POLICY BRIEF

EastWest Institute

Bridging Divides

Ways Forward for Conflict Prevention and Development in GPKT

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Executive Summary

Violent conflict primarily between ethnic Albanian armed groups and Serbian and Macedonian security forces has been a feature of the recent history of Kosovo, southern Serbia and fYR Macedonia and also the municipalities of Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kumanovo and Presevo. Violent conflict has also indirectly affected the municipality of Trgoviste.

The personal, social and economic cost of these conflicts has been hugely significant on the development and well being of the citizens of Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kumanovo, Presevo and Trgoviste (GPKT) micro-region. The legacy of violent conflict continues to dominate politics, society and economics to this day, as it will do for some time into the future.

The micro-region is still not entirely free from the possibility of renewed violence. The March 2004 riots in Kosovo were a sober reminder of the potential for violence. Much has been done to address the structural causes of conflict and to develop better systems of conflict management in the wider region over the past few years. Events such as the March 2005 local elections in fYR Macedonia, the tragic shooting of a boy crossing the border between southern Serbia and fYR Macedonia in January 2005, and the indictment of Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj in March 2005 all caused tension but passed relatively

Photograph of Albanian, Serbian and Macedonian language copies of petition signature pages collected by the GPKT Women's Working Group as part of their 'Petition for Peace' activity in February/March 2005, which collected over 6,650 signatures from citizens in the GPKT micro-region (for more information see GPKT Activity Update 14).

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Table of Contents

POLICY Brief

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Key Issues

Progress is still required on a number of key issues if the likelihood of future conflict is to be limited within the GPKT micro-region. While progress on these issues alone will not by itself guarantee a future free from violence, it will make an important contribution towards it.

1. The future status of Kosovo

The lack of a resolution or clarity with regards to the process for resolving the future status of Kosovo continues to undermine stability. Whatever the future status of Kosovo, it must protect the rights of citizens and facilitate the legitimate travel of people and goods within the GPKT micro-region. If final status, or the process for determining it, does not allow legitimate travel of people and goods or does not protect all citizens, then final status will in itself contribute to instability in the GPKT municipalities and the wider region.

Recommendations:

International community: Work to ensure that the process of deciding the future status of Kosovo is carefully managed at the local level in the GPKT micro-region, as well as on the national and international levels. Approach this as a process of management and engagement, and as a process that will extend beyond the resolution of the final status of Kosovo into the critical post-resolution phase.

Governments of Kosovo/fYR Macedonia/ Serbia: Design and put in place responsible law and order initiatives to manage any tensions that may arise from final status now rather than later. Ensure that these systems are not just security related in nature but also related to inter-community dialogue. Ensure that legitimate cross-border trade and travel in the GPKT micro-region is not hampered by the future status of Kosovo, including by whatever border / taxation systems are established.

GPKT municipalities: Continue to collectively advocate to their central authorities for greater mobility of people and goods regardless of the status of Kosovo. Ensure local political dialogue and conflict management initiatives are functioning to locally manage any tension that might arise.

2. Addressing the lack of economic progress in an equitable manner

Economic development and regional stability are closely inter-linked. Progress towards the creation of jobs in the micro-region remains elusive. However, it is not only economic development, but the nature and type of economic development that will dictate whether this contributes to or undermines stability in the micro-region. Inequitable, poorly planned and conflict insensitive economic development will also contribute to instability in the GPKT micro-region.

Recommendations:

International community: Prioritise economic assistance in the GPKT micro-region but ensure that it is 'conflict-sensitive' along the lines laid out above; otherwise it may undermine rather than promote stability. Consider supporting a locally led advocacy initiative on 'peace and economic development'.

Governments of Kosovo/fYR Macedonia/Serbia: Support economic growth in the GPKT micro-region, including ensuring that regulations and taxes, including cross-border taxes, are fair and realistic. Supporting economic growth encourages stability as well as increasing central government legitimacy. Ensure that this support is also 'conflict sensitive' and benefits are equitably spread across communities.

GPKT Municipalities: Ensure that economic development benefits different communities equitably in line with the principles and guidelines laid out in this paper. Consider supporting a broad- based and collective inclusive public advocacy campaign on 'peace and economic development in the GPKT micro-region'.

Local media: Support a public advocacy campaign on 'peace and economic development'.

3. Effective border management as conflict prevention

Ineffective border management and the fluid transfer of weapons, fighters and resources to sustain conflict were a feature of past conflict in the region. Despite some progress more needs to be done to ensure that in the future weak border management and limited co-ordination amongst security actors does not add to the potential for renewed conflict. The recommendations included within the EastWest Institute's Policy Brief *Border Management in Kosovo-southern Serbia-fYR Macedonia Vortex: A Local Perspective*,[1] should be viewed as conflict prevention measures and implemented accordingly.

Recommendations:

International community: The OSCE should look into establishing a mechanism to facilitate the better sharing of information between the various national and international security institutions with responsibility for the borders in the GPKT micro-region.

Governments of Kosovo/fYR Macedonia/Serbia: Implement and support the implementation of recommendations contained in the EastWest Institute's GPKT Border Management Policy Brief as conflict prevention measures.

GPKT municipalities: Advocate for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the EastWest Institute's GPKT Border Management Policy Brief as these are conflict prevention measures.

4. Effective management and implementation of decentralisation processes

Different processes of decentralisation are proposed, underway, being piloted or stalled within the municipal administrations in the GPKT micro-region. Lack of decentralised authority and decision-making was a core source of grievance underpinning past conflicts. If not managed carefully these processes of decentralisation will not bring more transparency and accountability in governance or improved public services for citizens. They may even exacerbate both intra-group and inter-group tension, thereby contributing to conflict dynamics.

Recommendations:

International community: Appropriate international support and oversight is needed for all processes of decentralisation at the local level. In addition to capacity-building measures, donors should consider placing appropriate internationals with relevant experience in each municipality to assist the decentralisation processes.

Governments of Kosovo / fYR Macedonia / Serbia: Ensure that there is sufficient clarity on the division of competencies between the central authority and local authority in the decentralisation process. Central governments should also ensure that there is financial clarity and transparency in its own interaction with local municipalities.

GPKT municipalities: Produce an annual report with full financial disclosure of income and expenditure, as well as breakdown of municipal employment. Reports should include a realistic appraisal of progress in the economic and public sectors to agreed benchmarks.

5. Promoting confidence building, dialogue and better inter-ethnic relations

There is still a need to develop confidence and dialogue to promote better inter-community relations in the GPKT micro-region. While this work is fragile and subject to impact by political and security issues at a higher level, it is nevertheless vital for long-term stability in the region. In order to ensure lasting impact certain principles/guidelines must be applied (see main text for principles).

Recommendations:

International community: Continue to support confidence building and inter-ethnic dialogue in the GPKT micro-region, but with reference to the guidelines noted in this document to ensure lasting impact. Support learning and reflection on this process across organisations and initiatives as well as implementation itself by local as well as international agencies.

GPKT municipalities: Provide wider support for confidence building and inter-ethnic dialogue projects. Avoid politicising activities by seeking to directly associate them with any political party or political figure.

Implementing agencies (local / international): Continue to support confidence building and inter-ethnic dialogue in the region, again with reference to the guidelines outlined in this document. Invest in cross-organisational and cross-regional learning and the documentation of good and bad practice.

6. Increasing access to information and media professionalism

"Professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict. They seek to present accurate and impartial news. But it is ofte n through good reporting that conflict is reduced".[2] The local media has a vital role to play in addressing misperception and misinformation that creates, fuels, and escalates tension in the GPKT micro-region. More could be done by and to support the local media in this regard. Standards for conflict sensitive journalism should be promoted and adopted by the media in the GPKT micro-region.

Recommendations:

International community: Do not neglect local level capacity-building programmes for professional standards in the media. Focus support for capacity building in professional standards on GPKT and other local media as well as national media.

GPKT municipalities: Do more to ensure the independence of the local media. There should be more of a critical distance between municipal political parties and political officials and the media in the GPKT micro-region.

GPKT media: Produce more local news stories and documentaries. Make recognised international standards of professionalism and conflict sensitive journalism the standard operating procedure in relation to coverage of news and public information.

7. Supporting local conflict management initiatives

Local civilian conflict management initiatives in times of conflict have been effective in reducing tension and building confidence. These initiatives are valuable in managing the inevitable tensions that will arise at least in the next few years. There is a need to bind more people into these initiatives by making it in their interest to participate, as well as moving from ad hoc initiatives to more regular and systematic mechanisms. There is also a need to ensure that skills and experience in conflict management are passed onto the next generation of political leaders from all communities, and that this field of activity is seen as a worthwhile and professional

way in which to address tension (rather than further escalation). There is the possibility of supporting the future development of local conflict management initiatives, such as: joint missions of local political leaders in times of tension, early warning activities, joint forums for airing grievances and issues of concern, alternative dispute resolution, and forums to connect local concerns to security structures. However, any external support to such initiatives must be approached with a remarkable degree of understanding, care and reflection.

Recommendations:

International community: Maintain a critical distance from local conflict management initiatives and mechanisms. These initiatives can be welcomed and encouraged but must be locally owned and not 'tainted' by association to international community.

Governments of Kosovo/fYR Macedonia/ Serbia: Learn and respect local conflict management mechanisms in the GPKT micro-region and look to support and learn from them, rather than undermine them.

GPKT local municipalities: Further develop and expand local and community level conflict management mechanisms as appropriate but do not seek to politicise them. Expose the next generation of political leadership to these initiatives, so that when key personalities move on, learning and systems are not lost.

International NGOs: Do not institute any activities (even indirectly) supporting or initiating new local conflict management mechanisms without a long period of community engagement, learning and reflection on how this would be most appropriately undertaken. Poorly planned or implemented initiatives in this field that do not follow lessons learned will cause more harm than good.

Local agencies / organisations / media: Research, document and publicise the positive experiences of local conflict management of tension in the past throughout the GPKT municipalities.

8. Addressing the strategic deficit in cross-border donor support

There is a need to ensure that there is strategic coherence in donor cross-border support in the GPKT micro-region. This is broadly for two reasons. Firstly, recent global research has indicated that unco-ordinated donor support in the economic, political, security and psychosocial spheres is counter-productive in promoting sustainable peace and development.[3] Secondly, unco-ordinated donor activity also places too much of a burden on municipalities, particularly municipal political leaders and officials. Both issues undermine rather than re-enforce donors' own stability and development goals. The needs in the micro-region are too great not to ensure that maximum positive benefit is derived from donor support and aid more generally. Greater strategic coherence and co-ordination will ensure that there is more complementarity between donor initiatives, and that certain development and governance sectors are not overloaded while others are neglected.

Recommendations:

International community: Seek to better co-ordinate strategy and programming in and across the wider region by developing and implementing an information-sharing framework. Programme time and make co-ordination, complementarity and coherence a stated priority to ensure that this process doesn't just remain aspirational. Ensure that mechanisms to gain local municipal input into donor strategies and priorities are effective and used.

Implementing agencies: Develop protocols and mechanisms for sharing information, and look for opportunities to harmonise or undertake complementary implementation activities.

GPKT municipalities: Be vocal in demanding that donors and implementing agencies are strategic, coherent and co-ordinated in what they are doing in the micro-region. Ensure that collective and well thought-out GPKT interests are advanced through donor supported and implemented activities.

POLICY BRIEF

1. Purpose and structure

The purpose of this brief is to describe ways in which the structural causes of conflict can be addressed and managed within the GPKT micro-region. In particular, the policy brief focuses on how economic and social development and cross-border measures can enhance conflict prevention.

This will be achieved by exploring:

1. The background to the conflicts in Kosovo, southern Serbia and fYR Macedonia
2. How the regional (South Eastern Europe), national/entity (Kosovo, fYR Macedonia, Serbia) and provincial level conflict dynamics interact with each other
3. The cross-cutting issues that underpin the conflicts, and
4. Progress made in addressing these issues in reference to the GPKT municipalities.

The policy brief then explores in more detail eight key issues for the prevention of conflict in the GPKT micro-region, and outlines specific recommendations for each of these issues.

2. Introduction

Violent conflict primarily between ethnic Albanian armed groups and Serbian and Macedonian security forces has been a feature of the recent history of Kosovo, southern Serbia and fYR Macedonia and also the municipalities of Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kumanovo and Presevo. Trgoviste has been more indirectly affected. The Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kumanovo, Presevo and Trgoviste (GPKT) municipalities have all benefited from the progress that has been made in addressing the structural causes of violent conflict. Additionally, more appropriate mechanisms of local conflict management have functioned in recent years. However, the legacy and impact past violent conflict has on daily life and the political, economic, socio-cultural, security environment in the GPKT municipalities is still keenly felt. The threat of a return to violent armed conflict at some point in the future has not completely vanished. Not all the structural causes of conflict have been adequately addressed, and there are some questions regarding the efficiency of local and international conflict management systems (i.e. political mechanisms and security mechanisms). In addition, a long historical legacy with a precedent in the recent past indicates that there are people on all sides who believe that violence is a useful and even legitimate tool to achieve political objectives. Furthermore, recent comprehensive global research indicates that there is a 44% chance of a return to violent conflict during the five years following a settlement. It also concludes that four to seven years after settlement is when international assistance and diplomatic focus is very much needed, but often missing.[4] Therefore, the international community, national/entity governance structures, the municipalities and local civil society must do more to remove the likelihood of a return to violent conflict in the future.

3. Background

A long historical legacy affects the attitudes and behaviour of individuals, communities and leaders in the GPKT micro-region. The international community tends to see an important starting point for contemporary history and violent conflict affecting the micro-region as the break-up of the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Communities in the GPKT micro-region and throughout the former Yugoslavia as a whole have a much more long-term view of their story of violent conflict, which impacts their current attitudes and behaviour. Basic agreements on fundamental aspects of history are hotly disputed even between more moderate elements of different identity/ethnic groups as well as within them. Different interpretations of history in the GPKT micro-region are not only used as a way to understand the past, but also the present, and to justify a political vision for the future. While this has an impact on high-level political issues in the region as a whole, such as the appropriate future status of Kosovo, it also has an impact on more local issues such as where borders should be or how local governance should be conducted. While the rights and wrongs or details of specific incidents can be endlessly debated, the use of violence and repression

to achieve political goals as a feature of the wider region is a fact. What is also not in dispute is that the legacy and perception of violent conflict in the micro-region, and how history is understood, do have an influential impact on the present.

3.1 Violent conflict in Kosovo

Many commentators choose to place the uprising and resultant response in March-April 1981 as the end of non-violent coexistence in Kosovo. Others cite the 1989 rallies by Serbian nationalists in celebration of the six hundred year anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo Polje as a crucial event in recent history. It was in 1989 that Kosovo also had its semi-autonomous status removed by the Yugoslav state. These events symbolised, under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic, the overt use of nationalism and ethnic identity to mobilise and maintain political support. Solutions to governance and security issues exclusive to particular ethnic groups gained increased prominence, in rhetoric and in practice. Compromise, accommodation and respect for different ethnic groups' rights were restricted or actively undermined.

