

Integration as Conflict Prevention: Possibilities and Limitations in the experience of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

Franziska Zanker¹

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¹ Franziska Zanker followed an internship at the HCNM in early 2010 and has just completed an M.A. in International Relations and Diplomacy at Leiden University, the Netherlands. All views expressed are her own, and do not necessarily reflect those of the High Commissioner. Special thanks to Dr. Natalie Sabanadze and Dr. Francesco Palermo for comments on earlier versions.

In the world there are between 6,500 and 10,000 different ethnic identities.² These identities do not always conform to state boundaries, which has led to an understanding that people must learn to live in peace and harmony despite ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious and social differences, as societies become increasingly diverse. Unfortunately, this is often not the case and identity-related grievances still remain a primary cause of conflict to this day. It is therefore of interest whether integration programmes in multi-ethnic states can lead to the prevention of conflict.

At the outset, it should be noted that the term integration is given entirely different interpretations by diverse scholars, organisations and even states. Over time, definitions and understandings of integration have proliferated, making matters even more complicated. According to this author integration should be defined as the accommodation of differences. This notion understands that diversity and plurality exists within a community, and that mechanisms must be put into place in order to support an ongoing process providing for the integration of a multi-ethnic society. Mechanisms include policies for education, political participation and language. Essentially, it is thought that the accommodation of differences relates directly to the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). In order to encapsulate a wider spectrum of conflict prevention, the application of integration in this discussion will go beyond the target audience of the HCNM — national minorities — and also include new minorities, i.e. those with a migrant and immigrant background.

The basis for arguing that the integration of multi-ethnic societies can lead to the prevention of conflict stems from the experiences of the HCNM, believed to show the link between the two. It will be shown, building on the experience of the HCNM, that if integration is regarded as the accommodation of differences, it can be used as a structural conflict prevention tool, albeit with due recognition of the shortcomings, which will also be discussed in detail. one key player.

I. The Concept of Integration

The concept and use of the term integration is as persistent as it is ambiguous. Integration can mean so many different things that its definition becomes close to impossible. This impossibility of coming to a unitary and cross-cutting definition makes any argument containing integration, like the one in question, extremely difficult. Nonetheless, the HCNM's interpretation of integration will be considered, as well as a few other key understandings.

Integration with respect for diversity

The position of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) HCNM was created as a result of the resurgence of nationalism, pursuant to the end of the Cold War. In particular the HCNM mandate was created to tackle tensions between minority and majority groups affecting peace, stability and relations between OSCE participating states.³ The issue of the integration of persons pertaining to a national minority was on the agenda of the HCNM since its conception, through the promotion of more inclusive and pluralistic

² C.P. Scherrer, *Structural Prevention of Ethnic Violence*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, pp. 17; see also R. D. Putnam, 'E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the 21st Century', in *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 2007, Volume 30, Number 2, pp. 137

³ CSCE, Helsinki Document: The Challenges of Change, 9-10 July, 1992, Section II, Part 3; see also R. Letschert, 'Successful integration while respecting diversity; 'Old' minorities versus 'New' minorities', in *Security and Human Rights (formerly Helsinki Monitor)*, 2007, No. 1, pp. 53

ways of nation- building in countries with a legacy of ethnic nationalism.⁴ In 2005, at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Meeting, the HCNM was called upon to draw up recommendations on how to combine the concepts of integration and diversity, taking into account the needs of both majority and minority groups. As a result of this request the HCNM commissioned a comprehensive study of integration policies pertaining particularly to new minorities (see Migration Policy Group 2007). The HCNM then specified that special efforts must be made to develop an over-arching common identity whilst respecting the rights of minorities to maintain their cultural and religious identity. The HCNM has always advocated this type of integration with respect to diversity, where states should encourage minority participation in political, social and economic life so that minorities can develop a sense of belonging, whilst protecting their cultural, linguistic and religious rights.⁵ Therefore, in addition to the protection of minorities' rights, such as the right to learn the minority language, there could be integration policies, e.g. learning the state language. In the view of the HCNM , this balance is a strategy for building a more cohesive society. Integration, according to the HCNM , is conceived of as a two-way process, involving the duty of states to promote voluntary integration of minorities and the responsibility of minorities to work with integration policies and obey laws.⁶ The HCNM does not believe that there is such a thing as a perfectly integrated society, instead understanding integration to be a process, with no specific end-result. Nor does the HCNM favour one model of state organisation over another. Lastly, the HCNM supports integration when it is undertaken with due regard to good governance, democracy and respect for human dignity.

