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The European Union and conflict transformation

Thomas Diez and Laurence Cooley

Introduction

Prosperity and peace have always been the two main reference points in the legitimization of European integration and governance. The notion of an ‘ever closer union’ was no doubt a response to the experience of two World Wars and an answer to the question of how one can transform conflicts among nation-states so that war becomes an unlikely, if not impossible scenario. The Franco-German rapprochement in the aftermath of the Second World War is thus often credited to the integration process, although causality in this case is certainly not a one-way street (see e.g. Miard-Delacroix and Hudemann 2005; Treacher 2002). Yet the case of Northern Ireland also shows that even violent conflict can persist for decades within an integration framework, even though integration may have helped to bring about eventual resolution (Hayward and Wiener 2008).

As the European Union (EU) has developed a common foreign policy, it is no surprise that conflict transformation has become one of the core aims in this policy field. The global and regional context after the end of the Cold War in the 1990s confronted the EU with violent conflicts in its neighbourhood on the one hand and a call for a greater intervention in conflicts across the globe on the other. The EU’s response has been two-fold. First, it has tried to bring the Central and Eastern European states into the fold of membership. One of the main justifications for this was that the context of integration would prevent further violent tensions between ‘ethnic’ groups after the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia (see Higashino 2004). In other cases, the EU is pursuing an association strategy aimed at stabilizing societies, and is offering a long-term membership prospect, such as in the Western Balkans (see e.g. Gordon 2009).

Second, the EU has become increasingly active in conflicts both on the level of diplomacy and on the level of direct intervention through military or police missions. In contrast to the first response, therefore, the EU in these cases is not so much providing a framework in which a conflict may be transformed, but using specific policy actions to become directly involved in the conflict, mostly by helping to improve the security capacity of the target states and thus to provide stability on the back of which societal transformations may develop. Such engagement has taken place in a number of conflicts, in particular where membership is not an option, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Gegout 2009: 405–7).
the EU at the time of writing pursues both strategies in tandem: thus, it is active in missions in Kosovo (EULEX) and Bosnia-Herzegovina (EUFOR Althea), while at the same time holding out a long-term membership perspective.

In this contribution, we review the mechanisms and success of EU involvement in conflicts. We define conflict in this context as the violent expression of perceived incompatibilities between subject positions, including both interests and identities (see Diez, Stetter and Albert 2006; Diez, Albert and Stetter 2008). Conflict transformation in the broad sense involves all changes to such conflict, and can take different forms, from mere conflict management in which the incompatibilities remain but are dealt with in non-violent ways to ‘proper’ conflict resolution in which the identities and interests of the conflict parties are sufficiently transformed so that they are no longer seen as incompatible. We structure our review around the two main strategies of EU involvement identified above: integration and intervention. In each of the two cases, we will first review theoretical approaches to the analysis of EU involvement, then summarize the historical development before coming to an assessment of the EU in this context on the basis of the existing literature.

**Conflict transformation through integration**

**Theoretical approaches**

European integration has long been credited with the stabilization of peace in Western Europe after the Second World War, and in particular with the transformation of the Franco–German relationship. It is, therefore, surprising that few studies undertook a systematic analysis of the impact of integration on conflicts before the turn of the century. Instead, the link between integration and peace was by and large assumed, despite the fact that disputes, at times violent, persisted in Northern Ireland, the Basque country in Spain, and Corsica. Academic interest in the issue rose in the context of the 2004 enlargement when integration was promoted as a strategy to counter what were perceived to be widespread conflicts in the accession countries. This posed the general question of whether the prospect of integration can be used as a foreign policy instrument of the Union to promote peace in its neighbourhood.

Most of the existing studies implicitly or explicitly treat the impact of integration on conflicts as a form of Europeanization (see e.g. Axt, Schwarz and Wiegand 2008) and use concepts that are identical, similar or can at least be related to this broader debate in European Studies. As such, integration is seen as having the potential to lead to a change in policies, promoting less hostile and aggressive stances between conflict parties; to changes in the political system, opening political institutions towards the participation of civil society and other actors that may take a more positive view of the other conflict parties; and to a transformation of broader interests and identities, making the subject positions involved in a conflict no longer incompatible.

