

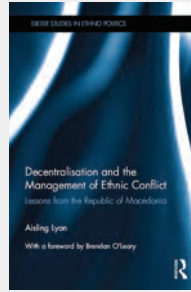
Decentralisation and the Management of Ethnic Conflict: Lessons from the Republic of Macedonia

By Aisling Lyon

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Reviewed by Büşra Dillioğlu, International Balkan University

The question, is it possible to preserve the territorial integrity of a multi-ethnic state by devolving responsibilities to municipalities, is the main puzzle of this work. Republic of North Macedonia was established in 1991 with a sharp legitimacy problem. It was challenged both from outside by neighboring Greece and Bulgaria, and from inside by its minority communities. The country's existential insecurity had a significant impact on determining the format of relations between the ethnic Macedonian-dominated state and its minority communities. Notable inequalities experienced by the minority communities led to the mobilization of Albanian insurgents against the state in the following decade. The internal conflict ended only with international pressure and by the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001. The ultimate goal of the Framework Agreement was to accommodate the grievances of the Albanian community by decentralizing to the local level. *Decentralisation and the Management of Ethnic Conflict*, by Aisling Lyon, offers an analysis of local government decentralization as a potential approach for the management of ethnic conflicts. Lyon focuses on political, cultural, social and economic inequalities and asks if decentralization, which is the process of the transfer of competences from the central to the local level, can be an answer to them. Other forms of territorial self-government arrangements,



namely federalism, autonomy and devolution are not the focus of this work.

The book is composed of a detailed introduction, five chapters and a brief conclusion. In the introduction, Lyon explains her key arguments, primary among them the idea that decentralization has the potential to address many ethnic inequalities. It is a power-dividing strategy that allows for the expansion of political space available for local communities to manage their own affairs and resources. This process preserves the territorial integrity of the state by giving a greater political and administrative space to local communities, while not necessarily recognizing their distinctive ethnic characters. The challenges posed against the potential benefits of decentralization are also addressed by the author. Lyon claims that municipalities do not receive the benefits of fiscal decentralization equally, and that the central government's monopoly over resources prevails. Hierarchical political parties and clientelism at both the central and local levels together with inadequate fiscal autonomy undermine the potential benefits of decentralization. Furthermore, the absence of mechanisms to protect rights and expand these benefits to communities that are not territorially dominant, such as the Turkish, Vlach and Roma communities, pose another obstacle.

The first chapter explains why decentralization was initiated in Macedonia. In offering this explanation, Lyon focuses entirely on horizontal inequalities and establishes a correlation between these inequalities and the violent mobilization against the state. In her analysis, Lyon pays particular attention to the Albanian community and points out that inequalities triggered the conflict in 2001. She divides these inequalities into four categories: political, cultural, social and economic. Each are examined in detail and illustrated in the table provided by the author at the end of the chapter (p. 48) Political inequalities existed because Albanians were not recognized as 'a constituent nation,' and Albanian political leaders were not able to benefit from political opportunities and power on par with their Macedonian counterparts. Cultural and social inequalities were concentrated around the language issue and recognition of community emblems. There were a number of demands, including mother-language education, the use of minority languages in municipal affairs and recognition of Albanian as the second official language of the state. Finally, with respect to economic inequalities, the high level of unemployment and diminishing public resources disproportionately affected the non-majority communities.

The following three chapters consider whether the decentralization process in Macedonia contributed to the elimination of political, administrative and economical inequalities. Lyon focuses on the implementation of the terms set by the Framework agreement between 2005 and 2012. The second chapter asks specifically whether the decentralization process contributed to broadening effective political participation and strengthening democracy at the local level. The author first provides different perspectives in the literature regarding the promotion of decentral-

ized government in ethnically divided societies (pp. 55–59) and then concludes that the Macedonian process does provide a good example, as municipal rule allows those minorities that make up a majority at the local level to seize and exercise political power. Furthermore, the political space available for citizens to participate in local governance and decision-making processes has expanded. Finally, decentralization helps legitimize government institutions in the eyes of previously marginalized groups and enhances the transparency and responsiveness of local governments. The author expands her work by discussing the issues that hinder some other potential benefits of decentralization. Clientelism, patronage politics and lack of democratic culture in the political system still exist and act as a barrier for the elimination of political inequalities and the integration of society.

Lyon does not devote a separate chapter to examining the elimination of cultural and social inequalities via decentralization. Instead, in the third chapter, she takes the decentralization of the primary and secondary education system as a case study and asks if this can be an answer for meeting the needs of diverse groups. The chapter begins with a clear explanation of why the education system was taken as the case study; Lyon claims that education is crucial for the reproduction of minority communities. In addition to its crucial role in transmitting identity to next generations (Bieber, p. 81), education is also significant for the elimination of social inequalities. The author presents a systematic comparison of the education system before and after the implementation of the provisions. There are number of tables throughout the chapter, mainly based on UNDP and World Bank findings, which illustrate that economic stagnation and uneven demographic shifts existed before 2005. Hence, dissatisfaction over education

standards could exacerbate tensions between different ethnic groups. Changes to the education system as a result of decentralization helped facilitate heterogeneous policy making, improvement of the provision of Albanian-medium education and increased transparency via greater community involvement in decision making processes. On the other hand, the major problems in the education system that existed before 2005 persist, and there is a trend of ethnic segregation in both primary and secondary schools. Thus, ethnic segregation has the potential to reverse the positive effects of decentralization in the long run.