Other conceptualisations of integration, aside from the understanding of the hcnm, must be considered in order to understand the wider debate on integration as a conflict prevention tool.

Other conceptualisations of integration

As a result of changes in the world structure in the early 1990s there was increased migration and an intensified demand by older minorities to recognise their differences. Both these phenomena have led to more attention to integration, resulting in the abundance of different understandings and meanings of integration and related processes.⁷ Whilst it is unfeasible to mention all variants of integration it is nonetheless worthwhile to mention a few, as it will be shown that the link to conflict prevention largely depends on the definition. Integration can be divided into a number of main policy options, namely voluntary assimilation, creating a common culture, multiculturalism and separation. Voluntary assimilation (noting that non-voluntary assimilation is largely unaccepted) is a one- sided process, whereby minorities become a part of the dominant culture, giving up their own identity for this. This is in some interpretations associated with ethnocentrism, cultural suppression and violence to enforce conformity.⁸ Creating a common culture, also known as a

4 N. Sabanadze, 'Beyond Conflict Prevention: HCNM and Minority Integration', in T. Agarin and M. Brosig, *Minority Integration in Central Eastern Europe*, Amsterdam, 2009, pp.108; see also M. Pentikäinen, *Creating an Integrated Society and Recognising Differences: The Role and Limits of Human Rights, with Special Reference to Europe*, Academic Dissertation, University of Lapland, 2008, pp. 289

5 See R. Ekeus, *Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons Belonging to National Minorities: Ensuring Security and Sustainable Development in the OSCE Area*, Address by the OSCE HCNM, Thirteenth Meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum, Prague, 2005; see also Pentikäinen (2008), supra note 4, pp. 289

6 Pentikäinen (2008), supra note 4, pp. 290; Sabanadze (2009) , supra note 4, pp. 116

7 A. Favell, *Integration Policy and Integration Research in Europe: a review and critique*, Report prepared for the Carnegie Endowment 'Comparative Citizenship Project', June/Nov 1999; F. Lindo, 'The concept of integration: theoretical concerns and practical meaning', in L. Fonceca and J. Malheiros, *Social Integration and Mobility*, Lisbon, 2005, pp.12; Pentikäinen (2008), supra note 4, pp. 9; M. Similä, *Is a Multicultural State an Oxymoron?*, Tallinn Conference on Conceptualising Integration, October 18-19, 2007, pp. 14

8 W. Bosswick and F. Heckmann, *Integration of migrants: Contribution of local and regional authorities*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2006, pp.4

‘melting pot’, signifies the acceptance of minorities and their contribution to a common culture, whereby diversity is relegated to the private sphere. The object of this type of integration is to create a common unified citizenship or civil national identity. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, amounts to the protection and even encouragement of diversity in both the private and public sphere. The problem associated with multiculturalism is that it risks looking at culture as something homogenous and static, with an over-emphasis on cultural differences, and an under-emphasis on differences connected to social conditions and the making of political claims.⁹ Lastly, the separation model denies social integration to minorities, whereby migrants are expected to leave, such as the Gastarbeiter model in Germany or Switzerland. Overall, there has been a general shift away from multiculturalism due to its potentially simplistic attributions to culture. Emphasis is increasingly being placed on promoting unity and social cohesion leading to the establishment of shared values, as symbolised by the common culture model.

Integration is considered to consist of complex and multi-layered practices in the economic, social and cultural sphere. Therefore, another way to classify integration is to divide it into structural, cultural, interactive, identificational and social integration.¹⁰ Structural integration pertains to the acquisition of rights and access to positions in the core institutions of society, such as the economy and labour market, education and other qualification systems, housing, and political citizenship. These pluralistic policies include, for example, affirmative action in education and the workplace and proportional representation in elections.¹¹ The second classification, cultural integration, is the individual’s cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal changes. This is linked to identificational integration which relates to the feelings of belonging to and identification with groups. Interactive integration underlines the notion of integration being a two-way process as it concerns the acceptance and inclusion of minorities in the primary relationships and social networks of the host society. This is heightened through social integration, the last classification, which stands for inclusion and acceptance in core institutions, relationships and positions of a host society.

The definition adopted by the author, accommodation of differences, is influenced by the integration model of common culture, as well as interactive and social integration as explained above. It is also seen to be a reflection of the hcnm’s integration with respect for diversity. It will be argued, building on the experience of the hcnm, that if integration is seen as the accommodation of differences, it can be used as a conflict prevention tool.

II. Integration of multi-ethnic societies to prevent conflict

The question ultimately asks whether integration policies can make a positive difference in conflict-prone, multi-ethnic societies. Arguably the HCNM’s work shows that there is a link between the integration of multi-ethnic societies and conflict prevention. Furthermore, it will be shown that when focusing on identity conflicts, the link can be replicated elsewhere, as too much focus on identity can lead to polarisation and thus conflict. Integration mechanisms can additionally be recognised in conflict prevention tools which are mainly structural. This shows that integration mechanisms can be used as a conflict prevention tool.

9 Similä (2007), *supra* note 7, pp. 15

10 Bosswick and Heckmann (2006), *supra* note 8, pp. 9-11; see also A. Rudiger and S. Spencer, *Social Integration of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities: Policies to Combat Discrimination*, Conference on the Economic and Social Aspects of Migration, European Commission and OECD, Brussels, 21-22 January 2003, pp. 5

11 R. Stavenhagen, *Ethnic Conflicts and the Nation-State*, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996, pp. 296

The experience of the HCNM

The HCNM has pointed out that policies of integration, ensuring human rights, preventing conflicts and the cohesion of societies are all interconnected.¹² Minorities are often marginalised and therefore need additional rights to have an equal starting position, as well as to realise their basic rights guaranteed by the constitution and legal systems. Otherwise a sense of exclusion and alienation from society or a sense of a threat to one's identity can create tensions; in which case the HCNM's attention is warranted. This is especially underlined by the fact that these tensions may turn into an inter-state conflict, notably with kin-states. In the words of a former HCNM CNM 'a society at peace with itself is more likely to be at peace with its neighbours'.¹³ It is recognised that long-term conflict prevention includes fostering tolerance, understanding and mutual acceptance in society. As such, approaches must be developed that help people to accommodate their differences in a way that allows genuine equality and minimises the risk of conflict. From the experience of the HCNM, minority rights may not be enough to safeguard against conflict, but should in some instances be complemented with integration policies which ensure that rights are implemented, duties are recognised, and different communities interact. For example, a person belonging to a minority may have a right to political participation which in fact is only de jure, a possible factor in heightening tension for a disenchanted minority group. Therefore, if as an integration policy there are civic bodies with participation rights and successful recruitment mechanisms for both minority and majority groups, it not only ensures that it is also a de facto right but also that the communities are working together, which increases trust and therefore makes conflict less likely. Consequently, 'the philosophy applied in practice to achieve...conflict prevention is one of integration of the different ethnic communities'.¹⁴ In other words, according to the experience of the HCNM, a lack of integration and social cohesion can be a threat to the security and stability of a multi-ethnic state.

In practice, the work of the hcnm is pertinent to potential conflicts related to identity problems. Furthermore, identity is inherently linked to all interpretations of integration. It is therefore argued that when using identity problems as a basis for conflict, integration as a conflict prevention tool can be made more generalisable than purely the hcnm's experience.

