Ethnonationalist Conflict in Postcommunist States

Varieties of Governance
in Bulgaria, Macedonia,
and Kosovo

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NATIONAL AND ETHNIC CONFLICT
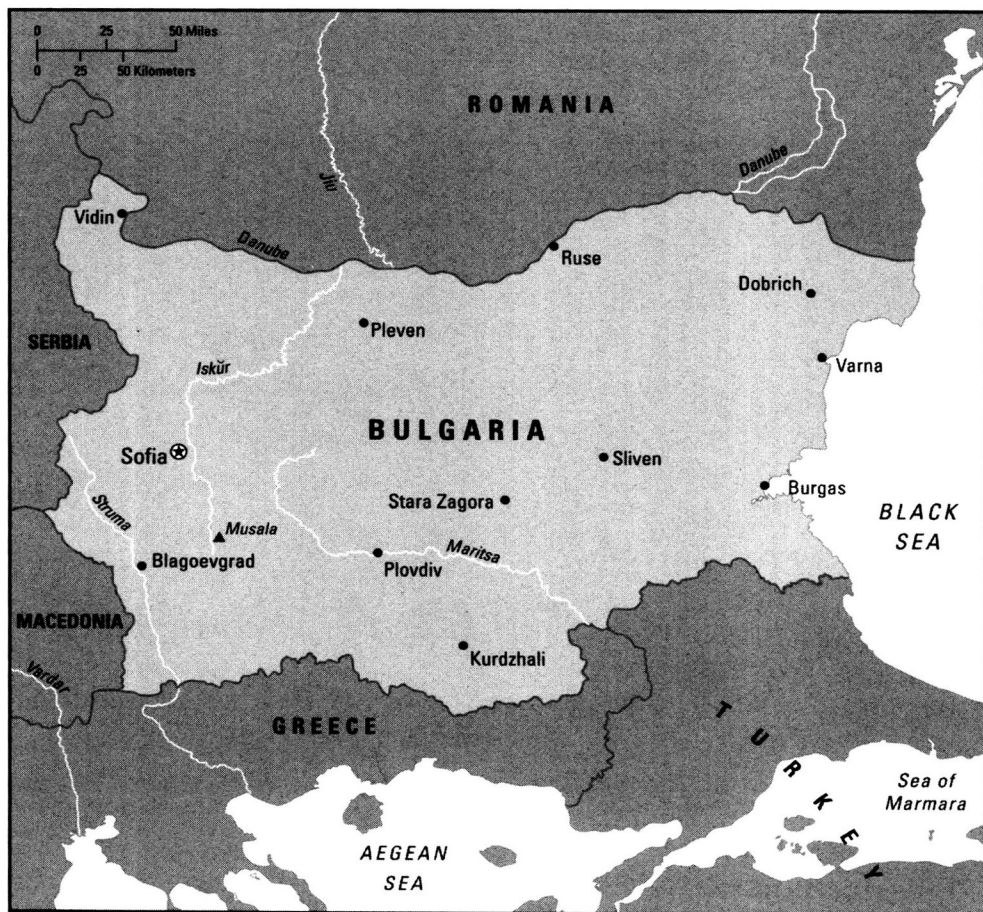# IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Brendan O'Leary, Series Editor

To the memory of my parents Velin and Ivanka,
and to Neda and Elisa

Abbreviations

AACL: Albanian American Civic League
AAK: Alliance for the Future of Kosovo
ANA: Albanian National Army
BSP: Bulgarian Socialist Party
CSCE: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DAHR: Democratic Alliance of the Hungarians of Romania
DPA: Democratic Party of the Albanians (Macedonia)
DUI: Democratic Union for Integration (Macedonia)
ECHR: European Court of Human Rights; European Convention on
    Human Rights
ECRML: European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages
EULEX: European Union Rule of Law Mission (Kosovo)
FCPNM: Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities
    (Council of Europe)
GERB: Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria
HCNM: High Commissioner on the National Minorities (OSCE)
HRW: Human Rights Watch
ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN)
ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
    (UN)
ICFY: International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia
ICTY: International Criminal Tribunal on Former Yugoslavia
KLA: Kosovo Liberation Army
KPC: Kosovo Protection Corps
LDK: Democratic League of Kosovo
LPK: People's Movement of Kosovo
MRF: Movement for Rights and Freedoms (Bulgaria)
NAAC: National Albanian American Council
NCEDI: National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (Bulgaria)