The Kosovo Albanian approach of non-violent resistance as championed by Ibrahim Rugova was perceived as an increasingly ineffective method to advance political change. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began to attack Serbian targets. Serbian security structures responded in ways that precipitated a large-scale movement of many ethnic Albanians. Many saw this response as tantamount to large-scale ethnic cleansing and its effect was an almost total breakdown of trust between the Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb population. After a NATO bombing campaign and the threat of offensive military action on the ground, coupled with diplomatic and economic pressure, the Milosevic regime finally agreed to a variety of measures including the deployment of NATO troops. In June 1999, following UN Security Council resolution 1244, Kosovo was established as an international protectorate under UN control with KFOR responsible for security.

While Gjilan/Gnjilane was not spared from violence, the point has often been made that inter-community violence in the municipality was considerably less intense than in other parts of Kosovo. Reasons given state that inter-community relations were better in the past, and there was not such a legacy of violence. It is often demonstrated by those studying conflict that a history of violence increases the chances of violence in the future and vice versa.

3.2 Violent conflict in southern Serbia

The ethnic Albanian community in southern Serbia also lived with unresolved grievances, but remained relatively calm until January 2000, when an organised armed ethnic Albanian group began operating. The Liberation Army of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja (UCPMB) was formed in January 2000. After a low-level insurgency-style campaign in which approximately 100 people were killed and initially 15,000 people displaced, the UCPMB ended its campaign following heavy international pressure in May 2001. The overall aim of the UCPMB was likely to have been the inclusion of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja within an enlarged Kosovo. However, following international engagement and conciliatory moves by the new Serbian government, a plan was put forward by the Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Covic to address ethnic Albanian grievances.[5] This plan included greater political representation for ethnic Albanians, the creation of a multi-ethnic police force and the economic revitalization of the region. The plan was never formally accepted by the UCPMB, but it did form the backdrop to an internationally brokered ceasefire and disbandment arrangement.

It is widely agreed by security analysts that the UCPMB in its military actions initially benefited from: i) fluid borders – allowing weaponry, fighters and commanders travel easily; ii) fighters and commanders experienced in the Kosovo conflict within its ranks; and iii) exploiting the security vacuum created by the establishment of the 'Ground Safety Zone' (GSZ) in southern Serbia around the administrative boundary established after the Kosovo conflict, into which Serbian security forces

were initially forbidden to enter. The UCPMB also enjoyed support for its armed action amongst some but not of all the ethnic Albanian population in the Presevo Valley. The intervention of NATO and significant diplomatic activity by the US, OSCE, and EU, in addition to concessions from a new Serbian government, all contributed to the ending of hostilities.

Between May 2001 and 2003 there were a variety of sporadic security incidents. These included human rights violations by state security authorities, and the targeting of the new multi-ethnic police for intimidation by ethnic Albanians linked to the UCPMB. In March 2003 a bomb was discovered next to the police station and school. Also those linked to the UCPMB have been arrested for criminal activities. While these incidents were troubling, they did not represent a return to widespread violence in the region, nor do they indicate that a return to violence is likely.

Three issues are of particular interest to current stability in the Presevo municipality. Firstly, is the issue of what the future status of Kosovo will be, and by extension what impact this status and the process to arrive at it will have on the Presevo Valley. Secondly, the not un-related issue of the upgrading of a Serbian military base near Presevo, which has 'polarised' local opinion. Thirdly, Presevo, like the region more widely, still suffers from an extremely bad economic situation and high levels of unemployment. While the ethnic Albanian political parties in Presevo may have similar underlying positions, they employ different tactics to deal with these issues. There is also increasing frustration that many of the provisions made in the agreements that helped bring an end to the violence in southern Serbia remain unfulfilled. Most international and local observers however, significantly downplay the likelihood of a return to violence in southern Serbia in the immediate future.

In the case of Trgoviste, the conflict in southern Serbia did not directly impact upon the municipality in terms of violent incidents. However, violent conflict did have an impact in terms of a feeling of insecurity within the community, as well as negatively impacting upon the economy.

3.3 Violent conflict in fYR Macedonia

After the break-up of the former Yugoslavia the conflict in fYR Macedonia was one of the shortest and least bloody in the region. In 2001, conflict led to approximately 200 deaths and more than 180,000 internally displaced people, and had a significant impact on everyday life. However, this relative lack of bloodshed makes the peace-building process less challenging than in other places in the Balkans. The reasons why the conflict broke out in 2001, rather than earlier or later, are a matter of considerable debate. While there were legitimate grievances on behalf of the Macedonian ethnic Albanians, the National Liberation Army in Northern Macedonia (NLA) exploited fluid borders for movements of people and arms, capitalised on having fighters experienced from Kosovo within its ranks, and at least partially sustained itself through criminal activities. The NLA politically also had a more radical agenda than previously existing ethnic Albanian political parties in fYR Macedonia. Many ethnic Albanians identified with this more radical agenda, and looked at Kosovo and southern Serbia as indicators of how progress could be achieved through armed conflict.

The violent conflict was formally brought to an end with the signing of the Ohrid Agreement in August 2001 following pressure from the European Union and the United States and with the involvement of NATO. Sporadic incidents of violence perpetrated by both Macedonian security forces and those linked to ethnic Albanian armed groups have continued since the signing of the agreement. The Ohrid Agreement stipulated a number of measures to address ethnic Albanian grievances in relation to language rights, representation in public administration, parliamentary oversight, cultural rights and police reform. Significantly, addressing these issues required changes to the Macedonian constitution and more decentralisation of power to municipalities. The Ohrid Agreement also included provisions for the disarmament of the major ethnic Albanian military group, the NLA, by NATO. While these measures were warmly received by the ethnic Albanian population, many Macedonians looked on the agreement as a reward for violence and as impacting very negatively their own identity and security. Since the signing of

the agreement there have been some violent activities attributed to a new military group, the Albanian National Army (ANA), although some have doubted the level of popular support this group has and what its motives actually are. Recently an issue of concern has been the increasingly fractious dealings between different ethnic Albanian political parties, which also have the potential to destabilise the country.

Efforts in Kumanovo town to prevent widespread violence were largely successful during the conflict in 2001. The reasons for this were many. The local political leadership displayed sensitivity, and the activities of the Mayor, together with leaders of the ethnic Albanian community and the Municipal Commission for Inter-Ethnic Relations were important in addressing tension that could have fuelled more violence.

4. Different levels of conflict dynamics impacting the GPKT micro-region

The GPKT municipalities are both impacted by, and themselves impact on the nature and course of violent conflict in region. It is important to understand how wider regional and higher-level conflict dynamics work in order to reach an appreciation of how they can be addressed. It is also very important to maintain a sense of perspective when dealing with conflict issues within the GPKT municipalities. However well Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kumanovo, Presevo and Trgoviste address local conflict dynamics within their own municipalities, they will always be affected by conflict dynamics on the 'higher' national and regional levels. They will also be subject to spill over from events and activities within neighbouring municipalities and other nearby hot spots. This demonstrates why a holistic and multi-level approach to conflict prevention and management is required.

Diagram A. Conflict dynamics impacting the GPKT micro-region
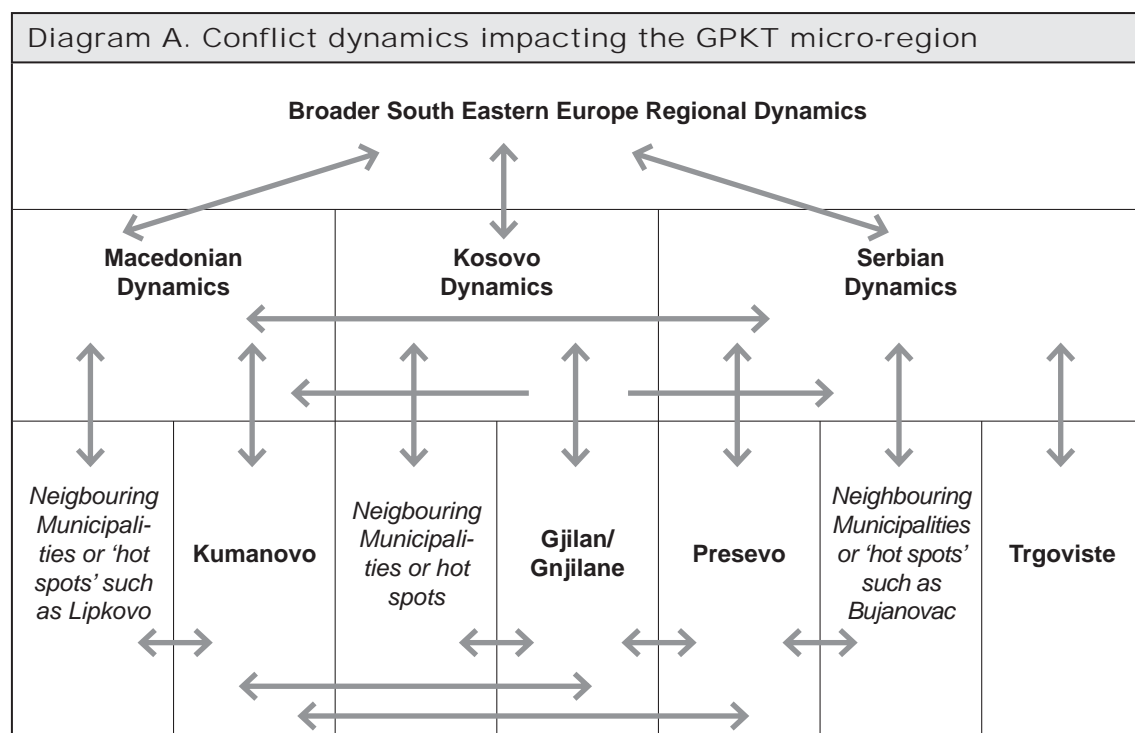
POLICY BRIEF

The municipalities of Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kumanovo and Presevo are affected indirectly or directly by what happens:

i. At a regional level throughout South Eastern Europe (i.e. current situation between Serbia and Montenegro)
ii. At the country/entity level in Kosovo, fYR Macedonia and Serbia (i.e. change in Serbian government, Kosovo status, Macedonian elections)
iii. In the immediate neighbouring municipalities and other nearby 'hotspots' within their country/entity borders (i.e. Lipkovo, Bujanovac)
iv. In immediate municipalities bordering them across administrative and national boundaries (i.e. Gjilan/Gnjilane – Presevo)

Conflict dynamics and events in Kosovo potentially have a heavier impact on southern Serbia and fYR Macedonia than vice-versa, yet there is a two-way impact. Presevo has more of an impact on southern Serbian stability because of its past history of conflict and ethnic composition than the more distant and mono-ethnic Trgoviste.

Trgoviste does not have a history of violent conflict within its borders. It is thus highly unlikely to experience violent conflict directly in the future. However, Trgoviste is also subject to impact from events on the national/entity or regional level, and past conflict in the region has had a negative impact on the economic and political situation of Trgoviste.

5. Violent conflict in the GPKT micro-region: cross cutting issues

It is dangerous and incorrect to see conflict dynamics and the underlying reasons for the conflict in the GPKT micro-region as entirely the same. Although the conflicts exhibit some similarities, the issues, parties, intensity and course of violent conflict in southern Serbia, fYR Macedonia and Kosovo were in many respects quite different, as was the course and nature of the violence itself. The local and international systems developed to manage conflict are also quite different in the three jurisdictions.

However, there are some common cross cutting issues that are worth exploring because they either have a cross-border impact or are similar in nature. Exploring common themes is also important because in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kumanovo and Presevo municipal-level conflict dynamics are inextricably and closely linked to wider dynamics at the national and regional level.

5.1 Regional issues

The violent break-up of Yugoslavia, resurgent nationalism, and the creation of new countries across the region provided a larger backdrop to the various conflicts impacting GPKT and the wider region. Although the violence and destruction wrought in other places such as Bosnia and Herzegovina may also have had a local moderating influence locally, "Kumanovo was spared because citizens stood up and said they didn't want what happened elsewhere in the Balkans to happen here. They saw that no-one was a winner" (local media representative Kumanovo).[6]

5.2 Political/governance issues

The ethnic Albanian community wanted much greater self-governance and political rights in Kosovo and southern Serbia. In fYR Macedonia, the ethnic Albanian community wanted these rights to be enshrined in the workings of the State as well as access to state employment. Ethnic Albanians in Serbia and fYR Macedonia also wanted Serbian and Macedonian governance authorities to better respond to their needs. Some ethnic Albanians in the region wanted complete independence and even the creation of a 'greater Albania'. Serbian and Macedonian governance structures were unwilling to grant these greater rights as they felt that this would impact negatively on the well-being of ethnic Serb and Macedonian citizens living in those areas. They also saw greater ethnic Albanian rights and devolution as the start of a process that would undermine the long-term territorial integrity of the Serbian and Macedonian states. The intransigent nature of the Yugoslav/Serbian government in the late 1990s meant that these grievances were left to fester rather progress through dialogue.

5.3 Economic issues

By the early 1990s an economic meltdown had occurred in the former Yugoslavia. Total failure of the communist system of economic management coincided with a global recession and the outbreak of variety of conflicts across the Balkans. The impact of the severe economic downturn cut across all ethnic/identity groupings in southern Serbia, fYR Macedonia and Kosovo, though it impacted on some groupings more severely than others. It also created and significantly exacerbated tension between different identity/ethnic groupings as policies put in place to attempt to address the economic meltdown, particularly in Kosovo, discriminated against some ethnic/identity groups. The centralised system of economic stabilisation initially proposed by the international financial institutions also exacerbated inequalities. Economic sanctions and the cost of wars across the former Yugoslavia further compounded the bad economic situation. Some external commentators have said that it was 'economics rather than ethnicity' which accelerated the violence in region.

The political economy of violence is increasingly important to conflict analysis. There is no doubt that the conflicts and attempts to address conflict affecting the GPKT municipalities, including the economic embargo, the abuse of new governance structures, and the subversion of international aid resources, created financial winners as well as losers, particularly amongst the corrupt and criminal elements in the region. Many corrupt individuals were quite influential and had a considerable incentive to continue profiting from the state of conflict. While it is incorrect and an oversimplification to say any of the conflicts were caused by criminal intent, criminal activities certainly helped sustain violence in the GPKT micro-region.

5.4 Socio-cultural issues

Categorising the conflicts in question as 'ethnic conflict' is incorrect as the conflicts had many different social, political, economic dimensions, many of which crossed ethnic lines. However, different communities identified along ethnic lines often envisaged their interests collectively.

The ethnic Albanian community wanted much greater language, educational and political, in addition to political, rights in fYR Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo. These rights had been suppressed or actively discriminated against by the then Yugoslav, (and subsequently) Macedonian and Serbian governance structures, who saw these greater rights as undermining their own national identity and as a challenge to their own heritage. Many in fYR Macedonia and Serbia felt that allowing greater language and educational rights to ethnic Albanians would be the start of a process of 'Albanian-isation' within their own territory. They saw this as a prelude to the break-up of their own Macedonian and Serbian states.

While there was a significant amount of inter-marriage between Macedonian and Serbian communities, the ethnic Albanian community was much less integrated. The almost entirely separate life of the ethnic Albanian community (despite being in close proximity to Serb and Macedonian communities) also accentuated differences and misperceptions. Honour and identity are important to all communities in the region. Avenging past humiliation, righting 'historical wrongs', 'restoring dignity', and 'defending honour' are powerful motivators in all communities, and are ripe for manipulation by political leaders. These factors are often used to justify violence, despite the fact that many people on all sides supported peaceful coexistence and non-violent change. Religious leaders for the most part aligned themselves with nationalist/ethnic movements rather than with more conciliatory approaches to ending conflict.

