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# **Managing Conflicts Non-Violently Through Preventive Action: The Case of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

by *Alice Ackermann*

## **INTRODUCTION**

When the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia proclaimed its independence in September 1991, soothsayers were quick to point out that this multi-ethnic country would be consumed next by the war already waging to its north in Croatia. These voices grew louder as ethnic conflict also erupted in Bosnia in April 1992, following President Izetbegović's unsuccessful attempt to elicit a preventive peacekeeping force to stop the escalation of hostilities. That Macedonia avoided the unrestrained violence and bloodshed witnessed in the other secessionist Yugoslav republics can be attributed to a number of factors: first, the moderate and responsible behavior of political leaders representing the various contending ethnic groups; second, the preventive engagements of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); and third, a host of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). There are also less tangible factors that had an impact on the country's efforts to maintain peace at all cost. These included, for example, the widespread fear of the disastrous consequences of extreme manifestations of nationalism, and the determination not to repeat a past marked by a history of bloody wars being fought on Macedonian soil at least four in this century alone. Important to consider also is the nature of Macedonian society which shares a long history of peaceful co-existence among its varied ethnic groups.

Other interpretations have also been proposed as to why Macedonia escaped the brutal violence devastating large parts of the former Yugoslavia. External factors, such as the relatively small size of the ethnic Serb population in Macedonia which Belgrade may not have seen as critical enough to risk yet another war for; the perhaps "unexpected" protractedness of the war in Bosnia, tying down much of Serbia's military forces; or Serbia's objective of using Macedonia to circumvent international sanctions have all been named as reasons for why there was no armed conflict in Macedonia. While there is also some truth to these political and geopolitical explanations, they do not provide an entirely sufficient answer to the question posed here: why was there no violent conflict in Macedonia?

The Republic of Macedonia stands out as one of the relatively successful examples of conflict prevention. Moreover, it is one of the most unique ones of several of the cases explored so far in the literature.<sup>1</sup> This uniqueness is due to several reasons. First, unlike some of the other successful cases of preventive diplomacy, such as those of Estonia or Slovakia, Macedonia was located in a war-torn region where the spillover of ethnic war was a much-feared scenario during the duration of the Yugoslav conflict. Also, Macedonia's position within the southern Balkans was a very unstable one, given the conflictual relations with Serbia and Greece, ethnic tensions at home, economic instability, a political system in transition and the lack of a viable military force or security alliance. Finally, Macedonia is unique because it demonstrated that despite its

location in a "war zone," it was possible for the country to preserve peace. That this was the work of many actors is the subject of this article.

This article explores the various forms of preventive action initiated primarily in Macedonia between 1991-95 to prevent a spillover of military confrontations from the other Yugoslav republics, and the eruption of ethnic violence within its domestic confines. It then proceeds to suggest an analytical framework of conflict prevention drawn from the case study under discussion, which can be applied to other successful cases of prevention. Concluding, the article examines Macedonia's contemporary domestic and regional environment against the background of the Kosovo conflict and the recent elections which have brought a more "nationalist" Slav Macedonian and ethnic Albanian party as coalition-partners into the government.

## **PAST AND PRESENT DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT**

The Republic of Macedonia, the most southern of the former Yugoslav republics, has a multi-ethnic population of 2.1 million. Of that, 1.3 million (66.5 percent) are Slav Macedonians; 443,000 (22.9 percent) Albanians; 77,000 (4.0 percent) Turks; 44,000 (2.3 percent) Rhomas; 39,000 (2.0 percent) Serbs; and 8,500 (0.4 percent) Vlachs. Ethnic Albanians, who live primarily in the western part of Macedonia along the borders with Albania and Kosovo (Serbia), form the largest ethnic group. Their relationship with the Macedonian state is also the most problematic one, not only because of their cultural and religious differences, but also because of their grievances regarding group status, cultural rights and discriminatory practices.

Macedonia provides an excellent example to demonstrate the linkage of the internal and external dimensions of violent conflict, a pattern that has become a characteristic one for the end of the twentieth century. Since Macedonia's independence, there have been three sources for potential violent conflicts: first, ethnic violence between Slav Macedonians and ethnic Albanians; second, confrontations with Serbia, especially in the wake of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia; and third, a possible spillover of unrest from Kosovo. Since the Dayton Accords in December 1995, and the Serb-Macedonian agreement in April 1996, any potential threat of a Serbian intervention in Macedonia has been removed. However, some unresolved territorial issues remain, especially the demarcation of the border between the two countries, which continues to result in border encroachments on the part of Serbian forces, especially from adjacent Kosovo. The Greek-Macedonia dispute, which was triggered by Macedonia's independence, was resolved in late 1995, through the mediating efforts of the United Nations and the United States. Although it was economically and politically destabilizing, Greece's foreign policy toward the Republic of Macedonia, which entailed a debilitating embargo, never threatened to escalate into armed confrontation between the two states.