Polarizing Identities as a Root Cause of Conflict

According to Putnam, identity is socially constructed, and can therefore be reconstructed or deconstructed at any given time.¹⁵ Persons will usually consider themselves to have more than one identity. An overemphasis on certain aspects of identity, such as ethnicity, is often a result of some real or imagined deprivation or discrimination. It can lead to increased polarisation and segregation and, as a result, conflict. Bosswick and Heckman found that the formation of ethnic minority identities among migrants is leading to the reinforcement of ethnic stratification and ethno-cultural conflict.¹⁶ It must be highlighted that cultural differences, which can be equated with identities, are not in themselves enough to cause conflict, as can

12 Pentikäinen (2008), *supra* note 4, pp. 302

13 R. Ekeus, 'Towards a Europe for All', Address to the Roundtable Conference *New Minorities: Inclusion and Equality*, The Hague, 2003, see also R. Ekeus, *High Commissioner's address to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's 15th Annual Session*, Brussels, 4th July 2006

14 K. Vollebaek, Conflict Prevention in the field of national minorities and the link to sustainable Globalization, Lecture at the European International Model United Nations, The Hague, 2008; see also V. De Graaf, Draft Rapporteur's Report: Session VII: Policies of integration of persons belonging to national minorities, EF.GAL/30/05, 27 May 2005; J. de Fonblanque, Economic and Social Integration of Persons belonging to National Minorities, Address by the Director of the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to the Thirteenth Meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum, Prague, 23 May- 27 May 2005

15 Putnam (2007), *supra* note 2, pp.159

16 Bosswick and Heckmann (2006), *supra* note 8, pp. 5

be seen by many heterogeneous peaceful societies that exist today. Rather, it is the combination of a group deprivation, particularly when linked to a certain identity, such as no political representation for one identity group, which can be a powerful source of mobilisation towards conflict. As a result, disaffected minorities have been a source of conflict since the mid-nineteenth century, and the struggles of secessionist minorities have repeatedly redrawn the maps of Europe.¹⁷ More recently, the dangers posed by unassimilated immigrant groups have been pointed out, especially post-September 11.¹⁸ A rise in immigration in Europe since the 1970s has led to an increase in racist and xenophobic tendencies and incidents, as well as overall tension. This is a direct consequence of identity over-emphasis, whereby increasing diversity has led to an 'us versus them' mentality, sometimes seen as a clash of cultures or identities. Indeed, concern has been expressed that diversity causes societies to become fragmented when cultures and religions that are different, sometimes opposing, come into closer contact.¹⁹ In the absence of some kind of integration policy, such as accommodating differences, such diversity can be sensitive to conflict.

Interpretations of the roots of conflict are endless and multi-faceted, but it is irrefutable that perceived or real deprivation or discrimination due to one's identity can lead to conflict. National ideologies which attempt to subsume sub-national identities in a non-voluntary manner have become one of the major reasons for conflict.²⁰ In addition, the perception of an outsider identity for which little trust or understanding exists can lead to the same outcome. As such, indicators of potential violent conflict include the presence of outsider groups that are not part of the community, as well as little or no representation for those groups.²¹ To put it succinctly, discrimination and misunderstandings of other identities can heighten tensions and be the cause of conflict. Integration policies resulting in more harmonious relations between different identity groups can therefore be seen as conflict prevention. Nonetheless, as will be discussed below, some forms of integration can even cause conflict; therefore its definition must be treated with diligence when making the link. For the purpose of this article it is therefore integration seen as the accommodation of differences which is purported to help prevent conflict.

Integration as a conflict prevention tool

Conflict prevention is increasingly topical despite the fact that it has not yet reached a normative status. International organisations working on conflict prevention are numerous, and include the UN, World Bank, OSCE and EU. It is a central concept in the UN Charter; Chapter VI contains a number of devices which can be used as preventative measures including fact-finding, negotiation, mediation and conciliation. Despite a great deal of activism in the field of conflict prevention, conceptual confusions remain. One of the key questions is whether only the immediate causes of conflicts or also the underlying roots should be addressed under a prevention mandate. This has led to a distinction between light or operational prevention mechanisms

17 Stavenhagen (1996), *supra* note 11, pp.294; F. Stewart, M. Barrón, G. Brown and M. Hartwell, *Social Exclusion and Conflict: Analysis and Policy Implications*, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE), January 2005 (Updated April 2006); L. Cederman, A. Wimmer and B. Min, 'Why do Ethnic Groups Rebel?'; in *World Politics*, January 2010, Volume 62, no. 4, pp. 21; W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity*, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 27-8