5.5 Security issues

Ethnic Albanians were subject to human rights abuses and harassment from the security services, which was a source of grievance in southern Serbia, Kosovo, and to a lesser extent fYR Macedonia. In particular, the policing practices and the ethnic make-up of the police were significant sources of grievance for the ethnic Albanian community in all three areas. Another source of grievance was a general lack of professionalism, and lack of competence and respect for human rights within the armed forces in the region as a whole.

Violence was used to impose control and draw attention to issues by all sides. Mistrust, suspicion, prejudice and misunderstanding between ethnic/identity groups increased with each new violent incident.

POLICY BRIEF

Some ethnic Albanian groupings in Kosovo, southern Serbia and fYR Macedonia sought to advance political ambitions through the use of violence. The availability of weaponry, networks to smuggle arms and the ability to organise on a military basis emerged in the ethnic Albanian communities first in Kosovo, then in southern Serbia, and fYR Macedonia. There was also significant interaction between the ethnic Albanian armed groups in fYR Macedonia and southern Serbia and those in Kosovo.

5.6 International engagement

The international community's approach to the break-up of Yugoslavia and the continued political evolution thereafter was fractured and lacked a clear political direction. Despite the legacy of dealing with other Balkan wars, international diplomatic and military tools were not used in a timely or effective manner to prevent conflict or were withdrawn at critical junctures (as with the UN deployment in fYR Macedonia). The lack of political will combined with the lack of a clear strategy compounded matters. This resulted in a lost opportunity for conflict prevention, and when the international community did intervene it was more in the vein of crisis management and containment after violence had broken out in Kosovo.

6. Parties to the conflict in Kosovo, fYR Macedonia and southern Serbia

6.1 Parties to the conflict from the region

In Kosovo, fYR Macedonia and southern Serbia the parties to the conflict consisted of three different categories of groupings with overlapping membership. These groupings were evident at the provincial level in Gjilan/Gnjilane, Kumanovo and Presevo. In Trgoviste there are a number of Macedonians but there was no other ethnic group other than Serbs based in the municipality in any significant number, nor were there any armed insurgency groups operating there. However, Trgoviste did, like other Serbian municipalities, have political movements aligned with those in Belgrade, and young men from the municipality did join the army and security forces.

The three categories evident in the three other municipalities were as follows:

1. Major ethnic groupings based in the region, with which individuals identify themselves. (Essentially the general population who identify themselves with a particular ethnic group.)[7]

Box I: Parties to the conflict from the region			
	Kosovo	southern Serbia	fYR Macedonia
Major ethnic/ identity groupings	• Albanians • Serbs • Other minorities	• Serbs • Albanians • Other minorities	• Macedonians • Albanians • Other minorities
Political movements / governance structures	• Serbian state apparatus • Serbian political movements • Ethnic Albanian political movements	• Serbian state apparatus • Serbian political movements • Old and new ethnic Albanian political movements in southern Serbia	• Macedonian state apparatus • Macedonian political movements • Old and new ethnic Albanian political movements in fYR Macedonia
Armed groups / security forces	• Serbian state security forces (army and police) • KLA	• Serbian state security forces (army and police) • UCPMB	• Macedonian state security forces (army and police) • NLA

2. Governance structures and political movements that broadly represented ethnic/identity groups (although there were differences in policies and approaches among these groups in relation to the use of violence).

3. Armed/security forces and armed groups that were identified with ethnic/identity groups and/or governance structures (armed groups tended to be directly associated with the more radical political elements).

The conflicts tended to polarise opinions, but across the three locations, support amongst the population for the use of violence either by armed groups or by security forces, and the political movements representing them, was never absolute. Indeed, there were often significant disagreements amongst ethnic Albanian political groups about the propriety of the use of violence, as there were different shades of opinion on the use of state violence in the Macedonian and Serbian political sphere. These differences were over the legitimacy, necessity and utility of the use of violence, and are still reflected in current opinion today. Intra-community differences of this nature are an extremely important part of understanding the possible course of any renewed violence in the GPKT micro-region. As in some conflict zones around the world (such as Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka) once there is a period of relative stability, splits within identity can re-occur that sometimes spill over into violence. These splits do affect stability and can even be a precursor to a return to wider conflict. In this regard, the difference between ethnic Albanian groups within fYR Macedonia and within Kosovo is something that requires attention.

It is extremely important to note that the targets for violence and conflict were not always the 'other' ethnic population. For example, in southern Serbia (including Presevo) the conflict was primarily between the UCPMB and the security structures of the Serbian state (including the police). The KLA and NLA also targeted the police and security structures. While undoubtedly 'civilians' on all sides suffered and felt their own personal security was compromised, it was not a campaign waged exclusively against the 'other' ethnic populations.

6.2 International parties to the conflicts

The international community was also an active player in the conflicts in the region, including involving itself militarily through KFOR in Kosovo, and the bombing of Serbia. In the main, the international community's interest was primarily to promote stability in the region with a minimum of engagement, particularly militarily. There were differing perspectives on the conflict and commitment to engage amongst powerful members of the international community. The most powerful members of the international community were the United States and larger Western European states such as France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy, as well as Russia. Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey also had specific national interests directing their actions in the region.

7. Different perceptions and understanding of the reasons for conflict in the GPKT micro-region

7.1 Different perceptions of the Kosovo conflict

Understanding violent conflict in the GPKT micro-region, as anywhere, requires understanding the usually very different perspectives different people and communities have on past conflicts. For example, the answer to the question 'why did violent conflict break out in Kosovo in 1999?' depends very much on whom you speak to in the GPKT municipalities, and the information and opinions they base their analysis on. The same situation occurs in relation to perceptions of the violent conflict in fYR Macedonia and southern Serbia (see Box II below). Even amongst people from the same communities there are often very different opinions, and access to quality information is sometimes poor. While there is no definitive 'Albanian' opinion or 'Serbian' opinion, there are some themes and perspectives that are more likely to be held by those who identify themselves as members of the 'Albanian' or 'Serbian' communities.

Box II: Why did violent conflict break out in Kosovo? Different perceptions

An Ethnic Albanian Perspective

1. A genuine sense of injustice because of the political, economic, socio-cultural and security issues (such as the ones laid out in section 5.). In particular that the Yugoslav/Serbian governance structures had not only failed to deliver a better future for ethnic Albanians but actively were working to undermine them.

2. A sense of failure of non-violent methods to address these issues, particularly the political/governance and security issues. This led to the reluctant need to protect and further interests through violence and the belief that the cause was just. A feeling that severe provocation from the actions of the Serbian security forces in terms of ethnic cleansing left the ethnic Albanian community with little option.

3. The development of a Kosovo Albanian ability to organise militarily (through the KLA) was a natural response to aggression.

4. A willingness to fight by 'brave' young men driven by a strong motivation to protect their own communities and forge a better political future.

5. The availability of modern weaponry via Albania allowed ethnic Albanians to defend and advance their interests against the Serbian state on a more equal military footing than had been the case in the past.

6. There was an open willingness on behalf of communities and citizens to support / harbour armed groups and individuals directly associated with them.

7. The international community was initially unwilling to invest enough in stopping violence perpetrated by the Serbian state apparatus. It was therefore necessary for ethnic Albanians to take matters into their own hands.

8. The international community, particular the US, the UK and NATO finally intervened to support their just cause.

Ethnic Albanians interviewed had the tendency to consider those who did the fighting as "brave" and as "heroes". Some elements in the ethnic Albanian community acknowledge that human rights abuses were committed by all sides, while others felt that this was inconsequential compared to what was done to them, by particularly the Serbian security apparatus.

A Serbian perspective

1. Serbian forces were legitimately protecting the state from an illegal insurgency of a terrorist nature and the ethnic Serbian population from attack.

2. The ethnic Albanian political leaders bullied and manipulated the population into supporting military options, and many of these paramilitary groups were aligned to criminal elements.

3. The international community was somewhat duped into supporting the ethnic Albanian cause by clever propaganda. There was a resultant inability to mount a robust Serbian security response, because of international pressure and involvement.

4. 'Illegal' availability of weaponry from Albania emboldened ethnic Albanians.

5. Political, financial and military support obtained via Albania, and from levying ethnic Albanians working abroad, enabled the violence.

6. That violence suited a wider pan-Albanian political strategy.

An international view on conflict in Kosovo in 1999

1. There was a genuine sense of legitimate grievance on behalf of the ethnic Albanians, particularly in the case of Kosovo. An entirely inappropriate security response was implemented by the Serbian state (in relation to Kosovo), and this was exacerbated by unprofessional security institutions prone to abuse individual and collective human rights.

2. An availability of young men with sense of grievance and a romanticised version of violence and 'the cause'.

3. The violence was a part of a broader political strategy, but there were also genuine political grievances.

4. The motivation of violence was political, but there was utilisation of criminal networks to traffic arms and fund military costs.

5. A reluctant but belated need by the international community to get engaged: which meant that a lack of preventative measures was followed by military action with the aim of avoiding another Bosnia and Herzegovina situation.

7.2 Different views on the conflicts in fYR Macedonia and southern Serbia

There are also widely different views on why violent conflict broke out in southern Serbia in 2000 and fYR Macedonia in 2001. 'Spill-over' from Kosovo, security vacuums, criminal ties, opportunism and intra-community political power struggles amongst ethnic Albanian groups, are often given as reasons. This is usually the opinion of Macedonian, Serbian and international commentators. Other international and ethnic Albanian commentators contend that it was a legitimate response to years of political neglect and a lack of progress in addressing political, social and economic issues.

Once violence had broken out, there was a desire and a need within communities to ensure that it did not escalate. Both the international community and local leaders played an important role in managing conflict in Kosovo, fYR Macedonia and southern Serbia. Even small things like the emotive use of language to describe those engaged in violence were extremely important. For example, it was noted by an elected official (aligned with the Macedonian state in Kumanovo) in reference to the conflict in 2001, "we condemned the violence but tried not to use phrases like 'terrorists' or 'criminals' when referring to Albanian fighters as it would upset the Albanian population and make the situation worse".

8. Ending the conflicts and recent developments

8.1 Agreements to end the conflicts

UN Security Council Resolution 1244 in Kosovo and the Ohrid Agreement of 2001 in fYR Macedonia had the intention of not only ending hostilities, but also of starting a process to address the factors that had given rise to violent conflict in the first place. Southern Serbia was different in the sense that there was no encompassing formal agreement to end hostilities. Instead there were three interlinked and overlapping ones: firstly, 'The Plan and Programme of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and Government of the FR of Yugoslavia for solution to the crisis in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja',[8] (usually referred to as the 'Covic Plan'): secondly, the Platform of the Albanian delegation; and, thirdly, the Statement on Demilitarisation from the 20th of May 2001. All these agreements were compromises with considerable detractors on all sides, and each featured a deliberate lack of clarity on some of the political, economic, security and identity issues to be addressed. Progress on the implementation of the substance of these 'agreements' has been somewhat mixed, and continues to be a source of grievance in the GPKT micro-region.

However, since the formal end of the violent conflicts impacting the municipalities of the GPKT there have been a number of new developments in the political and security spheres. These developments relate to how much progress has been made in addressing the causes of the conflict, as well as the effectiveness of mechanisms to prevent or manage tension when it arises. In Kosovo, fYR Macedonia and southern Serbia there is still some work to be done to ensure that violence does not again impact the region.

8.2 Developments in Kosovo with particular reference to Gjilan/Gnjilane

Since 1999 there has been significant progress in addressing some but not all of the structural factors underpinning the causes of past conflict and the development of effective ways of managing tension. On some municipal issues Gjilan/Gnjilane has had more success than its counterpart municipalities in Kosovo - for example, in terms of good inter-community relations, and political leadership in the management of tension. However, a number of other issues affecting conflict in Gjilan/Gnjilane cannot be tackled on a municipal level alone.

On a wider political level, one of the biggest frustrations within the ethnic Albanian population in Gjilan/Gnjilane, as elsewhere, is that the future status of Kosovo remains unresolved and that several local issues such as privatisation seem to be stalled by the lack of clarity on this key issue.

While there are some successful businesses in the Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality, overall the economic situation has not improved. Indeed, the false boom created by the large amount of aid provided to Kosovo in the immediate post-conflict phase has long since passed. The primary concern for ordinary ethnic Albanians, after the resolution of the future status of Kosovo, is usually the large numbers of unemployed youth, and most in Gjilan/Gnjilane believe these are closely linked issues. Ordinary citizens and politicians in all communities are quick to draw the link between stability and jobs in Gjilan/Gnjilane: improving the economic situation dominates much of the political agenda. However, economic improvement must benefit the entire municipality equitably and be carefully thought through if it is going to have a lasting positive impact.

Expectations are high that the decentralisation process will bring greater stability to the region and address a number of economic and social issues. It is difficult however, to see how decentralisation in and of itself can meet these expectations. If negative patterns of local governance, such as corruption, patronage, and poor standards of public service that are common throughout the region, are not addressed by increased professionalism, accountability and transparency, then decentralisation will actually negatively impact stability.

The new borders and checkpoints at the administrative boundary between Gjilan/Gnjilane and southern Serbia split extended families and make the daily conduct of life and trade more difficult throughout the GPKT micro-region. As one resident of Gjilan/Gnjilane commented with regards to his own limited freedom of movement, "we are living on a reservation like the Indians in American in the 19th century". Mobility of certain vehicles across the administrative line with Serbia and personal mobility is still restricted ('KS', UNMIK-issued registration plates, and UNMIK-issued passports are not accepted as valid in Serbia).[9] This hampers economic development and creates a sense of grievance amongst both ethnic Albanians and Serbs, who historically are not used to such constraints. The lack of ability to move internationally, and challenges to moving regionally, with an UNMIK passport has left many Kosovo Albanians

bitter. Removing borders is not an option, but further facilitating legal cross-border activity would certainly benefit all in Gjilan/Gnjilane.[10]

The media in Kosovo, as in the wider region, reflects the views of the communities that it serves, which does not always mean that it promotes tolerance and understanding. The lack of professional standards in reporting certainly exacerbated the inter-ethnic riots that occurred during March 2004. As one local Kosovo Serb representative put it, "the March riots were the first test of the media in Kosovo. It was a test that they failed". The local media in Gjilan/Gnjilane does seem to be engaged in improving its professional standards and reaching out to other communities, including through a few multi-ethnic programmes or media initiatives, but these efforts require substantial further support and encouragement.

In a role reversal, security has improved for the Kosovo Albanians but worsened for the remaining Kosovo Serbs and allied minorities living in Gjilan/Gnjilane following the institution of the UN protectorate in 1999. Although security and stability for the Serb communities across Kosovo improved significantly over the following years, the March 2004 violence gave the Kosovo Serb community in Gjilan/Gnjilane significant cause for concern when 40 houses were damaged (approximately 15 to 20 homes were seriously damaged, others with small breakages of windows, external fixtures, etc.) and over 100 people were directly affected.[11] This violence undoubtedly set back inter-community relations in Gjilan/Gnjilane, which had progressed substantially in the municipality since 1999, although there were a number of positive things to be taken from it. Most particularly, the local Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb leadership were very active in trying to manage the immediate conflict and the aftermath. Also, many Kosovo Albanian citizens were upset about the violence in their municipality, blaming it on those from outside Gjilan/Gnjilane. More recently, the indictment of Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj by the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia raised tension but caused no serious incident of violence in Gjilan/Gnjilane.