What remains worrisome to Macedonia are interethnic tensions and the continued polarization of Macedonian society, as well as the conflict in Kosovo which remains unresolved to date. Much of the conflict between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians is fuelled by mistrust and misperception between the two ethnic groups, and the fact that

they constitute two distinct societies with different traditions, customs, cultures and religions. What continues to drive ethnic tensions in Macedonia are distinct grievances on the part of ethnic Albanians, not all of which have been sufficiently addressed in the various negotiation forums set up between the international organizations in the country and the representatives of the contending groups. These encompass grievances over recognition as a minority group rather than a constitutive nation; more liberal language and educational rights, including an Albanian-language institution that can function as the center to maintain Albanian culture and language; and the continuation of discriminatory practices in the military, the police, the legal professions, and in higher administration and government service. While a negotiated approach to these demands has already yielded considerable progress toward the granting of minority rights, there remain some outstanding issues that primarily express the need of ethnic Albanians for cultural autonomy.<sup>2</sup>

## **PREVENTION IN PRACTICE: ACTORS, INSTRUMENTS AND OUTCOMES**

### **The Domestic Politics of Prevention**

Although preventive diplomacy in Macedonia is most often associated with international organizations, such as the United Nations, the role of domestic actors in prevention is a crucial one that is often ignored. One reason for this rests on the assumption that governments are only motivated by international pressure to take such preventive steps as engaging in political dialogue or in accommodative approaches to conflict resolution. While external actors can and often do exert pressure on political leaders to adopt a more conciliatory approach toward their country's minorities by offering various incentives, it would be incorrect to view this as a one-sided interaction. Rather, preventive action is a two-way process that requires the support and the moderate and responsible behavior of the leaders of all contending parties if it is to be successful.

Crucial for the prevention of conflict in Macedonia, particularly in its earlier phases, both on the interethnic and regional levels, were several political leaders, such as Macedonia's President Kiro Gligorov and moderate ethnic Albanian and Macedonian politicians. The government's reliance on political dialogue, accommodation and power-sharing, but also a pragmatic approach toward its neighbors Serbia, Greece and Albania, have all been preventive efforts to minimize ethnic tensions and confrontations with surrounding states. Abstaining from inflammatory nationalist rhetoric and exclusionary appeals on the basis of ethnic division have been equally important in the attempt to avert ethnic violence. There has also been a consistent search for compromise solutions on such unresolved grievances as those concerning the Albanian demand for an institution of higher learning.

Macedonia's political leaders undertook several conflict prevention efforts beginning at the time of escalating tensions in spring 1991. Prominent among these was the critical role played by President Gligorov, along with Bosnia's President Izetbegović, in the search for a compromise solution to avert the violent breakup of Yugoslavia. Political and economic reasons propelled Macedonia and Bosnia to assume the role of mediator between the leaders of the more powerful republics, Serbia and Croatia. But the fear of

ethnic violence was an even more potent motivation to search for a compromise, as growing nationalist sentiments, the volatile ethnic composition, and anxieties that the disintegration of Yugoslavia would inevitably have a violent spillover effect into all republics perhaps even erupting into a wider regional war became more pressing.

Gligorov and Izetbegović urged the leaders of the various republics to find a compromise solution in the form of a newly negotiated constitutional structure, which would present a middle way between the centralized model preferred by Serbia, and the confederal system supported by Croatia and Slovenia. Several meetings took place between all the republics' leaders, with each republic serving as the host location. By early June 1991, it appeared that the Macedonian-Bosnian compromise proposal would be accepted as a blueprint for a restructured Yugoslavia. The compromise plan called for the creation of a loose federation along the lines of the European Community, with a common foreign policy, parliament, military and currency. While Yugoslavia would remain within its current administrative borders, the individual republics would have complete autonomy in all other areas. However, the political dialogue and accommodation, already difficult to sustain during the skirmishes taking place in Croatia throughout the spring of 1991, broke down, as violent confrontations escalated in April and May in Croatia, and as Croatian police contingents and Serbian paramilitary units engaged in frequent incursions into Bosnia. In the end, it became impossible to implement the compromise because it had been negotiated too late to stop the violence that had already erupted.<sup>3</sup>

Another crucial preventive measure, once the country was independent, was the negotiated approach President Gligorov took toward the withdrawal of the Yugoslav army from Macedonian territory. The withdrawal of 60,000 Yugoslav army soldiers was one of the major hurdles to keeping the country out of the war. By early February 1992, Gligorov succeeded in negotiating directly with Yugoslav National army (JNA) representatives, rather than the Federal State Presidency, as Belgrade had insisted on, and which Macedonia regarded as an illegal institution. An agreement on withdrawals was reached within a short period of time, which also guaranteed Macedonia protection of its borders during the withdrawal, and which required the JNA units to leave behind equipment and territorial defense weapons. The JNA withdrawal was completed on 26 March, two weeks before the war broke out in Bosnia. Although the withdrawal was greeted with relief, the JNA violated the agreement, removing all military equipment, and leaving Macedonia without a viable defense capacity. It was then that Gligorov decided to appeal to the United Nations for a preventive force.<sup>4</sup>

This was perhaps the most significant preventive action taken to address the regional instability and external threat facing Macedonia. The request for UN peacekeepers, which was voiced informally as early as December 1991 in a meeting with UN envoy Cyrus Vance, came two months after the country declared its independence. Then in November 1992, Gligorov made an official appeal suggesting "a prevention mission," to avoid a spillover of the war. Gligorov described his objectives in making such an appeal as follows:

When the first incidents started in Croatia, and before that in Slovenia, after which in Bosnia, it became obvious to us that there could be a spillover in the southern part of the Balkans as well. That was a signal to us, and made us think of how we could prevent it. We had no army to speak of. All the arms had been taken by the Yugoslav army. We didn't have any neighbors that would help defend our country. That's when we decided to put forward a proposal before the U.N. Secretary-General Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.<sup>5</sup>

On 11 September 1992, the Security Council unanimously approved Resolution 795, which authorized the preventive deployment of UN peacekeepers to Macedonia's borders with Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia). Its explicit mandate was to monitor and report on critical developments affecting Macedonia's stability. Aware that a small UN preventive force, consisting of several hundred soldiers could do little to defend the country, its deterrent potential was well-recognized by Gligorov, especially after US peacekeepers joined the UN mission.<sup>6</sup>

Preventive action was also taken to stem the growing ethnic tensions emanating from within the country. Reliance on political dialogue, a policy of accommodation and power-sharing rather than indifference or coercion have been used to prevent ethnic violence, especially among ethnic Albanians. The inclusion of ethnic Albanians in the government and parliament, the formation of ethnic Albanian parties and the implementation of some cultural and language rights are a few of the contributions the Macedonian government has made toward conflict prevention. For example, in 1994, the PPD, although faring poorly in the national elections, was offered five ministerial positions, in an effort to co-opt the moderate wing of the primarily ethnic Albanian party.

The Macedonian government has also been accommodative on most of the demands of ethnic Albanians, in particular on language and educational issues, such as allowing ethnic newspapers and television programs. The state-operated Macedonian television, for example, has three-hour daily broadcastings in the Albanian language, and also broadcasts in other minority languages, such as Turkish, Romany, Vlach and Serbian. Advances have also been made toward alleviating some of the grievances of ethnic Albanians regarding professional advancement and under-representation in governmental service and the police and military forces, as well as access to higher education. According to a Human Rights Watch and a Council of Foreign Relations Study,<sup>7</sup> some degree of under-representation continues to plague ethnic Albanian-Macedonian relations, but there have been more serious efforts to adjust ethnic imbalances.

While the government's reliance on taking a middle approach through dialogue and accommodation policies has been important for remedying some of the grievances of ethnic Albanians, a few controversies remain which continue to stir up ethnic tensions. One is the issue of the Albanian-language university in Tetovo, created against government regulations in 1995, to accommodate the need for higher language education in Macedonia. There remains also dissatisfaction over the slow progress in achieving a more equal status for ethnic Albanians in Macedonian society, a demand expressed in calls for recognition as a nation and broader representation in various professional groups.

The Macedonian government has met these grievances by attempting to find compromise solutions acceptable to both sides. In the case of the Albanian-language institution, for example, Macedonia adopted a law mandating that teacher training at the Pedagogical Faculty could also proceed in the Albanian language, much to the protest of conservative groups in the country. Although Gligorov walks a fine line with conservative factions opposed to granting ethnic Albanians too many rights and concessions, Macedonia's leadership understands that a gradual approach, which assures equal representation and access to the political and economic system for all ethnic groups, will assure domestic peace.<sup>8</sup>

### **International Organizations and Conflict Prevention**

Of all the international organizations engaged in preventive action in the Republic of Macedonia, perhaps the best-known efforts are those of the United Nations. The preventive mission, the first ever in the history of the United Nations, arrived in January 1993, only a few weeks after passing Resolution 795 authorizing the force. Canadian peacekeepers first manned the UN observation posts along the borders to Serbia and Albania, and were later replaced by Scandinavian UN soldiers. The peacekeeping force, later renamed the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) received additional support from the United States, after President Clinton authorized the participation of about 500 US soldiers, bringing the total to more than 1,000 personnel. The participation of US Army units strengthened the deterrent function of the preventive deployment force, whose mandate was subject to renewal every six months.

The immediate task of the UN mission was to monitor a largely mountainous region of approximately 500 kms of frontier along the Macedonian-Serbian and Macedonian-Albanian borders. Patrolling border crossings, custom stations and villages, and maintaining contact with the local people constitute the major activities in the monitoring of developments along Macedonia's frontiers. Border incursions were frequent in the early years of Macedonia's independence because of the absence of physical markers clearly identifying the Serbian-Macedonian divide; at times however, Serbian soldiers also engaged in these encroachments as provocative acts. UN peacekeepers handled many of these minor intrusions directly in the field. More serious incidents, such as the capture of Macedonian soldiers who accidentally strayed into Serbian territory were resolved through the intervention of the UN commander in Macedonia.<sup>9</sup>

In 1995, the UN also added a civilian mandate to complement its military one. It called on UNPREDEP's Chief of Mission to facilitate political dialogue between the contending ethnic Albanian and Macedonian parties. Much of this work is done in coordination with the OSCE Spillover Mission in Skopje. Among the more concrete activities that UNPREDEP's civilian branch has performed were the monitoring of presidential and parliamentary elections, such as in October 1994, or the negotiation of agreements in which the various ethnic parties consented to abide by democratic norms and abstain from the use of extreme nationalist rhetoric during the 1994 election campaign. A humanitarian component, providing the "third pillar" of UNPREDEP's mission in

Macedonia was also added over time to facilitate social development and assist in humanitarian relief projects.

Although the United Nation's preventive role in Macedonia continues to be a prominent one, it should not be forgotten that there were two other international and regional organizations that acted in a preventive capacity. Particularly emphasized should be the role of the Working Group on Ethnic and National Communities and Minorities of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) which was kept out of the public spotlight.<sup>10</sup> Beginning its work in October 1991, even prior to the deployment of UN peacekeepers, the Working Group initiated negotiations between ethnic Albanian and Macedonian representatives over various Albanian demands, including territorial autonomy. Most of these negotiations were conducted in trilateral forums involving representatives of the contending groups and Working Group members. The negotiations were especially successful in convincing Albanian leaders not to pursue secession, which would have triggered widespread violence, but to participate in the political structures to redress long-held grievances. Chaired by the German diplomat, Geert Ahrens, the Working Group was influential in fulfilling several of the Albanian demands, such as increasing the number of Albanian-language schools and the hours of radio and television broadcasts in the Albanian and other minority languages. Ahrens also played a crucial role in initiating talks with the Macedonian government to draft legislation on local self-government in areas with ethnic Albanian majorities.<sup>11</sup>

Not limiting their preventive efforts to ethnic Albanian demands, the Working Group was also influential in defusing the crisis with Macedonia's Serbian population which erupted in the early months following independence. Although not a significant minority a mere two percent of the population some ethnic Serbian leaders maintained strong ties to Serbia, especially to its more radical nationalist politicians. What was more serious was that ethnic Serbs also proclaimed a Serbian republic within the new Macedonia, going as far as adopting their own constitution. Alarmed that this could lead to a possible military intervention by Belgrade, the Macedonian government, with the participation of the Working Group, held a series of trilateral talks with ethnic Serb leaders. Demanding a number of cultural and educational rights, ethnic Serbs eventually agreed to the signing of a document which granted them cultural autonomy in the areas of education, religious practices and access to the media. The "Agreed Minutes," signed on 27 August 1993, also included the ethnic Serbian demand to be recognized as a minority in the constitution.<sup>12</sup>

Another preventive actor arriving in Macedonia prior to the United Nations was the OSCE (then still the CSCE). Its Spillover Mission to Skopje was created because of the failure to send a European Union observer mission, which had met with the threat of a Greek veto. Although Macedonia was barred from becoming a CSCE/OSCE participating member over the objections of Greece, the OSCE arrived in Macedonia as early as September 1992, following a decision by the 16th Council of Senior Officials (CSO) to provide an OSCE Spillover Monitoring Mission. In the process of its preventive efforts, the OSCE has applied two types of mechanisms: the establishment of a permanent mission in Skopje, and the periodic fact-finding missions by the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) with headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands.



The Spillover Mission's original mandate called for the monitoring of external and internal conditions affecting the stability and security of the country. Much of the monitoring of borders was later assumed by the United Nations, and OSCE members began to focus more on domestic developments, meeting with leaders of political parties, labor union representatives, journalists and community leaders. Moreover, OSCE members conducted regular visits to towns and villages in an effort to record incidents of ethnic tensions, minority rights violations, and other ethnic and social tensions. OSCE mission members also investigated a number of high-profile ethnic incidents such as for example the death of an ethnic Albanian killed during the opening ceremonies of the illegal Albanian-language university in Tetovo.

The High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoel, performs one of the most important tasks for early warning and preventive diplomacy, primarily through regular fact-finding missions. For example, between 1993 and 1995, in one of the most critical periods for a newly independent Macedonia, van der Stoel conducted eleven visits to the country, to follow up on a number of diverse and volatile issues, such as citizenship requirements, television and radio programs for minority groups, the professional representation of ethnic Albanians, and educational and language rights. Many of the fact-finding and mediation visits have facilitated positive change and have led to the implementation of compromise solutions with respect to media access, a quota system at Macedonia's university, and the reopening of the pedagogical faculty in Skopje to meet some of the educational demands of ethnic Albanians.<sup>13</sup>

### **Track-Two Prevention: The Role of Non-governmental Organizations**

Several NGOs, both international and indigenous, have also become involved in long-term preventive action in Macedonia. While the preventive efforts of the United Nations and the OSCE are directed toward the official level, those NGOs operating in Macedonia in a preventive capacity, work to affect changes on the grass-roots level. Among these are for example, the Washington-based Search for Common Ground, and the Ethnic Conflict Resolution Project (ECRP), an indigenous organization located at the St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje.