18 J. Rex, John and G. Singh, 'Multiculturalism and Political Integration in Modern Nation- States - Thematic Introduction', in *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, 2003, Volume 5, No. 1, pp. 3

19 Migration Policy Group, *Policies on integration and diversity in some OSCE participating States: An exploratory study prepared by the Migration Policy Group*, 16th January 2007, p. 3

20 Stavenhagen (1996), *supra* note 11, pp. 290

21 S. Fisher, D.I. Abdi, J. Ludin, R. Smith, S. Williams and S. Williams, *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action*, London, 2000, pp. 104

compared to deep or structural prevention.²² It is primarily only when the latter is considered, which includes eliminating underlying causes, that integration policies could be seen as a conflict prevention tool. Structural prevention includes the need for political and societal stability, which can be enhanced by a comprehensive integration policy.

General structural prevention tools, which can be seen to be linked to integration policies, have been advocated. It has been noted, for instance, that an inclusive society which accommodates diversity and facilitates people's active participation in political, economic and social lives is the best way to lay the foundation for preventing conflict and building sustainable peace.²³ In other words, 'the best way to prevent [conflict] is to promote healthy and balanced economic development, combined with human rights, minority rights and political arrangements in which all groups are fairly represented'.²⁴ This fair representation of all groups and a rights-protection system suggests that discrimination and deprivation due to identity will be removed, and that there is therefore an accommodation of differences.

More specific structural conflict prevention tools can also be considered to be linked to integration. For example, emotional significance attached to membership of a political community, amounting to a civic identity can mean that the focus is removed from ethnic differences. As a result, institutions in society can be designed to control or prevent interpersonal ethnic tensions by creating a common civic identity through integration policies.²⁵ Fisher et al. also call on societies to invent new processes and structures to address particular problems that could cause violent conflict. Essential for conflict prevention is to work on the 'social fabric', including education for peace and justice, promoting participation in decision-making and developing good governance.²⁶ These prevention tools are directly transferable to the work of the HCNM who has advocated education and political participation policies with reference to good governance. Horowitz suggests that inter-ethnic conflict may be reduced by, inter alia, policies that create inter-ethnic co-operation and reducing disparities between groups so that dissatisfaction declines.²⁷ A rapprochement between cultures and intercultural dialogue, as well as the politics of inclusion and empowerment has also been suggested as an instrument of prevention. Political and social policies that bridge the gap between minorities and the states are seen as a key way to constructively manage ethno-political conflict.²⁸ Other specific tools to prevent conflict include technical assistance in urbanization, including for local administrations, education, health and housing.²⁹

22 A. Ackermann, 'The Idea and Practice of Conflict Prevention', in *Journal of Peace Research*, 2003, Volume 40, no. 3, pp. 345, p. 341

23 UNDESA, *Peacebuilding and Social Inclusion*, 2008 available at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/sib/peacebuilding.html> (accessed 23 March 2010)

24 K. Annan, *We the Peoples: the Role of the UN in the 21st Century*, Millennium Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, 2000, pp. 45

25 D. Smith, 'Reconciling Identities in Conflict', in R. Caplin and J. Feffer, *Europe's New Nationalism: States and Minorities in Conflict*, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 209; Stavenhagen (1996), supra note 11, pp. 292

26 Fisher et al. (2000), supra note 21, pp.106, pp. 141

27 See Stavenhagen (1996), supra note 11, pp. 247

28 N. Bearg Dyke, 'Report of Conference Discussions and Recommendations', in *Conflict Prevention: Strategies to Sustain Peace in the Post-Cold War World*, Report of the Aspen Institute Conference, July 30- August 3 1996, Aspen, Colorado, pp. 23; Council of Europe and Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, *Declaration on intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention*, DGIV/CULT/PREV (2004)1E, 16 February 2004, pp. 4; Stavenhagen (1996), supra note 11, pp. 248

