Managing Hatred and Distrust:
The Prognosis for Post-Conflict Settlement
in Multiethnic Communities in the Former Yugoslavia

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Local Government
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Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI), as one of the programs of the Open Society Institute (OSI), is an international development and grant-giving organization dedicated to the support of good governance in the countries of Central Eastern Europe (CEE) and the Newly Independent States (NIS). LGI seeks to fulfill its mission through the initiation of research and support of development and operational activities in the fields of decentralization, public policy formation, and the reform of public administration.

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Executive Summary

The deadly violence in Kosovo in 2004 and near-civil war in Macedonia in 2001 prove that tensions in the former Yugoslavia remain at a dangerous level in the new millenium. Peace is not sustainable in divided local communities, where neighbors harbor hatred and distrust for their neighbors. Although international actors have declared an end to major military conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, ethnic divisions still cause friction on the local level. Ethnic violence persists, different nationalities often lead segregated lives in the same municipality, and security concerns restrict the movement of minority members who live in enclaves. Meanwhile, politics based on ethnicity infiltrates local governments around the region, thwarting democracy in the institutions that affect people's daily lives.

In such a situation, the creation of a truly peaceful society can only be achieved on the local level, within each community.

This book presents 17 case studies detailing specific efforts to achieve peace locally, through effective management of multiethnic communities in the former Yugoslavia. It is hoped that this information will point to strategies that can be replicated elsewhere.

The policies, projects, and strategic efforts outlined in this volume indicate that progress can be made in encouraging local harmony, though the task is difficult.

The Introduction to this book identifies some common characteristics of the different case studies. The chapters that follow analyze specific cases, describing efforts to assist in the management of multiethnic communities. Chapters begin with a brief summary, followed by local background and details of the situation, an analysis of the case at hand, and recommendations for future action. The studies cover various locations in Bosnia, Croatia, the territory of Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, and Slovenia. The efforts analyzed are being driven by various combinations of civil society, local officials, the state, and international actors, but they are all being played out on the local level.

Some of the case studies detail projects that have achieved big changes on a small scale. This can be seen in efforts to improve the situation of a community of internally displaced Roma in Ni_, Serbia, or separate projects that encourage interethnic cooperation and communication in Gostivar and Kumanovo, Macedonia. Other studies, like an overview of the difficult local situation in Kosovo, reveal how much still needs to be done to achieve meaningful reductions in hatred and distrust.

All of the studies provide important lessons learned through practical work undertaken to improve the situation in the former Yugoslavia. They can give us a better understanding of how to encourage multiethnic peace, in the region and around the world.

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INTRODUCTION

Managing Hatred and Distrust:

Changes from the Bottom and the Top

INTRODUCTION
Managing Hatred and Distrust: Changes from the Bottom and the Top

By Nenad Dimitrijević and Petra Kovacs

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INTRODUCTION
MANAGING HATRED AND DISTRUST: CHANGES FROM THE BOTTOM AND THE TOP

By Nenad Dimitrijević and Petra Kovacs

The residue of hatred and distrust between the various groups living in the former Yugoslavia poses major obstacles to peaceful management of the multiethnic communities there. Nonetheless, various actors, on the local, state, and international level, are attempting to overcome these obstacles.

The efforts of these actors—their successes and the lessons we can learn from their failures—is the topic of this book, published as part of the Managing Multiethnic Communities Project (MMCP). The MMCP is an in-house policy research project of the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI) of the Open Society Institute. The purpose of the MMCP is to identify and distribute knowledge on innovative local policy-making practices in the fields of ethnic conflict resolution and multicultural politics. Back in 1998, it was decided that one of the subprojects of this research would be an exploration of multiethnic local communities in the former Yugoslavia. The first volume of "Managing Multiethnic Co-Existence in Countries of the Former Yugoslavia" was published in May 2000 as part of the LGI book series. With the publication of that volume, LGI intended to provide local professionals, trainers, and educators with knowledge about innovative practices that can be used to promote multiethnic coexistence in various communities in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

The present volume should be read as a follow-up to the first one. It includes case studies on recent good practices. These case studies cover emerging issues involved in local public management of multiethnic communities: strategies of re-integration of multiethnic communities, (re)settlement of refugees, fighting segregation, reconciliation, encouraging participation in local policy-making, and management of infrastructure.