Search for Common Ground in Macedonia (SCGM) has evolved as a well-known non-governmental organization whose projects focus overwhelmingly on changing attitudes and values of conflict groups, and on teaching Macedonian citizens to recognize and eliminate ethnic stereotypes. SCGM's underlying philosophy is to "assist Macedonia's society to resist the escalation of ethnic conflict into violence."<sup>14</sup> This is achieved through a variety of diverse projects which address various aspects within society and which tend to focus on immediate problems affecting all segments of the population, regardless of ethnic affiliation. Rooted in a "needs-based" approach, in that all citizens share some common needs for which common solutions are essential, SCGM has undertaken cooperative projects such as the one where students from different ethnic backgrounds participate on a consistent basis in environmental clean-up projects. SCGM also conducts cross-ethnic journalist training projects and conflict resolution courses for children with different ethnic backgrounds.<sup>15</sup>

A conflict resolution organization of a different kind is ECRP at Skopje's University, which focuses primarily on bringing ethnic Albanians and Macedonians together for long-term conflict management education. Three kinds of activities form the core of ECRP's conflict management approach: education, research and direct mediation. Taking an interactive approach to conflict management, ECRP works not only with training adults in conflict management techniques, but also with children since many ethnic stereotypes develop at an early age and flourish in a school system where different ethnic groups do not necessarily attend classes in the same language.<sup>16</sup> Such long-term conflict management efforts on the grass-roots level, as conducted by SCGM and ECRP, are significant for creating a culture of nonviolent conflict resolution and for supporting those international efforts targeting political elites.

### **The Macedonian People**

Although domestic elites and international actors played critical roles in the implementation of preventive action, it is also essential to give credit to the Macedonian people from all ethnic groups, whose centuries-long experiences of peaceful co-existence and self-perceptions as being "peaceful" also provide a possible explanation as to why there has been no ethnic violence on the scale witnessed in the other former Yugoslav republics. Some commentators have pointed out that the political leadership made a conscious choice in refraining from the use of "chauvinist" myths and the self-glorification of history, as was witnessed in Serbia and Croatia, where such "psychologized history" stirred up ethnic hostilities. Although there were many references to Macedonia as a nation, including those in the constitution, there were no deliberate attempts to misuse history for the purpose of creating myths to legitimize the cultural superiority of ethnic Macedonians.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the Macedonian government has worked hard to promote a civic rather than ethnic nationalism.

For other observers, the answer as to why there was no violent conflict in Macedonia, rests with factors inherent to the Macedonians as a people. According to one view, Macedonians, regardless of ethnic group, were eager to overcome the nineteenth and early twentieth century Western-held notion of a violent Balkan country. A more prominent view, however, holds that Macedonians do not have a self-image of the "warrior," but rather hold a collective image of peoples, all of whom have been dominated by different invaders, regardless of ethnicity. Moreover, Macedonians in general view themselves as peaceful people, even though Slav Macedonians regard themselves as more peaceful than ethnic Albanians, and vice versa.<sup>18</sup>

### **A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF CONFLICT PREVENTION**

As this study demonstrates, the prevention of violent conflict is not something that occurs automatically, or through "good will." Conflict prevention is a process entailing the deliberate implementation of preventive measures in a pre-violent or early phase of a conflict.<sup>19</sup> As such, it requires the "hard work" of many different actors, perhaps even with overlapping capabilities, addressing the various levels of conflict potentials. Conflict

prevention, as the case of Macedonia, and a few other case studies illustrate, is an act of choice and design, rather than one of accident.

The inquiry into the question of why there was no violent conflict in Macedonia has suggested that a number of actors involved in preventive activities assisted in implementing a non-violent approach to conflict management in Macedonia. This included not only international and regional organizations but also NGOs operating on a grass-roots level. Domestic actors also adopted a moderate and accommodative approach and chose negotiations rather than indifference or repression toward the demands of ethnic Albanians and other minorities. That preventive action is not always a hundred percent effective goes without question. For example, several contentious issues remain at the center of the conflictual relations between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians, and have not been resolved, even with the involvement of international actors. There are also various limits faced by NGOs, the United Nations, and the OSCE, including scarce resources, the problem of what happens when international players leave the country, and the level of interaction between international organizations and NGOs.

Several questions remain which are difficult to answer at this point in time. For example, will the UN preventive mission have to stay on indefinitely in Macedonia? Can a compromise solution be found for Kosovo so that the constant threat of a potential spillover of violence into Macedonia and the region is removed? Could a European-based preventive force be created to maintain a more permanent peacekeeping role in the region? And for how long can the government continue to keep the delicate balance between meeting gradually the demands of ethnic Albanians while facing growing criticism from more conservative forces that oppose accommodation and power-sharing? Also, how will the government continue to accept the advice of international and regional actors on minority rights without the increasing perception of their interference in domestic affairs?

Although these questions are pertinent and there are obviously limits to the preventive role of the UN, the OSCE, NGOs and domestic leaders, what needs to be kept in perspective is that preventive efforts in Macedonia were crucial for preventing the outbreak of violence in the formative stages of the country's emergence as a sovereign state. Crucial in that the domestic political leadership and international actors succeeded through a number of approaches in ensuring that demands were voiced as "access" (i.e., power-sharing; political and cultural rights) that could be addressed through negotiation, and therefore were not transformed into "exit," such as secession.<sup>20</sup> This would have resulted in violence since "exit" would have constituted a threat to the state and the Macedonian nation. It is also important to note that preventive action supported the democratization process in Macedonia because of the government's serious efforts in implementing and protecting minority rights.