The concept of securitization has been used to measure the transformation achieved (see Diez, Stetter and Albert 2006; Diez, Albert and Stetter 2008). Securitization is the representation of an ‘Other’ as an existential threat, legitimizing extraordinary means, i.e. means that would otherwise not be seen as legitimate and which often include violence or the preparation of violence (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998: 21, 23–24). In intense conflicts, such representations pervade many aspects of society and paint the Other in the darkest terms, thereby also reinforcing antagonistic subject positions. The aim of integration, therefore, is both to contribute to a less hostile view of the Other and to reduce the societal spread of securitizations.

The main question then becomes the identification of the mechanisms through which integration, or the prospect of integration, may work. So far, despite a difference in emphasis, and despite
employing a mixture of rationalist and constructivist arguments, studies have offered quite similar answers. In general, one can distinguish different mechanisms along two dimensions: first, whether the impact stems from active policies on behalf of the EU or whether it is an effect of the integration process per se; and second, whether the target of change is particular policies or specific institutional rules, or whether change is aimed at broader societal transformations. On this basis, Diez, Stetter and Albert (2006; Diez, Albert and Stetter 2008) offer four different categories of EU impact:

**Compulsory:** In this case, EU actors offer carrots (in particular EU membership) and sticks (sanctions, but also the withdrawal of the promise of membership) in order to achieve a policy change or a specific modification of the ways in which political institutions work (e.g., a change to electoral rules). In line with the broader literature on EU enlargement, Tocci (2007: 10–15) calls this mechanism ‘conditionality’ and distinguishes between positive and negative conditionalit (the equivalent of carrots and sticks), as well as between ex ante and ex post conditionality, depending on whether policy change needs to be achieved before an agreement is signed or whether it provides for the annulment of an agreement in the absence of policy change within a specified period after signing. The distinction between ex ante and ex post conditionality is more directly relevant to agreements below the level of full membership, but points to the possibility of legal sanctions after membership has been obtained if the acquis is not respected by a member state.

**Enabling:** In contrast to the compulsory impact, this mechanism relies on the existence of the integration framework as such rather than on specific actions by EU representatives; the aim, however, remains to change particular policies or political institutions. For Diez, Stetter and Albert, this mechanism covers cases in which political actors can legitimize, for instance, less nationalist policies with reference to the acquis that would otherwise not have been acceptable in the broader political debate. Tocci (2007: 17) refers to the possibility of ‘passive enforcement’ in which policy elites and bureaucrats change their preference as a consequence of working within a new (EU) set of rules and procedures. This may partly be a consequence of broader identity changes (see below), but it may also be the effect of integration opening the possibility of conducting policies both in form and substance that political actors had not deemed possible or even thought of before.

**Connective:** In Karl Deutsch’s transactionalist conceptualization of the integration process, exchange and communication across borders is the core mechanism of integration. In this tradition, the EU has the possibility of operating funding programmes to ‘bring people together’ across conflict divides. Such activities are of course not an end in themselves—ultimately, they would have to lead to a change in the way adversaries view each other and themselves (on evidence from Northern Ireland, see Hewstone et al. 2006).

**Constructive:** The ultimate aim of conflict transformation is a redefinition of subject positions within a conflict so that they are no longer seen as incompatible. Bringing people together may be a step towards this aim (although the broader evidence of the effectiveness of such a measure is rather ambiguous), but identities and interests often change over time simply through continued participation within the framework of a group. This effect is more commonly known as ‘socialization’, while Tocci (2007: 15–17), stressing the role of the actor in the process, sees it as a form of ‘social learning’.

While the intended direction of changes induced by integration is towards positive conflict transformation in the sense of less intense securitization, it is important to note that in principle the pathways identified may not only be ineffective, but they may also have a negative effect if,
for instance, local actors use EU policies to legitimize policies that would have adverse effects on the other conflict party. Furthermore, the possible impacts are likely to be more or less powerful depending on the stage of integration: conditionality will be most effective when a realistic membership perspective exists but membership has not yet been agreed (Haughton 2007), while the constructive impact is the result of a long-term process that will work best if a conflict has already been brought within the fold of the EU. In principle, however, the four pathways could also be expected to work in ‘lesser’ forms of integration such as association.

