

Williams, Abiodun. *Preventing War: The United Nations and Macedonia*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

On 23 July 2001, one child was killed and 24 other people wounded in northwest Macedonia following heavy fighting between Macedonian troops and ethnic Albanian rebels. The incident ended a tense 18-day truce that was precluded by weeks of sporadic fighting throughout the northwestern part of the nation. Macedonia was on the brink of full-scale civil war when ethnic Albanian guerrillas withdrew from positions around Tetovo. The turmoil in this troubled nation is far from over and no clear resolution is in sight.

Abiodun Williams' *Preventing War: The United Nations and Macedonia* takes the reader back to happier times in a Macedonia that appeared to have escaped the many problems of its conflict ridden neighbors. It was a Macedonia that harbored potential internal conflict, but seemingly negotiated most external threats confronting the nation in its formative years. Williams' study contends that Macedonia escaped the turmoil of other former Yugoslav Republics mainly through the efforts of preventative diplomacy<sup>1</sup> by the United Nations in the form of UN military peacekeepers. This UN peacekeeping effort was unlike any other peacekeeping operation in the fact that forces were deployed as a preventative measure prior to the manifestation of any conflict.

Peacekeeping operations prior to this effort were deployed to international hot spots tempered by the bipolar camps of the Cold War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, UN peacekeeping efforts were exposed to the full fury found in old Third World nation Cold War camps vacated by the superpowers and/or their proxies. Peacekeeping efforts were severely discredited while trying to temper these turbulent areas. Increased deployment and sustainment costs needed to fund multiple peacekeeping operations in these turbulent areas were also quickly becoming cost prohibitive. Enter the newly independent Macedonia from the former Republic of Yugoslavia.

Macedonia has been the home to numerous ethnic tribes since it first became well-known as the birthplace of Alexander the Great. Williams describes how Marshall Tito recognized and encouraged a separate Macedonia as part of his republic. This national consciousness was and is more imagined than real as approximately one fourth of the population is ethnic Albanian. Additionally, the author points out that numerous neighboring nations all lay claim to at least part of Macedonia, including Greece who also lays claim to the name and national symbol. Despite these fractured demographics, Macedonia emerged as an independent nation after Yugoslavia broke apart. The new republic's first president, Kiro Gligorov quickly asked the United Nations for protective assistance against numerous regional threats while the nation put its internal house in order. The UN responded with its first preventative peacekeeping deployment.

Williams does a good job outlining the United Nations Preventative Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) structure. The initial force consisted of soldiers from Norway, Sweden and Finland known as the Nordic Battalion or NORBAT. A United States Army battalion from Germany known as USBAT later joined NORBAT. The author does a credible job

outlining many little-known structural details and concerns with the UNPREDEP force, such as the muddled and confusing USBAT chain of command split between the UN, US Army Europe and the regional US Joint Task Force Headquarter (Provide Promise) in the Balkans. Additionally, restrictions were placed on US troops by its own chain of command, limiting patrolling no closer than 1,000 meters to the border and interaction with Serb and Macedonian troops. Additionally, the UNPREDEP force fell under the auspices of the UNPROFOR mission and chain of command in Bosnia. The UN operation in Macedonia was later given independent status with little effect on UN troops, but tremendous effect on the government of Macedonia's fight for international recognition as an independent and sovereign state.

The author then transitions from describing the UNPREDEP structure to analyzing its effectiveness in fulfilling its monitoring and reporting mandate against external threats to the new nation. He explains how the small UN force enhanced the security and stability of the new state stuck in the middle of a very volatile region. The UN force presence served to alert the international community to destabilizing developments in Macedonia. The UN contingent also contributed to humanitarian efforts within Macedonia, such as the USBAT sponsorship of a local orphanage. Finally, Williams argues that the reason UNPREDEP fulfilled its mandate was through effective resourcing in terms of men and material.

On the other hand, managing internal conflict in Macedonia was outside the scope of the UNPREDEP mandate. Williams shows how the UN Security Council attempted to create a "good offices" mandate to address Macedonian domestic conflict. UN police monitors, social integration projects and economic development projects were all a part of this mandate. He explains how this effort was hindered by Macedonian governmental distrust over this part of the mandate and viewed some of it as internal meddling. Finally, limited resourcing hindered the good office portion of the mandate.

Williams' final chapter describes how the UNPREDEP mission ended due to international political squabbling among UN Security Council members instead of a careful analysis and deliberate exit strategy planning. Williams attempts to conclude his study on a positive note highlighting the effectiveness of UNPREDEP and its usefulness for future conflict resolution. However, the reader is left with an unsettling view of where true weaknesses in UN peacekeeping efforts exist. UN Charter limitations, weak mandates, "big five" veto power combined with international politics, UN bureaucratic structure, UN Secretary General views and the inability to create/combine a complete political-social-economic-military peacekeeping, peacemaking and nation building program all conspired to hamper UNPREDEP efforts in Macedonia. The result was a premature departure of UNPREDEP from a nation still in turmoil.

In the end, it is hard to argue against Williams' thesis that the UNPREDEP mission successfully maintained peace and stability in Macedonia. As a member of the USBAT for six months, I remember the bulging Serb boundary claims in our sector between our UN observation posts along the border. It was easy to see that this thin line of UN outposts were the only things preventing greater Serb encroachment into Macedonian

territory, thus fueling border tensions that had almost led to fighting around Cupino Brdo in 1994. However, this was a small passing victory in the greater required campaign for peace in this troubled country. In conclusion, Williams' book is an important and timely study as Macedonia stands on the brink of full-scale civil war. Abiodun Williams' efforts reveal why the current turmoil exists and why the UNPREPREP did little to prevent it. More importantly, the study shows how the UN must revamp its peacekeeping efforts if it wants to truly play a role in international conflict resolution and conflict avoidance.

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Endnotes

1. Preventative diplomacy is described in a 1992 UN Secretary-General report as "action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur."