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Conflict in Macedonia: Exploring a Paradox in the Former Yugoslavia

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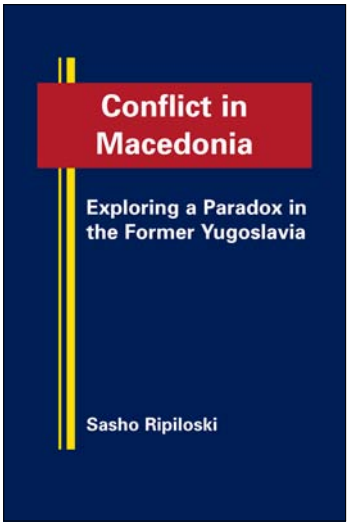

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1
The Macedonian Paradox

Notwithstanding a broad range of internal and external stresses, Macedonia[1] was the only republic to attain its independence peacefully from the otherwise violent disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. Poor, landlocked, and ethnically fragmented, its existence contested in one way or another by larger neighbors and situated within a volatile region, the likelihood of conflict[2] in the fledgling state appeared high. Given the ostensibly prodigious nature of these threats, Macedonia became subject of a high-profile international preventive response, that is to say, a deliberate effort by outside actors to preclude war within its borders. In many respects, Macedonia represented a laboratory of sorts, with much of the thinking on conflict prevention that emerged with the end of the Cold War being applied therein. For the international community, broadly defined,[3] the country would be rightly lauded as a rare example of successful conflict prevention. Conscious of the potential regional implications stemming from an outbreak of violence, outside actors initiated a timely and innovative campaign in the latent, pre-conflict stage to mitigate the two immediate sources of instability confronting the new country: namely, the threat of spillover from the Yugoslav successor wars in the north, and internal tensions between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians – the country's titular nation and largest ethnic minority respectively.

The actions of the international community, allied to a moderate Macedonian leadership and a number of historical factors that were absent elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia, certainly diminished the potential for conflict. Encompassing a range of actors and strategies, most notably the groundbreaking deployment by the United Nations (UN) of a preventive peacekeeping force, the international response underscored the value and cost-effectiveness of prevention. While not necessarily decisive, this action reinforced the peace attained by local protagonists and various domestic and regional factors. The stabilizing role played by external parties during this initial phase should not be

downplayed. Yet, much to the surprise of many outside observers, Macedonia would fall into conflict a decade after independence, when ethnic Albanian guerrillas launched an eight-month insurgency in the putative name of political and cultural equality in the northwest of the country. By threatening to push Macedonia toward civil war, the events of 2001 posed difficult questions of the international community, specifically why the much-feted preventive strategies it had pursued in the period following independence failed to engender a durable peace.

International engagement in Macedonia, as Alice Ackermann identifies, may be compartmentalized into three distinct phases, each corresponding to the different stages of the conflict cycle: (1) the pre-conflict stage, designed to pre-empt an outbreak of violence, (2) the overt conflict stage, designed to manage and negotiate a resolution to the violence that ensued, and (3) the post-conflict stage, designed to ensure implementation of the attendant peace agreement and monitor post-conflict dynamics.[4] The initial engagement – a qualitative departure from traditional international approaches to conflict – may be deemed a success insofar as it achieved the dual objective of helping Macedonia avoid the violence that befell other breakaway Yugoslav republics, on the one hand, and maintain internal peace thereafter, on the other. Yet core, underlying stresses – a large, disenfranchised ethnic minority with an ambiguous loyalty to the state, economic underdevelopment, a weak rule of law, and unresolved regional issues – remained. External actors succeeded only in mitigating near-term conflict sources, meaning root factors were left to fester and develop dangerous new dimensions, before ultimately manifesting themselves in violence. While it should be commended for its innovative approach in the immediate post-independence period, the international community failed to adopt a sufficiently long-term approach to prevention in Macedonia. In essence, its policies equated to a Band-Aid solution that merely papered over Macedonia's cracks, achieving an unstable peace as opposed to a (more) permanent one.

Key Arguments

First and foremost, the lessons stemming from Macedonia's peaceful emergence as an independent state must be re-evaluated in light of the 2001 conflict, which dispelled popular assumptions of the country as a model of conflict prevention. Macedonia, put simply, is not the success story it is widely assumed to be. In the period 1991–2001, it may be considered a success only from a near-term perspective, and not a long-

term one. Above defusing immediate tensions, the international community, preoccupied with peacekeeping and peacebuilding in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, never articulated a long-term strategic vision for Macedonia. While near-term approaches to prevention are essential in and of themselves, they are ultimately futile if the greater – that is to say, long-term – peace is not attained. Of course, a structuralist, long-term approach cannot guarantee peace; however, by altering entrenched, conflict-conducive patterns and mindsets, it can increase its likelihood, and directly diminish the potential for future violence and the concomitant need for costly outside intervention. Conversely, when the root causes of, and conditions for, conflict within a society remain, as in Macedonia, violence is always likely.

Second, underlying risk factors were sustained and exacerbated by the mistakes of a complacent international community, whose engagement in the country receded over time. This process of disengagement, beginning with the signing of the Dayton Accords in December 1995 that ended the first Yugoslav wars, created a vacuum in which destabilizing influences were able to solidify, so enhancing the prospect of future conflict. Convinced of its own hype of Macedonia as a preventive success, the international community divested time and resources from the country at the very juncture that sustained, ongoing engagement was needed to consolidate post-independence gains in the Balkans' self-styled "oasis of peace." Weak and fractured, Macedonia, in reality, represented anything but.

