

KOINOVA

Ethnonationalist Conflict in Postcommunist States

# Ethnonationalist Conflict in Postcommunist States

*Varieties of Governance  
in Bulgaria, Macedonia,  
and Kosovo*

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Book Presentation

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Capture of Karadzic, 2008



Haradinaj at ICTY, 2008



Tarculoski and Bozhkoski at ICTY, 2008



Mladic at ICTY, 2011



**CORRUPTION**  
Your **NO** counts



# Violence continues to flare



Continuing clashes in Northern Kosovo



Occasional violence in Bulgaria



Protests and counter-protests related to inter-ethnic clashes in Macedonia, 2012

# Two major questions

- Why do ethno-national conflicts reach different degrees of violence? Why did they do so in Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Kosovo?
- Why do violence continues to reoccur even after strong international intervention for conflict-resolution and democratization?

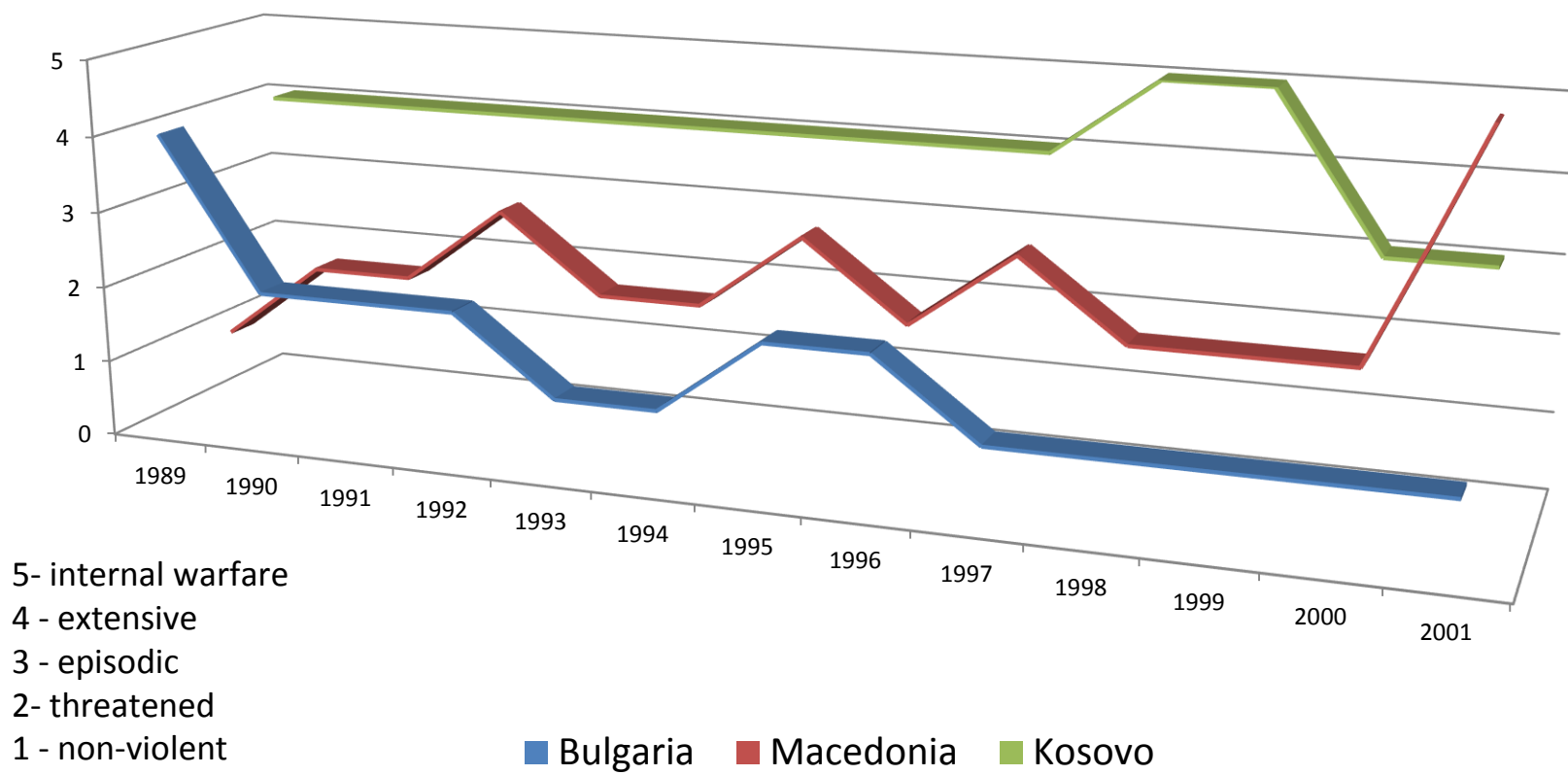
# The Book's Key Argument

- The levels and duration of ethnonational violence are rooted in conflict dynamics established between majorities, minorities, and international agents during a formative period at the end of communism.
- The dynamics of these disputes were initially based on specific contextualized links between these agents, and then became repeated by them and informally institutionalized over time.
- These contextualized links are *static* and resemble informal institutions that enable and constrain agents' behaviors.
- Exogenous shocks contributed primarily to the escalation of violence.
- Causal mechanisms such as “advantage of political incumbency,” “adaptive expectations,” “[negative] learning” and “drift” have sustained these dynamics, while “replacement” and “layering” have contributed to long-term change.

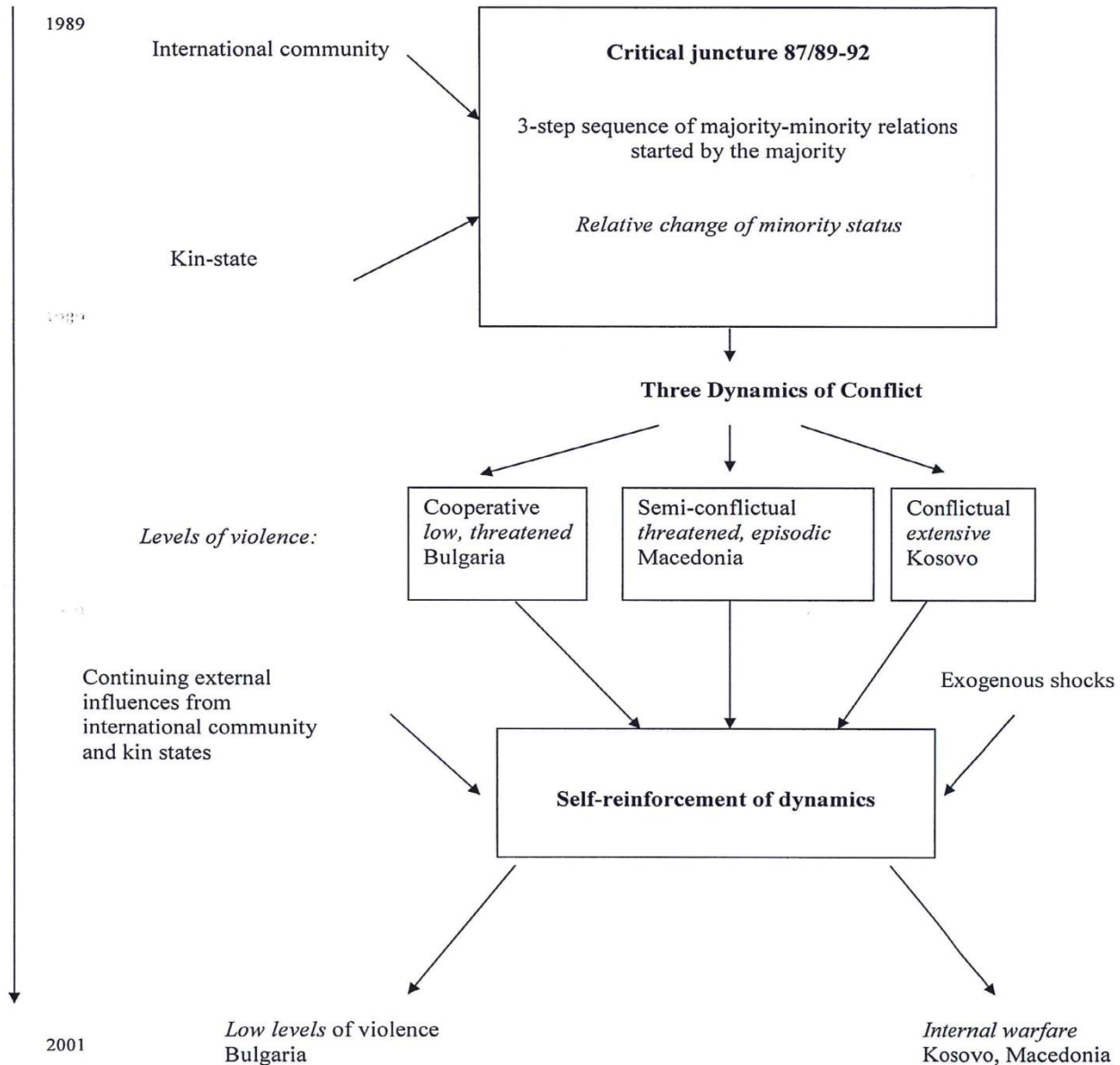
# Contributions

- Intellectual home in **conflict analysis**, but
- Applying **historical institutionalism** to derive better understanding of:
  - formative periods of conflict dynamics, and especially how international agents and kin-states participate in them
  - impact of exogenous shocks, and
  - causal mechanisms of continuity and change.
- 20-year comparative study
  - ruling out explanations at different stages of the process tracing
  - paying close attention to timing and sequencing
  - based on extensive fieldwork.