1. Understanding Conflicts and their Consequences

Socialist Yugoslavia was destroyed in cruel inter-ethnic wars. The way was prepared for these wars, in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, through nationalist policies of ethnic domination and exclusion—policies initiated and decisively orchestrated by Slobodan Milošević's regime in Serbia. National identity was mobilized as nationalist hatred against "others," causing hundreds of thousands of casualties, refugee waves, and mass destruction of human settlements, all against the background of the ideologically prepared practice of "ethnic cleansing." During the wars in Croatia and Bosnia, the prin-

cipal targets of annihilation were heterogeneous local communities, which, by their peaceful existence in the previous period, had demonstrated the viability of harmonious relations in a complex ethnic, cultural, and religious area.

Any analysis of the prospects for democracy and viable protection of minorities in multiethnic local communities of the five countries that emerged after the breakup of Yugoslavia has to start by looking at the character of conflicts. The reason for this is simple: Recent violent conflicts, and their consequences, have acted as obstacles to the establishment of democratic normalcy. Conflict analysis has to take into account the whole "life-cycle" of both the "macro-conflict," between federal units and ethnic groups at the state level, and of the more "micro-conflict," between groups at local levels. Following Johan Galtung, the life-cycle of a violent conflict consists of three stages: the stage that precedes direct violence, the stage in which direct violence is used, and the stage after the use of direct violence.[1] These stages can be delimited by the outbreak of direct violence and by its end.[2]

The importance of the identification of these stages becomes obvious as soon as we concentrate on our subject proper—the final, post-violence stage in local communities—and ask about issues relevant for its peaceful management. It could be argued that the issues relevant are: goals, methods, means, and actors of the management of the post-conflict situation. But one more thing should be clear: "peaceful management" itself is a matter of choice, which involves assigning primacy to peace over the recent experience of war. It is not necessarily clear what is meant by peace, beyond the secession of hostilities. Both the post-Yugoslav experience and the general experience of the post-violence condition teach us that different scenarios are possible and that the end of violence does not necessarily equal democracy and multiethnic reconciliation.

Each of the issues mentioned as relevant for directing and shaping the post-conflict situation—goals, methods, means, and actors—can be approached in different ways. The choice of approach for the post-violence stages depends on the legacy of the pre-violence and violence stages. This legacy is often a composite of destroyed political institutions and cultures—and actors that are not conducive to democracy, the rule of law, and guarantees of inter-ethnic equality. Take, for instance, the question of institutional arrangements: If we look at the post-Yugoslav macro-levels, i.e. at the states that have emerged after Yugoslavia's collapse, we see that they are all formally democratic. This can be identified as an act of fundamental choice, by which the old authoritarian regime has been abandoned for the sake of democracy. But, it is equally important to observe that the manner of introduction of democracy matters. Violent conflicts were carried out under the aegis of the establishment of ethnic states in a multiethnic context. In other words, post-Yugoslav nation-states were created and legitimized as democracies in inter-ethnic wars. An important consequence follows: In most of these states, the culture of conflict is yet to be fully overcome.

For the purpose of this text, the term "culture of conflict" is used to denote attitudes, orientations, patterns of action, and value preferences that promote domination of one ethnic group over another. This condition is partly an "objective" consequence of a war, after which structures, cultures, and actors tend to be closed and suspicious of one anoth-

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[1] The term "direct violence" refers to the use of physical coercion during conflict.

[2] Johan Galtung, "Konflikttransformation mit friedlichen Mitteln. Die Methode der Transzedenz," p. 4. (www.uni-muenster.de/PeaCon/wuf/wf-98/9830208m.htm)

er. But the conflictual post-war condition is also sometimes further worsened by purposeful action. As a direct consequence of victorious nationalism, the culture of conflict legitimizes institutional arrangements which—though formally democratic—promote ethnicity-based majority rule in multiethnic contexts. This culture is centered around an illiberal ethical preference for the particular collective good of a particular (majority) group. Such an approach divides people along the lines of their ethnic affiliation, because the state partiality creates room for the condition of exclusionary inequality. In this political context, the majority tends to understand loyalty to the state as loyalty to their own nation: We are loyal to the state because it is our home. It follows that minorities are deprived of the focal point of loyalty within the state of which they are citizens: If the state belongs to "them," it cannot possibly belong to "us." This situation may compel a minority to look over the border and find its own *locus* of loyalty in the "mother-country." The next chain in this bad causality is often the accusation that minorities are separatist or irredentist. Meanwhile, relations between the two states can deteriorate. This post-violence culture of conflict not only affects structures and groups. It cuts across individual lives, making the everyday human condition insecure and often miserable.

Leaving aside the macro-level, we can see that this pattern of conflictual legacies often applies to relationships between groups at the local level as well.[3] It may be trivial to observe that the better part of everyday life concerns—housing, schooling, jobs, etc.—finds its expression and implementation in local communities. Majoritarian domination patterns, which are hidden at the state level behind propositions of formal democracy, reveal their full destructive capacity in local settings. As some of the case-studies in this volume demonstrate, the culture of conflict sometimes gets stabilized in a condition that could be called normalized violence.[4]

Management of everyday life issues, as well as of specific post-violence issues, is occasionally based on practices that further deepen inter-group distrust and exclusion. Post-traumatic rehabilitation—including re-building of houses and infrastructure, economic, social, and cultural development—is sometimes used to re-legitimize patterns of violence in a post-war context.

2. Presenting the Project

2.1. Approach

There is nothing deterministic in the picture sketched above. Violent conflict does not necessarily have to lead to normalization of violence. The post-conflict condition can be seen as a "window of opportunity," both for honestly addressing, and for overcoming, the

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[3] The term "local level" covers territorially delimited sub-units within a state ("local community"), authorized by national laws to a degree of autonomous competencies in decision-making and managing and administering public policies.

[4] For more details on the concept of "normalization of violence" in post-conflict situations, see: Alison Ayers, Sunil Bastian et al, "Democracy and Identity Based Conflicts: Problem or Solution?" *IDEA Draft Working Paper,* November, 1999, p. 5. (www.ids.ac.uk/ids/govern/pdfs/demcon.pdf).

sources of conflict and distrust.[5] Case studies of good practices presented in this volume demonstrate the viability of alternative approaches, aimed at creating the culture of peaceful coexistence. This coexistence would be based on inter-ethnic respect and tolerance, as well as on identifying and affirming cross-cutting issues that can bring together members of a local community, irrespective of their ethnic affiliation.

At the most general level, good practices of conflict management aim to transform a conflictual situation into a stable environment, free of direct and "normalized" violence, stereotypes, prejudices, and mutual distrust. The task is extraordinarily complex in each particular case. The concrete steps that must be taken to address conflict vary greatly, depending on the context. There are situations in which the trauma of recent violence is still so deep that, instead of addressing the sources of strife, conflict management has to be pragmatically oriented toward avoiding its new manifestations. In the long run, this in itself is not a fully satisfactory strategy. People cannot—and, indeed, should not—forget what happened during the war. Confrontation with the true history of past events, including addressing responsibility, guilt, apology, and related moral, cultural, and legal issues, cannot be avoided. Still, given that memories of violence carry a potential for renewal of conflicts, questions can be asked about the right sequencing of steps.

It might be rational to start by working on issues that are not directly related to the conflict but are equally important for all groups in a local community—and for all inhabitants of the local community as individuals. The idea is that these cross-cutting questions would act as incentives for the establishment of open communication, in which the conflicting positions of the recent past would not be primary points of orientation. It is worth repeating that local communities, with their competencies in "real-life areas," like housing, schooling, health care, local infrastructure, jobs, etc., are the most appropriate venues for addressing daily, non-controversial matters. The ultimate goal is to bridge the gap between conflict-burdened groups, by restoring their communication on questions that are jointly observable as being in the common interest. Once the slightest common denominator is re-established, it is more likely that the difficult questions of the legacy of violent conflict can be approached in sober, non-functionalist terms. Some of our case studies provide thoughtful examples of various efforts undertaken by various actors at the local level. In this book, we will provide a number of good practices that are aimed at achieving reconciliation on the ground. These good practices involve key stakeholders: local NGOs, local governments, and international organizations.