The international community's inability to resolve through peaceful methods the political deadlock in neighboring Kosovo, with which Macedonia is bound by dint of the ethnic, familial, and political ties of a cross-border Albanian community, had particularly adverse consequences. Alongside its bilateral dispute with Greece relating to the use of historic names and symbols, a spillover of instability from Kosovo always represented the greatest external threat to Macedonia's security. Likewise, more could have been done to strengthen Macedonia's fragile economic base, which served to aggravate all other risk factors, including interethnic tensions. As it were, external actors overemphasized ethnic sources of conflict, when, in fact, most of the underlying factors promoting instability – economic decline, organized crime, corruption, regional uncertainty – were non-ethnic in character. For instance, gradually integrating Macedonia into Euro-Atlantic – that is to say, European Union[5] (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – political and security structures would have helped alleviate some of these threats. Yet for all its rhetoric, the EU only belatedly

outlined a (genuine) pathway to membership for the countries of the Western Balkans,[6] a policy that proved inherently counterproductive. In parallel to this, NATO's military intervention in Kosovo in 1999, and its management of the province thereafter, directly or indirectly increased the likelihood of violence in Macedonia. Indeed, to the extent that the international community miscalculated the consequences of its actions on Macedonia, and so failed to adequately insulate the country from spillover, this event would come to represent a lightning rod for what was to follow in 2001.

Of course, by no means can the outbreak of conflict in Macedonia be attributed exclusively to the failings of the international community. Part of the problem in the Balkans is the tendency to apportion blame to others, and the expectation of outsiders to solve all internal problems. Responsibility for what occurred in 2001, first and foremost, lay with the Macedonian state and its institutions. Despite a commitment to political power sharing and the provision of extensive minority rights, many discriminatory Communist-era policies and practices toward the Albanian-Macedonian community were perpetuated. Institutional efforts to address their legitimate demands were also slow. Nevertheless, while the international community can only do so much, it was particularly culpable in this instance given Macedonia's inherent weakness, and, ipso facto, the ability of outsiders to leverage it into undertaking necessary reforms. To be sure, an important opportunity was missed in the pre-conflict stage to pressure and reward a weak state highly dependent on external assistance into addressing core Albanian grievances in a more expeditious manner. The EU's initial failure to articulate a clear European "perspective," or the prospect of integration based on political, economic, and social progress, for Macedonia and the broader region was a major oversight in this respect. This process of long-term Europeanization would have obligated Skopje to advance minority rights and combat organized crime and corruption – issues that directly contributed to the 2001 conflict – in a more robust manner, while simultaneously giving its people, immaterial of ethnicity, a mutual interest in a peaceful, functioning Macedonia. Rather than offering such a perspective upon the outbreak of violence, this long-term process of alignment should have commenced years earlier, slowly but surely transplanting European norms and values to the country and region. Yet Brussels underestimated the enormous soft power leverage it wields over Macedonia, for which accession into the EU has always represented the key to a stable and prosperous future.

Though the international response to the 2001 conflict was ultimately an effective one, particularly through the use of incentives and disincentives to alter entrenched positions and guide the protagonists to a political settlement, this was, to some extent, beside the point – conflict should never have been allowed to materialize in the first place. Be that as it may, the international community, with the EU, as regional guardian, in the vanguard, has seemingly heeded the lessons of its previous failings, as, while the root causes of instability within Macedonian society largely remain, they are slowly, albeit belatedly, being eroded through the process of Euro-Atlantic integration.

What Is Conflict Prevention?

The underlying logic of conflict prevention is simple: address conditions conducive to conflict within a given society *before* they manifest themselves in overt and protracted violence, and pre-empt the need for costly and dangerous international interventions – be they during or after hostilities – in the process. The idea of preventing intrasocietal disputes from escalating into violence is an eminently rational one, not least from a cost perspective. By logical extension, a universal consensus has emerged that prevention is better, and easier, than cure. And as the scholarly and policy debate has shifted from reaction to pro-action, so a normative presumption of prevention and its associated accoutrements, including, most controversially, humanitarian intervention, has slowly taken root.[7] Contrary to popular belief, bred by the scope and intensity of those conflicts that broke out immediately following the end of the Cold War, the incidence of war – inter- and intrastate – has, in fact, declined since 1989, a trend that can partly be attributed to growing recognition of the value of prevention, and the concomitant ability of regional and international institutions to respond to flashpoints in a timely and decisive manner. In this respect, then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's "An Agenda for Peace," published in June 1992, was an important watershed, the first major, systematic international endorsement of the practice as understood in the post-Cold War era. Yet for all the intellectual and institutional traction the idea of conflict prevention has gained, much conjecture continues to surround the term, its scope and application.

The first task, therefore, is to eliminate any terminological and practical ambiguity. One term used to describe conflict prevention is "peacebuilding," a misleading description given the logic of prevention is to preclude the outbreak of violence in the first instance.

Peacebuilding, conversely, is a rehabilitative process initiated in the post-conflict phase, so defeating the purpose of prevention, which, by definition, has failed. Similarly, terms such as "conflict management" and "conflict resolution" are processes applied after the event, and thus correspond to the post-, as opposed to pre-, conflict stage of the conflict cycle, intended to contain and ultimately settle instances of intrasocietal violence respectively.