# Levels of Violence, 1989-2001

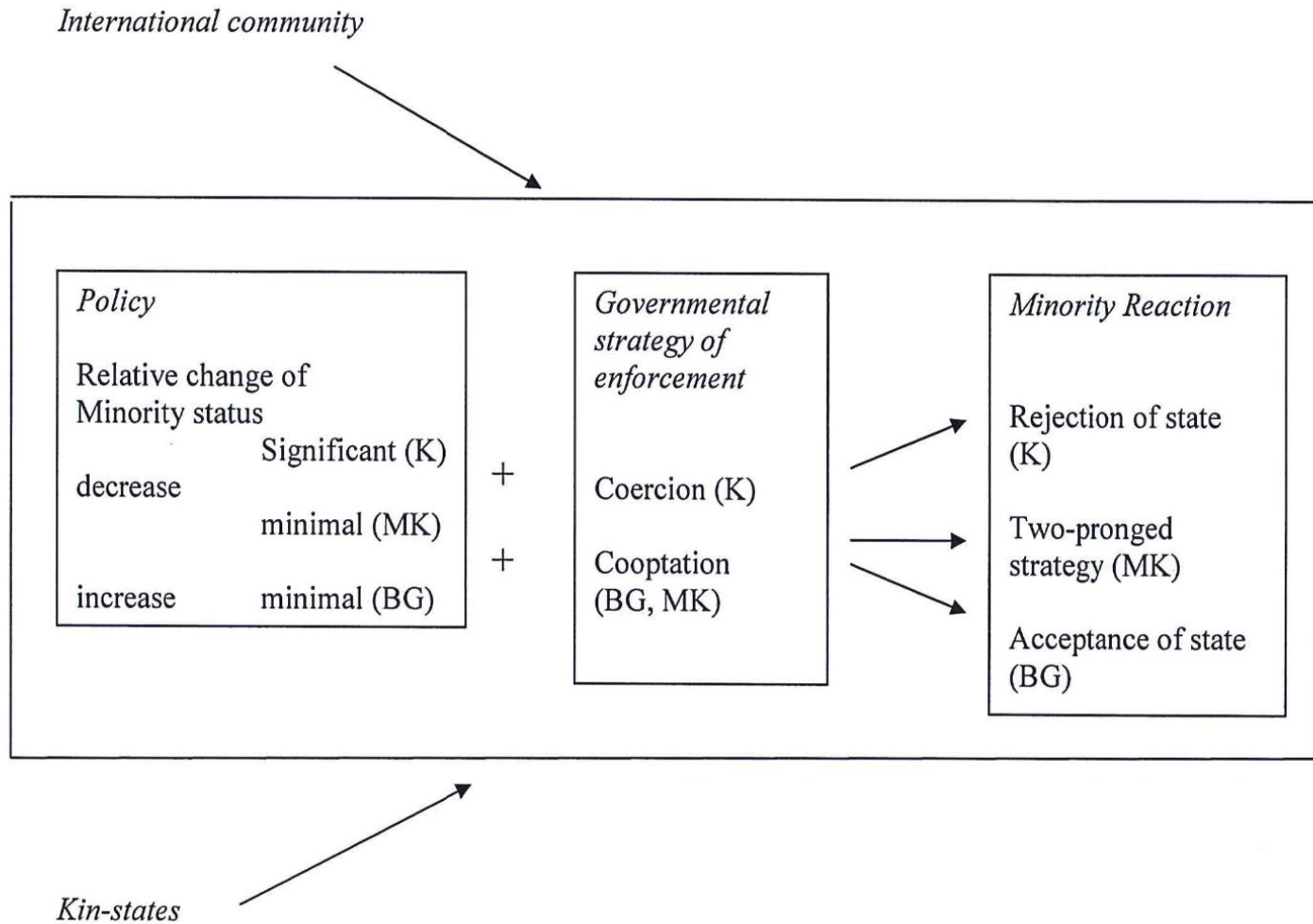


# The Argument in Brief

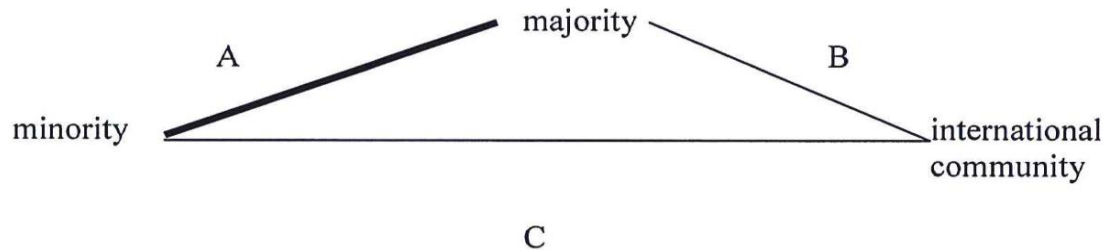




# The Formative Period (1989-2001)



# A Traingular Relationship



## The Structure of the Links

### BULGARIA

#### A – minority-majority:

- ✓ Minimal increase of minority status
- ✓ Cooptation
- ✓ Minority acceptance of the state

#### B – majority – international community:

- ✓ Non-redefinition of the state
- ✓ Prospects for EU integration

#### C – minority – international community

- ✓ Political participation
- ✓ Voicing of minority rights violations

