



# **Decentralisation and the Management of Ethnic Conflict: Lessons from the Republic of Macedonia (Exeter Studies in Ethno Politics)**

*Aisling Lyon*

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Ethnic inequalities in divided societies can exacerbate social divisions and lead to conflict. Reducing these inequalities could have a de-escalating effect, yet there is little consensus on how this can be achieved most effectively and sustainably. Decentralisation is held to improve inter-ethnic relations in multi-ethnic states by allowing territorially concentrated groups greater autonomy over their own affairs, and the case of the Republic of Macedonia offers an example of the successes and failings of decentralisation.

Decentralisation and the Management of Ethnic Conflict offers new insight into the dynamics of conflict management through decentralisation, using an in-depth case study of decentralisation in the Republic of Macedonia between 2005 and 2012. Guided by the concept of horizontal inequalities, the volume identifies the factors which influenced the decision to devolve responsibilities to the municipalities after 2001. Taking an integrative approach to studying the political, administrative, and fiscal dimensions of decentralisation and its implementation, the book investigates whether these institutional reforms have indeed contributed to the reduction of inequalities between Macedonia's ethnic groups, and what the obstacles were in those areas in which decentralisation has not reached its full potential. The key lesson of the Macedonian case is that attempts to solve internal self-determination conflicts through decentralisation will fail if local self-governance exists only in form but not in substance.

This book contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the challenges facing different forms of decentralisation in the long term, and as such represents a significant contribution to Conflict Studies, Development Studies and Political Science more generally.

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