

Disembedding conflicting identities in the Western Balkans

Conflict Sensitivity in the EU Integration Tools

By Geert Luteijn & Katharina Mathias

Abstract

The Future of Western Balkans (WB) is closely related to the developments in the European Union. The EU sets conditions for the region's economic, political and social integration which, if fulfilled, could lead to membership. This EU integration model has been developed through several integration rounds for new member states. It provides numerous tools and means to assist fulfilling the EU conditions. However, through their lack of conflict-sensitivity, they are poorly equipped to foster the integration of a post-conflict society. Additionally, the current focus on economic integration impedes the necessary holistic approach to stabilize the region. In this respect, this paper discusses two cases: North Kosovo and Sandžak. Both regions still suffer from high political and social tensions.

Key words: EU integration, post-conflict societies, Western Balkans, North Kosovo, Sandžak

This research will argue that a conflict sensitive approach mainstreamed within the EU integration tools is crucial for post conflict societies. It may sound like an open door, but our case studies show that EU policy is driven by a different agenda. The EU sees institution- and statebuilding as well as taking away economic borders as its traditional role in assisting potential member states. These focuses disregard important conflict lines in a society and thereby result in new potentials for conflict. In this respect, the current EU approach has not been adapted to the actual on-the-ground situation and thereby lacks the ability to successfully support the Balkan countries to overcome tensions and root causes of conflict. Hence, the EU policies even contribute to the reinforcement of the region's state of a 'negative peace' (defined solely as the absence of violence). This development becomes specifically evident in the EU approach of establishing good neighbourhood relations of the prospective member states and the countries surrounding them. A shift in policies is needed in order to assist the development towards a sustainable democracy and 'positive peace', which requires the elimination of root causes of violence and overcoming social divisions through reconciliation.¹

Integrating this conflict-sensitive approach in the Balkan's EU integration process is inevitable for many reasons. First of all, conflict lines cut straight through states on the Western Balkans. The only sustainable way to reach positive peace and make these states and societies democratic is to bridge these cleavages. Secondly, this integration round will further highly reflect on the EU capacities to maintain its original role as a political force for peace in Europe. Within the current EU legitimacy crisis, the EU cannot afford the integration of new politically instable member states. Thirdly, the question arises how many sacrifices the WB countries are willing to make for their integration. In this respect, a successful integration demands overcoming certain identities created by the former conflicts, which are currently triggering the still on-going tensions and still play a vital role in political mobilization. At last, a successful integration of the Western Balkans is likely to be exemplary for EU relations with other neighbouring regions as the South Caucasus or North Africa. Hence, this conflict-sensitive approach is not only applicable for the EU integration process itself, but also for a closer EU association without membership aiming at stabilizing surrounding regions.

Conflicts in Sandžak and North Kosovo: Causes and policy implications

As this paper will show, the EU integration tools tend to focus on the integration of formerly conflicting states. This approach is capable of explaining the European integration process in West-

¹ Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*, (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1996).

Europe quite extensively. After the Second World War, reconciliation between states was established by bringing the states economically closer together and taking away trade barriers. The former inter-state conflicts lines were therefore to a good extent overlapping with the “lines of EU integration” between the states by supporting (mainly economic) cooperation. However, the recent conflicts on the Balkans have different conflict lines stemming from the fact that religious/ethnic groups used to live together in the Yugoslav republics. Conflict has changed this only partly. In some cases groups still live on the same territory where in other cases areas have been ethnically cleansed of one of the groups. However, state borders are not identical with ethnic lines in the societies (see Figure 1). Conflict areas can be detected where specific groups are mixed or at “ethnic borders”.