In particular, it is important to differentiate "conflict prevention" from "preventive diplomacy," a vague term that can cause confusion when used interchangeably with the former: where conflict prevention, as defined in these pages, focuses on structural as much as proximate sources of tension, preventive diplomacy[8] is considered a distinct operational response strategy, applied in the advanced pre-conflict stage, when violence is imminent or, indeed, has erupted, to address immediate conflict catalysts. In essence, it constitutes a form of short-term crisis management, designed to defuse and/or contain an immediate crisis from escalating both vertically and horizontally, that is to say, from evolving to encompass more intense, destructive means of warfare and additional actors and issues respectively.[9] In the context of their short-term nature, operational strategies are invariably implemented in isolation from long-term responses that strive to establish a structural foundation for more permanent peace. As such, "preventive diplomacy" should be understood as a critical component of the broader conflict prevention process, rather than as a synonym for it. Using the term as a synonym for conflict prevention is particularly problematic given that preventive diplomacy implies that prevention is limited to diplomacy, when, in fact, it also entails long-term development and numerous other strategies.

Conflict Prevention Types

One can thus distinguish between three types of prevention: (1) operational, (2) structural, and (3) post-conflict. Operational prevention is underscored by the targeted implementation of proximate, near-term strategies that are designed to mitigate *immediate* sources of conflict,[10] particularly through the use of incentives and disincentives to positively transform conflictual behavior. Operational prevention attempts to contain or reverse conflict accelerators, and is applied in response to an immediate crisis, when violence is imminent or has erupted.[11] Structural prevention, conversely, is more proactive, advocating a long-term approach through the implementation of policies that mitigate

underlying conflict sources. The basic premise guiding this approach is that addressing root sources will reduce the likelihood of future violence. Post-conflict prevention, or peacebuilding, meanwhile, refers to those initiatives designed to preclude a relapse into violence.[12] As per structural prevention, it aims to diminish underlying sources of conflict, albeit after the cessation of hostilities. Given the complexity of reconstructing war-torn, polarized post-conflict societies, while concurrently attempting to put in place the structural foundations for long-term peace, this type of prevention is arguably the most difficult. Of course, each form of prevention has its unique challenges, and relies on specific measures, both coercive and noncoercive in character, to achieve its objectives. Where structural and post-conflict prevention speak of democracy, inclusive institutions, economic development, human rights, and interethnic harmony, operational prevention speaks of mediation, good offices, sanctions, and preventive peacekeeping.

Definition and Application

Taking its point of departure the findings of the seminal Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict,[13] this book conceptualizes conflict prevention in broad, holistic terms, taken to mean a proactive, systematic endeavor to identify and mitigate proximate and, in particular, structural conditions of conflict prior to their manifestation in violence. Involving numerous official and non-official actors,[14] conflict prevention should be understood as an ongoing process that strives to create the enabling, structural conditions for long-term intrasocietal peace. As such, it emphasizes the underlying sources of instability that give rise to violence, moving beyond immediate catalysts in the search for durable peace through developmental, governance and capacity-building assistance.[15] While precipitating, near-term factors are critical in themselves, prevention cannot be adequately understood without an awareness of the fundamental conditions that provide the impetus for the violent expression of grievances. If ignored, one is merely addressing the symptoms of conflict, and not, critically, its root causes.[16]

In essence, conflict prevention should be understood as an investment, a form of insurance and risk minimization, against future violence and intervention. As Peter Wallensteen argues, prevention 'involves building societies with little likelihood of violent conflict.'[17] It is a process that rests on two key factors: (1) responding early to signs of impending conflict, and (2) committing to a long-term effort to eradicate underlying conflict sources.[18] In this context, international intervention

should not necessarily be equated with the arrival of foreign peacekeepers or with external military action, but should be understood as a sustained, largely pacific engagement – by governments, international security and financial institutions, regional organizations, NGOs – targeting root sources of conflict within a given society, and so creating conditions that diminish the propensity to violent recourse. This is not to say, however, that conflict prevention completely shuns military measures: while, by definition, "conflict prevention" aims to resolve crises without the use of military force, it nevertheless reserves the right to resort to it, or at least threaten to do so.

Agents of Prevention

The challenge of augmenting the structural foundations for intrasocietal peace cannot be understated; indeed, the time and resources required are realistically beyond the means of any single state or institution. Effective prevention necessitates a collaborative effort between a range of internal and external agents. The most effective preventive response is an integrated one that encompasses a plurality of actors, and, by extension, allows for a pooling of resources and expertise, burden sharing, division of labor, and comparative advantage.[19] Though primary responsibility for prevention, for all the efforts of outside actors, ultimately rests with local governments, each third party preventive agent brings to bear unique strengths, as well as weaknesses. NGOs, for instance, can monitor local trends, promote nonpartisan research, and lobby governments, while providing critical grassroots contact and intimate local knowledge; in effect, they stand on the front line of prevention.[20] NGOs are often the first external actors to recognize imminent conflict, and, as such, serve a critical early warning function.[21] Given the long-term, grassroots nature of their work, NGOs can be just as important as diplomats and peacekeepers. The work of NGOs, however, is often compromised by financial restrictions, security fears, and host government intimidation, as well as an absence of formal, systematic channels through which to convey their conflict warnings.[22]

The UN, by contrast, as the apogee of international multilateralism, provides unparalleled collective legitimization of external intervention in the jurisdiction of a sovereign state, plays an eminent role in global norm creation, and, through its collection of specialized agencies, funds, and programs, possesses a unique reach and capacity.[23] As the only truly global collective security organization, the UN represents the obvious and natural focal point for building consensus and mobilizing the

resources for multilateral action.[24] Inasmuch as it was established for the precise purpose of maintaining international peace and security, it is empowered to deal with pertinent violations, including through coercive measures, as per Chapter VII of its Charter.[25] Yet budgetary restraints and competing national interests, allied to the undemocratic composition and processes of the Security Council, its principle decision-making organ, have undermined such efforts in the past. Given the size and diffuse character of its membership, decision-making is naturally slow.