29 J. Attali, 'Economic and Social Dimensions of Preventing Conflicts', in *Conflict Prevention: Strategies to Sustain Peace in the Post-Cold War World*, Report of the Aspen Institute Conference, July 30- August 3 1996, Aspen, Colorado, pp. 131

The root causes of conflicts are often linked to certain groups feeling deprived or discriminated against when certain rights are concerned. Sometimes advocating minority rights is not enough, and additional measures towards integration must be taken. Numerous references to primarily structural conflict prevention tools – be they general or more specific - can be interpreted to include integration policies, namely the accommodation of differences. As such, a link between the integration of multi-ethnic societies and conflict prevention is demonstrated, beyond merely the experience of the HCNM. Nevertheless, this link is limited to a certain definition of integration. In addition there are other shortcomings, which will now be discussed.

III. Limitations to the link between integration and conflict prevention

One difficult element of using integration as a conflict prevention tool is the variety in conceptualisations and understanding of conflict, prevention and integration, as already previously underlined. Another issue is discussing integration in security terms, especially concerning the radicalisation debate. Securitizing integration in such a manner can lead to increased polarisation and discrimination, having detrimental consequences for the integration process. In addition, there is the more general issue of whether integration policies can actually heighten tensions. All these will now be discussed in turn.

Conceptualisation Problems

Using integration as a conflict prevention tool becomes thoroughly questionable when noting that there is no common definition or understanding. The difference in the understanding of integration as well as the causes and prevention of conflict has already been touched upon. According to Kymlicka, attempts to internationalise multiculturalism, as well as minority rights, ‘is running into a veritable minefield of conceptual confusions’.³⁰ For instance, differences can be made between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ integration. A ‘thin’ layer of integration may mean that common interests and perhaps values are highlighted in order to have a better functioning society. This is exemplified by, for example, (voluntary) assimilation models whereby integration means taking on the values of the majority population (which might be the belief in a multi-ethnic society). A ‘thicker’ layer of integration affects all parts of society. At its utopian height it could mean that all levels of society are deconstructed in order to reinvent an entirely new identity and common culture. More generally, a ‘thick’ layer of integration is reflected by policies from the common culture model of integration, whereby elements of a new common identity are forged. It is often unclear to what level or degree integration policies are, could and should be developed.

A further question which remains is who is integrating, and integrating into what? The minority which is being integrated, and the majority which is reciprocating may have complex identities. An identity can have many different parts, of which different aspects may be given emphasis in different contexts. As such, one can be a Frisian minority, whilst being Dutch and also a woman. Each of these may have different importance at different times. Furthermore, as inter-cultural and interracial partnerships increase, so does the percentage of persons pertaining to a mixed ethnic heritage.³¹ Not only is the concept of identity therefore immensely complex to construe, there is also the additional problem of defining the society that is being integrated into. Integration and how to go about this is increasingly difficult as socio-demographic entities and character in societies have changed and will continue to do so in the future. Often it is assumed that integration

30 Kymlicka (2007), *supra* note 17, pp. 8

31 L. Platt, *Relationships within and between ethnic groups: An analysis using the Labour Force Survey*, Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009, pp. 39

should lead to one single, indivisible 'state' which has one simple unitary 'society'. This is at least an oversimplification, if not an outright erroneous judgement.³² Therefore the assumption of integration being able to solve conflict due to tensions between identities is a tricky one to make.

Integration as a security question

In the context of Muslim migrant minorities, there is a perception that the project of diversity 'went too far', which has led to a reassertion of more assimilatory and exclusionary politics, reflected in increasingly conservative and insular integration policies all over Europe.³³ Turning immigration, particularly Muslim immigrant integration, into a security issue shows the direct link between (a lack of) integration and potential conflict. Namely, it is argued that terrorism takes place as certain members of society are not sufficiently integrated into their country of residence and therefore choose to attack what it stands for. Nevertheless, this has the effect of institutionalising the notion of Islam as a security threat.³⁴ Securitising Muslim migration is not only discriminatory; it also has the potential to make matters worse. As long as the security rhetoric remains, the issue will become increasingly politicised and polarizing. In fact, the Muslim security rhetoric segregates a whole community and accuses them of radicalisation, which makes the possibility of successful integration less likely. This then becomes a vicious circle whereby tying the integration of Muslim migrants into a security debate will actually decrease the chances of integration and increase the chances of radicalisation and conflict. Part of the problem is also that integration measures, whether a link to reducing security fears is made or not, are not seriously implemented and, in the name of anti- terrorism, liberties are compromised and Islam is restricted from public space.³⁵ This means that a true effect of integration on reducing terrorism cannot even be measured, if the argument that a lack of integration causes security-concerns is accepted, discounting the findings that the security rhetoric actually causes increased polarisation.

