Conclusion

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In South East Europe the processes of nation- and state-building are not finished as especially the cases of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo demonstrate. Peace plans and stabilisation programmes like the Dayton peace accord or the Ohrid Framework Agreement therefore are still necessary as political frameworks, which make it easier for the former parties of conflict to find arrangements for normalizing their relations.

Due to fact that the international community since 1999 has been much more seriously engaged in the region with political, economic and military means compared to the chaotic disintegration of the former socialist Yugoslavia, the peace plans have fulfilled their main goal to prevent the outbreak of new violent conflicts. It is difficult to define the criteria for success in implementing the Balkan peace plans. Generally the implementation of peace plans can be regarded as successful, if relations between the former parties of conflict are "normalizing". This goal can be made much easier with regard to the political representatives than in regard to the ordinary people, who will remain suffering for a very long time. The process of normalization is wide ranging, beginning with the absence of war (negative peace) and coming up to the very challenging post-conflict reconciliation (positive peace). Post-conflict rehabilitation for that reason is a very complex, challenging and long-term process.

The international community through its military and civilian instruments has contributed a lot to increase security in the Balkan areas affected by war and has helped the local actors to re-establish political and economic relations. Even in the very complicated Kosovo issue it was possible to initiate a political dialogue between the Serb and the Albanian side about the future status of this province, although the positions of the two sides still seem to be very contradictory. A stable and peaceful solution for the Kosovo issue is of great importance for development in other parts of South East Europe, where, like in

Southern Serbia or Macedonia, Albanians live side by side with Slavic peoples.

The forgotten conflict in Southern Serbia's Preševo valley is a small but very risky conflict. A realistic re-shaping of the stabilisation plan from 2001 and a much stronger engagement of the international community in this case would be necessary. According to Dušan Janjić, a specialist for Serb-Albanian relations, it would be essential to implement the following measures in order to improve the interethnic relations in Southern Serbia:

- To develop further the concept of integrating the Albanians in the Serb institutions,
- to develop an economic strategy for this area and a plan for social-economic revitalization of settlements through the improvement of economic status of all citizens in the region,
- to develop multiethnic policing further,
- to reform local media and
- to raise the level of civil initiatives.

The case of Southern Serbia is a good example for the thesis that peace processes in South East Europe are strongly interlinked, although the peace plans do not always refer to each other. In order to induce peaceful interethnic relations in the areas with mixed Albanian and Slavic population it is necessary that Belgrade, Priština/Prishtinë, Skopje, Tirana as well as the representatives of the international community maintain close cooperation in the triangle of Serbia-Kosovo-Macedonia in conducting coordinated measures for stabilization, development and confidence-building among the ethnic communities. Apart from that the risk remains that through the transfer of extremist actions from Southern Serbia to Macedonia, Albanian demands for re-shaping Macedonia in a bi-national federation could again become strong and endanger the Ohrid peace process.

Although it is unlikely that new wars will occur as a consequence of the unfinished state-building processes, most of the Balkan countries, which were affected by war, are still positioned in the lower spectrum of post-

conflict rehabilitation and far away from reconciliation. The key issue in this regard is to overcome zero-sum situations and to replace them by win-win-situations. This task certainly is very demanding due to the fact that in most of the Balkan peace processes there is a lack of confidence between the parties formerly in conflict. In this regard the question how to overcome the security dilemmas in the relationship of ethnic majorities and minorities is of crucial importance. Some lessons can be learned from the stabilisation process in Macedonia and the Post-Erdut development in the ethnically mixed area of Eastern Slavonia in Croatia.

In both cases instruments for improving majority-minority relations have been applied. Among these decentralization and moratoriums in sensitive fields, like for instance the temporary exemption of the Serbs in Eastern Slavonia from military service, play a significant role. Although majority-minority constellations are not the same in various areas of South East Europe, and therefore every case has its specific historical, political and social context, which has to be taken into consideration, it is obvious that especially Southern Serbia and Kosovo in regard to their complicated and strained interethnic situation could profit from the Erdut and Ohrid experiences.

The critical question linked to the Erdut and Ohrid experiences is, whether an upgrading of minority rights, which on the one hand calms the interethnic relations, on the other hand can deepen ethnic division, for instance through the founding of mono-ethnic schools for the minority group, as it is the case in Eastern Slavonia. The main challenge in regard to minority rights will be to find the right balance. The international community can contribute to this process of confidence-building by supporting common educational projects, especially in regard to history books, which still represent a source for prejudices and negative stereotypes. While legislation gives the opportunity for national minorities to be educated in their own language, better ways of implementing this must be found, in order to avoid ethnic segregation.

The tension between the demand for territorial integrity and self-determination side-by-side with difficult majority-minority constellations is another source for the continuing security dilemma in

the region. It is certainly necessary that regional actors rely on international law in order to find a common foundation to overcome this gap. The UN's present protectorate of Kosovo in case of its independence could become an international legal "special case". This should not lead to a domino effect jeopardizing peace plans that are beginning to show results. This applies especially to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and political demands in the Bosnian-Serb community to carry out a referendum on the issue of Republika Srpska's independence.

In regard to the time scope for implementing peace plans the international factor, the role of international organisations and individual countries in the stabilisation process has to be strengthened. The engagement of the international community in the region without doubt is still of crucial importance in order to establish a system of common security, to use a term of Dennis Sandole's, one of the leading US-specialists for conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation.

For the South East European countries the perspective to be integrated into the NATO-PfP framework and into the EU is the most important security provider and catalyst for regional co-operation. Kosovo as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina will soon face a re-shaping of the protectorate respectively semi-protectorate structures. A credible policy of the EU in regard to the integration process could contribute a lot to get through this sensitive period without creating new turbulences in the regional stabilisation processes. Enlargement fatigue on the side of the EU but also of the NATO, the latter especially in regard to aspirants from the "Adriatic Group", could endanger the progress made till now in the peace processes. Nevertheless it is certainly legitimate to think about how to re-shape the policy of integration, in order to make it more realistic and practicable for the Euro-Atlantic institutions as well as the aspirant countries the region.

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