**Historical development**

Leaving aside the role that integration played in the Franco-German rapprochement after the Second World War, the notion that European-level policies or the integration process as such could be used to help conflict transformation is a relatively novel idea. Border disputes or disputed territories were not considered to fall within the competence of the European Community (EC). This slowly changed from the 1980s onwards. The Haagerup Report of the European Parliament in 1984 suggested that the Community devise an economic programme to help transform the conflict in Northern Ireland (see Hayward 2006: 267–68). At the same time, the ‘southern’ enlargement of the EC towards Greece (1981), and Portugal and Spain (1986) was partly justified by the contribution integration could make towards the stabilization of new democracies (Bideleux 1996). This did not establish the EC/EU as an actor in conflict resolution, as such, but did pave the way for an understanding of integration as minimizing or transforming conflict and anchoring democratic systems.

In the 1990s the EU became more actively involved in conflict transformation. In Northern Ireland it funded the first so-called PEACE Programme as part of the regional development funds, in which some money was explicitly set aside for cross-border co-operation while other funds sought to improve the socio-economic conditions in the region and hence to lessen the incentives of people to engage in the conflict. This has since been followed by further rounds of the programme. While the funding itself could be seen as enhancing regional and social cohesion and thus to fall within the competence of the European Commission, one can also argue that it reflected a new understanding of the Commission about its role in relation to such conflicts in the Union (Tannam 2007). This needs to be set against a context in which the EU evolved to encompass more policy areas than simply the Common Market. Even though these policy areas continued to be organized largely on an intergovernmental basis, the broader understanding of what the EU stood for changed.

Nowhere did this become more visible than in the 2004 enlargement. The enlargement process was legitimized above all by the notion that integration would bring stability and peace to a region that would otherwise be in danger of descending into a spiral of ethnic conflict, threatening to destabilize the whole European continent (Higashino 2004). In Helsinki in 1999 the European Council asked all candidate states ‘to make every effort to resolve any outstanding border disputes and other related issues’. This was linked to the fact that membership candidates ‘must share the values and objectives of the European Union as set out in the Treaties’ (European Council 1999). While these passages may have found their way into the Conclusions partly because Turkey, which has numerous border disputes with Greece, was accepted as a membership candidate at Helsinki, they opened the way for more open engagement by the EU with conflicts in which applicant states are engaged. However, the ambiguous stance taken by the Union towards the Croatian–Slovenian border dispute makes it clear that, at present, the resolution of such disputes is not a firm criterion for membership and that, as such, it is open to political interpretation.
This is not to say that the EU has not exerted leverage in the Balkans. The opening of accession negotiations with Croatia was suspended in March 2005 because of the state’s lack of co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The subsequent arrest of the fugitive army general Ante Gotovina resulted in the resumption of Croatia’s progress towards membership. In neighbouring Bosnia the signature of a Stabilisation and Association Agreement was made conditional on the acceptance by local politicians of police reforms which have led to the closer integration of the law enforcement agencies of the two entities that make up the Bosnian state.

Cyprus is the case in which the EU’s capacity to transform conflicts through integration has been pursued most openly. Cypriot membership (and indeed the acceptance of Cyprus as a membership candidate) was often justified by reference to the ‘catalytic effect’ that this could have for conflict resolution on the island (see Diez 2002). Initially floated by Greek and Greek-Cypriot politicians, EU officials soon took on board the idea that integration, apart from changing the overall power structure in the eastern Mediterranean, may change the incentives of Turkish Cypriots in particular and may, therefore, lead them to pursue policies towards unification of the island, to which they and Turkey in the eyes of most observers had been the main obstacle.

Assessment

Most studies acknowledge that integration has the potential to transform conflicts, but at the same time find that in many cases the actual empirical record is more complex, to say the least. Cyprus is a good case in point. On one level, there has been a regime change in the Turkish-Cypriot north, and Turkish Cypriots voted in their majority in favour of the UN-sponsored ‘Annan Plan’, named after former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, for a United Cyprus Republic. Yet these developments seem to have been caused by domestic factors, including the fallout of a banking crisis, rather than by the prospect of EU membership as such (Diez and Pace 2011; Tocci 2007: 49). While it is difficult to establish whether the demonstrations in 2001 that led to the regime change would have taken place without the prospect of EU membership, a more solid argument is that the EU served as a reference point for the demonstrators. Thus, integration had an enabling impact, and one could possibly argue a constructive impact in the sense that the EU context allowed Turkish Cypriots the articulation of an identity not opposed to Greek Cypriots (see Lacher and Kaymak 2005: 159). More problematically, membership negotiations seem to have had little or no effect on the Greek-Cypriot position. Instead, Greek Cypriots rejected the Annan Plan so that Cyprus became an EU member in 2004 as a divided island, and the prevalent notion of a ‘European solution’ among Greek Cypriots is tied to an emphasis of the four freedoms and the anachronism of dividing borders, which reinforces the Greek-Cypriot position in the conflict. The ‘enabling’ impact is therefore not unidirectional but also sometimes allows conflict parties to pursue their conflicts ‘within a new “European” rhetoric’ (Yakinthou 2009: 307).