The fourth chapter, titled “Who Has the Money?” provides an assessment of fiscal decentralization and the increasing economic autonomy of the municipalities. Lyon’s work considers the following questions: the impact of short-term political calculations on the implementation of fiscal decentralization, the level of municipalities’ dependency on the central government for revenue, and finally the purchasing capacity of municipalities and their ability to be party to contracts and agreements. The author provides a detailed assessment of these questions by examining various municipalities’ sources of revenue, and whether they have their own resources or are heavily dependent on inter-governmental transfers. Lyon then considers the expenditure and contractual autonomy of municipalities. After this detailed analysis, Lyon suggests that Macedonia’s fiscal decentralization was designed in such a way as to ensure local dependency on the central government. What she calls “partial decentralization” is the result of the economic dependency of municipalities for their budget (p. 222). Hence decision making capacity and contractual capacity remain heavily dependent on the central government. Lyon concludes that tight controls

over peripheral areas may undermine the benefits of decentralization.

The final chapter is far more challenging than the previous ones with respect to the potential gains of decentralization. It focuses on territorial disparities within the country and questions the capacity of the Framework Agreement to promote socio-economic development and cohesion within the state. In the first chapter, Lyon had noted that significant disparities exist between ethnic Macedonians and minority communities, and that these disparities had led to Albanian frustration. Neither this nor the previous chapter touch upon the elimination of economic problems such as high unemployment rates or inflation, because these are not directly related to the effects of decentralization. In the final chapter, Lyon examines the development of urban versus rural areas, noting that Albanians predominantly live in rural areas. Although the size and capacities of municipalities vary significantly, the author notes, the expectation from each of them to provide services is the same. The re-design of municipalities after 2004 led to the creation of a considerable number of small municipalities that lack substantial staff and revenues. Hence, in the absence of capital investments, municipalities’ capacities to deliver services in rural areas remain very weak.

The book is an important study to enrich our understanding of current political issues about the Republic of North Macedonia. Political parties that have a minority grass-root, raise issues such as Albanian being the second official language of the state, to be addressed further with decentralization. Lyon clearly states that decentralization has failed to reduce socio-economic disparities between urban and rural areas and to accommodate grievances of smaller minorities which do not

make a substantial majority within a municipality. She also notes that Macedonia's experience with decentralization requires further reforms to consolidate the process and factors such as clientelism, patronage politics and lack of democratic culture in the political

system hinders other potential benefits of the decentralisation. In this sense, the book can be used by politicians, experts and academics as a policy recommendation to test and improve provisions of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

The Theory of War and Peace: The Geophilosophy of Europe

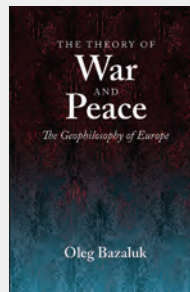
By Oleg Bazaluk, *translated by* Tamara Blazhevych

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Reviewed by Birkan Ertoy, Social Sciences University of Ankara

A professor in the Department of Philosophy, Oleg Bazaluk focuses on war and peace in his book and attempts to develop a philosophical theory of these concepts. As he explicitly expresses at the beginning of chapter two, "Methodology and Axiomatics of the Theory of War and Peace," Bazaluk's aim is to develop a "scientific theory of war and peace" based on well-known discussions in international relations (IR) and to determine "the rhizome" of these concepts (pp. 35-44).

The book is divided into seven chapters and a conclusion. In the first five chapters, Bazaluk focuses on explaining his theory; the other two are devoted to implementing it. Every chapter has a conclusion that allows readers to see the summary of discussions and quickly grasp a comprehensive understanding. In the first chapter, the author analyzes the concepts of war and peace on philosophical grounds and determines two lines of reasoning in understanding these concepts. The main reason, according to Bazaluk, is to understand these concepts before formulating a



theory (p. 33). While the first line represents Democritus' ideas and refers to the realist tradition in IR, the second line represents Plato's thoughts and refers to idealism or liberalism (p. 11). Bazaluk provides a historical and philosophical background for these concepts that IR literature has excessively focused upon, and claims that he follows Plato's line (p. 43).

After explaining the main lines of thought in the literature of war and peace, Bazaluk determines the main axiomatics or dependent variables of his theory: "Earth's Civilization" and "Loci of Civilization" or "Sociocultural Centers" (p. 37). In a way, chapter two represents the meta-theory of his approach since he explains his methodology along with the dependent variables. Bazaluk points out that he has chosen "geophilosophy," an approach that combines philosophy and geography, as the methodology of his theory (p. 43). However, he extends the limits of geophilosophy by adding political philosophy, social philosophy, and psychology to