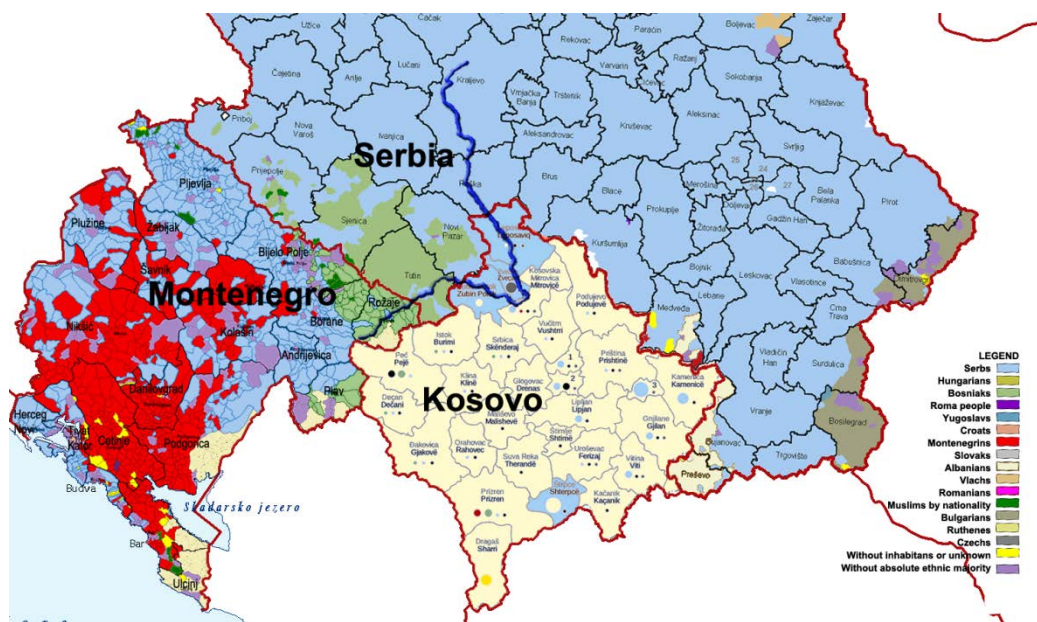


Figure 1: Ethnicity in the Ibar region²

In this respect, the current model that worked for Western Europe can be associated with instrumental reconciliation which aims at separation, a trustworthy relationship and peaceful coexistence between states while neglecting the past.³ Accordingly, the current EU tools of integration only address the establishment of good neighbourhood state relations between the former republics of Yugoslavia. However, due to the occurrence of intra-state conflicts this approach falls short on ensuring peace. The typical intra-state conflict outcome of social divisions still persist within the societies and triggers

² Sources: Serbia Census of 2002; Montenegro Census of 2003; Kosovo estimations of 2005.

³ Arie Nadler and Nurit Shnabel, ‘Instrumental and Socioemotional Paths to Intergroup Reconciliation and Needs-Based Model of Socioemotional Reconciliation’, in Arie Nadler, et al. (eds.) *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Reconciliation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 40 ff.

tensions and conflicts, even if the WB states are now separated as independent government units. Hence, an accurate response entails the concept of socioemotional reconciliation which is associated to intra-state conflict management. It includes dealing with the past and the history of recent conflicts and animosities between ethnic/religious groups. This necessity stems from the fact that instability is still caused by political mobilization along conflict lines. It is seen as the normal way of doing business and politics as well as it reflects on the people's low trust in other groups and states. The result is the persistence of high potential for renewed conflict. Conflict sensitivity therefore defines the need to adapt the conflict management through EU integration to the actual conflict situation.

The paper examines two cases to substantiate the argument that a conflict sensitive approach, with other words an approach that fosters socioemotional reconciliation, to the WB post-conflict area is crucial. The north of Kosovo is in a state of anarchy: there is virtually no rule of law.⁴ The violent conflict in 1998 and 1999 divided the territory between the ethnic groups of Kosovo Albanians and Serbs (see map in Figure 1). The European Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) supports the new state in South Kosovo. However it has been obstructed by power mongers in the North which profit from the on-going status issue between the Kosovo government and Serbia. Within the EU five countries refuse⁵ to accept the independence of Kosovo, forcing EULEX to act 'status neutral'.

The instability of the current situation reveals itself when for instance NATO forces were supposed to limit their presence by reducing troops, but recalled these plans in August 2011 due to the heightening of tensions in the North.⁶ Kosovo Serbs blocked all important roads going through the North to border crossings with Serbia since the Kosovo state moved to these checkpoints to enforce its border policy.⁷ Previously only officials of the Serbian state manned these posts controlling (what they call an 'administrative line'). This new incident should be seen as part of the ongoing conflict. The conflict may not be violent like in 1998 and 1999 and has changed since considerably, but is still nourished by the same root causes stemming from unsought issues and still polarize ethnic identities. Nationalism politicized issues of land ownership, cultural heritage and state borders, the recent past polarized ethnic identities. Identities have become embedded in society which makes their transformation a long-term

⁴ International Crisis Group, *North Kosovo: Dual Sovereignty in Practice*, pp. 2–3; and Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, *Security Situation in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica During the Period December 2008 and January 2009*, (Pristina: Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, 2009), pp. 66.

