeland correlate with tensions within the diaspora in their host countries, with a key variable being the active role homeland governments played in exacerbating these tensions. The section will conclude by assessing the impact of these developments on Multiculturalism in Australia, paying special attention to

how the significant political capital of the Greek community marginalised Macedonians and reinforced perceptions of oppressor versus oppressed dynamics.

Pre-1991 inter-ethnic conflict

In 1991, the Australian government released its National *Inquiry into Racist Violence* (1991) report. Conducted by the Parliamentary Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, the inquiry addressed ethnic conflict in Australia, finding that the "most widespread and violent form of inter-ethnic conflict was found to be between Croatian and Serbian or Yugoslav people, and that it had declined both in frequency and intensity in recent years" (1991:148). The report also referenced tensions between Greeks and Macedonians, noting that these were "less frequent and extensive," with the "most serious violence usually erupting at soccer matches" (1991:148).

Soccer matches had become a significant arena for the manifestation of ethnic rivalries and ethno-nationalism within Australia's Balkan communities, particularly among post-war migrants. The role of soccer clubs for these migrants was pivotal in shaping their identities within their new setting. As Roy Hay notes, soccer clubs facilitated the formation and shaping of migrant identity in Australia for the generation that settled during the two decades following the Second World War (Hay, 1998:49). The prominence of soccer in Australia is directly tied to the arrival of post-war migrants in the 1950s, with ethnic communities, namely, Greek, Greek Macedonian, Jewish, Hungarian, Italian or Yugoslav soccer clubs (James, 2023:645). Clubs that Greeks, Macedonians, and Greek Macedonians established in Melbourne include South Melbourne Hellas, Heidelberg Alexander established by migrants from Florina, and Preston Makedonia also established by migrants from Florina, but identified exclusively as a Macedonian club (Danforth, 2001).

Ethnic soccer clubs had a tendency towards imagining themselves in line with the concept of *jus sanguinis* (the law of blood), reflective of post-Ottoman nation-building pursuits of homogeneity. Ethno-nationalism was not the only basis of division, and soccer matches also accommodate for homeland political divisions that also defined rivalries between Balkans teams. Take for instance the Serbo-Croatian club, JUST Footscray, which promoted a pro-Yugoslav identity, attracting both Macedonians and other Yugoslav migrants (James, 2023:650). Croatian soccer clubs often formed in opposition to JUST on ideological grounds

(James, 2023:642), which has led to the unfortunate perception of Croatians being associated with fascism and extreme right-wing ideologies (2023). These political divisions between ethnic clubs can also be considered as a continuation of Balkan history, most notably the Second World War, that were brought to Australia from Southeastern Europe.

Ethnic soccer clubs not only served as sporting entities but as symbols of ethnic solidarity and pride, fostering a sense of community in the face of assimilationist pressures in Australia. As Danforth (2001) explains, these clubs "served as powerful symbols of the diaspora communities they represented," providing a "weekend safe haven" for migrants navigating an unfamiliar and often unwelcoming society (Warren, 2011). The imagined communities migrants built through soccer clubs were at odds with Australia's Anglo-centric identity, and by extension the national game of Australian Rules Football (Warren, 2011). Experiences of marginalisation for these groups contributed to the ethnicization of migrant's identities and by extension the development of ethnically exclusive soccer club. However, with the introduction of Multiculturalism and the abandonment of White Australia in the 1970s migrant-controlled soccer federations, otherwise referred to as the 'ethnic clubs' system came to be the country's preeminent soccer competition (Danforth, 2001).

After the lobbying of migrants, in 1977 the National Soccer League (NSL) was established, and it constituted Australia's first national sporting competition for club level (Warren, 2011). The line up of teams for the league's first season included "Adelaide City (Italian), Brisbane City (Italian), Brisbane Lions (Dutch), Canberra City (non-ethnic), Eastern Suburbs (Jewish), Fitzroy, [formerly Heidelberg] (Greek Macedonian), Footscray JUST (Yugoslav procommunist), Marconi (Italian), Mooroolbark (English), South Melbourne (Greek), St George (Hungarian), Sydney Olympic (Greek), Western Suburbs (Anglo-Australian), and West Adelaide (Greek)" (James, 2023, pp645-646). Preston Makedonia was not admitted into the NSL until 1981 (Danforth, 2001). Similarly, Croatian teams were subject to caution as well, due to the Australian Soccer Federation's (ASF) fear that the admission of Croatian clubs into the NSL would risk crowd violence when facing off against Footscray JUST (James:2023:646). However, both Melbourne Croatia and Sydney Croatia were also initiated in the 1984 season (James, 2023:646).

The popularity and significance of the NSL for migrants and to the broader community was not missed on the Greek Consulate of Melbourne. When Preston Makedonia was finally admitted into the NSL and were rostered to play Heidelberg Alexander the Greek Consulate

of Melbourne attempted to prevent the game from taking place out of fear it would enable the recognition of a distinct, non- Greek Macedonian identity (Danforth, 1995:189). Two days prior to the game a representative of the Greek consulate approached Heidelberg Alexander to request that the club cancels its game against Preston Makedonia out of fear that their engagement with the club would contribute to the recognition of Macedonians (1995). The Greek consulate offered to cover the ten-thousand-dollar cancellation costs of the game and, according to Danforth the consulate's representative directed committee members that: "You're here to help me destroy that race! As good Greeks we have to drown those people in the Yarra River!" (Danforth, 1995:190).