A number of lessons can be drawn from this, which are confirmed by other case studies (Diez, Stetter and Albert 2006; Tocci 2007: 150–72). One of the most crucial lessons is that integration does not have an automatic effect but is dependent on local actors. These often use EU involvement for their own purposes, and in addition the EU is quite often not the neutral actor that some of its proponents think it is or would like it to be. This may sound simple, but often the attitude of EU politicians and commentators displays little recognition of the inter-dependencies brought about by becoming involved in a conflict. Similarly, such a conflict is nearly always part of a broader regional or international context that is difficult to handle at the
same time as dealing with an individual conflict. More fundamentally, several studies have emphasized the need for a clear and serious commitment on behalf of the EU, and that EU membership or association must be seen to be of clear benefit to the conflict parties (Rumelili 2007; Tocci 2007; Ugur 1999), although Axt, Schwarz and Wiegand (2008: 254) also emphasize the extent to which conflict parties are already ‘Europeanized’, i.e. identify with the EU, before being brought into a formal integration context.

**Conflict transformation through intervention**

**Theoretical approaches**

Understood in broad terms, intervention towards conflict transformation can take a number of forms. Perhaps most intuitively, intervention can mean military action designed to terminate violent conflict or to uphold peace agreements. In the following discussion, however, we suggest that EU interventions can also involve the use of non-military instruments including diplomacy, economic incentives and normative power. Furthermore, in addition to attempts to terminate conflict, intervention may also take place to prevent conflict, or to establish the longer-term conditions for positive peace in post-conflict environments.

As Hill (2001: 319) notes: ‘The most obvious potential resource when confronting an international conflict, and one which still ultimately defines an actor’s status, is that of military power’. Interventions may fall into two broad categories: those that are motivated by the perceived interests of the external actor, and those that take a peace-keeping form (Cooper and Berdal 1993). It is the second of these categories, along with the related but distinct concept of peace-building, which is of interest in the present context. This is not to say that EU interventions are never motivated by self-interest—preserving regional stability and preventing large refugee flows may often be considerations when the EU launches military operations—but these interventions take the form of peace-keeping and peace-building missions rather than attempts to support one side in a conflict.

Peace-keeping is traditionally understood as a form of intervention that is impartial, non-threatening and is supported by all parties to the conflict (Cooper and Berdal 1993: 135). This form of intervention typically takes place in order to uphold previously agreed cease-fires and peace agreements. However, intervention often has the longer-term goal of peace-building, which involves the development of civil society, reform of civilian institutions such as the police, the holding of free and fair elections and the protection of human rights. Peace-building as an activity distinct from peace-keeping emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War and is frequently understood through the lens of the ‘liberal peace’ whereby external actors encourage local democratization and liberalization as strategies designed to develop the conditions for sustainable peace (Paris 2004; Richmond 2005). Here, intervention includes not only military but also civilian elements, such as missions composed of election observers and police personnel.

However, intervention in the sense understood here need not take the form of the deployment of military or civilian missions. Hill (2001) suggests a number of other instruments that the EU has at its disposal. The first of these is diplomacy, and Hill cites Joint Actions, Common Positions and Common Strategies as diplomatic instruments available to the Union under the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Diplomacy, as it relates to conflict transformation, takes a number of different forms but perhaps most obviously may involve attempts to negotiate peace accords with conflict parties. As Caplan (2005) suggests, the EU and other international actors are also able to use conditional recognition as an instrument to provide incentives to states to conform to norms, such as those on minority rights, which may reduce the possibility of violent conflict.
A further instrument available to the EU is the establishment of economic sanctions against conflict parties, which may be used to pressure them into signing peace accords or adhering to human and minority rights standards designed to mitigate against violent conflict. The EU is also able to make use of its economic power through employing various forms of conditionality beyond its use as an instrument in accession negotiations. The supply of financial aid or the conclusion of trade agreements can be made conditional on human rights guarantees, for example, as a way of preventing conflict (Hill 2001: 327–28; Paris 2004: 26–27).