Regional organizations, with smaller memberships, theoretically possess more streamlined decision-making processes. Further, to the extent that such groupings are usually bound by common values and a shared culture and history, preventive action authorized by a regional body may appear more amenable to the target state, thus pre-empting accusations of Western neo-imperialism. Allied to geographic proximity and influence, regional organizations – such as the EU, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe[26] (OSCE), and African Union (AU) – represent major centers of early detection and response.[27] Yet, similarly to the UN, financial limitations, disparate interests, and often unwieldy procedural processes can undercut policy coherence, and so militate against effective – if not early – action. In this sense, individual states, provided they possess a direct interest and can justify intervention on legal and/or moral grounds, can respond markedly more expeditiously than multilateral organizations encumbered by unanimous or majority decision-making practices across diverse memberships.[28] Individual countries, particularly the United States, as well as regional powers, can also bring to bear significant diplomatic, economic, military, and technical resources and influence on a given situation.[29] That said, unilateral action can be highly problematic, as underscored by the American experience in Iraq, where a lack of international authority and resources served to aggravate the security situation.

Conflict Prevention Methods

While advocating a structural approach to prevention, the precise strategy to be employed will necessarily depend on the exact phase of the particular conflict cycle. As Edward Azar explains, conflict should be understood as an organic process that evolves over a natural, historical life cycle, incorporating periods of genesis, maturity, reduction, and, ultimately, termination.[30] Conflict should thus be conceptualized in distinct stages: pre-conflict, or the incipient/latent stage; intra-conflict, or the manifest/overt stage; and post-conflict.[31]

Each phase will naturally possess different dynamics, and so demand a different approach. From the perspective of policy, it is important to define the conflict cycle, and be cognizant of the different stages therein, as well as of the factors that can accelerate or de-accelerate a given conflict's development along this continuum.

The key to prevention is that of timing. Ideally, opportunities for prevention will be seized in the incipient stage, when advanced conflict conditions are absent, the issues in dispute are fewer and less complex, conflict parties are less motivated, polarized, and armed, the desire for vengeance is less intense, and moderate leaders still maintain control.[32] This represents the largest, and most important, entry point for outside actors. In contrast, policy options progressively narrow as a conflict escalates vertically and/or horizontally, and is imbued with dangerous new dimensions, including revenge and retribution, thus making containment and resolution significantly more problematic.[33] Progression along the conflict continuum may render a situation intractable and therefore less amenable to international intervention – Bruce Jentleson's Rubicon effect,[34] or the theory of "ripeness," which postulates that certain points in a conflict cycle are more conducive to intervention and resolution than others.[35] Put another way, policy options do not stay open over time. As such, the critical question is precisely when and how to intervene.[36]

Limits to Prevention

While the logic of prevention is clear enough, important obstacles to its effective application remain. Indeed, for all the normative headway it has made, these limits – political will, consensus building, policy coordination, comprehensive institutionalization – continue to inhibit its systematic application. Prevention, moreover, is difficult when locals are seemingly intent on violence. For the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, prevention is contingent on six distinct capacities, which should be understood as links in an interdependent, reinforcing chain: (1) analytical, to predict and comprehend intrasocietal conflict, (2) early warning, to trigger a response, (3) operational, that is to say, the preventive tools available to policymakers, (4) strategic, or determining which methods to use when, (5) institutional, to formulate a coordinated response, and (6) political will, which remains the weakest link in this chain.[37]

In an ideal sense, intervention will be forthcoming prior to the outbreak of violence; in reality, the international community will

invariably respond after the event, once people have died in large numbers, physical and environmental destruction has been incurred, and further seeds of hatred and vengeance sown. This reactiveness can be attributed to a number of factors, from established Westphalian principles of international relations and an absence of geo-strategic and national interest on the part of major powers, to financial restrictions and the nature of the UN system, which – given ideological divisions and divergent interests within the Security Council – lends to decision-making paralysis. Collectively, these factors limit the ability of the international community to build the political will and the resources for timely action, and so militate against coordinated, multilateral responses to emerging crises, whether inter- or intrastate. In this respect, the present system of global governance, and international responses to real or emerging crises within it, remain deficient.

Of course, undertaking prevention in a foreign country is a risk, not least politically, particularly if it involves the deployment of forces. If imprudently designed, it may exacerbate a given situation. What cannot be denied, however, is that pro-action in forestalling the human cost of war is more efficient and cost-effective than inertia and, ultimately, reaction. Even a modest political and economic intervention in the incipient stage of a conflict can make a substantive difference. The appeal of prevention – as a policy, strategy, and paradigm – is therefore enhanced by the comparatively smaller risks and costs associated with it.[38] Preventive measures can preclude a need for costly peace operations and ambiguous humanitarian interventions, while insulating neighboring countries from a spillover of refugees, arms, and general instability. In this sense, the concept of prevention is logical from both a liberal humanitarian ethos and Realpolitik, national security perspective.[39] As such, conflict prevention should be conceptualized as a cost-effective way to protect and advance national interests, even when such interests are not directly at stake. Inaction diminishes the credibility of multilateral institutions and powerful states. Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina, for example, will always haunt the collective conscience of the international community.