NDP: People's Democratic Party (Macedonia)
NDSV: National Movement Simeon the Second (Bulgaria)
NLA: National Liberation Army (Macedonia)
OFA: Ohrid Framework Agreement
OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACE: Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PDK: Democratic Party of Kosovo
PDP: Party for Democratic Prosperity (Macedonia)
PKK: Kurdistan Workers' Party
PMBLA: Liberation Army of Preshevo, Medvedja, Bujanovac
PR: Proportional Representation
RFE/RFL: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
SAA: Stabilization and Association Agreement (EU)
SAO: Serbian Autonomous Oblasts
SCP: Serbian Communist Party
SDSM: Social Democratic Union of Macedonia
SFRY: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SPS: Serbian Socialist Party
SRM: Socialist Republic of Macedonia
SRS: Serbian Radical Party
TDP: Turkish Democratic Party
UDF: Union of Democratic Forces (Bulgaria)
UNMIK: United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNPREDEP: UN Preventive Deployment Force
UNPROFOR: UN Protective Force
VMRO-DMPNE: Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-
    Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity

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MONTENEGRO

Pristina

Sofia

Podgorica

KOSOVO

BULGARIA

Skopje

ITALY

Tirana

MACEDONIA

Ankara

ALBANIA

*IONIAN
SEA*

GREECE

*AEGEAN
SEA*

TURKEY

0   50   100   150 Miles

0   50   100   150 Kilometers

KOSOVO

BULGARIA

0   25   50 Miles

0   25   50 Kilometers

Jablonika

Beli Drim

● Kumanovo

⊛ Skopje

● Tetovo

▲ *Golem Korab*

● Gostivar

● Veles

● Štip

Crni Drim

● Kičevo

MACEDONIA

Vardar

● Strumica

● Prilep

Dojransko ezero

Ohridsko ezero

● Bitola

Prespansko ezero

ALBANIA

GREECE

Aegean Sea

Contents

Introduction

Applying Path-Dependence, Timing, and Sequencing in Conflict Analysis

Over the past few decades some Eastern European postcommunist states with large ethnonational minorities managed to participate in nonviolent transitions while in others ethnic conflicts turned into civil wars. Some consolidated their democracies, and by 2007 were full members of the European Union (EU). Others started democratic transitions but did not complete them. Instead, disagreements between majorities and minorities evolved into civil wars, arrested political development, and led to significant loss of life. Despite the EU's mitigating effects on its neighbors, some conflicts displayed remarkable resilience and others developed anew.

The global media reported on the capture of indicted war criminals Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic and their delivery to the International Tribunal on Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and on multiple counts of criminality and corruption in structures of government. They also covered more mundane topics such as elections and initiatives related to the EU integration of the Western Balkans. But violence continues to be a viable option in this part of the world. Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008,[1] triggered new riots in the heart of Serbia. The city of Mitrovica in northern Kosovo, divided by the Ibar River into Albanian and Serbian communities, became a new center for violent clashes. Disputes in July 2011 involved the ethnic Albanian-dominated Kosovo government, the ethnic Serb minority, and some NATO troops still deployed there.[2] The dual governance in Mitrovica complicates Kosovo's political development and Serbia's EU aspirations.[3] Kosovo's international status, though not recognized by a majority of the UN General Assembly, also

complicates the uneasy peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where fears of seces-
sion by Republika Srpska, a constituent component, prompted high-
ranking Western diplomats to warn: "It's time to pay attention to Bosnia
again if we don't want things to get nasty very quickly."[4]

Macedonia is not spared interethnic violence, despite being celebrated
as a conflict prevention success story following brief warfare in 2001. Rela-
tions between Albanians and Macedonians have been deteriorating. In Feb-
ruary 2011 Macedonian and Albanian protesters clashed in Skopje over
construction of a museum-church, which Macedonians supported and Al-
banians opposed.[5] In April 2012 the bodies of five Macedonian men were
found near Skopje. Attackers remained unidentified, but the killings trig-
gered violent clashes and numerous demonstrations.[6]

Inter-ethnic peace in Bulgaria prevailed in the 1990s, and was important
for the country to join the EU in 2007. Yet the ultranationalist party Ataka
emerged in the mid-2000s and challenged this peace. In the streets of Sofia
in 2008, one could hear Ataka supporters spreading hate speech against
ethnic Turks in a manner rare even in the transition years when relations
were fragile. In May and June 2011, Ataka launched demonstrations against
the loudspeakers of the central Sofia mosque. Muslim worshippers were
attacked and severely beaten.[7]

These examples illustrate the importance of two major questions posed
by this book. Why do ethnonationalist conflicts reach different levels of
violence? And why do they often persist despite strong international conflict
resolution and peace- and institution-building programs? I approach these
questions through a decade-long comparative study of three places where
majority-minority relations escalated to different degrees of violence after
the end of communism: Bulgaria, Macedonia, and the then province of
Kosovo in Yugoslavia.[8] Conflicts were characterized by low violence in Bul-
garia, mid-range in Macedonia, and high in Kosovo.