Finally, the EU may be able to contribute to conflict transformation through its ‘normative power’, defined by Manners as the ‘ability to shape conceptions of “normal” in international relations’ (Manners 2002: 239). Such normative power may result from the mere existence of the EU if conflict parties take the integration process as a model in attempting to transform the conflict. In terms of active intervention, EU actors may use the acceptance of the EU as a normative power by conflict parties to suggest and encourage policies towards conflict transformation (see Diez and Pace 2010).

**Historical development**

There is broad agreement among commentators that the EU’s ability to intervene in conflicts as a foreign policy actor has traditionally been severely limited. This was highlighted by the failure of member states to reach a common position during the breakup of the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Early on in the Yugoslav crisis, the Luxembourg Minister of Foreign Affairs Jacques Poos famously proclaimed: ‘This is the hour of Europe’ (quoted in Riding 1991: 4). It quickly became clear, however, that Poos had been overly optimistic and that US military and diplomatic involvement was required in order to resolve the conflict unfolding in the Community’s backyard.

The 12 EC member states initially agreed to make recognition of the Yugoslav republics conditional on the fulfilment of certain conditions, many of them relating to minority rights, as established by the Carrington Plan and the Badinter Commission (Caplan 2005: 16). This policy was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 16 December 1991. However, later that month the German Government moved to recognize Croatia and Slovenia without first waiting for the opinion of the EC’s arbitration commission on whether the two republics had met the conditions laid out. Debate continues as to whether this decision contributed to Bosnia-Herzegovina’s subsequent declaration of independence and the war that followed (compare Glenny 1992: 151; with Caplan 2005: 124), but at the very least the notion of European unity was shattered.

Despite the obvious failings of European leaders to act collectively early on in the Yugoslav crisis, the Union did have some success in mitigating further conflict in the Balkans during the 1990s. Caplan (2005: 167) argues that in making diplomatic recognition of Macedonia in 1992 conditional on the new state’s adoption of minority rights policies and the renunciation of territorial claims on its neighbours, EU member states had significant traction. Whereas in the case of Croatia the member states were divided, in the case of Macedonia there was a common front, significantly improving the Community’s ability to act.

It was only towards the turn of the millennium, however, that the EU made more sustained progress towards the development of effective foreign policy instruments that could be used to intervene to prevent or resolve conflicts. In mid-2001, French politician François Léotard acted as an EU mediator alongside American James Pardew in talks that led to the signing of the Ohrid Agreement which established power-sharing between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia (see Akçali 2009: 190–91; Ilievski and Taleski 2009). Meanwhile, in Bosnia, the international community’s High Representative, who is responsible for oversight of the implementation
of the Dayton Accord, now also acts as the EU Special Representative (EUSR), and is to remain in Bosnia when the Office of the High Representative is closed down.

The EU’s conflict intervention capacities were boosted further by a decision at the Laeken European Council in December 2001 to operationalize the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in the form of the Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) and Rapid Reaction Forces (RRF). As a result of this decision, the Union was able to support the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement with deployment of an ESDP mission—EUFOR Concordia—from March to December of 2003, at the request of the then Macedonian President, Boris Trajkovski. In December 2004 the EU also took over the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) peace-keeping role in Bosnia when EUFOR Althea was launched. ESDP missions have also been launched outside of the European neighbourhood, notably to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2003 (Artemis) and again in 2006 (EUFOR RD Congo). Operation Artemis was designed to improve the security and humanitarian situation in Bunia, DRC, and EUFOR RD Congo supported the United Nations (UN) Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) during the country’s elections.

The Union has also deployed civilian police missions, most notably in the Western Balkans. Following the conclusion of its Concordia mission in Macedonia, a follow-up police mission to the country was established. Codenamed EUPOL Proxima, this mission ran until December 2005. The Macedonian police mission was the second launched by the EU. The first was deployed to Bosnia in January 2003 and took over responsibilities from the UN-mandated International Police Task Force (IPTF). The Union also launched a rule of law mission in Kosovo, EULEX, in December 2008. These missions are seen not only as attempts to reduce crime through police reform, but also as playing a role in peace-building efforts in divided societies. The Bosnian police mission, for instance, has a mandate that includes, among measures designed to improve the effectiveness of local policing in the fight against organized crime, a commitment to the development of an ethnically neutral police force (Osland 2004: 552; see also Collantes Celador 2005). Small civilian missions have also been deployed to the Middle East to support local police development in the Palestinian Autonomous Areas (EUPOL COPPS) and monitor the border crossing into the Gaza Strip at Rafah (EUBAM RAFAH).