The security for the Kosovo Serbian community in Gjilan/Gnjilane is better than in many other Kosovo

municipalities. As was recently noted, "you can go to Gnjilane and speak Serbian in a café, Gnjilane is a good example to other places" (Kosovo Serb Gjilan/Gnjilane resident). There is a sense of pride by many in the community about the relatively good inter-ethnic relations and business contacts between the two communities. During the war there were many fewer killings in Gjilan/Gnjilane than in other provinces and this makes present day inter-ethnic relations easier. These relations are not only important for peaceful co-existence but also the longer-term economic future of the region.

There have been a number of positive attempts to foster inter-community interaction - but these attempts are inevitably fragile. They are subject to being affected by events on the larger political scale. This does not mean to say that they are not worthwhile or necessary. Indeed, for example if Kosovo Serb youth in Gjilan/Gnjilane remain cut off, bored and isolated, it will only breed their resentment and feelings of exclusion, and it will make them susceptible to those within their own community who advocate more radical solutions to their current plight. While addressing youth disaffection requires action and leadership within the Kosovo Serb community, it also requires leadership from the ethnic Albanian community and support from the international community, locally as well as on a wider scale.

Although the comparative levels of trust between the communities and political leaders in Gjilan/Gnjilane are relatively good compared to the rest of Kosovo, they are still very low. When things go wrong people still often look to an explanation that is linked to ethnic tension. For example, some people in Gjilan/Gnjilane still cite incidents they see as ethnically motivated, such as a lack of municipal progress on particular administrative matters related to them, or petty criminal acts such as throwing stones at cars. On closer inspection, these incidents are not ethnically motivated but rather inefficient systems and random petty criminal activities. However, misperception and mistrust inevitably run deep.

The Kosovo Police Service (KPS), a multi-ethnic police force, has improved policing in Gjilan/Gnjilane, but it still has some way to go before it is viewed as professional and effective by all communities. Even

Kosovo Albanians are somewhat dismissive about the level of skills, training and corruption within the KPS ranks in Gjilan/Gnjilane. There were stories of individual ethnic Albanian members of the multi-ethnic police force (KPS) supporting the Kosovo Serb community in the Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality during the March 2004 riots, "I had a good neighbour, a policeman, who came without his uniform to see that I was alright" (Kosovo Serb woman living in Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality). Overall, however the KPS was deemed by the Kosovo Serb community to have failed in its duty to protect people and property in March 2004. Kosovo Serbs in Gjilan/Gnjilane are still doubtful about KPS motivation and ability to protect them if another similar situation arises. The lack of a high-ranking local Kosovo Serb KPS officer is a source of concern for Serbs in Gjilan/Gnjilane, and as was noted, the events in March 2004 "make it difficult for the Serbs to trust the KPS" (Kosovo Serb media representative from Gjilan/Gnjilane). Many within the Kosovo Serb community look to KFOR as the primary guarantor of security in the municipality (although this differs to a certain extent according to nationality of the troops). The future presence of KFOR is also seen by Kosovo Albanians in Gjilan/Gnjilane as necessary for some time to come if the potential for conflict is to be avoided, although the reasons for this are somewhat different, with some Kosovo Albanians still worried that Serbian security forces might attempt to return to Kosovo.

The issue of Kosovo Serb returnees has the potential, as the issue of returnees has in many other places in the Balkans, to cause tension within the Kosovo Serb community itself. There is a sense of anger that Kosovo Serb returnees have more resources and opportunities than those who stayed. Many in the community feel that returnees are being financially bribed to move back by the international community, and the issue of returnees could be more carefully managed and implemented by donors and agencies. A good process of consultation which ensures that there are wider community benefits from return can help defuse tension; consultation can also help address accusations that supporting returns is an entirely politically motivated 'number counting' exercise by the international community.

The quality of education is a cause for concern in Gjilan/Gnjilane as it is throughout Kosovo. There are serious doubts as to whether the education systems (both Kosovo Serb and Kosovo Albanian systems) are preparing pupils for a modern economy or inter-community co-existence. The vast majority of the younger generation of Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs in Gjilan/Gnjilane have no common language in which to communicate. Gjilan/Gnjilane's reputation for good inter-community relations will be very difficult to sustain if the majority of the next generation of its inhabitants drawn from the two major communities have no way of speaking to each other.

8.3 Southern Serbia with particular reference to Presevo and Trgoviste

8.3.1 Presevo

Presevo has also experienced a number of positive efforts to address the structural causes of conflict. However, the majority of ethnic Albanians still want much greater devolution of political power and also a reduction or even a complete removal of the Serbian security presence. Most ethnic Albanians in Presevo do not think there has been adequate progress on governance, social, or economic issues since the ending of violent conflict,[12] and they see little progress on some of the commitments and measures laid out in the various plans that ended the conflict. There is also an issue for ethnic Albanians in terms of the limited progress in accessing Serbian public institutions and services, including the right to do so in their own language.

Recently, there have been calls by some ethnic Albanian political groups for a demilitarisation of the region and the deployment of international forces. There have also been reports in the Serbian press[13] that there are plans for renewed conflict and an outbreak of violence in the region. Some local Albanians are sceptical – "there has been progress, but the media can spoil the whole thing. They are not professional the journalists. I read the Serbian press and very often they don't use verified sources and they always blame the Albanians" (ethnic Albanian

teacher from Presevo). While never discounting the possibility, most local and international observers think that violence is an unlikely scenario given the current status of wider regional politics; as UNMIK publicly stated in December 2004, "We have no information that would lead us to believe that new conflicts are forthcoming in the region."

Linked to this perception is the agreement amongst most ethnic Albanians in Presevo that the nature and territorial integrity of the future status of Kosovo will be the largest arbiter of stability in the region. Of particular concern is the status of Mitrovica, as ethnic Albanians in Presevo see close parallels with their own situation. As one ethnic Albanian resident of Presevo put it, "whatever happens to Mitrovica we want the same here". Other ethnic Albanians are hoping that directly or indirectly the future of the ethnic Albanian municipalities in southern Serbia will feature in the discussions and process to clarify the final status of Kosovo. High expectations regarding a possible change of status are certainly being pushed by some local ethnic Albanian political elements, although most international observers think that this is both unlikely and undesirable.

The decision in March 2005 by some ethnic Albanian political parties and leaders in the Presevo Valley to associate with the Co-ordination Body for South Serbia is a positive sign for relations with Belgrade and stability more generally.[14] However, some influential ethnic Albanian political parties are for the time being distanced and hostile towards the Co-ordination body (although some promising signals were apparent at the time of going to press). If, in addition, the Co-ordination Body does not deliver on at least some of the ethnic Albanian requests and there is not some level of progress, then this will increase tension. Some Presevo politicians maintain that there has been very little investment in the region from Belgrade apart from security measures and it is high time for change. An improvement in the poor economic situation is an important and long-overdue guarantor of stability for the region.

The economic situation has not improved since the end of the conflict and is uppermost in the mind of ordinary Presevo residents. Youth unemployment is a particular concern. One ethnic Albanian teacher

interviewed noted, "Of the 250 students I taught over the last five years only two have proper jobs". Another estimate puts the number of employed within Presevo municipality at only 2,500 out of 40,000.[15] The ability of ethnic Albanians from Presevo to seek employment in Western Europe, a long time 'safety valve' for the region, has somewhat diminished in recent years. In addition, a recent report from the Institute of War and Peace Reporting noted that an ethnic Albanian was stopped from purchasing a privatised company in southern Serbia for what would seem to be reasons of ethnic identity.[16] While this was not in Presevo itself, this kind of incident does not bode well for community relations or economic development. Good economic management by successful entrepreneurs is one of the keys to development in this region, and restrictions without good reason, and with a potential for public mis-interpretation, are doubly detrimental.

Inter-community ethnic relations within Presevo itself seem to be fair and have improved over the years since the end of the conflict. As was noted by a local Serb youth, "There is improved security for Serbian community – Presevo is a good place, it is an example as both communities can live side by side". However, not all Serbs feel the same and some are rather fatalistic about their future, particularly their ability to encourage members of their community to return to the region. For the Serbs that are leaving the Presevo Valley the motivation is economic, as well as related to the political and security situation. Some Serbs for example have been able to sell their houses to ethnic Albanians and move to set up their lives elsewhere in Serbia. The local Serb community also suffers from the lack of economic development and job opportunities in the region.

A new multi-ethnic police force, a key demand of ethnic Albanian community, is up and functioning, and seems to be doing well, although suspicion in both communities still exists. As was noted by an ethnic Albanian from Presevo, "Albanians are not used to co-operating with the police in this area". There was also some understandable resentment that the police force provides one of the few viable salaried job opportunities for ethnic Albanians in the region.

An issue of particular concern is the divergent views by the ethnic Albanian and Serbian communities on the propriety of a newly renovated and upgraded military base. This issue clearly has wider political undertones than the immediate development of the base itself. It represents a physical manifestation by the Serbian government of a political policy to stay engaged in southern Serbia and also to deal with any serious security incidents robustly. The heavy militarization of Presevo by the army and special police is still a large source of grievance amongst local Albanians. Although arms dumps have been found in the municipality, how 'active' these are, and the reality of any security threat is difficult to gauge. A number of incidents occurred in 2002, for which the ANA claimed responsibility, but recently things have been quiet. However, inappropriate security actions by the Serbian forces based in southern Serbia, or alternatively provocation from ethnic Albanians linked to armed groups, have potential to significantly undermine progress made so far. The international community still needs to be vigilant and actively engaged in ensuring that any single incident in Presevo municipality does not spiral out of control.

The regrettable recent incident of Dashnim Hajrullahu, a boy from Presevo being shot in January 2005 as he tried to illegally cross the border with fYR Macedonia, did raise tension and cause some non-violent demonstrations. Fortunately several ethnic Albanian politicians helped in reducing tension that could have provoked further incident. They also called for the border management-related context that led to the situation in the first place to be dealt with.[17] The incident did however bring home in a graphic way the reality that mobility is restricted in the region, and that this causes tension and hampers business and family contacts. The challenge is to manage the necessity for border controls in a way that is realistic and effective but does not cause undue tension.

Recent attempts to make the local media in Presevo more representative (including more Serbian pro-gramming) and independent of political parties, is a welcome development though substantial prog-ress is still needed. These efforts will, if sustained, encourage better community relations and a greater degree of transparency in local politics: this is a positive trend and needs support and encourage-ment to continue.

The physical security of ethnic Albanians in non-Albanian majority areas of Serbia is also an issue in Presevo. The lack of safety of ethnic Albanians to study at universities in Serbia restricts the already limited educational options of young Albanians in Presevo. It also pushes young Albanians from southern Serbia to Universities in Pristina and Tetovo, which are overcrowded and have extremely limited places. This further alienates ethnic Albanians from the Serbian state system and employment opportunities.

8.3.2 Trgoviste

As has already been noted, Trgoviste did not suffer directly from violent conflict within its borders. However, the indirect impact of the violent conflicts in the region on the municipality was significant. The hyper-inflation created in the early 1990s as a result of the wider conflicts hastened economic decline. Also, as in other places in Serbia, Trgoviste did suffer from a lack of international development assistance when Serbia was placed under a number of international restrictions. Some in Trgoviste attribute at least some of the migration out of the municipality as a direct consequence of the conflict around the wider region.

The larger political questions often related to violent conflict in the region dominated the agenda in Belgrade. The chance for Trgoviste (or other southern Serbian municipalities for that matter) to gain attention for its specific needs has been extremely limited. Trgoviste is an interesting case study as it has been neglected both economically and with regards to central government funding. While the circumstances are different from municipalities in Serbia with a large ethnic Albanian population, the central government has not been rushing to put money into the municipality. As one Trgoviste municipal official commented, neither Trgoviste nor Presevo get much support from Belgrade: "The Serbian [central] government doesn't have a problem with ethnicity, it has a problem with money". There is also the feeling in Trgoviste that because they did not have conflict within their municipal area they have been somewhat neglected in terms of aid money from the international community or interest from the central Serbian government.

Trgoviste, like the other municipalities in the GPKT micro-region, sees the only sustainable future for the municipality in the creation of new jobs. Trgoviste's economic future is squarely linked to the stability of the region as a whole. In this, Trgoviste has a vested interest in trying to engage in the promotion of wider stability and development. The wider isolation that Trgoviste currently feels will certainly be compounded if the population of Trgoviste cannot trade or travel to its near neighbours or vice-versa because of conflict or tension. The isolation of Trgoviste will only get worse unless a viable economic future is found for the municipality. A large part of this future will be related to infrastructure, trade, outside investment, donor engagement and possibly even tourism. Progress can only be made on these issues if there is stability in the wider region, and if the Serbian central government is not isolated from the international community.

Trgoviste youth have very few opportunities to actually interact with other communities, though they are often eager to do so. Access to independent quality information in Trgoviste is extremely limited, which fuels the sense of isolation, and misperceptions about other ethnicities and wider political developments. Many of the people and politicians of Trgoviste do on the whole seem to realise that their future is intertwined with developing and maintaining good relations, especially trading relations with their neighbours. However, there are undoubtedly many people within Trgoviste who support a more hard line nationalist and position that bitterly opposes the independence of Kosovo.

8.4 fYR Macedonia with particular reference to Kumanovo

The process of addressing the structural causes of conflict in Kumanovo has been assisted by developments on the broader political scale in fYR Macedonia. Progress regarding EU membership for fYR Macedonia has been positive, as has the functioning of multi-party and multi-ethnic governance on the national level. The failure of the Referendum on nationality issues on the 7th of November 2004 also indicated a rejection of a more exclusionary vision of

the future. It even seems as if there will be progress in demarking the border between Kosovo and fYR Macedonia, although this will require engagement and sanction by the Serbian government to really work effectively. However, the tangible benefits of some of this progress on the higher level are yet to be felt directly by the citizens of Kumanovo. There is also a worrying trend of increasingly bitter rivalries between ethnic Albanian political parties, and the consequences of these rivalries may be more than the usual fall out from the changing fortunes of political parties in a stable multiparty democracy.

On the national level there are questions about the process of police reform, and the integration of ethnic Albanian former fighters into the police force. These are related to whether standards were maintained or proper recruitment processes followed. In the short-term ensuring that ethnic Albanians from fYR Macedonia associated with the NLA are integrated into the police is a good thing for conflict prevention. However, as with any DDR[18] process, if these individuals do not have the requisite skills, experience and qualifications, or still have links with criminal activity, the consequences will be extremely negative in the long-term.

The legacy of violence is still fresh in Kumanovo, as it is in Presevo and Gjilan/Gnjilane. As one Kumanovo resident commented, "It was only three years ago, it is difficult to forget the pain", although the same individual noted, "people are surprised how well things are going, relations between the communities are good, more stable than they were before the war". Almost all those who were displaced by the conflict have returned home, and as of January 2004 only 2,500 people from Kumanovo and Tetovo had still to return.[19]

In Kumanovo the decentralisation process that was part of the Ohrid Agreement is finally coming into being and expectations are high. Macedonian politicians are tentatively courting the ethnic Albanian vote, and this is seen as a positive sign: "we had Macedonian politicians wanting to appear on a TV [Albanian] station, this is a first and it is a very positive sign", commented an ethnic Albanian Kumanovo resident. This resident also noted however that, "Kumanovo is a very specific place – a variety of different groups live here, and it is easy for politicians to manipulate ethnic differences". There is also a considerable lack

of clarity on the details of decentralisation and how the process will be implemented in practice.