⁵ Spain, Romania, Cyprus, Greece and Slovakia currently do not recognize Kosovo.

⁶ Reuters, *NATO to send extra troops to Kosovo*, (PRISTINA/BRUSSELS, August 2, 2011), [online], accessed at 13 September 2011, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/02/us-kosovo-nato-idUSTRE7712FK20110802>

⁷ B92, Serbs in Kosovo print leaflets of their own, 20.09.2011, [online], accessed 20 September 2011, available at: http://www.b92.net/eng/news/politics-article.php?yyyy=2011&mm=09&dd=20&nav_id=76472

and comprehensive process necessarily addressing the past, present and future. Hence, recent developments show that this process is not automatically successful. The current focus on inter-state conflict management tools alone has proven insufficient. Without commitment from both sides to a regional approach including socioemotional reconciliation, the situation can easily escalate and lead to new violence.

In Sandžak the situation is similar in a number of areas. Although Serbs, Bosniaks and other groups do not live in separate territories, the division of social activity between ethnic groups is creating conflict potential. Neglect of the region by the Serbian Government has led to renewed tensions and public uprisings.⁸ The ethnically mixed area sandwiched between Kosovo, Montenegro and Bosnia experienced official state terror against its minorities (mostly Muslim-Slavs/Bosniaks) during the Milosevic regime, including ethnic cleansing, kidnappings, murders, arbitrary arrests, violent attacks and job dismissals. These issues have only been partly addressed by subsequent governments and by political and social groups in Serbia. Still, until recently, the potential for ethnic violence was relatively low.⁹ However, continued neglect by the government and the subtle and open discrimination against Bosniaks in the past few years has changed the situation. Many Bosniaks fear that discrimination and exclusion will worsen, which has led to the increased polarisation of issues along ethnic lines. Furthermore, intra-ethnic tensions have also risen. The Bosniak community is increasingly divided on how to respond to the political situation.¹⁰

In both conflicts, the root causes can be described as division within society along ethnic lines on the bases of politically and socially constructed long-standing conflicting identities. This division is reflected in the distribution of wealth, social positions and state power.¹¹ For the society as a whole this has led to underdevelopment, an unequal distribution of wealth¹² and the development of nationalist / religious ideologies. As an outcome, group hierarchy in society with socioeconomic discrimination has been constructed. Additionally, in the case of Kosovo, the state has been organized along the ethnic division: parallel state structures in some Serbian majority areas in Kosovo are the clearest example.

⁸ International Crisis Group, *Serbia's Sandžak: Still Forgotten*, Europe Report No. 162, (Belgrade/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2005).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.i.

¹⁰ Justin Vela, 'Serbia's Sandžak at odds with Belgrade', *Transconflict*, [online], accessed 16 May 2011, available at <http://www.transconflict.com/2010/12/serbia-sandzak-at-odds-with-belgrade-712/>

¹¹ Susan L. Woodward, 'Do the Root Causes of Civil War Matter? On Using Knowledge to Improve Peacebuilding Interventions', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2007), p. 150.

¹² Hence, the distribution itself is organized along ethnic lines; furthermore there is a difference in accumulated wealth between the ethnic groups.

The history of conflict in this region is a reinforcing factor as the experiences of war and discrimination are outcomes of former conflicts (or steady low-level conflict), but have also become root causes of the still high tensions. The people remain vulnerable to inter-ethnic¹³ and intra-ethnic¹⁴ tensions, as well as to political exploitation of the ethnic division that traces back to the experienced violence, ethnic discrimination and trauma. The economic situation in both regions is very poor, with no significant progress from either the regional development, or the progression of EU integration.

European Integration: Tools & Frameworks, Political and Financial Instruments

The conflict analysis showed that the conflicts in the Western Balkans have created a specific socio-political structure. In this respect, two main characteristics stand out in their impact on the current EU integration process. Firstly, the current state borders are not necessarily the conflict lines. This stemmed from the fact that the dissolution of Yugoslavia has been an intra-state conflict. Moreover, the EU integration policies and tools imply a completed social disintegration of Yugoslavia, which is not the case. In societies in the WB ethnic identities are at least as important as civic identities. The main conflict areas such as Sandzak and North-Kosovo are exactly sandwiched by the different political forces as EU integration, the assumed Yugoslavian disintegration (through the state-focus of the EU) as well as different identity concepts overlapping with the conflict lines. Therefore this situation has certain implications for EU integration tools – when defined as a force aiming at establishing peace in the Western Balkans.