To summarise, making a link between integration and conflict prevention could have the possibility of further increasing tensions in an already fractious and delicate situation. When increasing emphasis is placed on identify, not rebalancing as found in conflict prevention mechanisms outlined above, this is especially the case.

Integration measures causing conflict

There is no systematic relationship between cultural heterogeneity and a propensity towards civil war.³⁶ Many societies live in peace despite relatively segregated communities. Furthermore, some minority groups feel that any integration measures are an attack on their right to be different, and thus shy away from any such policies. Integration measures, especially those that are more assimilatory, may make minorities feel that they cannot preserve their language, culture or identity, which can breed alienation. This is why it is essential that nobody can be forced into an integration programme. If minorities, after having been offered all relevant information, choose to abstain from such measures, this should be accepted and respected. In fact, non-voluntary

32 Favell (1999), supra note 7

33 Kymlicka (2007), supra note 17, pp. 52; see also Migration Policy Group (2007), supra note 19, pp. 3

34 J. Cesari, The Securitisation of Islam in Europe, Challenge Research Paper No.15, April 2009, pp. 2

35 Ibid

36 D. Laitin, 'Immigrant Communities and Civil War', in International Migration Review, Spring 2009, Volume 43, No. 1, pp. 35

integration measures are highly likely to increase tensions.³⁷

Integration policies could put an ethnic slant on issues that are, to date, not even affected by such labels. This could increase tensions and prove to be problematic. Another concern is when the majority population rebels against the idea of integration. This is sometimes the case, as can be seen, for example, in the violent conflict and riots between Asian minority groups and native British citizens in Bradford in the UK. Furthermore, multiculturalism, one type of integration, is seen as advocating cultural relativism, i.e. the understanding of things in terms of the culture of the person, which can harm universal rights.³⁸ For example, under the auspices of multiculturalism, female genital mutilation practices or honour killings may have to be accepted as part of society. At the very least, difficulties arise as to what extent diversity should be respected. Consequently, integration programmes, even the 'best-intentioned programmes' can end in mutual violence.³⁹ More specifically, the form and implementation of integration policies can have a detrimental effect resulting in a higher likelihood of conflict. It should be noted that these definitions are however outside the remit of the accommodation of differences.

Therefore, having pointed out some problematic concerns, particularly the conceptualisation difficulties, and the problems associating integration with securitisation, it can still be argued that if integration is interpreted to mean the accommodation of differences, it can be used as a structural prevention tool. Some lessons concerning integration as a conflict prevention tool will now be drawn for the HCNM .

Lessons for the High Commissioner: Accommodation of Differences

It has been argued that integration mechanisms can be used as a conflict prevention tool. This idea is based on the work of the HCNM but can also be found when closely considering structural conflict prevention tools. There are limitations to the argument, which have been discussed above. One of the key problems is the multiple understandings of integration. Indeed, as has been noted, some versions of integration can even be the cause of tension or conflict. Furthermore, this multiplicity suggests that a unitary definition of integration is infeasible. On the other hand, the HCNM has clearly demonstrated that integration with respect to diversity can help in preventing conflict. As already mentioned, tools for the structural prevention of identity conflicts also reflect this idea, supporting the notion that integration policies can make a difference and can improve the chances of peace and harmony. Indeed 'some form of integration ... is likely to be the best way to ... reduce the risk of conflict'.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, a lot rests on the definition used. The integration debate is becoming increasingly polarising, volatile and unpredictable, particularly concerning new minorities. As such, to be clearly using integration policies as a conflict prevention tool, this must be reflected in the vocabulary used. Despite the positive work of the HCNM on integration with respect for diversity, difficult and negative implications may be automatically linked to this term. In the context of conflict prevention, integration as a term can be even more contentious. Therefore, this author suggests that the HCNM should use the term accommodation of differences. This avoids any biases being given to the term integration due to its proliferating usage and also excludes some forms of