The economic situation in Kumanovo, particularly the high levels of unemployment, is still negatively impacting stability, although some contend that Kumanovo is not doing badly given the circumstances. Opportunities for employment in Western Europe are less frequent and less lucrative than before for ethnic Albanians. The lack of progress in creating new job opportunities in Kumanovo weighs heavy on the minds of the citizens, with the link between stability in the municipality and employment often being made.

In Kumanovo, as in the rest of fYR Macedonia, there is some public dissatisfaction with the fact that public sector jobs are only really available to those with good political connections and party affiliations. Further turnover in some public sector jobs as political power changes does not make for an efficient local administration and increases public dissatisfaction: "Political jobs are also bad because there is a turnover of people [in municipalities and public services], that makes them a lot less effective at their jobs, and we need people to be effective at their jobs", noted an ethnic Macedonian civil society director. Recent decentralisation will require a move to a merit-based way of recruiting, although this will require quite a considerable cultural and political change and will have to be carefully managed with appropriate oversight.

Local elections held in fYR Macedonia in March 2005 were contentious amongst and between ethnic Albanian political groupings in particular. There were several irregularities and police arrested two men accused of manipulating ballots near Kumanovo. While individual incidents of electoral fraud are troubling, it is the wider political tensions between ethnic Albanian parties that give rise to concerns about long-term stability in fYR Macedonia.

The fact that space for a separate secondary school for ethnic Albanians in Kumanovo was found is something that has been seen as a positive development by the Albanian community – a tangible expression of 'progress'. However, the difference between progress in the towns and more rural areas in Kumanovo is quite significant, and some Albanian villages still feel that little has improved.

9. Addressing key conflict and development issues

While daily inter-ethnic relations remain mostly cordial, separate lives between the communities are still very much the norm in Kumanovo. Some youth from both communities are frustrated that there has been limited progress on issues of community interaction: "we have a problem, we can't go into each other's [ethnic Albanian or ethnic Macedonian] coffee bars". This is a comparatively minor point, but has major implications, as another generation of the ethnic Albanians and Macedonians that make up the citizens of Kumanovo living entirely separate lives does not auger well for long-term stability. This can only be addressed by long-term cultural change assisted by a more accommodating political environment.

The ethnic Albanian population in Kumanovo saw the emergence of the new borders as something that curtails their lives, as they tend to have more family and trade connections with communities across the borders in Kosovo and southern Serbia, while many of the Macedonians see the issue of borders as an 'annoyance' or even something that doesn't really affect their life that much. The issue of border management that would allow legitimate travel, yet address illegal activity more effectively, is a pertinent one for Kumanovo.

The security situation in Kumanovo is not presently a cause for major concern, although there is concern about the issue of effectively policing the area and managing the border from a security standpoint. While there certainly is some level of dissatisfaction amongst the ethnic Albanian community in Kumanovo on progress in implementing the Ohrid agreements, there would be little widespread support for a return to violence. In December 2004 there was an incident involving reportedly around 50 armed ethnic Albanian men setting up road blocks in Kondovo:[20] although the group eventually disbanded and its motives or real threat may have been exaggerated, the incident did not inspire confidence in stability in fYR Macedonia.[21] Such events occur in a context where trust has not been totally restored, the availability of small arms is high, and criminal cross-border trade is still lucrative. Making border management more effective from a security standpoint and also easing legitimate travel would benefit stability in Kumanovo.

There are many interlinked political, security, economic and cultural issues in the GPKT micro-region. Dealing with these issues will require addressing the structural causes of instability as well as managing potential conflict and inter-community tension. While there has been progress in addressing many of these issues, much more work needs to be done to guarantee future peace and stability. The fact that the past violent conflicts in the GPKT municipalities were less intense than in other areas of the Balkans makes future peaceful co-existence more likely. However, any renewed incidents of violence in the GPKT micro-region have the potential to set back progress in all fields - political, economic and social. This is why better prevention of violent conflict is central to the future of the GPKT municipalities and the sub-region as a whole.

Within the GPKT micro-region there are individuals and groups of individuals who exhibit a variety of attitudes and behaviours in relation to the use of political violence, either now or in the future (summaries as attitudes 1 to 6 as laid out in Diagram B). People and groups of individuals have also moved between levels 1-6 as the political situation has evolved in the GPKT micro-region (i.e. issues being addressed or not addressed, such as police reform or individual incidents). The challenge is for the transformation of the attitudes and behaviours of these individuals and groups of individuals to where they believe their interests in the future will be best served by non-violent action (level 6).

While the group of people within the GPKT micro-region within the first two levels (1 and 2) is extremely small, they are obviously very important in seeking to ensure that violence does not break out again. However, it is equally important that there is a transformation in the views of those in levels 3 to 5. A change in attitudes cannot be 'forced' or 'required', indeed this would be entirely counter-productive and futile, but it can be facilitated by addressing certain political, economic, and social issues. A change in behaviour can also not be 'forced' or 'required', however it is appropriate in the GPKT micro-region to use more robust border management measures to address those organising or involved in political violence directly (see section 3.)

Diagram B – Changing attitudes and behaviour in relation to violence[22]				
Attitudes and Behaviour	**More People**	**Key People**	**More People**	**Key People**
Levels 1-6	Negative Dynamics for Peace		Positive Dynamics for Peace	
1. Those who directly perpetrate and organise violence for political ends **2.** Those who directly support (by providing material or other specific assistance) those who perpetrate and organise violence for political ends **3.** Those who support the use of violence for political ends **4.** Those who support the use of violence for political ends in certain circumstances **5.** Those who do not support the use of violence themselves but 'understand' why it is 'necessary' **6.** Those who believe that political issues should always be resolved non-violently	↑	↑	↓	↓

The following recommendations are designed to address not only the structural causes of violence in the GPKT micro-region (those that give rise to attitudes 1 to 5 or create an environment where they are more likely to occur), but also to address potential triggers and escalators of violence. Addressing these issues will require 'key people' (those with direct influence over those who hold views 1 to 5) and simply 'more people' overall who genuinely believe that their interests are best served by non-violent methods. If positive dynamics of peace can be maximised then the likelihood of conflict will be reduced. However, if critical conflict issues are not addressed then negative dynamics for peace could prevail, leading eventually to renewed violent conflict.

Key issues

Several key issues must be considered when addressing causes of conflict within the GPKT micro-region. Many of these issues are inter-related and they require action from the international community as well as national/entity authorities, municipalities and other local institutions. There are no easy solutions to the issues discussed below, and there are many other additional issues that would also have to be addressed that could not be covered in this policy brief.[23] The remainder of this document describes these key issues and then provides recommendations and certain implementation guidelines.

1. The future status of Kosovo
2. Addressing the lack of economic progress in an equitable manner
3. Effective border management as conflict prevention
4. Effective management and implementation of decentralisation processes
5. Promoting confidence building, dialogue and better inter-ethnic relations
6. Increasing access to information and media professionalism
7. Supporting local conflict management mechanisms
8. Addressing the strategic deficit in cross-border donor support

POLICY BRIEF

9.1 The future status of Kosovo

In the medium term, the future status of Kosovo is the factor most likely to impact the stability of not just Gjilan/Gnjilane but all GPKT municipalities. There are high expectations and an entrenched position from the Kosovo Albanian community regarding Kosovo's future status, a seemingly entrenched position from the Serbian state, and a distinct lack of clarity from the international community. These positions are reflected by the populations and political leaders in the GPKT micro-region in Presevo and southern Serbia. Leaders and the general population are also concerned, not only about the final status of Kosovo, but what the borders of the entity or state will be. If the process for deciding the future status of Kosovo is not carefully and responsibly managed by the international community and national and local actors, there is a definite potential for renewed violence that will undermine progress in all other areas.

There are a number of ways that the process of determining the future status of Kosovo can increase instability and even the potential for a return to violence in the GPKT micro-region:

- Future status of Kosovo is dragged out and leads to frustration on behalf of Kosovo Albanians
- Future status of Kosovo does not meet ethnic Albanian population expectations
- Future status of Kosovo significantly angers the Serbian population in Kosovo and the Serbian government
- Future status does not include appropriate safeguards and guarantees for the Kosovo Serb community
- Future status of Kosovo encourages pan-Albanianism and more secessionist tendencies in southern Serbia or fYR Macedonia

While some of the tension is related directly to what the final status of Kosovo will be, a fair amount is related to how the process is managed and what kind of safeguards and guarantees can be put in place. At the micro-region level, a final status for Kosovo, no matter what the outcome, must ensure the following if it is to benefit the people of the GPKT municipalities:

- People and goods can travel throughout the micro-region with minimum of difficulty
- Cross border criminal activity is minimised
- Any renewed cross-border armed group activity is curtailed
- Changes to the systems of governance guarantee the rights of all citizens
- Systems for managing conflict and tension in the region are enhanced
- The continuation of multi-ethnic communities

It is impossible for the future status of Kosovo to meet all the expectations of all groups. GPKT municipalities, national governance structures and the international community must be prepared to deal with any reaction that unmet expectations might create. This applies as much in the long term as in the short term. Resolution of the future status of Kosovo will not solve all ills, despite the high public expectations in some quarters that there might be rapid improvement in the political, economic and security spheres. Once the future status of Kosovo is decided there will still be much work to be done to address structural issues that undermine stability in the region. Furthermore, the resolution of the future status of Kosovo also has the potential to create destabilising intra-community differences amongst various ethnic Albanian and Serbian political parties and politicians.

Box III: Expectations and opinions about the future status of Kosovo in the GPKT micro-region

In Gjilan/Gnjilane
"If Kosovo status is not resolved or disappoints people there will be big problems"
– ethnic Albanian youth leader in Gjilan/Gnjilane

"Everything is linked to Kosovo's final status, particularly economic development"
– ethnic Albanian elected official in Gjilan/Gnjilane

In Presevo
"If Kosovo gains independence it will help stability here"
– ethnic Albanian media representative in Presevo

"If Kosovo gains independence without Mitrovica there will be a tragedy here"
– ethnic Albanian political official in Presevo

"If Kosovo goes independent with its current borders and the rights of Serbs in Kosovo are protected then that will be a good outcome for stability in the region"
– ethnic Albanian elected official in Presevo.

"Jobs and what happens to Mitrovica in the final status of Kosovo are the two most important things for stability and peace in Presevo"
– Media representative in Presevo

"The Serb community thinks that maximum autonomy under Serbia and protection of everyone's rights is the best solution for everyone in Kosovo. This is the best option, other options there will bring fear amongst the communities here"
– Serbian political leader, southern Serbia.

"If Kosovo final status is sorted it will stabilise 80% of the problems in Presevo"
– ethnic Albanian representative working the Media

"People are living in a fairytale if they believe that Presevo will join Kosovo"
– Serb from Presevo

In Trgoviste
"The status [of Kosovo] has already gone quite far, but we leave those kinds of politics to Belgrade"
– Trgoviste resident

"It is a very political situation in Kosovo but any economic linkages with Kosovo are a good thing for Trgoviste"
– Trgoviste resident.

In Kumanovo
"For the moment Kosovo is not an issue here, but it always has the potential to become one"
– ethnic Albanian resident in Kumanovo.

Recommendations:

International community: Work to ensure that the process of deciding the future status of Kosovo is carefully managed at the local level in the GPKT micro-region as well as on national and international levels. Approach this as a process of management and engagement, and as a process that would extend beyond the resolution of the final status of Kosovo into the critical post-resolution phase.

Governments of Kosovo/fYR Macedonia/Serbia: Design and put in place responsible law and order initiatives to manage any tensions that may arise from final status now rather than later. Ensure that these systems are not just security-related in nature but are also related to inter-community dialogue. Ensure that legitimate cross-border trade and travel in the GPKT micro-region is not hampered by the future status of Kosovo.

GPKT municipalities: Continue to collectively advocate to the central authorities for greater mobility of people and goods regardless of the status of Kosovo. Ensure local political dialogue and conflict management initiatives are functioning to locally manage any tension that might arise.

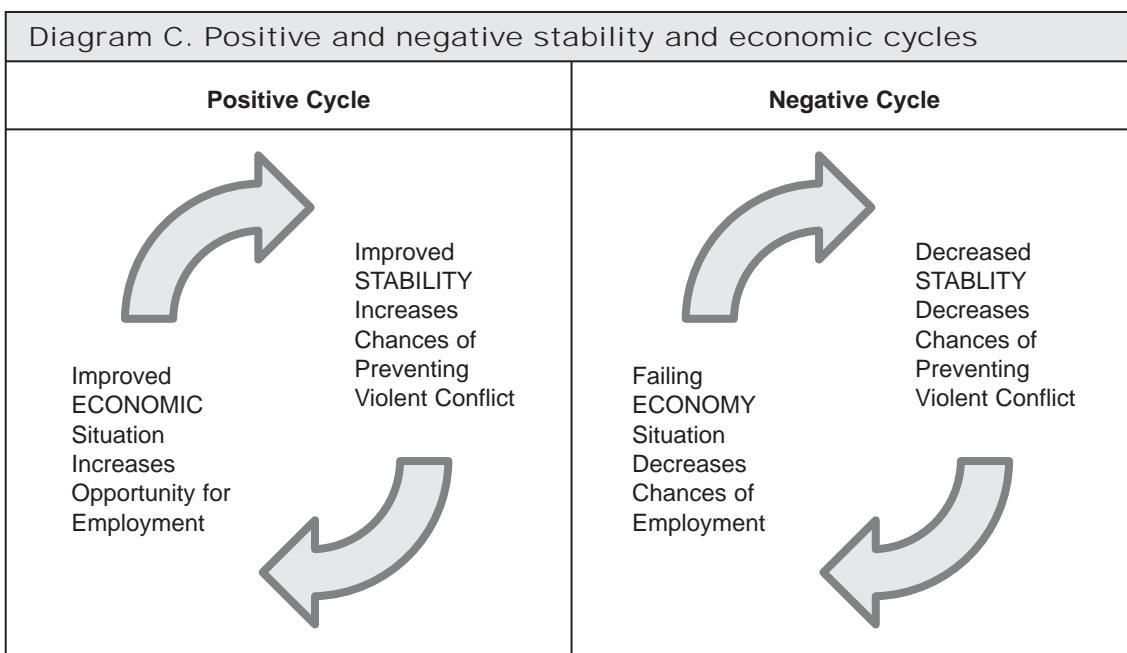## 9.2 Addressing the lack of economic progress in an equitable manner

9.2.1 Economic development and stability

The economy in the GPKT micro region is still extremely weak with little prospect for rapid improvement in the short to medium term. The direct legacy of violence and conflict still has a negative impact on many aspects of economic development. There will be no long-term stability in the region without a functioning economy that can reduce levels of unemployment in an equitable way. Economic progress is high on the agenda in the GPKT micro-region, and lasting results that create and sustain real jobs are needed. Across ethnic groups and sectors one of the most often expressed opinions is that economic improvement will bring stability and that stability will bring further economic improvement. Much of the thinking in the GPKT micro-region (and that of internationals) around the relationship between economics and stability can be summarised in Diagram C below. It is imperative that sustainable conflict-sensitive economic development is recognised as a long-term conflict prevention priority.[24]

People interviewed in the GPKT micro-region tended to argue that:

1. Economic development (particularly job creation) was good for stability in and of itself.
2. Economic development and job creation would also be indicators of effective governance, better inter-community relations, resolution of outstanding political questions, the good faith of governments (i.e. Macedonian and Serbian) and the international community delivery of commitments.