Conflict Causation

An understanding of the factors that give rise to internal conflict is fundamental to effective prevention. Certainly, a large body of scholarly literature has emerged to expound the dynamics driving this phenomenon. For the purposes of policy development, a theoretical

distinction can be made between three sources of violence: (1) structural – the underlying socioeconomic, historical, and systemic conditions that make a society vulnerable to conflict, (2) precipitating/accelerating – the enabling resources, policies, institutions, and processes that transform underlying conditions into violent action, and (3) triggering – the immediate acts or catalytic events that provoke violence and directly tip a society over the edge.[40]

As the Carnegie Commission argues, few, if any, internal conflicts are spontaneous or unexpected.[41] To the contrary, they represent violent expressions of simmering, long-standing grievances fuelled by fundamental, structural sources of tension. Yet root factors, in isolation, may not be sufficient to provoke violence. Rather, overt conflict tends to be triggered by an immediate, unexpected event that ignites underlying grievances,[42] such as an assassination or coup attempt, fixed elections, the suspension of constitutional law or a heavy-handed security response to opposition dissent, and/or the confluence of multiple factors that, collectively, transform tensions into physical violence. For conflict to occur, a number of structural, proximate, and triggering factors must necessarily converge. In other words, intrastate conflicts are rarely mono-causal, but the consequence of structural and proximate, internal and external sources – ranging from political/institutional, socioeconomic, historical, and cultural, to environmental, regional, and global – that increase the likelihood of instability and violence within a given context. Knowledge of these factors is well advanced: violence is most likely in countries characterized by corrupt and unrepresentative institutions, human rights violations, political and economic inequality, poverty, social injustice, intergroup divisions, and porous borders, than those where democracy, civil society, economic stability, political moderation, tolerance, the rule of law, and good neighborly relations are entrenched.

Strategies to address multidimensional crises must, by extension, be multidimensional in character. The concept of human security offers an important framework for analysis and action in this respect. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty defines human security as 'the security of people – their physical safety, their economic and social well-being, respect for their dignity and worth as human beings, and the protection of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.'[43] One can say, in broad terms, that if groups or individuals have the right to political participation and cultural expression, and possess genuine economic prospects, equal rights under the constitution, access to adequate shelter, food, and water, reliable social services, a fair

judicial system, and recourse to address their legitimate grievances peacefully, they are less likely to adopt violent methods to resolve their political and socioeconomic ills.[44] As Michael Lund notes, intrasocietal conflict tends to be the result of deep-rooted socioeconomic and historical conditions which, persisting over a sustained period of time, reduce human security and create a niche for violence.[45] Certainly, the sense of injustice and human insecurity must be acute for groups or individuals to take up, and attempt to rationalize, violence.

While it can be an important source of conflict, ethnic diversity need not be read as synonymous with instability and violence. Ethnically heterogeneous societies are not necessarily more prone or susceptible to violence, just as ethnic homogeneity does not represent a guarantee of peace and stability. Even in those cases where interethnic violence has erupted, it is misleading to attribute its outbreak simply to ethnic difference, a reading that can have negative policy implications. Though such distinctions may aggravate tensions, they are insufficient, in and of themselves, to produce violence, and so fail to adequately explain why people kill each other in a given social context. As Barnett Rubin posits, ethnicity can structure conflict, without causing it.[46] Conversely, it is the nationalist rhetoric and calculated decisions of political elites willing to mobilize ethnic difference for their own gain, particularly in times of social stress and insecurity, which compel people to fall back on primordial identities and group solidarity, that largely determine if and why such differences manifest themselves in violence. As such, the state's management of ethnic diversity, as opposed to its very presence, is key.

In a major departure from this (conventional) reading of conflict causation, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler conceptualize intrasocietal violence not in terms of grievance, but greed and opportunity. According to this model, conflict stems not necessarily from grievance, but from opportunities, or the circumstances in which groups are able to rebel against the state.[47] While political and other grievances may provide a motive for war, it is the presence of opportunities, particularly economic, which provide both the means and incentive for war, that catalyze internal conflict. In this respect, the availability of finance, which may come from any number of sources, from diasporas to neighboring governments; access to cheap conflict capital, including arms; a large pool of potential recruits; favorable terrain that can insulate rebels from the state, and provide a sanctuary for training and planning; and a weak state military capability render a society at extremely high risk of conflict.[48] In particular, Collier and Hoeffler identify the presence

of primary commodities, a powerful source of finance and extortion, as a fundamental conflict-inducing factor.[49] From this perspective, weak states with abundant natural resources are particularly vulnerable to violence. In many such instances of opportunity, criminal elements may assume and exploit the grievances of a particular identity group as a façade for rebellion designed not to redress these grievances, but, conversely, to further their own criminal, economic interests. Certainly, conflict constitutes a profitable industry,[50] creating an environment advantageous to organized crime and other nefarious activity. For Collier and Hoeffler, it is the presence of such atypical opportunities – more so than grievances relating to governance – that determines a country's susceptibility to violence.[51]