Hence, there is an important role for the EU to promote social structures that break with the existing separation in the Western Balkans. The current integration tools are in many ways not able to address these critical problems. In this respect, there can be several tools distinguished: (1) international treaties as the frameworks for policy implementation and co-operation, (2) political pressure from different institutions, and (3) investment in development projects.¹⁵ The question remains how these tools work in relation to the social reality in the region.

At first, it is important to make a distinction between the two levels: the bilateral level, associated with international relations, where state actors play their role, and the intra-society level, where, in this case,

¹³ International Crisis Group, *North Kosovo: Dual Sovereignty in Practice*, Europe Report No. 211, (Pristina/Mitrovica/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2011).

¹⁴ Transconflict, *Sandžak*, [online], accessed 26 April 2011, available at <http://www.transconflict.com/about/where-we-work/sandzak/>

¹⁵ Luteijn, Geert and Mathias, Katharina. *Serbia: Cross-border cooperation as a EU peace-building tool*, (Brussels/Belgrade: European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) & NGO Fractal, July 2011).

ethnic groups are the main actors.¹⁶ The fact that there is not necessarily an overlap of these lines poses several problems to EU tools. First, in order to reconcile the different ethnic groups, co-operation between these groups needs to be facilitated, regardless of any state borders. While this is a necessity for reconciliation in the region, it defies the logical way to the integration for individual states. States are the units that can pursue EU membership and reconciliation across borders is often interpreted as a threat for their integrity and political autonomy. However, state-building and state integration as well as socioemotional reconciliation need to be addressed. While state-building through e.g. political pressure on political elites as well as EU funding is important, facilitating reconciliation on the ground is just as important, but less tackled by the EU integration tools at the moment. The consequences are evident inter alia as the high tensions in the region are remaining, even after so many years of EU engagement processes.

The European Union sets criteria for prospective member countries which currently solely focus on the inter-state level. The most important are the Copenhagen criteria¹⁷. In this respect, the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) and the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) define through Article 6¹⁸ the commitment of the countries to foster ‘good neighbourly relations’ with other SAA or SAP countries¹⁹. This has resulted in interstate co-operation as a requirement for the WB states and the set-up of cross-border co-operation programmes supported by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) funding. For instance, Serbia and Montenegro have already drafted and are in the process of implementing a respective programme.²⁰ Its primary goal is to facilitate confidence-building and overcome conflicts as well as local divisions that are the results of the new state borders. The programme is indeed establishing contact points at a local level between the citizens of Serbia and Montenegro; however, the previous conflict analysis showed that the divisions in Sandžak are according to ethnic groups, which have been mobilised by certain political groups, not according to borders. Although the cross-border co-operation project focuses on economic and social co-operation between communities, the main stakeholders in the project are the states which frame and plan the

¹⁶ See e.g.: Julie A. Mertus, *Kosovo. How myths and truths started a war*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 230.

¹⁷ European Council, *Conclusions of the Presidency, Copenhagen*, June 1993, [online], accessed 1 May 2011, available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=DOC/93/3&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

¹⁸ Council of the European Union, *Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Communities and their Communities and their Member States of the One Part, and the Republic of Serbia, of the Other Part*, Luxemburg, 2008, [online], accessed 25 April 2011, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/serbia/key_document/saa_en.pdf

¹⁹ Ibid, Article 15.

²⁰ Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Finance and Republic of Montenegro, Secretariat of European Integration, *IPA Cross Border Programme 2007–2013*, p. 5f.

programme, while local actors and civil society are only participating as consultative bodies, but can further apply for funding from the budget of EUR 500,000 per year.²¹