Economic development is particularly important because implicit or explicit improvement in economic opportunities underpinned the various 'peace agreements' made in the region (UNSCR 1244, Ohrid Agreement, and the Plan and Programme for Resolution of Crisis covering southern Serbia). In the GPKT micro-region it is possible to argue that there has been progress in security issues (i.e. multi-ethnic police forces) and political issues (such as decentralisation), but much less progress in the economic sphere. Increased employment opportunities will also have an important psychological impact signifying tangible progress, a return to 'normal' life, and a more positive future for the region. A further economic decline would be disastrous for stability in the micro-region, as would uneven economic development.

Diagram C. Positive and negative stability and economic cycles

Positive Cycle	Negative Cycle
Improved STABILITY Increases Chances of Preventing Violent Conflict	Decreased STABLITY Decreases Chances of Preventing Violent Conflict
Improved ECONOMIC Situation Increases Opportunity for Employment	Failing ECONOMY Situation Decreases Chances of Employment

Box IV: Views in the GPKT micro-region related to economic development, conflict and stability

"When there are not opportunities for young people then you open the door to the negative"
– ethnic Albanian teacher Presevo.

"If you don't have a job you have time to get into trouble" – ethnic Serbian NGO representative and community leader in Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality. "Joining the army is one of the few job opportunities for young people"
– Official, Trgoviste.

"The police is one of the few places local Albanians can get employed"
– Media worker, Presevo.

"I wanted to do a training on peace building, but people said they would only come if they got paid [because they do not have jobs]",
– NGO worker in Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality.

"The economy is the same across the border, without co-operation there will be no development, and without development there will be no stability"
– ethnic Albanian youth leader Gjilan/Gnjilane.

"I ran my business throughout the conflict in 1999, I will always run my business whatever happens. But when the political situation is not stable, how can I invest?"
– Manager of successful SME in Gjilan/Gnjilane.

"Yes there is money in the Albanian community here, particularly from those who earn money abroad, but they won't put money in businesses here while there are so many solders and gendarmerie about"
– ethnic Albanian media representative in Presevo.

"I need to go to Belgrade for my business, we have a safe hotel there and it is good, but it wasn't always like this"
– ethnic Albanian manager of an SME in Gjilan/Gnjilane.

"The EU will not open the doors to us while there is still a possibility of conflict. No one wants a devil in their house"
– ethnic Albanian Municipal official Gjilan/Gnjilane.

"I don't see the responsibility for economic development as our problem – it is a Serbian government problem to sort out"
– ethnic Albanian Media representative Presevo.

In Gjilan/Gnjilane many link the poor economic situation and issues of taxation, property ownership and the investment climate back to the future status of Kosovo. However, the economy in Kosovo will not be subject to any 'quick fixes', and raising expectations that once the future status is resolved economic development and jobs will quickly follow is naïve and counter-productive. Experience from elsewhere in the region, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, clearly indicates that developing a positive business climate requires a long-term process of difficult reforms.

The more trade undertaken between communities, the more confidence is built. This is the premise that underpins much of the confidence building work being done in the GPKT micro-region. While it will require more than inter-community trade to build confidence, it does provide some level of indication of the quality of inter-community relations and also perceptions of safety and trust. Opportunities for inter-community and cross-border trade within the GPKT micro-region will not in themselves bring stability, but they should be supported and facilitated.

POLICY BRIEF

Box V: Positive stories of inter-ethnic community trade

"In Kumanovo some Macedonian traders use a few words of Albanian when dealing with Albanians, this is good"
– Kumanovo resident.

"I know of Albanians selling [livestock] to Serbs in Gnjilane, and Albanians collecting milk from Serbs. This is low-level activity, but is very important as it builds trust and confidence."
– ethnic Serb politician, Gjilan/Gnjilane.

"Retired people [Serbs] feel safe to come to the 'banks' to collect their pensions in Gnjilane"
– ethnic Serb politician, Gjilan/Gnjilane.

Author's note: During a GPKT Project schools related confidence-building event in Trgoviste, ethnic Albanians from Gjilan/Gnjilane bought forty kilos of honey on their own initiative. The honey was a lot cheaper in Trgoviste so they planned to trade it in Gjilan/Gnjilane: if it wasn't for the schools-related confidence-building initiative this would not have occurred.

9.2.2 Conflict sensitive economic development

The type and nature of economic development will be important to stability in GPKT municipalities. Economic development that is not equitable across and within communities and is based on patronage and poor foundations will negatively feed conflict dynamics. If jobs are given on patronage rather than merit, to unskilled or unqualified individuals, the foundations of economic development will be shaky at best. Genuinely successful businessmen in the GPKT micro-region know this: "My success is because of three things. 1. Fair play – respect deadlines, respect agreements, 2. Continually analyse the whole business situation, 3. Recruit on merit, recruit experienced people" (interview with successful GPKT SME owner).

Economic development in the GPKT micro-region must be conflict sensitive. In other words, it must be planned, implemented and evaluated with its impact on conflict dynamics as a key consideration rather than as an afterthought or not at all. Conflict sensitising economic development is more about 'the way' economic development projects priorities are set, and the way they are implemented, rather than the actual substance of initiatives.[25]

While there is great emphasis on 'infrastructural development' in the form of roads in the GPKT micro-region, 'new business development' has more potential to create lasting jobs. New business development is increasingly becoming a focus of municipalities and donors active in the micro-region. However, if new business development does not adhere to a few simple principles of conflict sensitivity (see below) it will neither create jobs nor contribute to peace and stability.

Well-targeted, co-ordinated economic assistance based on sound analysis is essential to the economic recovery of the region. Better donor co-ordination is also required to ensure that the overall economic development programme is conflict sensitive (see section 9.8).

Principles for 'conflict-sensitive' new business development are economically logical and also assist in promoting stability. New business development in the GPKT municipalities that does not have sound business logic and is not also 'conflict-sensitive' will be negative for both the stability and the economy of the region.

Box VI: Principles for Conflict Sensitive New Business Development	
Issue / Principle for New Business Development	**Importance for stability and peace-building**
Long-term economic viability	• Unrealistic job and opportunity expectations will have a negative impact on stability. • The situation in the GPKT municipalities is not so unstable that short-term jobs at any price are necessary. Real, long-term jobs will have more positive impact than short-term job creation schemes.
Sound economic base	• New businesses must be well researched. 'Pet' projects initiated by politicians, international donors or local entrepreneurs that are poorly researched may create and then dash expectations, discourage others for investing and therefore damage business confidence and undermine stability.
Utilising a community-based business knowledge	• In all communities successful SMEs exist, which are run by people with business experience gained outside the micro-region. This experience should be drawn upon.
Using a merit-based approach to recruitment, staffing and promotion	• The lack of 'merit-based' recruitment has resulted in a seething sense of grievance within as well as between communities. Merit-based recruitment is fairly recruiting and promoting people on the basis of skills and experience rather on who they know or what community they come from. It also makes very bad business sense to employ, or be forced to employ, people without the requisite skills and experience.
Equitable access to privatisation opportunities	• If entrepreneurs follow the rules and have the experience and the resources, they should not be barred from the privatisation process because of their ethnicity.
A refusal to discriminate between communities in daily business practice	• Any business that intends to serve only one ethnic community, or draws its raw materials from supplies associated with one community, is missing out on a potential market.
Appropriate and fair access to business support	• Municipalities, central governments, and donors should provide expertise and advice to new businesses. Support must be provided in an open and fair manner and locally relevant. New businesses should not get more support or more access because they are from a particular ethnic group or affiliated or linked with a political party or leader.
Reasonable taxes and levies	• An equitable and straightforward national and local taxation system is important so that social services can be financed. Overly high local taxation could force business owners to either not pay, go out of business or engage in corrupt practices to avoid or limited payment. None of these outcomes are desirable and all have the potential to indirectly or directly raise tensions.
Access to capacity-building opportunities in new business development	• Capacity building in small business development is necessary. Skills transferred should be technical and functional and must be available to all communities on an equal footing. This creates challenges because of language differences, especially in the younger generation, but equality is a worthwhile investment by donors and local governance structures. Failure to provide equitable access to capacity building in new business development will cause inter-community tension.

POLICY Brief

9.2.3 Economic development as a common cause

While most security and political issues are contentious there is space for considerable common cause around economic issues. A public information campaign to show that increased stability is in everyone's economic interests, supported by political, business, and society leaders, and involving the media has been a successful approach in other crisis regions around the world. This is particularly the case when local business gets involved.[26] Any campaign could be supported by donors, but must be locally owned and led and be as inclusive and practical as possible (such as a joint GPKT business directory).

Recommendations:

International community: Prioritise economic assistance in the GPKT micro-region but ensure that it is 'conflict-sensitive' along the lines laid out above, otherwise it may undermine rather than promote stability. Consider supporting a locally-led advocacy initiative on 'peace, stability and economic development'.

Governments of Kosovo/fYR Macedonia/ Serbia: Support economic growth in the GPKT micro-region including ensuring that regulations and taxes, including cross-border taxes are fair. Supporting economic growth encourages stability as well as increasing central government legitimacy: ensure that this support is also 'conflict sensitive' and benefits are spread equitably across communities.

GPKT Municipalities: Ensure that economic development benefits different communities equitably in line with the principles and guidelines laid out above. Consider supporting a broad-based and collectively inclusive public advocacy campaign on 'peace, stability and economic development in the GPKT micro-region'.

Local media: Support a public advocacy campaign on 'peace, stability and economic development'.

9.3 Effective border management as conflict prevention

Any return to armed violence in fYR Macedonia, southern Serbia or Kosovo would seem to be wholly illegitimate given the progress (however flawed) made on political, social and economic issues and the views of the majority of the population. Therefore armed groups and illegal cross-border weapons flows should be met with a robust but sensible and well-managed security response. Any response must be proportional and sensitively managed by all concerned, with appropriate oversight and action by the international community. Use of inappropriate force or impingement on human rights would likely fuel old grievances and lead to more violence. Few analysts would disagree that those who used violence in the past conflicts in fYR Macedonia and southern Serbia benefited from fluid borders, arms flows and support from within Kosovo. They also benefited from a lack of international attention or appropriate international mechanisms or mandates to control the situation. There are still big questions surrounding a more effective role for the international community in supporting border management. Border management should prevent potential incidents of armed violence and also address criminal activity. Criminal activity also indirectly contributes to instability by undermining the legitimate economy in the micro-region.

Because violent incidents will polarise communities and opinions in the GPKT municipalities and elsewhere in the region, prevention is certainly better than response. The international community missed a conflict prevention opportunity because of an unco-ordinated approach to security issues in the border regions in the past. It needs to avoid this in the future. Better information/intelligence sharing and development of early warning indicators are required for preventative action. Only the OSCE has a cross-regional mandate and could initiate such an approach, and it should take up the challenge of bringing others together around such an initiative.

The ultimate success of any initiative of this type will depend on co-operation from the various national/entity authorities involved. The OSCE should facilitate and oversee information exchange between

national/entity authorities and other international security actors. Lessons learned from a successful OSCE initiative between the border of Kosovo and Albania should be utilised for the borders within the GPKT micro-region.

The easing of legitimate cross-border trade and legitimate passage of people will also be something that reduces tension and builds confidence in the region. In this regard the recommendations contained in the EastWest Institute's GPKT Border Management Policy Brief listed below should be supported and implemented. These also are conflict prevention measures because they seek to support and facilitate legitimate cross-border activity while addressing illegal activities.[27]

Box VII: Summary of Recommendations from *Border Management in Kosovo-southern Serbia-fYR Macedonia Vortex: A Local Perspective*, by Henry Bolton, EastWest Institute GPKT Policy Brief, Brussels, February 2005

UNMIK

- Initiate an independent review of the administration and controls applied to the issuing of UNMIK Travel Documents, ID Cards and Vehicle Registration Plates. Re-initiate discussions with Belgrade in order to explore possible solutions regarding the obstacles to legitimate cross-ABL movement created by Serbia's refusal to recognise the UNMIK Travel Documents, ID Cards and Vehicle Registration Plates.
- UNMIK border police should establish, without delay, an effective criminal intelligence capability.

fYR Macedonian Government

- The Macedonian Border Police, when taking over responsibility for their northern border, should adopt fully their government's National Integrated Border Management Strategy.
- Without delay, the fYR Macedonian Government should review and amend the Rules of Engagement issued to border management personnel, taking into consideration relevant human rights legislation and European best practice. The Government should consider making non-lethal means of interdiction, e.g. dogs, available to border patrols.
- Recognising that Dashnim Hajrullahu, the young boy killed by the SCG Army while illegally crossing the border between fYR Macedonia and Serbia in January, 2005, was not in possession of valid travel documentation, and recognising that a significant proportion of the population in the border areas of

fYR Macedonia also do not possess valid travel documentation, the Macedonian Ministry of Interior should instigate a process for registering those persons and expediting the issue of passports.
- In line with the fYR Macedonian Government's IBM Strategy, the Macedonian Border Police, immediately upon taking over responsibility for patrolling their northern border, should establish mechanisms at the regional level for tactical information-sharing and co-operation with their Serbian counterparts. The fYR Macedonian Ministry of Interior should support any efforts to establish liaison with key players, and should also support efforts to create a GPKT Border Management Council, and appoint a representative to such a body with the aim of ensuring proper communications between local and national authorities (please see recommendations below to local political leaders and representatives).

Serbian Government

- The Co-ordination Body for Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja should encourage the Serbian border management agencies to develop closer operational links with their Macedonian colleagues at the local level.
- The Serbian Government should finalise, adopt and implement its own Integrated Border Management Strategy according to EC best practice standards, and should co-ordinate common priorities with fYR Macedonia to ensure systematic co-operation between the border agencies of their respective countries.

POLICY Brief

- Without delay, the Serbian Government should review and amend the Rules of Engagement issued to border management personnel, taking into consideration relevant human rights legislation and European best practice. The Government should consider making non-lethal means of interdiction, e.g. dogs, available to border patrols.
- The Serbian Government should commission a survey to assess the potential economic benefits for the municipality of Trgoviste that could result from: a) a border crossing point with Bulgaria; and, b) a border crossing point with fYR Macedonia, in order to assess which of the two options would bring the greatest advantage.
- The relevant Serbian authorities should support any efforts to establish liaison with key players, and should also support efforts to create a GPKT Border Management Council, and appoint a representative to such a body with the aim of ensuring proper communications between local and national authorities (please see recommendations below to local political leaders and representatives).

Local political leaders and representatives

- The Mayors of Presevo and Kumanovo should lobby their governments to provide a regular cross-border bus service facility for local inhabitants operating on the route Lojane-Vaksince-Sopot-Tabanovce-Strezovce-Presevo-Miratovac. This would facilitate the movement of people without the cost of opening and manning a new border crossing.
- The Mayors of GPKT should lobby their respective central authorities to establish direct lines of communication between the border management authorities and their municipal GPKT co-ordination offices. Over time, a GPKT Border Management Council could be established, as a forum where key representation of civic organisations, municipalities, local police and border agency personnel could systematically meet, communicate and co-ordinate, thereby increasing security and developing a much needed understanding on the part of the border authorities of the needs and sensibilities of the local communities.
- Local political leaders and representatives should lobby central governments and other stakeholders in support of all the above recommendations.