Conflict Early Warning

The concept of early warning is likewise fundamental to the practice of conflict prevention. In simple terms, early warning refers to the process of anticipating impending violence through the observation of conflict indicators, and, based on this information, generating warnings to trigger a preventive response. Early warning comprises three fundamental elements: (1) information, (2) analysis, and (3) communication.[52] A pre-condition for timely intervention, early warning of developing crises can be derived from a plethora of sources, from governments, intelligence bodies, and regional and international organizations to NGOs and the media. As a concept, it raises several issues, including how far in advance warnings can and should be issued, and precisely which factors this analysis should be based on, and thus monitored. Ideally, warnings will be communicated to decision-makers months, or, in the case of structural prevention, years, in advance to facilitate the formulation of an appropriate response.[53] Yet, traditionally, a centralized system of early warning – or some sort of international clearinghouse, located, for instance, within the UN system[54] – has been lacking; conversely, the process of early warning has been undertaken on an ad hoc basis by an unstructured network of official and non-official actors.[55]

While they will naturally diverge from context to context, a broad set of common trends or precursors of imminent intrastate violence, both proximate and structural, as noted, can be identified and monitored. For all the forecasting utility of such alarm signals, however, unstable and at-risk societies, and the underlying causes giving rise to them, are well known; as Rubin observes, conflict principally occurs in impoverished, poorly educated, polarized, isolated societies with weak institutions and

limited resources.[56] The challenge, in this sense, is to be attentive to the immediate catalysts – or conflict triggers – that transform structural factors into violent expression, or escalate a conflict from mere crisis to full-fledged war. As Jentleson posits, the challenge from the perspective of early warning is not necessarily identifying societies at risk, which are well known, but recognizing the processes and patterns of change that accelerate conflict.[57] In a policy sense, therefore, it is critical – as noted elsewhere – to differentiate between underlying, escalating, and triggering conflict factors.

Although significant progress has been achieved in understanding conflict causation, and early warning response mechanisms established by governments and multilateral institutions, the impediments to early warning receptivity and early action remain great.[58] These obstacles can be situated on multiple levels: informational, analytical, bureaucratic, political, and operational. The first challenge to early warning is informational, that is to say, the process of procuring the necessary information – both in terms of quantity and quality – and transmitting this in a reliable and timely manner to decision-makers.[59] In this regard, as John Cockell argues, the proximity of the analyst to the decision-maker can often be decisive, and so represents an important link between warning and actual response.[60] In addition, there is a need to eschew excess information, which can make it difficult to discern between quality warning and flawed analysis.[61] Linked to this is the accurate analysis of conflict indicators, and, in particular, the issue of bias entering the analytical and/or assessment process, which can distort the accuracy and credibility of available information.[62] Perceptions of the seriousness of a given situation, possibly informed by a particular policy position, may differ. The construction of informed policy choices based on available early warning information, or precisely when to act and which instruments to utilize, represent another significant bureaucratic challenge. With finite resources, this raises the issue of opportunity cost, or determining which crises are most pressing, and therefore demand the most time and resources. As Lund observes, a policy of prevention that acts on any and all signs of trouble would only serve to exhaust resources and credibility, while leaving real dangers unchecked.[63] To that end, it is critical to ascertain where and when the most destructive conflicts are most likely to occur, commit necessary resources, and formulate appropriate responses accordingly.[64] Indeed, the problem of overload represents the other chief bureaucratic challenge: policymakers may simply be too preoccupied with manifest

or more pressing crises to devote attention and resources to latent, low-level ones.[65] Naturally, certain trouble spots will take precedence over others. It was the former Yugoslavia's great misfortune, for example, to be disintegrating just as Saddam Hussein was invading Kuwait and the Soviet Union was deep in its death throe.

While formidable, the informational, analytical, and bureaucratic obstacles to early warning can generally be overcome. Rather, the principal barriers to early warning and response are political and operational, or catalyzing the will and resources to mobilize a timely and coordinated multilateral intervention in response to the information at hand. In the first instance, leaders may be unwilling to commit to costly and potentially risky action when violence is not overt, but remains a mere possibility, particularly in those contexts deemed marginal to a state's geo-strategic interests. If a given conflict fails to adequately impact on a state's national interests, policymakers are less inclined to respond to early warning signs. For all the normative advances made by conflict prevention and humanitarian intervention, the fact remains that – in the absence of core national interests – governments remain reluctant to act, meaning signals of imminent conflict, even if audible, are not guaranteed to trigger a policy response. Intervention may also be considered politically inexpedient, largely borne of a fear of becoming entangled in an intractable situation, and incurring heavy political costs at home. Thus, while an emerging crisis situation may be taken seriously, the potential costs of intervention – financial, human, political – may simply be too great to warrant early, substantive action.

In the final analysis, the problem of early warning is not one of a lack of accurate information or integrated, institutionalized systems of analysis, but, essentially, an absence of political will for early action. Those societies at risk of internal violence are well known. There is little element of surprise when a conflict does erupt. Generally speaking, warnings of impending violence are plentiful, though all too often still insufficient to prompt early intervention. As William Zartman argues, 'the biggest problem in the early warning debate is not whether an event is preceded by warning signals but whether warning signals are followed by an event.'[66] The gap between warning and response remains significant. Closing this gap represents the greatest challenge to early warning and, by extension, effective conflict prevention.