2.2. Classifying Case Studies

In 1998, when LGI launched its research on multiethnic local communities in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, the hope was that the time of wars had passed. Yet, before the first volume was published, the 1999 war in Kosovo broke out, followed by the armed conflict in Macedonia in 2000. Both in Kosovo and in Macedonia, conflicts were brought to an end through the heavy involvement of the international community, with military

[5] Johan Galtung, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

intervention, diplomatic activities, and deployment of international security forces after conflicts. All these efforts were complemented by the drafting of formal democratic arrangements from outside and above. It should be remembered that the international community was also instrumental in ending the war in Croatia and in establishing provisional after-war political arrangements in parts of that country. International engagement has been even more important in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Dayton agreement not only established peace, it also provided for a comprehensive set of constitutional and legal provisions creating the post-war institutional arrangement.

As some of our case studies show, this involvement of the international community has had a major impact, and not only on the state level. It has also contributed toward establishing a formal framework for local autonomies as well. The other source of formal democratic arrangements—including regulation of local autonomy—are the laws of respective states. Meanwhile, some other case studies point to parallel processes of promotion and strengthening of democracy by various grassroots actors.

Hence, we divide contributions to this volume into two major groups: those that present *top-down* approaches and those that present *bottom-up* approaches to conflict management. The primary criterion of distinction is the type of actors involved in practices of conflict resolution. An additional criterion is the kind of principal contribution to democracy these two approaches offer: in states and local communities analyzed in this volume, top-down approaches have mostly contributed to the establishment of legal and political institutions of democracy, while bottom-up practices, if successful, can be regarded as processes that have provided the democratic framework with substantive meaning, which is directly identifiable by local citizens as a valuable good.

Top-down conflict management in the specific post-Yugoslav context appears in two basic forms:

- institutional arrangements of conflict management created by state authorities;
- institutional arrangements of conflict management created by international actors for a post-Yugoslav state or area (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, etc.), some of which are designed specifically for the local level.

Bottom-up conflict management refers to social processes of re-conciliation and re-integration and the development of a sustainable coexistence, initiated and carried out by grassroots actors, like citizens and non-governmental organizations. A caveat has to be added here: Some of the grassroots actions described in this volume are implemented with the help of international NGOs, or even foreign governments. Still, this does not change the bottom-up character of the practice. Its implementation always rests on the readiness of local actors to overcome the conflictual cultural attitude toward those among their neighbors who belong to "other" groups—and on the capacity of members of all ethnic groups in a local community to identify the common good and work together toward achieving it.

With regard to the additional criterion for distinguishing between top-down and bottom-up approaches, let it be made unambiguous that the claim is not that procedural and substantive aspects of democracy can be strictly separated—let alone that democracy's procedural aspect is of less worth than its quality. Democracy is first and foremost a legal and political form. Still, our argument is that a more flexible approach to democracy is

needed in thinking about transitions from authoritarian rule in a post-conflict context, and this is still the actual context for most of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. At the level of multiethnic local communities, we claim that it is vital that there are substantive grassroots processes in which the local population gets a broad-as-possible share in the peace process, and in conflict management in general.[6] This is not a doctrinaire normative claim, but rather an insight based on observation of the transition to democracy in these countries, at both the state and local levels. In our context, we believe that the case studies offered in the present volume demonstrate that conflict management is more likely to yield a positive outcome if all citizens and all ethnic groups living in local communities realize that the stakes of good governance are their own stakes, rather than merely the formal monopoly of state or international actors. Case studies in this volume will bring a number of local experiences to the attention of an international and regional public who support this statement. International and national policies can only introduce changes from the top. These top-down approaches have their merits in halting conflicts and mediating minimum conditions for peace and security. Nevertheless, these policies will have a real and sustained impact only if they get genuine support from local communities. Such synergies are nascent in many local communities in the region.

By presenting this selection of recent case studies in a comparative regional context, we would like to emphasize the new, positive experiences of managing diversity—experiences that give us the hope that the legacy of hatred and distrust can be overcome.

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[6] Here we rely on: Alison Ayers, Sunil Bastian et al, *op.cit.,* p. 10-12.