Although the programme aims at overcoming conflict, conflict analysis is generally lacking in the programme's documents, in contrast to, for example, economic assessment.²² This indicates the focus of the programme. In line with most EU integration tools, it does not tackle the social structures along ethnic lines that are creating conflict potential. It rather focuses on state borders and through its further limitation to economic cooperation, it moreover neglects the possibilities of establishing contacts within different and diverse groups of the societies. Hence, it lacks conflict sensitivity which could even lead to a heightening of tensions. If socioeconomic development through trade and people-to-people activity is unequal between ethnic groups, people may perceive this cross-border co-operation as furthering exclusion and discrimination. It, therefore, risks reinforcing the existing structural divisions on the basis of social, political and economical conditions. The SWOT analysis in this programme document also ignores the triggers of tension: in the threat assessment, the risk of strengthening social divisions, and thereby increasing the potential for conflict potential, is absent. Hence, it is clear that no project is following any conflict sensitivity or 'Do-no-Harm' regulations, nor is any intra- or inter-ethnic co-operation encouraged in the guidelines for application.²³ Hence, it can be concluded that policy coherence is a crucial issue in this respect. Accordingly, the current tools have the capabilities to tackle the pressing issues. They need to be adapted to the conflict situation and conflict sensitivity mainstreamed throughout all socio-economic and technical development tools.²⁴

Another problem is the actual knowledge management by the EU as it is further developing the tools according to lessons-learned and evaluations. In this respect, the EU assesses the consequences of such programmes in a technocratic way: the objectives become the guidelines for evaluation. If the objectives are not conflict sensitive, neither are the evaluations by the EU. In this respect, conflict resolution is one aim according to the guidelines but through the lack of mainstreaming it in the programme, indicators and impact of projects do not properly focus on the actual conflict lines. Hence, even the latest progress report to Serbia in 2010 showed that the EC is aware of the problem of rising

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5f.

²² See SWOT analysis, *Ibid.*, p. 26 ff; SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats.

²³ Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Finance and Republic of Montenegro, Secretariat for European Integration, Joint Technical Secretariat, *Cross-border Programme Serbia-Montenegro, Supported by European Union, Potential Applicants*, [online], accessed 1 May 2011, available at http://www.cbcsrb-mne.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67&Itemid=70&lang=en

²⁴ Luteijn, Geert and Mathias, Katharina. *Serbia: Cross-border cooperation as a EU peacebuilding tool*, (Brussels/Belgrade: European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) & NGO Fractal, July 2011).

tensions in Sandžak.²⁵ However, this is not reflected in the project's framing and evaluation.

The Kosovo-Serbia case further exemplifies how the two different forces of EU integration (inter-state) as well as not yet finalized Yugoslavian disintegration (intra-state) are working. While the inter-state cooperation is a requirement for EU integration, the socially constructed in- and out-group separation along border-cutting ethnic lines sets limits for any further conflict resolution in the region. For instance, Serbia currently blocks Kosovo's entry to regional institutions like the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) which poses a great obstacle to regional cooperation²⁶ organised through several organs related to Council. An example is the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), which ensures free trade within the region. Kosovo was part of this agreement under UNMIK. The political constraints are still too tense for overcoming them – even the current dialogue facilitated by the EU will in this respect most likely only bring about minor changes in the state relations. Hence, it can be concluded that inter-group socioemotional reconciliation is even a precondition for the successful adaption and implementation of current EU inter-state integration tools.

Bilateral state agreements, as the current EU tools subscribe, are thereby important in order to develop good neighbourly relations and establish co-operation in order to address the integration of the different states. It is especially vital for areas that have a history of social, political and economic entanglement. This is the case both in Sandžak and North Kosovo. However, the states' co-operation needs to be complemented by tools actually addressing the social conflict lines. Only when the Yugoslavian disintegration is finalized through profound reconciliation, the preconditions are created for traditional, 'non-conflict-sensitive' state cooperation. In the respect of supporting this development, the EU has the leverage by using its political influence on the governments through its institutions and financial assistance through IPA funds.

However, there is high reluctance among the elites but also in society of actually addressing conflict lines. While the political and economic elite aims to capitalize this situation for their personal gain, political mobilization along ethnic/religious lines is an often used mechanism in order to achieve goals in domestic politics. Accordingly, the political pressure from the EU needs to address the conflict potential against the political will of most elites as well as against the will of vulnerable social groups which have been mobilized, as it could be seen in the latest incidents in North Kosovo. In the current

²⁵ European Commission, *Serbia 2010 Progress Report*, Brussels, 2010, [online], accessed 5 April 2011, available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2010/package/sr_rapport_2010_en.pdf, pp. 18–19.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

nationalistic environment – and with the interest of the high-level elite to neglect conflict areas – reconciliation and sustainable local development is difficult to be achieved when addressed only through high-level political actors. Hence, a shift towards a conflict-sensitive, low-level and people-owned EU integration approach for releasing the inter-group tensions is necessary which needs to be mainstreamed throughout all EU policies regarding the Western Balkans integration process.