Purpose and Structure

This book has three principal purposes. First, to determine why Macedonia, in spite of various stresses, avoided violence during the process of Yugoslav fragmentation, with strong emphasis on the international response, yet fell into conflict some 10 years later. As such, it will examine conflict prevention processes in the period 1991–2001, from the time of Yugoslavia's collapse through to the end of armed insurgency in post-Yugoslav Macedonia. While the history of the country and region is complex, events preceding this era fall outside the book's scope, and thus do not come under analysis. Second, to advance knowledge of a poorly understood country, one that – certainly in comparison to other former Yugoslav republics – has largely been neglected by Western scholars. And third, to extract lessons from the Macedonian experience that will advance understanding of the practice of conflict prevention, particularly of the factors that promote internal wars and the nature and timing of international responses to them.

A note on the structure of the book. Chapter 2 examines the period of Yugoslavia's collapse and Macedonia's peaceful extrication from it. Chapter 3 evaluates the response of the international community, which – timely, innovative, and multitrack – played an important role in assuaging immediate threats to Macedonian security. Chapter 4 outlines the events of 2001, and the subsequent international response, which, in the final analysis, proved decisive in heading off a wider war. Primarily narrative based, these chapters describe and examine the events from which broader theoretical conclusions are drawn. This is done in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 enters into a detailed discussion of the factors that facilitated peace then war in Macedonia. In addition to international intervention, it identifies various historical factors and the leadership of Kiro Gligorov as key mitigating dynamics. In parallel to this, certain (external) threats were not as robust as originally feared. Nevertheless, important failures on the part of successive Macedonian governments and the international community served to legitimate the politics of violence, so giving rise to an insurgency that threatened to push the country toward civil war. In the event, what occurred in 2001 was as much an intra-Albanian putsch as a struggle for group rights. Its timing, ultimately, can be explained by a confluence of internal and external forces, and the coalescence of political, nationalist, ideological, and criminal interests. Chapter 6 then develops general conceptual formulations and policy lessons from the international community's Macedonian experience.

In addition to explaining why Macedonia fell into violence, Chapters 5 and 6 address the core conceptual concerns of the book: what is the significance of the Macedonian context from the perspective of conflict prevention? What are the underlying and immediate causes of intrastate, ethnopolitical conflict? How can such phenomena be anticipated? Can generic conflict signals be developed as a guide to early intervention? Which third-party strategies are most effective in such situations, and when should they be applied? In the final analysis, conflicts such as Macedonia's highlight the interconnectedness and transnational nature of contemporary security threats. As such, the major powers have a practical interest in addressing emerging intrastate crises, even in instances where the putative national interest may appear marginal. To facilitate more timely multilateral responses, security, in effect, must be de-nationalized, and conceptualized in international – as opposed to strictly national – terms.

Notes

[1] Greece strenuously disputes its neighbor's use of the name "Macedonia," which it considers exclusive Greek property. To that end, it has used its leverage within regional and international institutions to obstruct the country's recognition under its formal constitutional name, the Republic of Macedonia. Thus, in regional and international circles, the country is formally known as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), the provisional name under which it was admitted into the UN in 1993. For the purposes of brevity, however, it will be referred to as "Macedonia" throughout the book. Similarly, the term "Macedonian" is taken to mean all citizens who reside within the territory of the Macedonian state, regardless of ethnicity. Where distinction is sought between ethnic communities resident in Macedonia, the prefix "ethnic" is used, followed by the name of the community in question (for instance, ethnic Macedonian, ethnic Albanian, ethnic Serb).

[2] The typology of conflict is vast. As Michael Lund notes, it can take numerous forms: global, regional, interstate, intrastate, or interpersonal: Michael S. Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: Conflict-Sensitive Development in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004), 10. Conflict can be fuelled by any number of factors, and can be destructive or constructive in nature; certainly, "conflict" does not have to be characterized by physical violence. This book deals specifically with destructive, *intrasocietal* conflict, which, among other things, may be based on ethnicity, ideology, the pursuit of political power, control of natural resources, and/or self-determination. In particular, it will

focus on *ethnopolitical* conflict, or those situations where ethnically based groupings challenge the political and social status quo within a given society.

[3] In the context of this book, "international community" is taken to mean those external actors – countries, supra-national entities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) – engaged in Macedonia in a preventive capacity in the period 1991–2001. In particular, it refers to the UN; EU; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); NATO; and the United States. Also note that, throughout the book, "international community" is used interchangeably with "third party," "external actors," and "outside actors."

[4] Alice Ackermann, "International Intervention in Macedonia: From Preventive Engagement to Peace Implementation," in *International Intervention in the Balkans Since 1995*, ed. Peter Siani-Davies, 106 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003).

[5] The European Union (EU) was formally established by the Maastricht Treaty in 1993; prior to this, the entity was known as the European Community (EC). To avoid unnecessary confusion, it will be referred to as the EU throughout the book, even when discussing pre-1993 events.

[6] "Western Balkans" is widely accepted as encompassing Croatia; Serbia; Montenegro; Kosovo; Bosnia-Herzegovina; Macedonia; and Albania.

[7] Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: Conflict-Sensitive Development in the 21st Century*, ii.

[8] The term "preventive diplomacy" was originally coined by UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld in 1960, during the height of the Cold War, to describe the organization's efforts to prevent distant Third World conflicts from escalating into wider superpower confrontation. The concept evolved with the end of the Cold War, and was broadened by Boutros-Ghali in "An Agenda for Peace" to emphasize the importance of early international responses to incipient conflicts, be they inter- or intrastate in character: Michael S. Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1996), 33–34.