### MACEDONIA

#### A – minority-majority:

- ✓ Minimal decrease of minority status
- ✓ Cooptation
- ✓ Two pronged strategy towards the state

#### B – majority – international community:

- ✓ Non-redefinition of the state
- ✓ Provision of security

#### C – minority – international community

- ✓ Political participation but no demands for becoming a constituent element of the state
- ✓ Voicing minority rights violations

### KOSOVO

#### A – minority-majority:

- ✓ Drastic decrease of status
- ✓ Coercion
- ✓ Minority rejection of the state

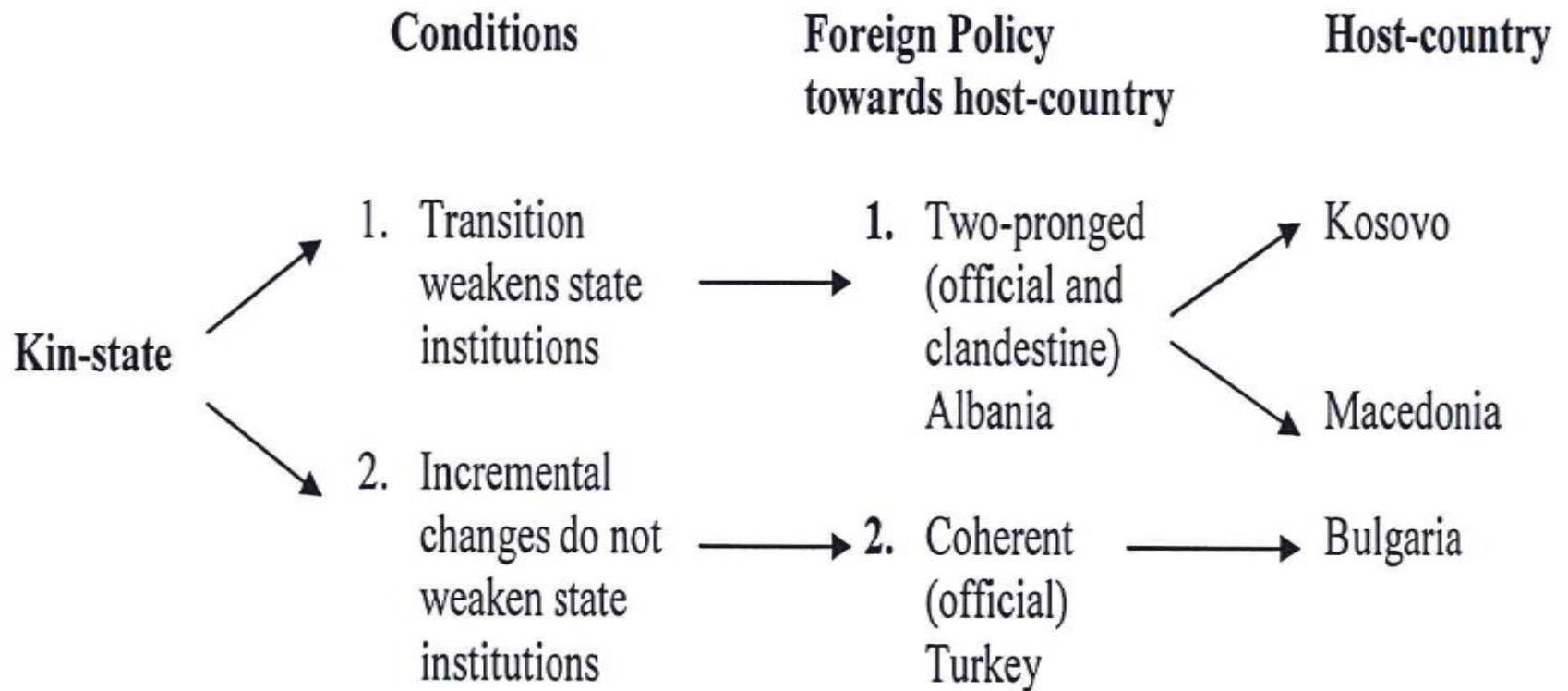
#### B – majority – international community:

- ✓ Non-redefinition of the state

#### C – minority – international community

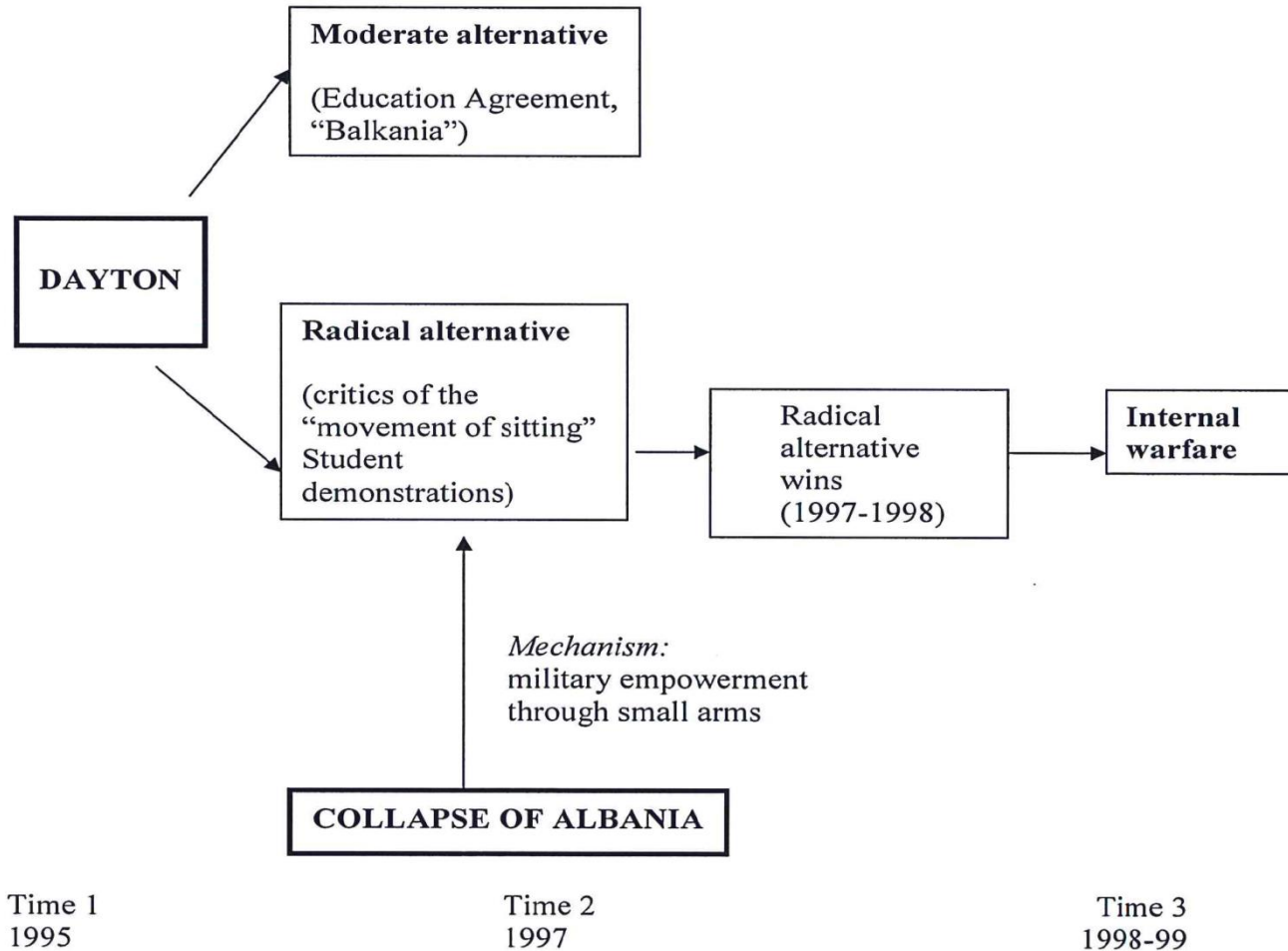
- ✓ no political participation, but non-violent strategy
- ✓ Voicing of minority rights violations