Conflict analysis is a well-established field, but with some exceptions,
inquiries about the variation in degrees of violence using a joint theoretical
framework are not common.[9] This is not surprising given the challenge of
coherent comparisons across sub-state conflicts that spread widely after the
wars of decolonization in the 1940s and 1970s, and continued with new
vigor after the collapse of communism.[10] Scholars are currently divided into
two major camps in approaching these conflicts. A large number concen-
trate on civil wars and other intrastate conflicts where violence is usually
high. This interest is also not surprising given the global shift from inter- to

intrastate wars after the end of communism: only 7 wars between 1989 and 2004 were between states; the remaining 118 were intrastate.[11] The conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya, East Timor, Liberia, Kosovo, Mozambique, Nagorno-Karabakh, the Palestinian territories, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and more recently Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have enjoyed much academic attention.

Other scholars, especially in the context of peaceful transformations in Eastern Europe, have concentrated on cases where ethnonational violence remained low. Czechoslovakia split peacefully into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1992. Russian minorities in the Baltic republics faced discrimination after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but did not rebel. Hungarian minorities in Slovakia and Romania mobilized, but not violently. In deeply divided Ukraine, neither Ukrainians nor Russian speakers reached for weapons even when tensions such as the 2005 "Orange Revolution" aimed at toppling an illiberal regime.

Despite methodological criticism that such studies often "select on the dependent variable" and fail to find underlying reasons and mechanisms for a range of outcomes of violence,[12] this focus is understandable because theorizing requires scholars to narrow the pool of relevant cases. Apart from civil wars, important phenomena in ethnonationalism include minority rights, cultural and territorial autonomy, federalism, and secessionist movements. Each tends to be associated with a certain level of violence. Since scholars usually focus on a specific phenomenon, variation in violence is often difficult to find, and researchers move on to other aspects of comparative variation.

The present study shifts the focus from a particular *political phenomenon* to the *relationships* between the agents involved. This approach identifies mechanisms that span ethnonationalist phenomena, and allows for exploring why relationships among major agents in a conflict become more or less violent over time. I concentrate on the evolution of relationships between majority and minority elites and the external factors that may affect them. I seek to understand how agents in these groups associate with the exercise of political power. There are many commonalities, whether the conflicts are driven by minority demands for political and cultural accommodation as in Bulgaria, autonomist claims as in Macedonia, or secessionist claims as in Kosovo. In this sense, this book adds to the emerging body of scholarship on microdynamics of conflicts, approaching conflicts as relational phenomena.[13]

It is puzzling why the conflicts in Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bulgaria reached different degrees of violence after 1989. Retrospectively it sounds commonsensical that these conflicts evolved differently, at least because Bulgaria did not undergo state collapse. But at the outset of the transition process none of this was determined. The countries had some crucial commonalities: the conflicts evolved between Christian Orthodox majorities and Muslim minorities, the communist parties controlled national politics, and there were no effective dissident or other civic movements to create political alternatives. During communism the Turks of Bulgaria experienced brutal assimilation that deprived them of their Arabic names and Islamic religion. Numerous studies indicate that government repression of a communal group is a major source of collective action and organized violent resistance. Initially repression may inspire fear and caution, but it creates long-term resentment and enduring incentives to retaliate.[14] Thus, it is surprising that the Turks of Bulgaria did not retaliate after 1989, but chose a peaceful course of accommodation. It is equally puzzling why the Albanians of Macedonia and Kosovo, who enjoyed many rights in socialist Yugoslavia, encountered more violence during the transition period, and why the levels of violence differed between Macedonia and Kosovo.

The outcomes of violence evolved along specific trajectories. In Bulgaria, relations between the Bulgarian majority and the Turkish minority experienced serious tensions in the early 1990s, but developed peacefully in the long run. The ethnic Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) became the third parliamentary party with a major say in the formation of governments, although it first entered a governing coalition only in 2001. Nevertheless, in the 2000s the ultranationalist party Ataka capitalized on anti-Turkish, anti-Muslim rhetoric, gained a significant constituency, and became an important parliamentary player, also supporting the formation of a recent government.

In Macedonia, interactions between the Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority were consistently tense. The Albanians were represented in parliament as early as 1990 and belonged to the governing coalitions since 1992, but their demands to be a constituent people of the state were perpetually ignored. Tensions in education and self-government led to peaks of violence in the mid-1990s. Albanian rebels linked to the postconflict environment of wartorn Kosovo staged brief internal warfare in 2001, demanding federalization. In the aftermath, interethnic violence significantly decreased and Macedonia became a candidate for EU membership.