[9] William DeMars et al., *Breaking Cycles of Violence: Conflict Prevention in Intrastate Crises* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 1999), 99.

[10] *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1997), 9.

[11] Barnett R. Rubin, *Blood on the Doorstep: The Politics of Preventive Action* (New York, NY: Century Foundation, 2002), 131–132.

[12] International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect: Research, Bibliography, Background* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001), 32.

[13] Published in 1997, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict brought together 16 of the leading scholars and practitioners in the field.

[14] Official actors are those operating at a governmental level, and include conflict parties, states, and supra-national organizations. These are also referred to as Track One actors. Non-official, or Track Two, actors, conversely, operate at the nongovernmental level, and may include NGOs, academia, independent media, and the private sector.

[15] International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 31.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Peter Wallensteen, "Reassessing Recent Conflicts: Direct vs. Structural Prevention," in *From Reaction to Conflict Prevention: Opportunities for the UN System*, eds. Fen Osler Hampson and David M. Malone, 213 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

[18] *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report*, xiii.

[19] Ibid., xiv.

[20] Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, 178.

[21] Bruce W. Jentleson, "Preventive Diplomacy: A Conceptual and Analytical Framework," in *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized: Preventive Diplomacy in the Post-Cold War World*, ed. Bruce W. Jentleson, 11–12 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

[22] Ibid., 12.

[23] Bruce W. Jentleson, "Preventive Diplomacy: Analytical Conclusions and Policy Lessons," in *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized*, ed. Jentleson, 338–339.

[24] *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report*, 129–130.

[25] Terry Nardin, "Introduction," in *Humanitarian Intervention*, eds. Terry Nardin and Melissa S. Williams, 18 (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2006).

[26] Until 1995, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was known as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). For the purposes of this book, it will be referred to as the OSCE throughout.

[27] Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, 176–177.

[28] Ibid., 179–180.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Edward E. Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases* (Brookfield, VT: Dartmouth, 1990), 6.

[31] DeMars et al., *Breaking Cycles of Violence*, 47.

[32] Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, 15.

[33] Jentleson, "Preventive Diplomacy: A Conceptual and Analytical Framework," 8.

[34] Jentleson, "Preventive Diplomacy: Analytical Conclusions and Policy Lessons," 330.

[35] Ibid., 331.

[36] Jentleson, "Preventive Diplomacy: A Conceptual and Analytical Framework," 9.

[37] International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 43.

[38] Ibid., 27.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: Conflict-Sensitive Development in the 21st Century*, 12.

[41] *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report*, 23.

[42] Rubin, *Blood on the Doorstep*, 29.

[43] International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 15.

[44] Rubin, *Blood on the Doorstep*, 25.

[45] Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: Conflict-Sensitive Development in the 21st Century*, 16.

[46] Rubin, *Blood on the Doorstep*, 12.

[47] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, *Greed and Grievance in Civil War* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2001), 2.

[48] Ibid., 6.

[49] Ibid., 2.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Though it offers a fresh perspective on conflict causation, the greed paradigm neglects the role of individuals and personalities, and the calculated actions of political elites to lead a people to war. Further, while the emphasis on natural resources helps to explain certain conflicts, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, it overlooks the developmental potential of such resources, namely, their ability to augment state capacity and further a country's economic development. At the same time, by rationalizing conflict, in large part, as a form of criminal violence and economic enterprise with little political basis, and thus portraying rebels as opportunists and criminals, this approach de-legitimizes the activities of legitimate rebel groups. As such, the theory of conflict causation propounded by Collier and Hoeffler is overly cynical, neglecting the justifiable grievances and historical injustices that groups may harbor against a state. From a policy perspective, such an interpretation, by definition, necessitates a military/police

response to crush putative criminals, but which, in fact, may only sow the seeds for further conflict.

[52] Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: Conflict-Sensitive Development in the 21st Century*, 62.

[53] David Carment, "Anticipating State Failure," in *Conflict Prevention from Rhetoric to Reality: Opportunities and Innovations*, eds. David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel, 91 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

[54] The UN did establish the Office for Research and the Collection of Information within its Secretariat in the 1980s for this purpose; however, this was disbanded in 1992: International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 35.

[55] Ibid., 35–36.

[56] Rubin, *Blood on the Doorstep*, 18–19.

[57] Jentleson, "Preventive Diplomacy: A Conceptual and Analytical Framework," 11.

[58] Alexander L. George and Jane E. Holl, "The Warning-Response Problem and Missed Opportunities in Preventive Diplomacy," in *Opportunities Missed, Opportunities Seized*, ed. Jentleson, 28.

[59] Jentleson, "Preventive Diplomacy: A Conceptual and Analytical Framework," 11.

[60] John G. Cockell, "Early Warning Analysis and Policy Planning in UN Preventive Action," in *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?*, eds. David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel, 185 (Tokyo and New York, NY: United Nations University Press, 2003).

[61] International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 36–37.

[62] Jentleson, "Preventive Diplomacy: A Conceptual and Analytical Framework," 11.

[63] Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, 108.

[64] Ibid.

[65] George and Holl, "The Warning-Response Problem and Missed Opportunities in Preventive Diplomacy," 28.

[66] I. William Zartman, *Cowardly Lions: Missed Opportunities to Prevent Deadly Conflict and State Collapse* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 5.