# Kin-states during the Formative Period

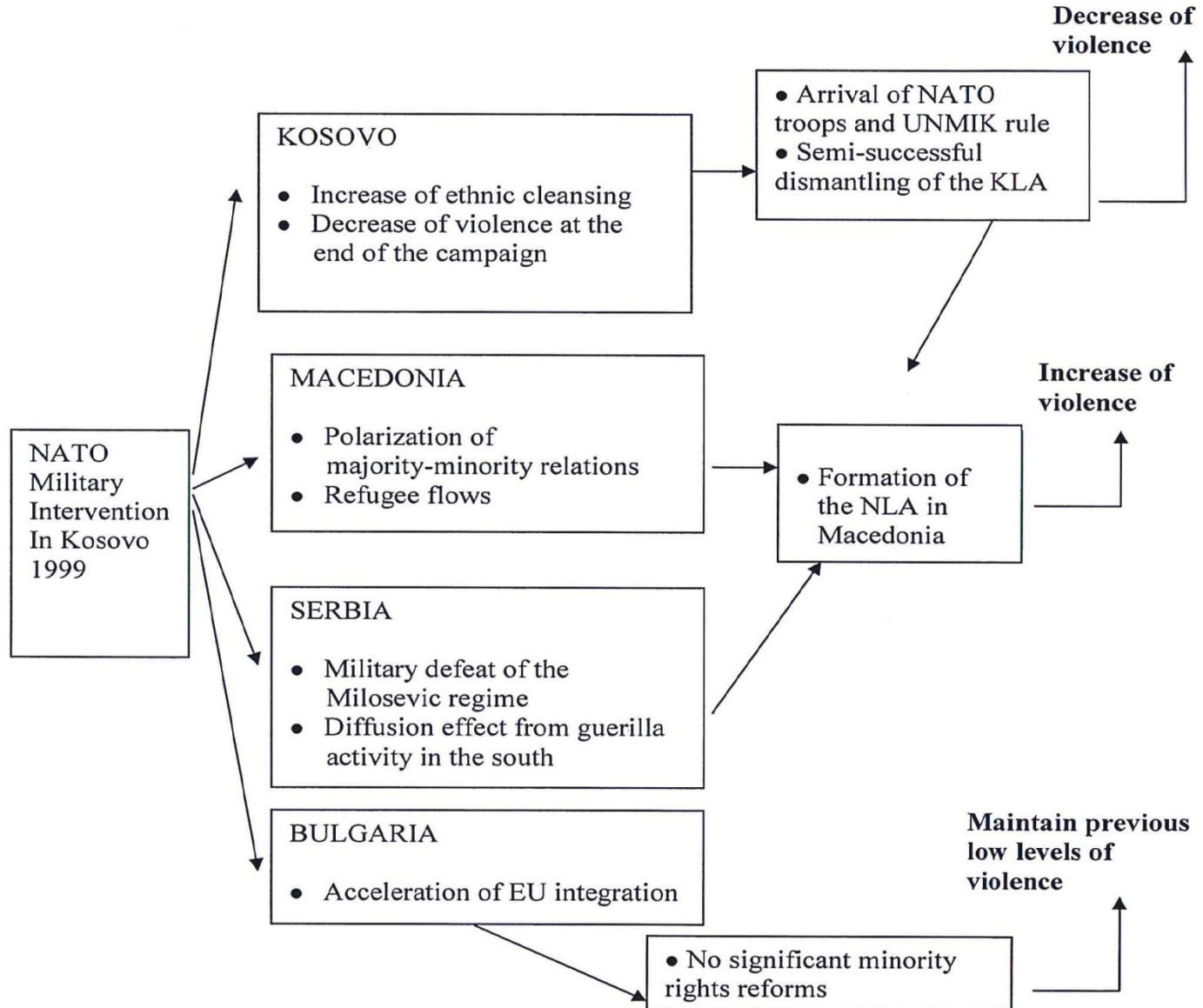


# Sequence of Exogenous Shocks

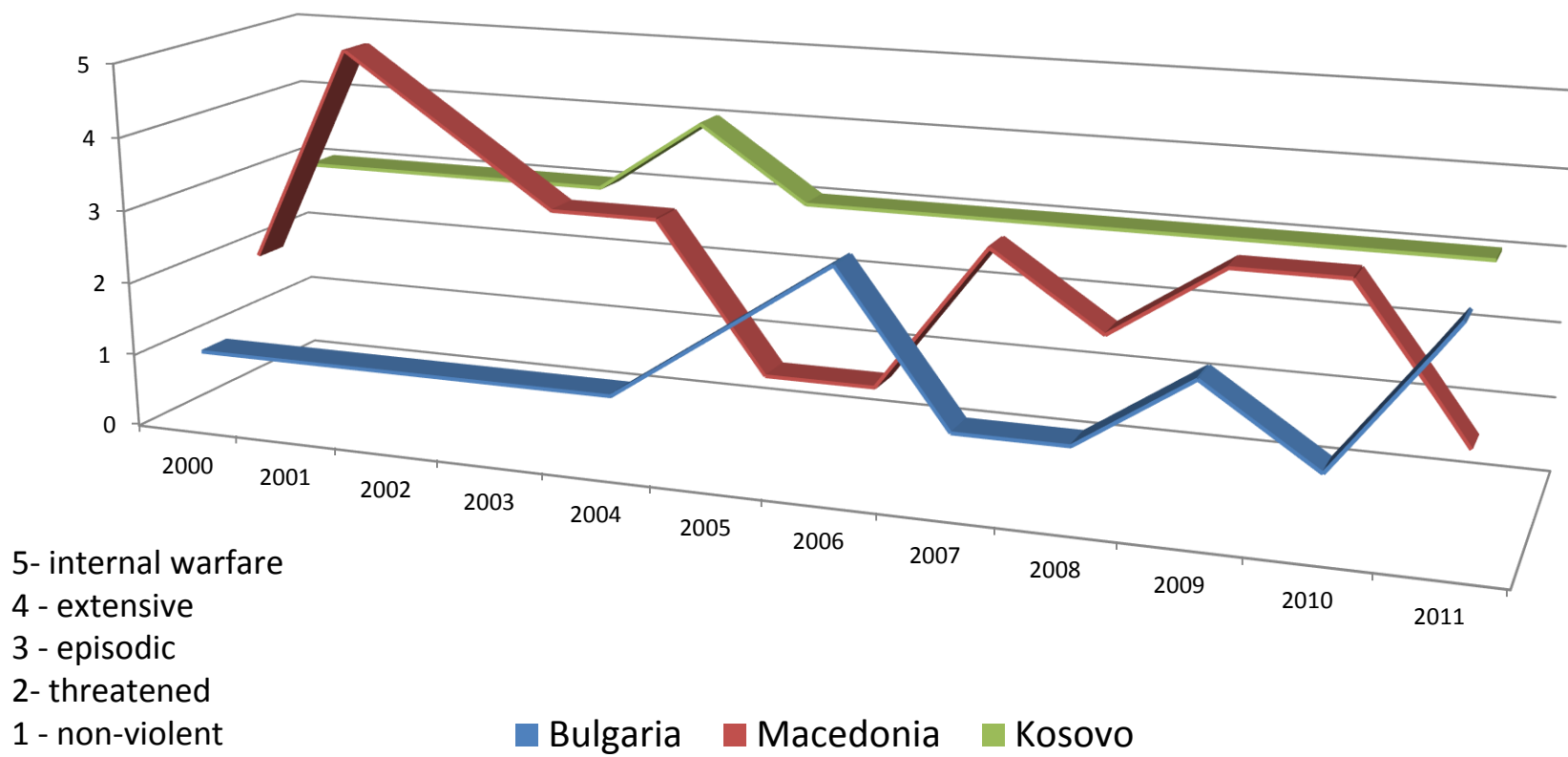
Dayton 1995, Collapse of Albania 1997



# NATO's 1999 Intervention



# Levels of Violence, 2000-2011



# Replacement

(Thelen and Mahoney 2010)