These examples demonstrate that tensions and the potential for conflict between Greeks and Macedonians existed prior to the crisis of the 1990s in Southeastern Europe. The replication and localisation of ethnic boundaries within Australia's soccer landscape by diaspora has the unfortunate effect of validating Maria Todorova's concept of *Balkanism* even within a diaspora context, namely the outside worlds negative perception of the Balkans as a region defined by conflict and division (2009). The persistence of ethnic and national rivalries within the diaspora illustrates how these communities internalise such perceptions and end up considering themselves as agents of historical tensions. These clubs became symbols of fractured national identities, re-enacting Balkan rivalries on Australian soil, thereby reinforcing Todorova's claim that Balkan identity is constructed through its history of fragmentation (2009). Anderson's *long-distance nationalism* is also particularly relevant here in understanding the utility of these ethnic soccer clubs. Despite geographical distance, the symbolic importance of national identity remained central to these communities. The consulate's extreme response, including racist rhetoric, further exemplified the intensity of these nationalist conflicts. In this context, *long-distance nationalism* intensifies as diaspora members continue to engage with political and ethnic struggles from their homeland. Soccer served as a battleground where the unresolved political disputes of Southeastern Europe played out, echoing Anderson's argument that nationalism can thrive even without direct political engagement or geographic proximity.

The *National Inquiry into Racist Violence,* that was cited at the beginning of this chapter, had stated in 1991 that "the conflict and violence [between Australia's Balkan diaspora] have lessened, as a result of the decline in nationalistic feeling of younger generations living in Australia" (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1991). This statement proved to be shortsighted, having been released in the same month as the commencement of the

Yugoslav War in 1991, demonstrating its inability to foresee the destabilising factor it would have on its own Balkan diaspora in Australia. With the declaration of the Former Republic of Macedonia's (FYROM) independence in 1991, no longer would inter-ethnic conflict, and by extension ethno-nationalism be reserved to the soccer pitch and its grandstands.

Post 1991 inter-ethnic conflict

The escalation of the Yugoslav War in 1991, alongside Macedonia's declaration of independence, transformed diaspora tensions from ethnic rivalries on the soccer field into broader social conflicts, highlighting the unpredictable impact a homeland crisis can have on diaspora communities. In the wake of the dissolution and war of Yugoslavia, the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia held a referendum and declared its independence on the 8th of September 1991. By the 17th of September it declared its sovereignty and began seeking international recognition as the 'Republic of Macedonia' (Floudas, 1996:293). Greece immediately put all its efforts into lobbying against the recognition of new republic's name, eventually leading to the United Nations admitting the new republic into the international organisation under the provisional name the 'former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' (FYROM) (Floudas, 1996:297). In Melbourne, the conflict reached a peak during this period (Danforth, 1995:211) indicating a correlation between the heightening of tensions in the homeland corresponding with the heightening of tensions in the diaspora. However, this was not without the active efforts of the Greek state, whose efforts to mobilise Greek people behind this issue extended beyond its own state borders.

The declaration of a Macedonian Republic had the effect of animating nationalist fervour in Greece, which had not been seen for decades (Floudas, 1996). The Greek government had anticipated Macedonia's break away when fighting began in northern Yugoslavia earlier that year, indicating to Athens that the federation's days were numbered (Floudas, 1996:292). This issue came to dominate Greece's foreign policy as Athens continually cited fears of irredentism (Floudas, 1996). Anna Triandafyllidou states that the declaration of independence challenged Greek people's belief that everything 'Macedonian' is part of their cultural heritage, and in turn fuelled the emergence of a new nationalist movement in Greece (Triandafyllidou et al., 1997). Triandafyllidou accept as true that Greece's political parties during this period manipulated the population's nationalist sentiments as campaign devices, during a time when the countries internal politics were extremely turbulent (1997). The

pandering of Greece's political elite was not limited to its population situated within its sovereign borders and extended this messaging to its diasporas abroad too (Triandafyllidou et al., 1997). In effect, Greece re-imagined its nation to comprise of its diaspora populations, and the prevailing discourse between Greeks and Macedonians in Melbourne as part of its strategic interests. One telling quote that highlights the Greek state's vested interest in Australia during this period comes from the Greek Consul General in Melbourne 1991, who remarked, "Australia is the front line of defence in the battle of Macedonia" (Danforth, 1995, pp. 7-8).

Relationships between the two communities in Melbourne entered a new phase of deterioration as the international dispute between Greece and FYROM intensified. Australia at the time was also dealing with the inter-ethnic conflict of other Balkan diaspora because of the instability in the region, namely Croatians and Serbians, who at the time were travelling to Yugoslavia to physically participate in their homeland conflicts (Skrbiŝ, 1999). It's believed that thousands of Serbian and Croatian Australians participated in the Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s (Payne, 2017). The rise of ethnic tensions and the looming possibility of violence was noticed first in the soccer. Danforth highlights that as tensions between the Greek and Macedonian communities in Melbourne escalated in the early 1990s, Heidelberg Alexander increasingly came to be seen as a Greek team (Danforth, 2001:371). The club underwent a process of politicization, nationalization, and Hellenization in several noticeable ways (2001). Blue and white stripes, representing the colours of Greece were added to the team's logo, which featured the head of Alexander the Great (2001). Supporters of Alexander would begin to dress as the ancient general, complete with a helmet, breastplate, and sword, and at half time they would parade around the field on horseback (Danforth, 2001:371).

Belic Kamparmak notes that soccer matches began to take place behind closed doors, out of fear that mounting tensions would lead to spectator violence (Kampmark, 2018:882). These fears did manifest. An exemplary instance, reported by *The Age*, was during an NSL match between Preston Makedonia and Heidelberg Alexander in Reservoir, in Melbourne's north on February 24, 1992 (Jenkins, 1992). A brawl ensued with 400 people just after half time, resulting in the injury of 11 police officers and the arrest of nine individuals (Jenkins, 2022). During the scuffle, a Greek priest was said to be 'roughed up' when he referred to Macedonian fans as Bulgarians (Danforth, 2001:372). Inspector Mayne commented on the incident to *The Age*, noting that police anticipated trouble, stating, "With any match between Greeks and Yugoslavs, you have to expect a bit of aggro" (Jenkins, 2022). The anticipation of

inspector Mayne is important as it implied the extent to which outsiders of these Balkan communities, namely, the broader Australian communities also reinforce stereotypical perception of Balkan people as ‘aggro’ and prone to conflict and violence on the basis of historical tensions, bringing into relevance Todorova’s discourse of *Balkanism* (2009) by mainstream Anglo-Australia too. Inspector Mayne had also told *The Age* that he speculated that the violence was likely linked to the ongoing friction between the two groups, which had been further inflamed by a 40,000-strong protest rally held by the Greek community in Melbourne the day prior, opposing the recognition of the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Jenkins, 2022). The Greek demonstration on the 23rd of February 1992 which saw the mobilisation of 40,000 is indicative of the two communities’ conflict breaking out of the confines of the soccer pitch and into the public domain.

Tensions progressively escalated into acts of violence. On January 18, 1993, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the clubhouse of the Macedonian soccer team Preston, causing $20,000 worth of damage (Stankovska & Petrovska, 1996). This was followed by a series of arson attacks in February 1994, when two Macedonian Orthodox churches, St. Nikola in Preston and St. Dimitrija in Springvale, were firebombed (1996). The violence also extended to the Macedonian Christian Church in Preston, which was severely damaged, and an attempted arson targeted St. George, the first Macedonian church built outside Macedonia (Stankovska & Petrovska, 1996). In addition to the church bombings, a Macedonian wedding party was blocked from leaving St. George by a group of Greeks, further highlighting the depth of the animosity. The owners of a Macedonian restaurant in Fitzroy, Mr. and Mrs. Sucevic, were also targeted. After receiving threats about the restaurant's name, a brick wrapped in a Greek flag was hurled through their window, followed by a fire at St. Nikola’s church just hours later. The Sucevics were told, "You see what happened to your church, the same thing will happen to you" (Stankovska & Petrovska, 1996). These violent acts even extended to personal attacks, such as the firebombing of Angelo Pateras' real estate office in March 1994. These events underline the volatility of inter-communal relations during this period.

Michalis Michael states that “polarization at the international level inevitably influences the environment within which ethnic communities relate to one another” (2015, p159). In Melbourne, the setting of ethnic soccer served as the initial environment in which adversarial groups from the Balkan interacted with one another and illustrated that even without any new developments in the homeland, diaspora still chose to perpetuate the historical fragmentation

of the region (Todorova, 2008). This supports Anderson's argument that *long-distance nationalism* can thrive even without direct political engagement and close geographic proximity (1998). Thus, it should come as no surprise then that any additional polarization at an international level between a diaspora's corresponding and adversarial homelands would constitute a rise in tensions, as the findings of this research has shown in the case of Greeks and Macedonians in during the 1990s. These tensions are of course then further heightened when homeland governments of diaspora directly meddle in their diaspora discourse in their host country, as was the case of the Greek community where there was a clear effort by the Greek state to mobilise Greeks in Melbourne against Macedonians, whether it be on the soccer pitch, on the streets demonstrating or to lobby their government. Zlatko Skrbiŝ directly refers to the quote by the Greek consul in Danforth's work that "Australia is the frontline in the battle for Macedonia" (1996, pp7-8) and believes that it reveals the role of state's intervention "in the construction and sustenance of ethno-nationalist hegemonic narratives. In other words, to understand the multidimensionality of contemporary nationalist conflicts, one needs to examine thoroughly the nature of interactions between diasporas and homelands" (Skribis, 1999, pp3).

Asymmetrical political influence and Multiculturalism

In the 1990s, Melbourne's Greek community leveraged its political influence to lobby the Victorian Government into delegitimizing Macedonian identity and language. The Macedonian community faced greater challenges in asserting its identity compared to the more established and politically active Greek diaspora, in part due to their smaller size, but also because of their lesser political influence, and more recent arrival from Yugoslavia (Danforth 1995; Jakubowicz 1994). Jakubowicz highlights that Macedonians often lived on the outskirts of urban centres, had less economic power and a less developed intellectual class (1994). In contrast, the Greek community boasted elected members in federal and state parliaments, wielding greater political influence, and more resources. Macedonian's reduced population and influence left them with the inability to organise large scale political mobilizations to the same degree of the Greek community, evident in their 40,000-strong protest in 1991 (Jenkins, 2022). The staggering size of mobilization from Greeks in attendance nearly matches the entire Macedonian population of Victoria today, which stands at 49,419 (Victorian Government, 2024b). The Greek community's ability to mobilise large

numbers of people was a testament to it political capital in relation to that of the Macedonians, who more likely than not experienced feelings of marginalization as a result.

An official state delegitimization of Macedonian language and identity came in 1994, under the leadership of Jeff Kennett, when the Victorian Government imposed a directive to all its ministers and government agencies mandating that Macedonians be referred to as "Slav Macedonians" and their language as "Macedonian (Slavonic)" (Mulheron, 2020:294). This was the first time an Australian government had attempted to alter the self-identification and name of an immigrant community's language. This unprecedented governmental interference in the identity of an immigrant community was said to be mandated with the hope of restoring peace and harmony between Greek, Macedonian, and Slavic communities (Mulheron, 2020:294). However, Irene Veljanova argues that the directive was driven by the Greek community's political influence and voting power, creating an "empty-shelled Slav-Macedonian distinct collective" and renaming the language as "Macedonian (Slavonic)" (2010). Jakubowicz echoes this sentiment, suggesting that when "the Greek/Macedonian fracas surfaced, Greek-Australian politicians were able to target key mainstream leaders, to talk Realpolitik" (1994, p. 26). Although the Victorian government cited this as a dissociative measure (Mulheron, 2020) Veljanova believes that these measures were intended to appease the Greek community following the formal recognition of the Republic of Macedonia under its provisional name, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). In effect, the Greek community got what it wanted, at the expense of the Macedonians' claim to identity. Macedonians expressed their discontent with these measures by derogatorily referring to Kennett as "Kennettopoulos" (Danforth, 1995:172).