The case study on Macedonia also yields a number of generic characteristics from which some general hypotheses can be drawn as to the non-violent management of conflict. Some of these have also been tested in other case studies, such as those of Estonia and Hungary/Slovakia.<sup>21</sup> These general characteristics, which can be identified in the

successful cases of preventive diplomacy, are important to consider in the design of an effective national or international policy of conflict prevention:

#### I. Timely Involvement in the Early, Non-Escalatory Stages of Conflict

Preventive action must come in the early or formative stages of conflict when violence is absent or only sporadic, and prior to the mobilization of contending parties. In Macedonia, preventive action was initiated prior to the outbreak of armed confrontations.

#### II. Support of Third Parties

The support of third parties, either major countries and/or international and regional institutions, is necessary for preventive action to be initiated, implemented and supported over time. For example, there was strong backing of the United States and the UN in the case of Macedonia, evident in the timely deployment of preventive forces but also in the creation of forums that encouraged political dialogue

#### III. Coordinated, Varied and Multifaceted Action, Instruments and Strategies

Preventive action in Macedonia also demonstrates that varied and multifaceted action and if possible, even a coordinated approach, facilitates the success of preventing violent conflict. A series of instruments were applied by official and non-governmental actors, ranging from preventive deployment to mediation, to activities on the grass-roots level designed to induce behavioral changes among ethnic groups.

#### IV. Moderate Behavior of Leaders

The study of Macedonia shows that preventive efforts are more effective and are more likely to lead to a favorable outcome if domestic leaders are willing to support a preventive process and take responsibility themselves for preventive actions. The moderate and supportive behavior of political leaders in Macedonia has taken various forms, including abstention from nationalist, exclusionary rhetoric and political agendas, or the falsification and misuse of historical symbols, events, and myths; a resistance to psychologize national history; and a willingness to use political accommodation, power-sharing and other forms of consociationalism, such as coalition-building in government.

#### V. Factors Intrinsic to Groups and Societies in Conflict

The non-violent management of conflict is also contingent on certain cultural and psychological factors intrinsic to contending groups in a given society. Some of these are rooted in the collective consciousness of nations and ethnic groups, such as self-image or the images contending groups have of each other. Other factors are the presence or absence of traumatic historical experiences, such as genocide or mass expulsion. The more extreme and traumatic the experience of individual and collective victimization is, the more difficult conflict prevention becomes. Macedonia also stands out here as an

interesting case because ethnic Albanians and Macedonians share a history of domination by outsiders and they hold group images of being peaceful.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite the successful application of preventive diplomacy in the Republic of Macedonia, it is crucial to keep in mind that preventive action continues to be an on-going process. Like many other multi-ethnic states, Macedonia will have to find a balance between the demands and needs of all its ethnic groups, and convince a majority, as President Gligorov correctly pointed out in an interview, that accommodation and power-sharing benefit all citizens of the country, including the Slav Macedonians.<sup>22</sup> It is therefore essential that the initial phases of preventive actions are followed by long-term conflict management efforts like those that several of the NGOs in Macedonia are engaged in. Their approach is one of long-term prevention through education in conflict management techniques and the building of communities.

It is also important to recognize that the region continues to be steeped in political and economic instabilities as well as ethnic tensions. Bosnia is far from being a stable and viable entity and NATO troops remain deployed as a post-conflict prevention force to avert a renewal of armed confrontations. Moreover, political violence in neighboring Kosovo poses not only a threat to Macedonia but also to the southern Balkans. Although there has not been a spillover of armed hostilities into Macedonia, the country's security remains precarious as long as there is no settlement of the Kosovo conflict. Among the concerns raised over the impact of Kosovo on Macedonia are the following: first, the alleged support of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia of the Kosovo Liberation Army; second, the manifestation of the Kosovo struggle as a potential model for collective mobilization; third, increased border crossings on the part of weapons smugglers from Albania, and Serbian border encroachments, including the temporary extension of Serbia's frontier into Macedonian and Albanian territory; and finally, the possible date for, and the type of negotiated settlement likely to emerge in Kosovo.<sup>23</sup>

Since fall 1998, the United States has been engaged in a major diplomatic initiative to negotiate a settlement between Serbia and the Kosovar Albanians. But the interim settlement, proposed by US envoy Christopher Hill, which would grant some form of provincial autonomy to Kosovar Albanians, continues to be rejected by both sides.<sup>24</sup> Sporadic violence also is still prevalent, despite a truce brokered in October 1998 under the auspices of Richard Holbrooke, casting even more doubt on any progress toward a negotiated settlement.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile in Macedonia, UNPREDEP's mandate has been extended to February 1999, after a resolution in 1997 had called for the gradual withdrawal of preventive peacekeepers. Its troop strength, several months ago reduced to 750, is back to 1,000 soldiers. Moreover, Macedonia has become host to a 1,700 strong NATO rapid reaction force in case of a possible evacuation of 2,000 OSCE monitors in Kosovo, who will be deployed in early 1999.<sup>26</sup>

How Macedonia progresses politically and economically in the near future will become much of the responsibility of the new government under Prime Minister Ljubco

Georgievski, whose party, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO-DPMNE) won the fall 1998 elections, along with its coalition partner, Democratic Alternative (DA), under Vasil Tuporkovsky. What is interesting about these electoral developments is that Macedonians not only voted for change, but that VMRO-DPMNE, once an outspoken nationalist party, has made overtures toward making Arb'n Xhaferi's Democratic Party of the Albanians, one of the more "radical ethnic Albanian parties, a coalition-partner. It is likely therefore that several of the ethnic disputes, such as the one over Tetovo University, will become resolved over time.