- In this account, replacement of informal rules before the formal ones:
  - Change in international agents' attitude towards a possible redefinition of the state (KOS and MK).
  - Change in long-term commitment to conflict-resolution and state-building (KOS and MK).
- Driven by both “insurrectionists” on the ground, but also by sequences of previous exogenous shocks.



# Layering

Puts “conditionality,” and “socialization” in perspective:

They do not necessarily change all political realities, but still contribute to the development of a set of new “rules of the game” to which local agents develop *practical attachments* while the old rules are still in place.



“Hardline nationalist” Todor Petrov of the World Macedonian Congress initiated the referendum proceedings

**Referendum on Decentralization, Macedonia 2004**



A torn anti-referendum poster in Struga



# Mechanisms of Conflict Perpetuation

- *Advantage of political incumbency*
  - mechanism of positive feedback, where groups able to consolidate early advantage achieve enduring superiority (Pierson 2000)
  - perpetuated through post-communist elites obstructing minority rights reforms.
  - contributed to the initial institutionalization of the conflict dynamics.





# *Adaptive Expectations*



- Self-reinforcement mechanism where an initial precedent of what is considered appropriate establishes the basis for future decisions (Mahoney 2000).
- Reinforce in interactions with one another the informal rules of appropriateness of behavior during the formative period.
- Rules based on the tripartite sequence (minority status increase/decrease, governmental co-optation/coercion, minority acceptance/rejection of the state), and the contextualized ways in which international agents and kin-states related to it.



# *[Negative] Learning*

- Learning creates effects of amplified reinforcement by assessing the impact of “prior experience with related policies.” Hall 1996.
- Usually associated with internalization of democratic values.
- Negative learning by repeated experience that the international community neglects human and minority rights in favor of stability concerns
- Thus, majorities and minorities learn to employ democratic rhetoric, but in essence to maintain exclusivist nationalist stances.

# “Drift” and a Reactive Sequence

- Drift designates the divergence from established rules by using the gap between rules and their minimal enforcement (M&T).
- The lack of serious enforcement of reformed institutional rules prompted the relationship between majorities, minorities, and international agents to consolidate in a realm of “normalization of corruption” to keep political stability intact.
- This triggered a reaction from majority political groups—usually outside the corrupt political order or having benefited little from it—to raise radical claims and contribute to conflict perpetuation.



# Relevance to Emerging Research Programs

- Formative periods, mechanisms of conflict perpetuation and change.
- Approach tested on conflicts in Romania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Georgia.
- Formative periods and the *Arab Spring* – joint role for domestic and international agents.
- Informally institutionalized conflict dynamics and scholarship on *legacies*.
- Expanding scholarship on *informal institutions* through the lens of conflict processes.
- Appeal to policy makers to consider durable *motivational structures* for behaviors, rather than institutions or actors' interests only.

# “Skopje 2014” is Real



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# Ethnonationalist Conflict in Postcommunist States

*Varieties of Governance  
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This book makes a significant contribution to the scholarship on ethnonational conflict. In a nicely written and richly conceptualized comparative study, Maria Koinova compellingly argues that periods of “critical juncture”—such as state collapse, new state formation, or major regime change—engender enduring patterns of ethnonational conflict. These patterns emerge through the interactions of majority and minority political actors and international agents that are active participants of the formative period. **Zsuzsa Csergő**, Queen's University

This is one of the most conceptually sophisticated and empirically rich studies of ethnic conflict. Koinova uses comparative case studies of Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbian policies toward Kosovo to explore the level and duration of violence among groups. Internal conflict dynamics are critical, especially interactions between ethnic majorities and minorities in the final days of communist rule. Sequencing is also important, making outcomes contingent and dependent on agency. Koinova's excellent book is an essential read for anyone interested in the Balkans, ethnic conflict and the study of politics more generally.

**Ned Lebow**, Dartmouth College and Kings College