Jakubowicz further contends that through the Greek community, Athens played a significant role in influencing Australia's multicultural policy, which had long upheld the right of immigrant groups to self-identify (1994). The directive imposed on Macedonians violated this principle, showcasing a crude response to Greece's ultra-nationalist position (Jakubowicz, 1994). The Victorian Government's actions exacerbated an already tense situation, effectively marginalizing the Macedonian community even further. While the government claimed its motive was dissociation, intended to sustain coexistence, the policy instead reinforced one group's dominance over the other. Jakubowicz refers to this as "an ultranationalist ethnically-based reprise" (1994, p. 27), which in effect continues the quasi-colonial policies of the early 20th-century Greek state, policies that sought to erase Macedonian identity and language in northern Greece (Papadopoulos, 2016).

Jakubowicz also attributes the Greek state's influence on the Greek community's ability to "mobilize large numbers of people in demonstrations led by priests" (1994, p. 27). This was a unique display of solidarity in a Greek community that had long been divided in Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide along a left-right political spectrum, particularly between the Orthodox Archdiocese and the cities' overarching community's groups (Jakubowicz, 1994). According to Jakubowicz, rapprochement within the community was encouraged by the Greek government between 1992 and 1993, motivated by fears of a potential conflict in the Balkans (1994). The ideological divide within the diaspora, rooted in the legacy of the Greek Civil War (Damousi, 2015), was further compounded by conflicting positions on the Greek Junta dictatorship of 1967–1974, with many progressive Greeks publicly demonstrating against the regime (Damousi, 2015). However, the ability of the Greek community to unite on the basis of ethno-nationalism illustrates the enduring power of ethno-nationalism to consolidate group identity and mobilize collective action, as they imagined themselves as part of a single, unified community. The biggest casualty in this conflict was the principle of Multiculturalism itself. Although the Victorian Government's directive regarding Macedonian identity and language was framed within the context of preserving Australia's multicultural policy which emphasises tolerance and coexistence of diverse groups it ended up being "a crude reaction to the ultra-Hellenist position of the Athens government" (Jakubowicz, 1994, p. 21). As Jakubowicz notes, there is an irony in the fact that "the multiculturalist environment of Australia that has legitimised the retention of Hellenic cultural politics here, while in Greece these same Hellenic cultural politics reject a multicultural acceptance of diversity, such as Macedonian language and culture, within that country" (1994, p. 21).

This chapter has demonstrated that post-migration developments in the Balkans, particularly the dissolution of Yugoslavia and Macedonia's declaration of independence, significantly exacerbated existing tensions within the diaspora in Australia. These events intensified inter-ethnic conflicts among diaspora communities, transitioning the rivalry from the soccer pitch into broader social and political arenas. This escalation was not only driven by heightened tensions in the homeland but also by active intervention from the Greek state, which sought to mobilize its diaspora as an extension of its nationalist agenda. The analysis underscores that diaspora tensions, such as those between Greeks and Macedonians in Melbourne, were not isolated incidents but were interconnected with homeland politics, illustrating Anderson's concept of long-distance nationalism. Furthermore, the chapter shows a clear correlation between homeland crises and diasporic conflicts, particularly in how these developments

impacted Australia's multicultural experiment. The Greek community's political lobbying demonstrated the power dynamics that shaped these interactions, calling into question the efficacy of Australia's multicultural policies. This analysis sets the stage for the next chapter, which will explore how these inter-ethnic conflicts influenced broader multicultural policies in Australia and to what extent they have reproduced the fault lines of the Balkans within the host country, while addressing the overarching research question.

Chapter 3: How does the diaspora's reaction to the Prespa Agreement compare to Macedonia's declaration of independence?

> "deeply rooted in a consciousness that his exile is selfchosen
> and that the nationalism he claims on e-mail is also the ground on
> which an embattled ethnic identity is to be fashioned in the ethnicized nationstate"
> (Anderson, 1998, p 74)

The final chapter will assess the relevance of ethno-nationalism in the present by using the recent case of the Prespa Agreement and the reactions of the Greek and Macedonian communities in Melbourne between 2018 - 2020. The underlining argument is that ethno-nationalism among southeastern European diaspora in Australia remains relevant after several decades of settlement and that events in the homeland still have the potential to mobilise them. However, diaspora reactions to the 2018 Prespa Agreement holds significant divergences to the reaction of diaspora in the 1990s, namely the dynamic between diaspora and their homeland governments. In the 1990s diaspora and homeland governments clearly behaved as allies, whereas the Prespa Agreement seemingly turned them into enemies because of homelands governments willingness to compromise in pursuit of resolution on the name dispute. While the new chapter of conflict between the Greek and Macedonians in Melbourne saw the reemergence of old methods of discursive confrontation, such as demonstrations, graffiti and vandalism in public spaces and of cultural institutions, there was also an emergence of new platforms in which ethno-nationalist discourse took place, namely online social media such as the platform of Facebook.

The purpose of this section is twofold, the primary goal is to illustrate the relevance and endurance of ethno-nationalism among diaspora in the present, while underlining the utility of Anderson's *long-distance nationalism* as a framework for analysing it. The second undertaking is to connect the renewed conflict that took place between 2018 and 2020 to the existing local history between Greeks and Macedonians in Melbourne. This additional phase in the two communities localised history of tensions and conflict is important because in this specific case there is a profound change in the dynamics between diaspora and homeland governments. The compromise of the incumbent Greek government in resolving the name dispute had the effect of diaspora.

The Prespa Agreement which was signed in 2018 finally resolved the diplomatic dispute between Athens and Skopje, effectively baptizing the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonian (FYROM) with its new and internationally recognised name, North Macedonia.

Although the resolution is considered a major success for the security and stability of Southeastern Europe much of the population of either country was not welcoming to the decision, this included members of their diaspora in Melbourne. In Melbourne between 2018 and 2020 the reactions of the two communities reflected continuities of their reactions to the events that transpired in the 1990s, including protests, vandalism and violence. However, there is one striking difference, namely the diverging viewpoints of the respective states and their diaspora. For the more nationalist component of the Greek community the perception of the Macedonian people as the number one evil had been replaced by the Greek elite who in their view effectively betrayed them and the battle for Macedonia.