In conclusion, it must be noted that over the course of several years, Macedonia has been successful in avoiding some of the scenarios that predicted the country would be drawn into a wider Balkan war. It must also be reiterated that Macedonia stands out as an example of the relatively successful application of preventive diplomacy. Moreover, case studies such as Macedonia also illustrate the growing willingness on the part of political leaders to manage communal and ethnic tensions in a more constructive fashion. According to Ted R. Gurr, the phenomenon we are witnessing is "the existence of strong global trends in the 1990s toward accommodation of the interests of national and minority peoples," through policies such as the protection of minority rights, the granting of more cultural and sub-state autonomy, the adoption of non-discriminatory practices and power-sharing approaches. Gurr interprets this change as one that is normative in nature, and one that is taking place on the global level. This normative shift entails the management of communal and ethnic differences through accommodation policies at an early stage, prior to the outbreak or escalation of violence.<sup>27</sup> Whether much of this normative shift comes as a result of more concerted efforts toward preventive diplomacy begs to be the focus of future research in conflict prevention.

## **Endnotes**

1. See for example, Alice Ackermann, *When Peace Prevails: Preventing Violent Conflict in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, forthcoming); Michael Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 1996); Gabriel Munuera, *Preventing Armed Conflicts in Europe: Lessons from Recent Experience* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies, Western European Union, 1994); Louis Kriesberg, "The Phases of Destructive Conflicts: Communal Conflicts and Proactive Solutions," in David Carment and Patrick James, eds., *Peace in the Midst of Wars: Preventing and Managing International Ethnic Conflicts* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 33-62; David Cortright, ed. *The Price of Peace: Incentives and International Conflict Prevention* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

2. Duncan Perry, "Destiny on Hold: Macedonia and the Dangers of Ethnic Discord," *Current History*, 97 (March 1998), pp. 119-26; Duncan Perry, "The Republic of Macedonia: Finding Its Way," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., *Politics, Power, and the Struggle for Democracy in South-East Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), pp. 226-81; J. Brown, "Macedonia: Regional Buffer or Source of Sparks?" *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 May 1998, p. 7; Ackermann, *When Peace*

Prevails; Stefan Troebst, "An Ethnic War That Did Not Take Place: Macedonia, its Minorities, and its Neighbors in the 1990s," in David Turton, ed., *War and Ethnicity: Global Connections and Local Violence* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997), pp. 77-103.

3. Munuera, *Preventing Armed Conflict in Europe*; Radoslava Stefanova, "Preventing Violent Conflict in Europe: The Case of Macedonia," *The International Spectator*, 32, no. 3-4 (July-December 1997), pp. 111-12; Alice Ackermann, "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: A Relatively Successful Case of Conflict Prevention in Europe," *Security Dialogue*, 27, no. 4, pp. 409-24; Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1995); Erich Frankland, "Struggling with Collective Security and Recognition in Europe: The Case of the Macedonia Republic," *European Security*, 4, no. 2 (Summer 1995), pp. 354-79.

4. Janusz Bugajski, *Ethnic Politics in Eastern Europe: A Guide to Nationality Policies, Organizations, and Parties* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994); Ackermann, *When Peace Prevails*.

5. Interview with Kiro Gligorov, President of the Republic of Macedonia, 6 June 1996, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. Also recorded in Alice Ackermann and Sanjeev Chatterjee, *From the Shadow of History*, Video Documentary (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami, 1997).

6. *Ibid.*

7. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *A Threat to "Stability:" Human Rights Violations in Macedonia* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1996); Barnett Rubin, ed., *Toward Comprehensive Peace in Southeast Europe: Conflict Prevention in the South Balkans* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund Press, 1996).

8. Hugh Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995); Janusz Bugajski, *Nations in Turmoil: Conflict and Cooperation in Eastern Europe* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996); Duncan Perry, "Macedonia: Balkan Miracle or Balkan Disaster?" *Current History*, (March 1996), pp. 113-17; Rubin, *Toward Comprehensive Peace in Southeast Europe*; Ackermann, *When Peace Prevails*.

9. There are few specific sources that discuss the UN's preventive deployment mission in Macedonia. See, for example, Alice Ackermann and Antonio Pala, "From Peacekeeping to Preventive Deployment: A Study of the United Nations in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia," *European Security*, 5, no. 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 83-97; Stuart J. Kaufman, "Preventive Peacekeeping, Ethnic Violence and Macedonia," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 19 (1996), pp. 229-46; Stuart Kaufman, "Preventing Ethnic Violence: Conditions for the Success of Peacekeeping," in Carment and James, eds., *Peace in the Midst of Wars*, pp. 194-229; Stephanie Lefebvre, "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM): Where to?," *European Security*, 3, no. 4 (1994), pp.