In terms of economic instruments, the Union employed sanctions against Serbia during the Kosovo conflict, which it subsequently lifted after Slobodan Milošević was ousted from power and the more moderate Vojislav Kostunica was elected as Yugoslavian President in October 2000. More recently, the EU suspended aid to the Palestinian Authority, to which it has been the largest international donor, following the victory of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the 2006 elections. Aid payments were resumed in 2007, but channelled so as to bypass Hamas.

Assessment

EU foreign policy is a policy area that remains notably intergovernmental in nature (Menon 2008: 105; Wagner 2003) and this has often proved a barrier to unified action towards conflict transformation on the part of the Union. This was exposed most obviously in the case of the former Yugoslavia. None the less, the Union has scored some successes in mitigating violent conflict through both diplomatic and military means.

The case of Macedonia shows that, when they are able to reach common positions, EU member states are able to exert significant pressure over third parties with the aim of preventing violent conflict. The Ohrid Agreement, which established power-sharing between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians, was negotiated with the involvement of an EU mediator and supported by an ESDP mission. In Bosnia, where the Union initially failed to play a significant
role, EUFOR Althea now represents the international community’s main peace-building mechanism in the country. The model of peace-building employed, however, has faced criticism from those who argue that it is excessively top-down in nature, seeking to impose solutions on local parties rather than empowering them, characterizing this as a form of liberal imperialism (Knaus and Martin 2003; Manners 2006c: 190–91).

Beyond its immediate neighbourhood, the Union’s power appears to be much more limited. Although the EU has been able to successfully deploy two ESDP missions to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, these have been limited in scope. In the case of Operation Artemis, for instance, the International Crisis Group argues that the mission ‘was probably possible only because its scope was so restricted’ (International Crisis Group 2005: 46). Furthermore, EU engagement in Africa often takes place at the behest and, therefore, in the interest of individual, powerful member states (Gegout 2009), which calls into question the benevolence of a ‘normative power Europe’. In the Middle East, the conflict between Israel and Hamas that occurred in the Gaza Strip during late 2008–early 2009 exposed the lack of traction held by EU member states over Israel by comparison with the USA, betraying the Union’s lack of influence in general in the region. The use of economic instruments in the region has not been successful in moderating the behaviour of local actors, with the use of aid conditionality harming the Palestinian Authority without undermining political or even financial support for Hamas (Tocci 2007: 121). Furthermore, the electoral victory of Hamas in the Gaza Strip showed that some of the norms that the EU would like to promote are themselves contested (democracy) or may conflict with each other (liberalism and social justice; see Diez and Pace 2011).

Conclusion: an ambiguous record at best

Conflict transformation is still a relatively new field of activity for the EU. Due to its own history, its commitment to multilateralism and peace, and its status as a novel actor in international politics, the EU should in principle be in a good position to bring about positive conflict transformation, through classic third-party means, offering integration or association to conflict parties, or simply through setting an example for the peaceful transformation of a continent hitherto ravaged by wars. Yet the evidence at the time of writing presents a much more ambiguous picture in which the promise of the EU has not often materialized. Neither integration nor intervention has been particularly successful so far, and the further away from the EU a conflict is, the more difficult it seems to be for the Union to make a real difference. This may, of course, change if the EU develops a more coherent foreign policy with more resources or if the Union is accorded a greater standing in international politics by actors further afield.

In the mean time, the EU’s engagement in transforming conflicts holds greatest promise in its immediate neighbourhood, where it is able to combine the mechanisms of intervention and integration. In countries such as Bosnia and Macedonia the Union has been able to build on its foreign policy successes by encouraging further reform through conditionality. Yet even there, the evidence is patchy at best and much of the progress made has involved the pushing through of reforms with little scope for participation by local grassroots actors.

Notes

1 For an overview of all of the military and civilian ESDP missions to June 2007, see Keukeleire and MacNaughtan (2008: 186–88).