The re-emergence of ethnic tensions between the two communities from 2018 to 2020 presents a unique opportunity to not only assess the relevance of ethno-nationalism today in an increasingly interconnected world, but also to examine how these dynamics have been influenced by greater engagement through social media. This chapter will apply the key theoretical frameworks that have guided this research, including *long-distance nationalism* and *Balkanism*, to understand the persistence of these conflicts in a modern context and the pervasiveness of the Balkan legacy.

The Prespa Agreement

On June 17, 2018, the Name Dispute between Greece and now North Macedonia was resolved with the Prespa Agreement. Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias and Macedonian Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov signed the historic agreement that changed the constitutional name of Macedonia, to North Macedonia (Neofotistos, 2020:1). After a 27-year stalemate between the two states the issue had now been resolved, at least in terms of diplomacy. Matthew Nimetz, who for 25 years served as the mediator in the name dispute between Athens and Skopje, first on behalf of the United States and later as an envoy for the United Nations hailed the resolution as a momentous step towards securing 'regional stability' (Ellis, 2024). Greece's staunch opposition to the use of Macedonia in the name of its northern neighbour had long prevented the country's admission into NATO and the EU' (Smith H, 2018) For many experts this constituted a risk of "endangering western-style liberal politics across Europe's most historically volatile region, where growing Russian intervention is increasingly a cause for alarm" (Smith H, 2018) The two leaders of each state, Alexi Tsipras in Greece and Zoran Zaev in North Macedonia, were reported to have been

"under pressure to resolve the row" (Smith H, 2018) in light of creeping authoritarianism in the region, previously cited by North Macedonia's (then FYROM) deputy Prime Minister, Radmila Šekerinska who had told the Guardian that the country "needs [a] prospect of joining EU to thwart authoritarianism" (Wintour, 2017).

Although the Agreement was celebrated internationally as a significant advancement for the region, it is crucial to acknowledge that the Prespa Agreement lacked broad support in both countries and narrowly secured the necessary parliamentary and popular votes in Greece and its northern neighbour (Neofotistos, 2020). Before the Prespa Agreement was signed in February, when FYROM's Prime Minister, Zoran Zaev had announced his readiness to add a geographical qualifier to the countries name, considering the use of Upper Macedonia, New Macedonia or Northern Macedonian as possible new names for the republic (Smith H, 2018) Greece had 'welcomed' the compromise (Smith, 2018) but sections of Greek society were disapproving, with mass demonstrations taking place in Athens on February 5th against the proposal, with more than 100,000 people in attendance (Associated Press in Athens, 2018). These sentiments were mirrored in FYROM with protests taking place in opposition to any compromise on the naming dispute (Reuters, 2018). Additionally, it was reported that Greece's Members of Parliament that represented northern Greece were receiving death threats ahead of the parliamentary vote (Smith, 2019). These exact sentiments were also reciprocated in Melbourne, with Danforth citing that "significant hostility to the Prespa Agreement in both Greek and Macedonian diaspora communities in Australia, Canada, and the United States" (Neofotistos, 2020:43).

Continuities of diasporas reactions

The announcement of a potential compromise in the name dispute in early 2018 retriggered tensions between the Greek and Macedonian communities in Melbourne. The manifestations of both communities were very much in line with how they may have reacted if this took place during the 1990s. All the signs of *primordial sentiments*, a prevailing discourse of *Balkanism* and *long-distance nationalism* were present at both communities' protests. There is however a slight difference, being both communities' acknowledgement, and perhaps respect, for the tenet of multiculturalism. This however is mostly sounded out by their actions during, and in-between their protests each other's claim to Macedonian heritage, with a discursive battle taking place in a public setting. This discursive battle also took place on

social media, a new feature in this modern iteration of the Greek and Macedonian conflict in Melbourne.

On the 25th of February 2018 thousands of Greeks held a 'Macedonia is Greece' rally outside of the Greek Consulate of Melbourne (Neos Kosmos, 2018a). Cultural and religious organisations were present, including the Pan-Macedonian Association of Melbourne and Victoria (PMAMV), the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria (GOCMV) and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia (GOAA) (Neos Kosmos, 2018a). Protestors could be seen holding large Greek flags, along with flags of the Star of Virginia, a cultural symbol of significance for both groups, and banners proclaiming, 'Macedonia Is Greece' (Neos Kosmos, 2018a). *Neos Kosmos* reported a cross-generational participation, and published photos of individuals dressed up in ancient Macedonian and Spartan warrior attire. The photos in the article show a dominant blue and white aesthetic (2018a). For the Greek demonstrators, the rally was seemingly against what they believed was an injustice. In the words of the GOCMV president, Bill Papastergiadis, "We are fighting for justice and history" (Neos Kosmos, 2018a). The sentiment of the protestors was that the voice of the Greek diaspora was being ignored, with Papastergiadis stating "We demand respect. Macedonia was, is and will always remain Greek" (Neos Kosmos, 2018a). Also present was a Member of Victorian State Parliament, the member for Oakleigh, Steve Dimopoulos, who represents one of the largest Greek constituencies in the state of Victoria, and addressed the crowd, stating that "Macedonia is as Greek as the Acropolis. No one can steal Greek history and culture" (Neos Kosmos, 2018a).

The Macedonian community held its own protest the following weekend, on the 4th of March (SBS News, 2018). Contrasting the blue wave of the Greek rally, the Macedonian rally was described as flood of red shirts, red flares, and red flags (as opposed to blue) with the Star of Verginia (SBS News, 2018). Signs were held that read "genocide" and "Macedonians against persecution" as the crowd marched towards state parliament, exclaiming that "the people, language, identity and culture of Macedonia were under attack" (SBS News, 2018). There were banners that read: "Greeks and Pontians out of Macedonia," (Kalymnios, 2018). One speaker addressed the crowd on the steps of Parliament House stating that "We do not need to prove who we are - not to Greece, not to the European Union," and "We are who we are. We are Macedonian" (SBS News, 2018). In similar fashion to the Greek protest, many were also dressed as ancient warriors, while they chanted "Macedonia" and waved banners that read "The name is priceless", "Genocide" and "the Republic of Macedonia belongs to

Macedonians and no one else" (Offer, 2018). Organisers of the rally had called for the use of flares to cease, reminding demonstrators it was a peaceful protest (Offer, 2018). But demonstrators did not adhere to the calls as two piles of Greek flags were set alight at the front of State Parliament, while the burning of a Bulgarian flag had also been reported (Offer, 2018).