711-33; Clive Archer, "Conflict Prevention in Europe: The Case of the Nordic States and Macedonia," *Cooperation and Conflict*, 29, no. 4 (1994), pp. 367-86.

10. There are no published sources on the role of the ICFY's Working Group in Macedonia. The preventive endeavors of the Working Group are discussed in Ackermann, *When Peace Prevails*; and in Ackermann, "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia."

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.* The demand of ethnic Serbs to be recognized as a minority came largely as a surprise to Macedonia's leadership because ethnic Serbs had always been regarded as a "narod" or nation.

13. For a general discussion on the OSCE and the role of the High Commissioner in conflict prevention, see, for example, Michael Bothe, Natalino Ronzitti, and Allan Rosas, eds., *The OSCE in the Maintenance of Peace and Security: Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Peaceful Settlement of Disputes* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1997); Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ed., *The Challenge of Preventive Diplomacy: The Experience of the CSCE* (Stockholm: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1994); Janie Leatherman, "The CSCE's (Im) Possibilities for Preventive Diplomacy in the Context of Ethnic Conflict," *International Journal on Group Rights*, 2, no. 1 (1994), pp. 35-54; Max van der Stoep, "Preventive Diplomacy in Situations of Ethnic Tensions: The Role of the CSCE High Commissioner," in E. Hetzke and M. Donner, eds., *Weltweite und europäische Sicherheit im Spannungsfeld von Souveränität und Minderheitenschutz* (Berlin: Mittler Verlag, 1994). For a more specific discussion of the OSCE role in Macedonia, refer to Stefan Troebst, "Preventive Friedenssicherung durch internationale Beobachtermissionen? Das Beispiel der KSZE-Spillover-Monitormission in Makedonien 1992-1993," in Wolfgang Pöhs, Thomas Weggel, and Claus Richter, eds., *Sicherheitspolitisches Symposium Balkankonflikt* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 1994), 125-56; also Troebst, "An Ethnic War That Did Not Take Place;" Alice Ackermann, "The Republic of Macedonia and the OSCE: Preventive Diplomacy in Practice," in Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, eds., *OSCE Yearbook 1997* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 1998), pp. 69-76.

14. Interview with Eran Fraenkel, Executive Director, Search for Common Ground in Macedonia, September 1995.

15. See Eran Fraenkel, "International NGOs in Preventive Diplomacy and Early Warning: Macedonia," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Vigilance and Vengeance: NGOs Preventing Ethnic Conflict in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1996), pp. 113-32; also several interviews with Eran Fraenkel in Skopje, Macedonia in May and July 1995, and May 1996. For a more detailed description of SCGM projects, see Ackermann, *When Peace Prevails*.



16. See Violeta Beska, "NGOs, Early Warning, and Preventive Action: Macedonia," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Vigilance and Vengeance*, pp. 133-46. Interviews with Violeta Beska, ECRP Director, May 1995, and March and June 1996.
17. For a discussion on mythmaking and ethnic violence, see, for example, Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security*, 18, no. 4 (1994), pp. 5-39.
18. Based on interviews with ethnic Albanians and Slav Macedonians in 1995 and 1996.
19. For a detailed analysis on the conceptual and empirical dimensions of conflict prevention, see, for example, Ackermann, *When Peace Prevails*; Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts*, also, Louis Kriesberg, "Preventing and Resolving Destructive Communal Conflicts," in Carment and James, eds., *Wars in the Midst of Peace: The International Politics of Ethnic Conflict* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press), pp. 232-51.
20. Ted R. Gurr, "Transforming Ethno-political Conflicts: Exit, Autonomy or Access," in Kumar Rupesinghe, ed., *Conflict Transformation* (New York: St. Martin's, 1995), pp. 1-30.
21. These generic characteristics are drawn from Ackermann, *When Peace Prevails*; and Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflicts*.
22. Interview with President Gligorov, 6 June 1996.
23. Brown, "Macedonia: Regional Buffer or Source of Sparks?"; Perry, "Destiny on Hold;" also, Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), "FYROM: Daily Warns of 'Radical Passions' of FYROM Albanians," FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-EEU-98-201, 20 July 1998, pp. 1-2; FBIS, "FYROM: Commentary Sees Increased Pressure on FYROM Borders," FBIS Daily Report, FBIS-EEU-98-209, 25 July 1998, pp. 1-2. For a more recent analysis, see Alice Ackermann, "Macedonia and the Kosovo Conflict," *The International Spectator*, forthcoming.
24. RFE/RL Newswire, 2, no. 237, Part II, 10 December 1998, p. 5.  
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25. "About 30 Rebels Killed in Kosovo Fighting," *New York Times*, 15 December 1998, A4.
26. RFE/RL Newswire, 2, no. 234, Part II, 7 December 1998, p. 5.  
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27. Ted Robert Gurr, *Peoples Versus States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and Accommodation at the End of the 20th Century*, chap. 5: "Strategies of Accommodation in Plural Societies" (book manuscript, May 1997 draft).