Full text available from:
http://www.ewi.info/publications.cfm

Recommendations:

International community: The OSCE should look into establishing a mechanism to facilitate the better sharing of information between the various national and international security mechanisms with responsibility for the borders in the GPKT micro-region. Support implementation of recommendations contained in EastWest Institute's GPKT Border Management Policy Brief, as these are also conflict prevention measures.

Governments of Kosovo/fYR Macedonia/ Serbia: Implement recommendations contained in EastWest Institute's GPKT Border Management Policy Brief as these are also conflict prevention measures.

GPKT municipalities: Advocate for the implementation of the recommendations contained in EastWest Institute's GPKT Border Management Policy Brief, as these are also conflict prevention measures.

9.4 Effective management and implementation of decentralisation processes

Three different processes of decentralisation of governance competencies have just begun in Kosovo, fYR Macedonia, and southern Serbia. These processes are designed to bring governance closer to the people, hopefully making it more responsive and effective. There are high expectations that these processes will deliver tangible results for citizens and also reduce the potential for future grievance and conflict. If effective, these processes can be a force for stability. If ineffective and poorly implemented, they can actually increase instability. There is unfortunately a great deal of public and official confusion about exactly what these decentralisation processes mean in practice in terms of new day-to-day municipal responsibilities and how these will be managed.

The lack of decentralised governance was one of the primary sources of grievance amongst the ethnic Albanian community in southern Serbia and fYR Macedonia. If local governance efficiency doesn't improve with decentralisation, continued inefficiencies may be blamed on reasons of ethnicity rather than corruption or lack of transparency.

In Gjilan/Gnjilane the proposed decentralisation process has the potential to change the local political landscape by granting municipal powers to a Serbian enclave of Partes.[28] In fYR Macedonia it has created new intra-community tension between different ethnic Albanian political parties: some of these parties recently boycotted the Macedonian parliament, citing Parliament and the coalition government's refusal to hear a bill that would annul the recent local elections.[29] Decentralisation in Kumanovo is unlikely to change the political balance of power significantly within or between groups, but it will nevertheless have an impact on the quality of governance. As issues surrounding effective governance were a core grievance in past conflict, not dealing carefully with them will negatively impact stability and inter-community relations.

9.4.1 Indicators and Guidelines for Decentralisation Processes

Progress in every area listed below amounts to a veritable wish list that even the most functioning local authority would struggle to meet. Expectations for successful decentralisation processes should be realistic, but also aspirational in terms of making local governance more effective, transparent and responsive. Addressing many of these issues will require significant cultural change of behalf of politicians, local public servants as well as the population as a whole. In addition, greater public awareness activities, a clear division of responsibilities, training and capacity development of municipal officials are all needed if these processes of decentralisation are to be successful.

Box VIII: Views on decentralisation and municipal governance

"No one group will get everything it wants from decentralisation"
– GKPT media representative.

"It is not an easy process to ensure that all services of the municipalities are offered to all communities"
– GPKT elected official.

"Before I worked for the municipality I thought the municipality could solve all social, political and economic problems. When I started working for them I realised how hard it was to make progress in any of these issues"
– GPKT municipal official.

POLICY BRIEF

Box IX: Indicators and Guidelines for Decentralisation Processes	
Positive and Successful Processes	**Negative and Unsuccessful Processes**
Manage the population's expectations of how the decentralisation process will improve lives	Fuel unrealistic expectations in the population regarding what decentralisation will deliver (e.g. lots of jobs, much more municipal spending)
Develop and clarify functional working relationships with central authorities	Cloud, confuse and do not develop a functional relationship with central authority
Increase transparency of local governance	Decrease transparency of local governance
Increase local political accountability	Decrease local political accountability
Increase local financial accountability	Decrease local financial accountability
Decrease local patronage and increase municipal appointments and contracts / tenders made on merit	Increase local patronage and appointments and contracts / tenders made because 'you know someone'
Decrease local corruption	Increase local corruption
Improve the local business environment	Exacerbate problems in the business environment by introducing unsustainable taxes or inappropriate new regulations
Equitably raise local revenue	Raise local revenue in an unfair manner
Provide municipal services efficiently	Provide municipal services inefficiently.
Undertake municipal functions without prejudice towards certain sections of the population with regards to ethnicity or political party affiliation	Undertake municipal functions with direct prejudice towards certain sections of the population with regards to ethnicity or political party affiliation
Directly improve local ability to manage inter-ethnic tensions	Directly undermine local ability to manage inter-ethnic tensions

Local-level indicators could be developed in the GPKT micro-region to monitor progress of the decentralisation process against these guidelines. This would serve as a measure of transparency and as well as an early warning mechanism of issues that need addressing.

Recommendations:

International donor community: Appropriate international support and oversight is needed for all processes of decentralisation at the local level. As a capacity-building measure donors should consider placing appropriately and experienced internationals with municipal experience in each municipality to assist the decentralisation processes. Resources for training and capacity development of municipal officials should also be provided.

Governments of Kosovo / fYR Macedonia / Serbia: Ensure that there is sufficient public and official clarity on the division of competencies between the central authority and local authority in the decentralisation processes. Central governments should also ensure that there is financial clarity and transparency in their own interaction with local municipalities.

GPKT Municipalities: Produce an annual report with full financial disclosure of income and expenditure, as well as breakdown of municipal employment. Reports should include a realistic appraisal of progress in the economic and public sectors. In addition there should be a transparent system of competitive tendering for contracts.

GPKT Media: Provide accurate public information on the decentralisation processes. Report any irregularities with processes of decentralisation.

9.5 Promoting confidence building, dialogue and better inter-ethnic relations

The removal of structural discriminatory barriers to economic and public opportunities is an important first step to reducing the potential for conflict in the GPKT micro-region. Greater confidence, cultural understanding, trust and acceptance between communities must be broadened and deepened to guarantee peace. The memory of conflict and violence is still very fresh. Also, for many community members, honour and identity needs will not be satisfied by economic or political progress alone.

The media, political leaders and influential individuals within their own societies can help promote or undermine peaceful co-existence. As a media representative interviewed in Kumanovo commented, "we do not need to be best friends, but we do need to live together". In addition, specific inter-community confidence-building activities that are carefully managed and sustained within a process are very worthwhile in terms of reducing misperceptions

and promoting greater understanding, tolerance and coexistence. The international community usually rushes to support these activities in the immediate post-conflict phase. However, the need for such programming is perhaps even more relevant in the GPKT micro-region today. Bringing in key local people in the GPKT municipalities who are usually not drawn to such activities (because of their personal or political views) is a considerable challenge, as it is in any post-conflict environment. It is however, a worthwhile challenge for those engaged in confidence-building and dialogue-related work.

Changes in the security or political situation at the national/entity level always have the ability to both negatively or positively impact inter-ethnic confidence building work. However, opportunities for interaction between members of different ethnic communities must be expanded in a sensitive and selective manner, as many citizens, particularly youth, are keen to see progress in this area. However, inter-ethnic confidence-building events and activities are sometimes prone to misuse: "It's easier to bring kids from different communities together when politics are not involved, and when it is misused by politicians or teachers with politics this causes problems", commented an individual involved in education from Gjilan/Gnjilane.

The guidelines below suggest a way forward in relation to better practice in relation to confidence-building and inter-ethnic dialogue work in the GPKT micro-region. While many of these guidelines are simple common sense and may seem self-evident, it is remarkable how often they are not followed in post-conflict environments.

POLICY Brief

Box X: Guidelines for successful investment in inter-community confidence building events in the GPKT micro-region	
Principle/Guidelines	**Why**
1. Activities must be sustained over a period of time within a process. These processes, sustained over a period of 3 – 5 years, have a much better chance of having a tangible peacebuilding impact.	**1.** Evidence from around the world indicates that one-off or short-term events fail to have any impact. Longer-term activities have more impact.
2. Activities should be focused on tangible and functional activities like educational, sporting, business, artistic events or capacity-building processes.	**2.** The functional purpose provides a reason and ensures projects have a dual impact that is more than the sum of its parts. Interaction for the sake of interaction can easily be seen as political.
3. Any inter-community process has to be sensitively undertaken and managed by organisations and individuals who are seen to have a level of impartiality.	**3.** If managed badly confidence-building programmes can cause more problems than they solve. Those organisations viewed as impartial will have a better ability to draw in a wider cross-section of participants.
4. Any inter-community process is best undertaken by those organisations with experience in inter-community dialogue and confidence building, as well as knowledge and a track record in the region.	**4.** There is considerable learning to be had from past practice, and local knowledge will help avoid making past mistakes. Experience in both confidence building, and a track record working in the region is a good mix. While this is not always possible in every area, in the GPKT micro-region there are local and international organisations that have both.
5. Work should be widened and deepened sensitively – rapid scaling up is not recommended.	**5.** The temptation to scale up rapidly or widen or deepen when there is success is often hard to resist. However, all these processes are fragile, and require careful management. Management overstretch has the potential to significantly undermine progress.
6. Make efforts to engage those who are interested but who do not usually take part in such activities .	**6.** Forcing individuals to be involved is morally dubious and functionally counter-productive. However, active encouragement, particularly by people from within their own community, for others to become involved is an approach that is worthwhile.
7. Care should be taken that a 'per diem' culture does not grow up related to inter-community events.	**7.** While a locally appropriate remuneration should be given in certain circumstances, there is a danger that money becomes the primary motivator for participation. This can skew and undermine processes of inter-community confidence building.

There is also concern that some supposedly inter-community activities supported by the international community in the GPKT micro-region are in practice mono-ethnic. "Some inter-ethnic projects being supported by international organisations are inter-ethnic only on paper", commented a Kosovo Serb NGO activist interviewed in Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality. 'Marriages of convenience' between organisations primarily representing different communities are inevitable as a way of accessing funds. However, these unrealistic relationships should not be supported in the long run if they remain merely 'marriages of convenience' with no real inter-ethnic activity. While there is a great deal of capacity building needed within communities, if activities have the purpose of being inter-ethnic in nature, appropriate oversight should be maintained to ensure that they are in practice.

While external agencies may be the catalyst for some inter-community and cross-border activities in the GPKT micro-region, the goal should be for this interaction to take on its own locally-owned dynamic. Indeed, there is a considerable history of interaction between ethnic groups and different communities in the GPKT micro-region. Revitalising this dynamic requires access to information and opportunities.

In the municipalities of the GPKT micro-region there are a number of businesses and social enterprises. In order to make contact, these enterprises must understand each other and share contact details. While the EastWest Institute GPKT project in itself has facilitated contact between communities, a physically produced directory would certainly assist future initiatives. The basic criteria for inclusion in the directory should be a willingness and commitment to undertake cross-border and cross-community business or social activities and a track record of business or social activities of over a year. It should include the nature of these businesses and social enterprises and contact names and contact details and should be produced in two, possibly three languages. After a year, some reflection should be undertaken on whether the directory has really facilitated contact and inter-community and cross-border interaction. If it has, a second expanded and improved version should be produced.

Recommendations

International community: Continue to support confidence building and inter-ethnic dialogue in the GPKT micro-region but only with reference to the guidelines above. Support learning and reflection on this process across organisations and initiatives as well as implementation itself. Look to support and build local as well as international NGO capacity in this area.

GPKT municipalities: Provide wider support for confidence building and inter-ethnic dialogue projects. Avoid politicising initiatives or individual activities by seeking to directly associate them with any political party or political figure.

Implementing agencies (local/international): Continue to support confidence building and inter-ethnic dialogue in the region, again in reference to the guidelines above. Invest in cross-organisational and cross-regional learning and the documentation of good and bad practice. Work to ensure that activities and initiatives are locally led and locally relevant.

9.6 Increasing access to information and media professionalism

The conduct of the 'national' media in Kosovo, fYR Macedonia and Serbia has been widely documented as fuelling the flames of past inter-ethnic tension and conflict. As local contacts commented: "The March [2004] riots were the first test of the media in Kosovo, it was a test that they failed" (ethnic Serb from Gjilan/Gnjilane); "The local media needs to be more accurate, but the international media can also get things wrong and cause problems as well" (ethnic Albanian teacher in Gjilan/Gnjilane).

While some blame this situation on the lack of professional standards, others point to overt political manipulation as the reason for bad practice. It is however not only the media's behaviour, but also the general lack of reliable information available to the citizens about political developments at the local as well as the national level that has the potential to fuel violence. As was noted, "There is a rumour culture here. I don't believe everything I hear and try and

POLICY Brief

get information from a variety of sources" (ethnic Albanian from Presevo). Media reform is not a new issue, but further focus, resources and support is needed to develop professional media standards in the GPKT micro-region.

Already there has been some progress, and there have been no repeats of the grossly inaccurate and sensational type of reporting observed around the March 2004 riots in Kosovo. However, more progress is needed. Locally relevant and adapted guidelines for 'conflict sensitive' journalism should be devel-oped and endorsed by GPKT media representatives. The checklist for conflict sensitive journalism noted below in Box XI provides a starting point. Support for the development for media standards should also be provided within a long-term process of capac-ity building rather than one-off trainings or events. Activities should also be supported by professional organisations with a track record of working in the region, although these organisations will need to have additional support from the international community to engage with local media houses.

Box XI: A checklist for conflict sensitive journalism*

- Avoid reporting a conflict as consisting of two opposing sides. Find other affected interests and include their stories, opinions and goals.
- Avoid defining the conflict by always quoting the leaders who make familiar demands. Go beyond the elites. Report the words of ordinary people who may voice the opinions shared by many.
- Avoid only reporting what divides the sides in conflict. Ask the opposing sides questions which may reveal common ground. Report on interests or goals which they may share.
- Avoid always focusing on the suffering and fear of only one side. Treat all sides' suffering as equally newsworthy.
- Avoid words like 'devastated', 'tragedy' and 'terrorized' to describe what has been done to one group. These kinds of words put the reporter on one side. Do not use them yourself. Only quote someone else who uses these words.
- Avoid emotional and imprecise words. 'Assassination' is the murder of a head of state and no one else. 'Massacre' is the deliberate killing of innocent, unarmed civilians: soldiers and policemen are not massacred. 'Genocide' means killing an entire people. Do not minimise suffering, but use strong language carefully.
- Avoid words like 'terrorist', 'extremist' or 'fanatic'. These words take sides, make the other side seem impossible to negotiate with. Call people what they call themselves.
- Avoid making an opinion into a fact. If someone claims something, state their name, so it is their opinion and not your fact.
- Avoid waiting for leaders on one side to offer solutions. Explore peace ideas wherever they come from. Put these ideas to the leaders and report their response.

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* *This paragraph is excerpted and adapted from Ross Howard, Conflict Sensitive Journalism, Copenhagen and Vancover: International Media Support and IMPACS, 2004. It was originally drawn from 'Peace Journalism, What is it? How to do it?'; this piece and other ideas can be found in Annabel McGoldrick, and Jake Lynch, Peace Journalism, Hawthorn Press, 2005.*

Recommendations

International community: Do not neglect local-level capacity-building programmes for professional standards in the media in the GPKT micro-region. Focus support for capacity building in professional standards on GPKT and local media as well as national media.