The dismay of each group broke out into a discursive conflict taking the form of graffiti and vandalism of cultural and religious places. The day after the Greek rally reports of retaliatory and "disgusting, racist" banners were erected around Melbourne including signs stating "Greeks are Turks" alongside the Greek flag, defaced with a penis, on a busy freeway in Melbourne's east (Smith, 2018a). A poster with the words 'Fuck Greece for Unfairness' and 'Fuckin Racists' on the backdrop of the Greek flag with the swastika in place where the cross is usually situated was also found on the Greek Orthodox church in North Balwyn (Smith, 2018b). On March 5 *ABC News* reported that "Melbourne's Macedonian Community [was] shocked by a spree of violent and racist graffiti sprayed onto its community buildings" (Dunstan, 2018). The Lalor United Sloga Football Club was defaced with phrases such as 'death to you all' alongside the words 'Skop Dogs', 'death', 'Ellas' and 'Kosovo is Serbia' (Dunstan, 2018). The Macedonian Orthodox Church of St Nikola was also victim to defacement of its building too, with similar messages such as 'Fuck Skopje' and "Ellas Makedonia" (Dunstan, 2018). These actions were attributed to 'passionate youth' who had been inflamed, particularly in the Greek community, by the Greek Community's lack of commitment to the "national Cause" (Kalymnios, 2018).

The unnamed Greek youth took to Facebook to rally the support of the broader Greek community against the Macedonian rally on the 4th of March. *Neos Kosmos* reported on the youth group's rally cries and of other hardliners in the community engaging with the post (2018). The youth group posted; "as Australian citizens we have every right to stand outside Parliament House holding Australian flags and protest against FYROM being named 'Macedonia' as Fyromians protesters want. We held our rally last week but did not offend anyone while since then there have been many offensive and derogatory anti-Greek mottos on the internet and on the streets" (Neos Kosmos, 2018b). One user, Peter Kallas, reposted the groups post, urging Greeks to use their "democratic rights" to counter the Macedonian demonstration (Neos Kosmos, 2018b). Kallas employed a plethora of ancient and recent local memories in an attempt to mobilise others, stating "After years of racial abuse and vandalism by the Slavic fraudsters the Greeks have had enough" and lamenting the youth

group as “A phalanx of 300 stand up men named in honour of Leonidas I & his immortals” while congratulating them for “preparing to demonstrate their Democratic rights as citizens of this nation to support our government’s non recognition of Fyrom” (Neos Kosmos, 2018b). Kallas in his post resorted to demeaning and delegitimising words, such as the referring of Macedonians as ‘Fyromians’ and calling their claims to national identity as ‘whacky’ (Neos Kosmos, 2018b). Kallas attempts to weaponize civic rights, rather ironically, so to “show Fyromians” that “the Greeks are coming accept it and adhere to the principles of our secular democratic nation” (Neos Kosmos, 2018b). When *Neos Kosmos* invited Kallas to comment whether he would attend the counter rally, he confirmed and stated, “that this is a constitutional democratic right we are entitled to as Australian citizens” (Neos Kosmos, 2018b).

It should be noted that leaders of the Greek community were actively lobbying members of the Greek against going to the Macedonian rally. The *Neos Kosmos* article that published the youth group’s rally cry was titled *‘No’ to the FYROM counter-rally on Sunday* (2018). Similarly, when the events of the vandalising of the church and soccer club took place, community members pleaded for the cooling of tensions for the sake of multiculturalism. Father Mile Taleski from the church raised concern for the broader implications on social cohesion revealing that, “We've got parishioners coming here, we've got kids — most of their friends are Greek — what should we explain to those little kids" (Dunstan, 2018). In similar vein a prominent member of the Greek community also condemned the vandalising of the Macedonian church as ‘heinous and disgusting acts of desecration” (Kalymnios, 2018). Even the national coordinator of the Pan-Macedonian Federation of Australia denounced the vandalism, stating ‘We are respectful of other people’s property and in this instance, other people’s places of worship” adding that there is “no place in a democratic society, there's no place in a multicultural society for things like this to be taking place, there has to be respect, mutual respect"(Dunstan, 2018). All of this shows a potential repentance of both communities, and particularly the Greeks, for their blatant disregard of multiculturalism in the 1990s. Outside of that though, it seems that the behaviour of the two communities has largely remained consistent.

The series of events taken place in the lead up to the Prespa Agreement establish that diaspora’s susceptibility to ethno-nationalism persists, and that political events in the homeland still impact the environment in which diaspora relate to each other (Michael, 2015). The obvious way in which ethnic fault lines have been replicated in this current

circumstance is the aspect of the Greek community that was protesting the Prespa Agreement in the same way that Greeks in Greece also did. What stands out though is the aspect of the diaspora which seems to be oblivious to the potential benefits such an agreement would have for their homeland's security. What Nimetz affirms as a success for regional stability for a conflict prone region is a completely moot point for the hardliners in Melbourne. This shows that although memory is important for the primordial claims of each group, this memory is rather selective, actively ignoring the very real memories of war and violence. With no desire of certain diaspora to mitigate such risks implies their willingness to continue the regions historical fragmentation and thus perpetual create conditions for future conflict. This speaks to Anderson's idea that a long-distance nationalist "creates a serious politics that is…radically unaccountable" (1998, p74). For instance, while Peter Kallas sits on his computer (or smartphone) and propagates dangerous nationalist claims, and intolerant vitriol, from the comfort of his geographically displaced Australian he is facilitating the replication of the regions fault lines without any real consequence for his actions. By the same token, Kallas is totally aware of the fact that 'his exile is selfchosen' for he repeatedly defends his pro-Hellenist stands on the basis that it is his 'democratic rights' to do so and assumes the role of an online "national hero" (1998, p74). Kallas, like the youth keen to fight Macedonians and hide behind their Australian civic rights are seemingly ok with fashioning an embattled ethnic identity.