37 M. Žagar, Policies and Ways of Integration: concepts and awareness raising - a few elements for a common strategy', 13th Economic Forum, Prague, 23-27 May 2005, EF.NGO/7/05, pp. 4; B. O'Leary, Building Inclusive States, Human Development Report Office, Background Paper for HDR 2004, United Nations Development Programme, 2004/9, pp.124; Stavenhagen (1996), supra note 11, pp. 295

38 Kymlicka (2007), supra note 17, pp. 6

39 Laitin (2009), supra note 36, pp. 49

40 Vollebaek (2008), supra note 14


integration which actually have a conflict potential.

It has been shown throughout that the accommodation of differences allows for conflict prevention. In addition, it is believed that this term already reflects what the HCNM understands as integration with respect for diversity, so it will have no fundamental effects on his ongoing and past work. Accommodation of differences means building mechanisms which support an open-ended process in the positive direction of a more stable and peaceful society. The HCNM should continue to refrain from having a particular method of ensuring the accommodation of differences, as this will continue to remain context-specific. It can nonetheless be stipulated that the general direction should be the reframing and balancing of new identities, leading to the prevention of all identity-based conflicts. An overemphasis on certain aspects of (mostly ethnic) identity, especially in societies in transition, can lead to increased polarisation and segregation and as a result conflict. Therefore accommodating differences by rebalancing identities and forging a common identity to a certain degree, allowing for diversity to remain, can de-emphasise polarising elements in society and thus lead to conflict prevention. However, it is perhaps too ambitious and unrealistic to have a goal of forging a common identity, and the rebalancing of identities in a society must primarily be focused upon.

As already emphasised, every situation differs, just as much as identity does. Thus Sabanadze suggests that the only way to create politico-legal space in which different peoples with varying needs and aspirations can live together is to make sure that policies are wide-ranging and context-specific.⁴¹ Such a nuanced approach is essential. After all a very heterogeneous society can live in harmony, compared to a relatively homogenous one, where nonetheless there are real issues causing conflict. Problematic also could be deciding on the often blurred distinction between interethnic and social conflict. As such, the HCNM should work in his areas of expertise, namely in situations in which tensions arise between minorities and majorities, with a likelihood of these spilling over state borders. As has been outlined above, this is often linked to questions and polarizations of identity and it is exactly for this kind of tension that the accommodation of differences can prevent further violent conflict.

Another lesson is that any policy advice should be careful to take into consideration and minimise short-term negative side-effects of integration policies in order to allow for the long-term benefits. In Macedonia, for example, conflict or tension may be caused as a result of new education reforms. This does not however take away their necessity, as the risk of conflict in the long term is high. It is a post- conflict, state-building situation, with a disenfranchised minority living close to its kin-state. It is in cases like these that the HCNM can prevent conflict through careful and balanced advice on integration, in this case focusing particularly on education. The issue of integration and conflict prevention is and will likely remain a contentious issue. The HCNM , however, has some specific expertise which he can use in order to prevent conflict in some circumstances through the promotion of integration. This would become more effective and generalisable if another term like the accommodation of differences is used in order to step out of conceptualising difficulties, as well as negative and oxymoronic repercussions. This particular interpretation of integration, accommodation of differences, is not integration into a majority culture or society, but is rather the integration of a multi-ethnic society. This assures that integration is a multi-way process of which all of society's actors play a part. If this form of integration, under the guidance of the HCNM , can prevent violent conflict from forming and breaking out, which past successes suggests, then it is a process worth pursuing.

41 Sabanadze (2009) , *supra* note 4, pp. 113



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Netherlands Helsinki Committee
Het Nutshuis
Riviermarkt 4
2513 AM The Hague
The Netherlands

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