Municipalities: Do more to ensure the independence of the local media. There should be more of a critical distance between municipal political parties and political officials and the media in the GPKT micro-region.

GPKT media: Produce local news stories and documentaries. Make recognised international standards of professionalism and conflict sensitive journalism the standard operating procedure in relation to the coverage of news and public information.

9.7 Supporting local conflict management mechanisms

Periods of heightened tension and sporadic violent incidents are inevitable as the sub-region develops politically over the coming years. The ability to manage these incidents non-violently at the local level, while addressing the sources and dynamics that exacerbate violence, is a core municipal level governance responsibility.

Local political and community leaders who are representative and legitimate in their own communities have played an important role in managing conflict and tension within their own municipalities in the GPKT micro-region. This is particularly the case when they undertake tangible confidence-building actions in collaboration with local leaders of other communities. During the riots in March 2004, the local political leadership shown by the then Mayor and the leader of the Serbian community was very instrumental in managing and addressing tension in Gjilan/Gnjilane. Also, the role played by the then Mayor and the leader of the Albanian community in Kumanovo during the 2001 conflict was extremely important in damping tension and restoring confidence. Even more recently, the actions of some ethnic Albanian leaders (including the Mayor of Presevo) in southern Serbia regarding the unfortunate shooting of a boy illegally crossing the border with fYR Macedonia also helped address and reduce tension.[30] These are all examples of incidents where the potential for conflict was addressed by the activities and action of local political leaders.

Acting in conciliatory ways to manage conflict and tension does carry some political risk within their communities for the leaders involved. This is particularly the case when leaders' political legitimacy or power-base is under threat. The accusation of 'selling out' can be made against them, undermining their credibility. Also, these leaders usually represent more moderate voices that have little or no sway over the more militant sections of their own communities. While personal qualities and motivation seem to be somewhat of a reason for the success of these initiatives they are too important to be left to the chance of 'having the right person' in post. There must be a commitment and investment in locally owned mechanisms of conflict management that look to reach out and bind in a more inclusive cross-section of local political figures.

Initiatives such as joint missions by political leaders from different ethnicities in times of tension to visit hotspots and conduct meetings to hear grievances, publicised joint statements and actions by political and community leaders promoting non-violent solutions at times of crisis, as well as ad hoc forums in which grievances and contentious inter-community issues can be discussed safely and respectfully and local solutions proposed have all been used to some affect. They should be lauded and supported. The problem, with these methods however is that they are ad hoc, and are largely reliant on individual local political leaders. They are rarely developed into something 'systematic' and at least semi-formal, although a link to formal local governance or security structures can be counter-productive. In order to become more systematic, local conflict management mechanisms would be more regular than 'one off', and would have more of a specific and defined remit and purpose and be less reliant on one or two personalities.

There is a need to further explore in detail in the GPKT micro-region how local conflict management actually works at the community and municipal level, and what methods could be taken to support their development into more of a system. Bureaucratising, politicising or creating inflexible and illegitimate

conflict management mechanisms would be wholly inappropriate and totally counter-productive. The role of outsiders in supporting any initiatives must be very limited and conducted with the support and endorsement of the local communities concerned. In this regard, any attempt to develop or support local conflict management mechanisms must be undertaken with a huge care or not at all.

There is a wide menu of conflict management mechanisms to choose from, such as: standing forums for airing grievances, mediation and negotiation capacity-building and designated community leaders with these skills, early warning activities, community liaison groups with security bodies, and alternative dispute resolution forums, to name but a few. Lessons learned would indicate that effective systems/mechanisms must be: 1) locally-led and owned rather than dominated or unduly influenced by an external agenda; 2) culturally appropriate to all parties; 3) seen to be effective, rather than as simply a vehicle for earning per diems or political grandstanding; 4) supported but not dominated by influential local institutions and leaders; and, 5) initiated and endorsed by a collection of individuals or organisations who together have legitimacy across conflict lines.

Recommendations:

International community: Maintain a critical distance from local conflict management initiatives and mechanisms. These initiatives can be welcomed and encouraged but must be locally owned and not 'tainted' by association with the international community.

Governments of Kosovo/fYR Macedonia/ Serbia: Learn about and respect local conflict management mechanisms in the GPKT micro-region and look to support and learn from them, rather than undermine them.

GPKT local municipalities: Further develop and expand local and community level conflict management mechanisms as appropriate, but do not seek to politicise them. Expose the next generation of political leadership to these initiatives, so that when key personalities move on, learning and systems are not lost.

International NGOs: Do not institute any activities even indirectly supporting or initiating new local

conflict management mechanisms without a long period of community engagement, learning and reflection on how this would be most appropriately undertaken. Poorly planned or implemented initiatives in this field that do not follow lessons learned will cause more harm than good.

Local agencies/media: Research, document and publicise the positive experiences of local conflict management of tension in the past throughout the GPKT municipalities.

9.8 Addressing the strategic deficit in cross-border donor support

There is a need to ensure that there is strategic coherence in international donor cross-border support in the GPKT micro-region. This is broadly for two reasons. Firstly, recent global research has indicated that unco-ordinated donor support in the economic, political, security and psychosocial spheres is counter-productive in promoting sustainable peace and development.[31] Secondly, unco-ordinated donor activity also places too much burden on municipalities, particularly municipal political leaders and officials. Both issues undermine rather than re-enforce donors' own goals of peace, security and development. The needs in the micro-region are too great not to ensure that maximum positive benefit is derived from donor support and aid more generally. Greater strategic coherence and co-ordination will ensure that there is more complementarity between donor initiatives, and that certain development and governance sectors are not overloaded while others are neglected. Donor and implementing agencies also need to work to facilitate the emergence of well thought out and researched collective local priorities originating from the GPKT municipalities themselves.

Cross-border initiatives are particularly difficult to co-ordinate strategically as they often fall outside the usual 'national based' co-ordinating mechanisms that donors and national governments utilise. The present ad hoc system relying on the good will of implementing agencies and individual donors is insufficient for this task. There is therefore a need to establish at the very least an information-sharing mechanism for donor supported initiatives covering the GPKT

municipalities and also more widely across the region (as not all cross-border projects are focused on all GPKT municipalities). This is the first step toward a more co-ordinated, strategically and locally-led, donor-supported action to cross-border initiatives in the wider region.

Recommendations

International community: Seek to better co-ordinate strategy and programming in and across the wider region by developing an information-sharing framework. Programme time and make co-ordination, complementarity and coherence a stated priority to ensure that this process doesn't remain aspirational. Ensure that mechanisms to gain local municipal input into donor strategies and priorities are effective and used.

Implementing agencies: Develop protocols and mechanisms for sharing information, and look for opportunities to harmonise or undertake complementary implementation activities.

GPKT Municipalities: Be vocal in demanding that donors and implementing agencies are strategic, coherent and co-ordinated in what they are doing in the micro-region. Ensure that collective and well thought out GPKT interests are advanced through donor supported and implemented activities.

Note on methodology

This policy brief was researched over the period of two months with 14 days spent in the GPKT region. More than thirty individuals from municipal politics, municipal administrations, civil society, media organisations, youth groups, teachers, the business community and representatives of the international community based in the GPKT region were interviewed. Also informal conversations were held with many more. The Brief is however not a comprehensive conflict analysis of the micro-region, nor an in-depth exploration of individual conflict issues. This would require a significantly more comprehensive process undertaken over a much longer period of time. All quotes associated with interviews in this piece were obtained by the author during visits to the GPKT municipalities in the first quarter of 2005 with research being complete by April 2005. Because of the sensitive nature of talking about conflict issues all interviews were conducted on the understanding that no individuals would be directly identified. In some instances identifying the place of work or ethnicity of the person concerned would also make them easily identifiable and so these details were also removed.

POLICY Brief

Endnotes

1 Henry Bolton Border Management in Kosovo-Southern Serbia-fYR Macedonia Vortex: A Local Perspective, EastWest Institute GPKT Policy Brief, Brussels, February 2005.

2 Quote from Ross Howard, Conflict Sensitive Journalism, Copenhagen and Vancover: International Media Support and IMPACS, 2004.

3 See Dan Smith, Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together: Overview of the report of the Joint Utstein Study on Peacebuilding, Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

4 See Paul Collier, Breaking the Conflict Trap, Washington: World Bank, 2003.

5 The plan's full name was Plan and Programme of the Government of Republic of Serbia and Government of FR of Yugoslavia for the solution of the crisis in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja.

6 All quotes associated with interviews in this piece were obtained by the author during visits to the GPKT municipalities the first quarter of 2005. Because of the sensitive nature of talking about conflict issues all interviews were conducted on the understanding that no individuals would be directly identified. In some instances identifying the work sector or ethnicity of the individual would also make them easily identifiable, and so these details were also removed.

7 It is noted that a number of other important ethnicities live in the GPKT micro-region and that they too have been participants and victims in the various conflicts.

8 Hereafter called 'The Plan and Programme for Resolution of Crisis'

9 For a full discussion of these types of issues see Henry Bolton Border Management in Kosovo-Southern Serbia-fYR Macedonia Vortex: A Local Perspective, East West Institute GPKT Policy Brief, Brussels, February 2005.

10 See above for a number of practical and realistic solutions in this regard.

11 Based on official compensation data provided by Gjilan/Gnjilane municipality, reported on by the Commission established to deal with reimbursement for damages following the March riots (Document Nr/Br. 03 dt. 13.04.2004).

12 For a political platform explaining this see Riza Halimi, "Analysis on Implementation of the Plan and Programme for Resolution of the Crisis in the Municipalities of Bujanovac, Presheva and Medvedja" – mimeo, Presheva, 20th of April 2004.

13 Vechernje Novosti.

14 For further information see United States Embassy Belgrade Press Release – "U.S. Embassy Welcomes Joint Statement on Southern Serbia", March 4, 2005 - http://belgrade.usembassy.gov/press/2005/050304a.html

15 Skender Latifi, "Kosovo Union Call Raises Tension", Balkans Crisis Report No. 532, 9th of December 2004.

16 Nikola Lazic "Albanian Investor Meets Brick Wall in Southern Serbia" Balkans Crisis Report No. 537, 27th of January 2005.

17 See, GPKT Meeting Report 12 – Strategic Mayoral Meetings January 2005, EastWest Institute – Regional and Transfrontier Co-operation Programme, mimeo.

18 Disarmament, Demobilisation and Re-integration.

19 Mitko Jovanov, Popova Sapka, David Quin, "Macedonia: Sporting Chance for Former War Zone", Balkans Crisis Report No 475, 8th of Jan 2004.

20 Konstantin Testorides, "President calls for resolution of crisis involving armed ethnic Albanians in village near Macedonian capital", Associated Press, 14th of December 2004.

21 For more discussion of this particular incident see International Crisis Group, 'Macedonia: Not out of the Woods Yet', Europe Briefing N°37 Skopje/Brussels, 25 February 2005.

22 Some of this diagram was inspired by Mary B. Anderson, Confronting War, Cambridge Mass: CDA Associates, 2003.

23 The issue of security sector reform, police reform more widely, and more specifically the role of the Kosovo Protection Corps, are more macro-level issues that will require action on the entity and international level. They have not been covered in this brief, but are important issues for conflict prevention in the wider region. For details on police reform see Gordon Peake, Policing the Peace: Police reform and experiences in Kosovo, Southern Serbia and Macedonia, London: Saferworld, 2004.

24 For detailed introductory guidance on 'conflict-sensitive' planning, implementation and evaluation, as well as institutional capacity development see <http://www.conflictsensitivity.org>

25 Although designed for the multinational extractive industries, some particular insight and operational guidance into conflict sensitive business practice can be found from International Alert, Conflict-Sensitive Business Practice: Guidance for the Extractive Industries, London: International Alert, March 2005, <http://www.international-alert.org/publications.htm#business>

26 See Nick Killick VS Srithanka, Canan Gunduz, "The Role of Local Business in Peacebuilding", Berghof Handbook for Constructive Conflict Management, Bonn, 2005. - http://www.berghof-handbook.net/complete.htm

27 Henry Bolton Border Management in Kosovo-Southern Serbia-fYR Macedonia Vortex: A Local Perspective, EastWest Institute GPKT Policy Brief, Brussels, February 2005.

28 For more information and commentary on the decentalisation process in Kosovo see OSCE "Local Government Reform and Decentralization" Details - Newsletter published by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Volume 1, Edition No. 5, April 2005.

29 See Ulrich Buechsenschuetz, "Macedonian Albanian Opposition Party Fights for Survival", Radio Free Europe/RL Newsline Vol. 9, No. 80, Part II, 28 April 2005.

30 See GPKT Meeting Report 12 – Strategic Mayoral Meetings January 2005, EastWest Institute – Regional and Transfrontier Co-operation Programme, mimeo.

31 See Dan Smith, Towards a Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding: Getting Their Act Together: Overview of the report of the Joint Utstein Study on Peacebuilding, Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

EastWest Institute
Bridging Divides

Centre for Border Co-operation (CBC)

CBC MISSION

The Centre promotes optimal cross-border co-operation across Eurasia, where severed relations or dysfunctional border practices hamper development and security. We engage local communities and their governments throughout Eurasia to bridge dangerous ethnic, political and economic divides, address cross-border threats through functional co-operation, and help strengthen border policies and practices to equally address the requisites of security and freedom of movement.

STRATEGIC GOALS

CBC projects are based on the assumption that if ethnic, religious and politico-economic fault lines are to be bridged, there is a need to work not only at the policy level with central governments, but also across borders with local border communities where such fault lines are most acutely felt. Addressing this need to work both 'bottom-up' and 'topdown', CBC's mutually re-enforcing strategic objectives are:

1. At the grass roots level (responding to local demand), to support functional, interest-based co-operation between border regions suffering dysfunctional or severed links;

2. At the policy level, to support the establishment of the necessary national and regional legislative/political frameworks facilitating cross-border co-operation, addressing the need to balance security and freedom in border policy and reduce the socio-economic gap on the borders of the EU.

WHY CBC?

Threats of international terrorism and cross-border criminality, the conflict-ridden fragmentation of ex-Yugoslavia and the process of European Union Enlargement have brought border issues to center-stage. Border regions internationally continue to represent zones of significant tension and instability if not outright conflict;they are at the same time among the least developed areas in the region. Functional trans-frontier co-operation of local actors and institutions (business, civic andgovernment) in such areas serves as an important tool of conflict prevention/post-conflict reconciliation as well as regional development and socio-economic convergence, promoting local democracy and open civil societies. As such it is a prerequisite of development and security in border regions, providing a concrete underpinning to regional co-operation and normalised inter-state relations.

GJILAN/GNJILANE-KUMANOVO-PRESEVO-TRGOVISTE (GPKT)

The work in the GPKT micro-region is predicated on the view that instability and cross-border crime in the micro-region is more a result of the harsh border regimes imposed in the recent past and resultant socio-economic isolation of the three parts of this once vibrant market region, than of the often-cited ethnic conflict in the area. EWI's GPKT Project seeks to foster political consensus at both local and national levels on positive solutions to the challenges facing communities in the GPKT micro-region, and is working with civil society in a number of areas to enhance capacity and support cross-border multi-ethnic partnership and confidence-building. The Initiative contributes to stimulating a much-needed debate about the nature of border regime reform in the Balkans in order to assist in the battle against organised crime and to promote regional stability and co-operation. This research was funded by the C. S. Mott Foundation and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency as part of their support for the GPKT Project.

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