The fact that it is taking place on Facebook reflects Skrbiš's argument that *long-distance nationalism* adapts to the globalized world, where the physical distance between diaspora and homeland no longer diminishes the intensity of national belonging. The adaptability of ethno-nationalism and our evolving globalised setting is captured in Chernobrov (2022) who argued that discursive wars on social media have overtaken violent altercations between adversarial groups. By connecting Cjerpbrov (2002) theory to Ghassan Hage's (1998) preestablished exploration of public displays as forms of negotiation over power and belonging, the graffiti wars between Greek and Macedonian communities in Melbourne during the 2018 protests can be understood as more than mere vandalism. These acts reflect the communities' efforts to assert ownership over public space and their ethnic identity. As Hage (1998) suggests, such displays are often symbolic battles over inclusion and exclusion, where graffiti becomes a way to contest the dominant narratives that either suppress or delegitimize ethnic claims. In this instance, the graffiti on churches and community centres were not only an expression of nationalist sentiment but also an act of resistance against perceived marginalization. But the

dangers of social media are more pronounced for as Chernobrov (2022) points out social media interactions not only make contentious issues more visible but also have the potential to turn dormant members of the community during a conflict into active participants because of constant engagement online. In any case these discursive battles indicate again the extent to which Southeastern European fault lines are replicated in Australia. At least in the case of the graffiti vandals, diaspora seemingly go out of their way to drag in other nationalities of Southeastern Europe into their conflict, either by way of offending them with comparisons such as 'Greeks are Turks' or tagging the words 'Kosovo is Serbia' on a Macedonian church. This indicates a prevailing perpetuation of Todorova's discourse of *Balkanism,* with both community's intent on preserving the historical fragmentation of the region and by extension internalising negative expectations of hatred of one another. This analysis can also be extended to the constant reference of Macedonians as 'Fyromians' by members of the Greek community.

Finally, what is interesting, is the clear break from the past, in the case of the Greek demonstrator's divergence with the Greek state. The Greek protest took place at the Greek consulate, a clear sign of their dismay towards the Greek state. But what is more interesting is the chosen words of Papastergiadis, namely the demand for 'respect' towards the diaspora. This shows a similarity in the calls of the Macedonian diaspora, particularly their perception of good and evil based on the dynamics of oppressed versus oppressor. The Greek community in this instance is implying that a wrongdoing by the Greek state to the diaspora, whether it is reference to the compromise itself, or their sentiments of being ignored, indicating how the belief of good and evil can be constructed on the dynamics of power, and in this instance, members of the Greek community feeling powerless.

Disagreement in the Greek Community

The SYRIZA government's role in the ratification of the Prespa Agreement had the effect of confusing members of the Greek diaspora in Melbourne. The agreement marked a profound departure from the previous alignment between the Greek diaspora and its homeland's government. Where the Greek government once actively fanned ethno-nationalist sentiments among Melbourne's Greek community through its direct or indirect interventions, it now must face up to the same community with its reversed position. Staunch opposers of the Prespa Agreement such as the Pan-Macedonian Federation of Australia, and its offspring in

Victoria labelled the agreement as “shameful and treacherous” (The National Herald, 2019). However, this was not the view of all the diaspora and as one might expect produced a dichotomy of opinion. In many ways, this can also be seen as the legacy of the Greeks in Melbourne, and in general, being characterised by a left and right divide. The unveiling of this schism within the Greek community was bought on by the announcement of visiting elected officials from Greece to Melbourne.

The first signs of reported conflict within the Greek community came in February 2019, when Greece’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Terrence Quick announced plans to visit Australia during the Commemoration of Greek Independence on 25 March (The Greek Media Group, 2019). The Greek Media Group (GMG) reported that the president of Pan-Mac in Melbourne, Andre Ballis condemned the visit and called on the Greek community to protest Quick’s presence. The GMG’s article referred to Ballis’ statement which branded the Greek Government as “an irreconcilable and unexpected enemy” to Pan-Macedonia’s “endless struggle…to preserve the cultural heritage of the fortress of Macedonian Hellenism from antiquity to the present” (2019). Ballis in his statement cosigned the support of several Greek groups, including the preeminent GOCMV and stated that the organisations accepted unanimously the motion put forward at a meeting held on 14 February. Upon release, Spiros Papadopoulos, a representative of the GOCMV, rejected the claim of unanimous support, stating that “Mr Ballis’ letter does not express our Organisation’s views” (Greek Media Group, 2019). GMG reported that Ballis rejected Papadopoulos claim, stating that the President of the Greek community, Bill Papastergiadis “was given a copy of the Press Release days before it went public” and asked him to reaffirm his position, to which he didn’t (Greek Media Group, 2019). “Ballis expressed his astonishment as Mr Papastergiadis had stated in a meeting, prior to the 2018 rally against the Greek Government, that “the Greek Community is with you” (The Greek Media Group, 2019).