Wrapping up towards conflict sensitive and people-centred EU policy

Our case studies show that the EU is aware of the still on-going low-level conflicts within the region, but fails to act upon this information. The framing and implementation of for instance the Cross Border Cooperation programmes is extremely poor regarding their effectiveness as a peacebuilding instrument. Hence, a change in policy that conditions EU support for Balkan states is necessary. The conditions that we advocate would acknowledge conflict potentials in the region and commitment of states to work on these potentials intensively. That means actively overcoming barriers between ethnic/religious groups.

Our research and experiences on the WB point out that the states are not wholeheartedly working on reconciliation. Therefore, EU support for the governments as well as state building activities should be critically discussed. Government institutions are currently used to exploit ethnic/religious differences and influence for example the mobilization of voters along ethnic lines. The EU has reacted to this by advocating policies that facilitate power-sharing, protection/subvention of minority rights, regional autonomy, decentralization and quotas for representation of groups. However, these policies bear the risk of polarization. When more ethnically homogeneous administrative units in a state are created, it can serve as a basis for reinforcing ethnic identities and mobilizing these identities politically²⁷. There are strong indicators that this is happening in Sandžak at the moment. At first, general bad governance, centralism and corruption appeared to local groups as official ethnic discrimination.²⁸ In the following years, ethnic-based representation replaced general majoritarian competition as a peace building tool as advocated by the EU. Serbia's implementation of these separatist instruments is still problematic in many ways and prone to political misuse by the elite. This has led to an increase of tensions and demands for autonomy in the region.²⁹ The International Crisis Group assessed the risks – resulting

²⁷ Donald Rothchild and Philip G. Roeder, 'Dilemmas of State-Building in Divided Societies', in Donald Rothchild and Philip G. Roeder (eds.) *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy after Civil Wars*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 1–26.

²⁸ International Crisis Group, *Serbia's Sandžak: Still Forgotten*, p. 5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.16f.

from the inadequate handling by the central government, Belgrade media and the Bosniak National Council (BNVS) – as a crucial danger for inter-ethnic relations in Sandžak.³⁰ Hence, tools further separating the societal groups which may in the short-term release tensions and reassure groups to a certain degree of inclusion, run the risk of polarization. According instruments should therefore be seen as transformative and not without concern in the long term. They can harm civic identities that exist within society by reinforcing separatist structures through organizing politics in the same way.

Furthermore, neither the EU nor the governments alone should decide on the state structure, as peace building is a process that is of primary importance to the people. They should be regarded as owners of the process. Where the EU focuses traditionally on the state, it should take an interest in peace building at the grass root level. A people-centred approach is necessary to break the vicious cycle of group vulnerability to political mobilisation and to empower citizens to determine what kind of state they want to live in. Thereby, the role of the EU is on the one hand to facilitate socioemotional reconciliation and support the development of a democratic society. On the other hand, EU leverage serves to bring countries together at the interstate level. Cross border cooperation is compromised by interstate conflicts such as the Kosovo issue. Dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo is only possible with pressure from the EU. Both levels, the interstate and the grass root, should be approached from a conflict sensitive perspective - taking into account what the consequences are on the ground and how ethnic/religious relations between people are affected.

The two case studies exemplified how the WB region is still struggling with the outcomes of recent conflicts. The newly formed states are seen as the main units for EU integration tools. However, conflict lines in societies cross borders and policy should focus on overcoming conflict lines within societies rather than focus solely on state building. Without adapting the policy frameworks, socioeconomic structures are often reinforced and, as we have recently seen in North Kosovo, conflicts can escalate again. However, international treaties and EU guidelines can still serve as a model for integration and in principle do not necessarily have to be changed at the highest political level. But the *interpretation* of the criteria set by the EU should address its application to conflict areas. Accordingly, a comprehensive, conflict sensitive approach demands a mainstream approach down to the lowest level, as well as guidelines and evaluations for specific programmes. Finally, financial support should be given to governmental and non-governmental actors that attempt to bridge the gap between ethnic/religious groups.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.31.

Foreign policy concerning post-conflict regions like South Caucasus or North Africa requires conflict sensitivity and the use of inter-state, inter-group and intra-group cooperation tools. Overcoming politicized issues of the past is a long term process. Shaping an environment that enables this process of socioemotional reconciliation is not only the way forward for the Western Balkans, but could serve the European Neighbourhood as well.

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