

# The Social Capital as a Security Factor

ZORA POPOVA\*

University of Bath, UK

**Abstract:** The paper focuses on the role of social capital reconstruction after an ethnic conflict, addressing the importance of citizenship (re-)building for the political and economic development. Exploring the lessons learned from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the paper identifies several levels, at which policy efforts should be directed in order to ensure achievement of expected outcomes. Social capital is a complex mechanism that enables coherence and functioning of any societal system and especially of a state. If elements of social capital do not match, if the macro-level of social capital does not embrace a relevant micro-level, the system is in risk of failure and collapse. When a social capital of a political unit (e.g. state) is in focus, it could be regarded as a security factor. The findings can be applied to assess developments and to evaluate the stability risk in newly emerging states and countries in transition to democracy.

**Keywords:** social capital, citizenship, civil society, security factor, EU-identity

## Introduction

In the early 1990, after the collapse of communism, peoples from the former Eastern bloc emancipated and claimed their rights for political self-identification. As a result, the Balkans faced the most devastating wave of wars after the World War II, which created additional challenges to the transition to democracy, peace and stability.

Twenty years later, the same countries that put an end to the existence of Yugoslavia, are in pursue of policies aiming at accession to the European Union. Surely, this re-union should not be regarded as re-construction of any previously existing model of co-existence, but a construction of a new reality upon a different platform. And the provocative question here is: *Is it possible people who have fought to drive apart to become fellow-EU-citizens and to develop a common EU-identity sharing the same political realm with their former countrymen/rivals? Could the enlarged EU become in such a respect a viable construct?*

The answer is conditionally positive. The feasibility of the project depends on the efforts that would be directed towards enabling the new EU-citizens (since as established by the Treaty of Maastricht 1992, nationals officially acquire EU-citizenship with the accession of their state to the Union) to develop their EU-identity and to transform into community-members. This is a precondition for success in building up a supra-level social capital throughout the EU, which will allow it to continue functioning as a coherent socio-political space. Alternatively, a formal 'belonging' to a larger political entity not supported

\* email of author