In March it was revealed that SYRIZA MP and Vice President of Parliament, Giorgos Varemenos would also be a guest of honour at the Commemorative Service of Greek Independence Day in Melbourne on the 24th of March. Every year, the Greek Community in Melbourne commemorates Independence Day at the Shrine of Remembrance (Neos Kosmos, 2019a). This is a significant event for the Greek community as it is the only ethnic group in Melbourne with the privilege of using the Shrine for the purposes of a non-Australian cultural celebrations. For the Greek community of Melbourne, the March has become a localised tradition. In the words of a prominent member of the Greek community, the March “as it has

evolved, has less to do with Greece per se and more to do with the perpetuation of our own identity and culture as Greek Australians" (Kalymnios, 2019). The commemorations begin at Saint Eustathios in the morning and is proceeded by youth from various Greek School marching around the shrine (Neos Kosmos, 2019a). Current and former Parliamentarians of Greek descent are present, alongside the Premier of Victoria and the Leader of the Opposition (Neos Kosmos, 2019). Often in attendance are distinguished guests from Greece too, invited by the Organising Committee for the celebration of the National Anniversary and in 2019, SYRIZA MP and Vice President of the Parliament, Giorgos Varemenos were present, as a guest of honour (Neos Kosmos, 2019a).

It had been reported by *Neos Kosmos*, that in light of disapproval of some members of the community that the Organising Committee that invited Varemenos tried to withdraw their invitation, but it was too late (Neos Kosmos, 2019b). The article reports that on the 23rd of March, Varemenos, held a press conference at the Greek Consulate in defiance to the community's negative reception to his visit due to the Prespa Agreement. Neos Kosmos reported that Varemenos' press conference stressed a «Μήνυμα ενότητας» (message of unity) (Neos Kosmos, 2019b). Varemenos attributed the mass mobilization of the 1990s as the Greek community's contributions of «εθνικές υπηρεσίες» (national service) (Neos Kosmos, 2019b). Varemenos then stated that the Prespa Agreement is the «μεγαλύτερη ελληνική διπλωματική επιτυχία από το 1974 έως σήμερα» (Greatest diplomatic success since 1974 until today) (Neos Kosmos, 2019b). With what proceeded the next day it is almost certain that this statement inflamed sentients aggrieved members of the community.

On the morning of the Commemorative service proceedings took place at Saint Eustathios, with Varemenos in attendance. The Bishop Iakovos cited concerns about the Prespe Agreement and the way it was ratified and issued a warning of "the dangers that lie in governments not listening to their citizens, citing an old Greek proverb: "Φωνή λαού, οργή Θεού." (The voice of the people is the wrath of God.) (Kalymnios, 2019). Then, prior to the commencement of the March, members of Pan-Mac handed out flyers containing the lyrics of *Μακεδονία Ξακουστή (Macedonia Renown),* a well-known patriotic song patriotic song (Kalymnios, 2019). When processions took place after the March at the Shrine, Varemonos was invited to address the crowd. Upon speaking, Varemenos was booed and called a traitor by members of the Greek community that disapproved of the Prespa Agreement (Ta Nea, 2019). Spectators chanted "Greece, Greece Macedonia", and proceeded to call the MP a "bum" and the SYRIZA government "traitors" and began booing him (Ta Nea, 2019). It was

also reported that bottles were thrown in his direction (Neos Kosmos, 2019). The crude display at the Shrine led to the 2019 commemoration being the final time the March was to take place their again. Upon returning to Greece, Varemenos commented on the behaviour of he was met with in Melbourne, describing the chants as "fascistic" when speaking to THEMA radio (Proto Thema, 2019). The Greek consular general, Dimitris Michalopoulos, stated in an after account that the "extremists, guided by their personal interest, their tendency for self-promotion…seduced the Greek community to paths that led to the diversions" (Neos Kosmos, 2020).

The nationalist fervour of members of the Greek community shows a level of disconnection from the practical political reality of Greece's foreign policy. These fringe members of the Greek communities maintain an idealised expectations which conflicts with the evolving policies and realities within Greece itself. This phenomenon of unaccountable nationalism reflects Anderson's notion that diaspora members being distanced from the immediate consequences of political decisions. It also shows how this cohort fits Anderson's assumption that often diaspora can be the most vehement nationalists, clinging on to historic narratives, such as the historic fragmentation of the region. In many ways however, some responsibility can be placed on Greece too, for their instigating during the 1990s effectively let the genie out the bottle. This shows how local history of the conflict also play a vital role in the present manifestations of the conflict as Greece set a certain level of expectations for the diaspora. It should therefore be no surprise that certain members of the Greek diaspora feel betrayed by what they consider as a backflip by the Greek government.

Conclusion

In concluding this thesis, attention should be bought back to what has been examined, namely the extent to which the ethnic fault lines of Southeastern Europe have been reproduced within Australia's Balkan communities. This thesis's focuses on the Greek and Macedonian communities in Melbourne and has produced findings that indicate that these fault lines, initially transplanted through post-war migration, have adapted and taken on a localised form, which have been influenced by both pre-migration histories and post-migration developments.

The first sub-question addressed how these ethnic fault lines emerged in Australia, showing that recent memories of conflict, such as the Greek Civil War, played a significant role in shaping diasporic identities. These memories facilitated the replication of historical tensions, further entrenched by Australia's immigration policies that ethnicized these communities and in turn marginalized them.

The second sub-question explored how post-migration developments in the homeland, particularly the dissolution of Yugoslavia, impacted existing tensions in the diaspora. It was found that political crises in Southeastern Europe amplified nationalist fervour within Melbourne's Greek and Macedonian communities, illustrating Anderson's concept of long-distance nationalism.

The third sub-question examined the diaspora's reaction to the Prespa Agreement and compared it to Macedonia's declaration of independence. It demonstrated the persistence of ethno-nationalism, which remains a powerful force among diaspora communities, albeit with some divergence in sentiment between the Greek state and its diaspora. While old forms of ethnic antagonism persisted, the introduction of new platforms, such as social media, allowed for an evolution in how these conflicts manifest.

The hypothesis that ethnic fault lines between Greek and Macedonian communities in Melbourne are a continuation of historical events that have taken place in Southeastern Europe has been largely supported by the findings. However, these conflicts have indeed taken on a localised form, shaped by new dynamics of settlement and identity formation, as well as by homeland developments and Australia's multicultural framework. This localised

adaptation reveals the complex ways in which diaspora identity, ethno-nationalism, and historical legacy intersect, perpetuating conflict even within a multicultural society.

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