ESCALATION/DE-ESCALATION MODELS OF ETHNIC CONFLICT

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THEORETICAL DISCOURSE ON CONFLICT

The starting point of theoretical discourse on social conflicts, including ethnic ones, usually concerns their inevitability. This is because they form a specific class of social conflicts and as such are inherent – and crucial – for all social relations. A lot of notable works on the subject include such observation. 'Conflict, of course, is intrinsic to human society and is often an agent of reform, adaptation, and development. But conflict can also engender destructive violence', writes Richard H. Solomon.[1] Conflicts perform the role of both social destroyers and creators, says Johan Galtung, and stresses: 'Conflict generates energy. The problem is how to channel that energy constructively.'[2] Violent conflicts are social phenomena 'emerging through, and constitutive of, social practices which have, through time and across space, rendered war an institutional form that is largely seen as an inevitable and at time acceptable form of human conduct', points Vivienne Jabri.[3] And Stephen Ryan adds: 'Inter-ethnic conflicts are likely to be a continuing feature of politics

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[1] Solomon, Richard H. (2000) *'Foreword'*, (in:) Ted Robert Gurr. *Peoples versus states: minorities at risk in the new century*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, p. XII.

[2] Galtung, Johan. (1996) *Peace by peaceful means: peace and conflict, development and civilisation*. London: SAGE & PRIO, p. 70.

[3] Jabri, Vivienne. (1996) *Discourses on violence: conflict analysis reconsidered*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p. 3.

both within and between sovereign states.'[4] The struggle of ethnic groups for recognition is as old as processes of state-formation and nation building.

On the other hand, ethnic conflicts are often simply the cover for political, social or economic conflict. One can agree with the opinion that 'ethnic' conflicts are not necessary caused by 'ethnicity'. They occur when a country's 'social contract', that is, political and social arrangements equipped with some form of historical legitimacy, comes under internal or external pressure. In such circumstances – characteristic, for example, for the transformation period in countries' politics and economy – political leaders tend to mobilise their constituencies around ethnic, differences, stepping in classical struggle for power and wealth.[5] One can even hear the rather extreme statements that all social conflicts could be presented as ethnic while at the same time there is no such phenomenon as ethnic conflict at all. As has been noted: 'Ethnic conflict as such does not exist. What exists is social, political and economic conflict between groups of people who identify each other in ethnic terms.'[6] Or: 'Ethnic conflict refers to the form the conflict takes, not to its causes (…) Indeed most conflicts are only superficially ethnic and are stimulated by a combination of non-ethnic factors.'[7]

Thus, there is nothing strange in the fact that only a few authors have fully clarified what they understand by ethnicity in general and then by ethnic group and ethnic conflict. One of them is Ted Robert Gurr, for whom '"Ethnic groups" are people who share distinctive and enduring collective identity based on a belief in common descent and on shared experiences and cultural traits.'[8] Anthony D. Smith begins from a definition of an *ethnie* or 'ethnic community', that is, 'a named human population with a myth of common ancestry, shared memories, and cultural elements; a link with a historic territory or homeland; and a measure of solidarity'.[9] On that basis, one could call ethnic conflict a 'dispute about important political, economic, social, cultural, or territorial issues between two or more ethnic communities', as Michael E. Brown put it.[10] Still, both suggestions are difficult to put

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[4] Ryan, Stephen. (1995) *Ethnic conflict and international relations*, 2nd ed. Aldershot: Dartmouth, p. 237.

[5] Lipschutz, Ronnie and Beverly Crawford. (1995) '"Ethnic" conflict isn't'. *IGCC Policy Brief*, March, No. 02.

[6] Stavenhagen, Rodolfo. (1990) *The ethnic question: conflict, development and human rights*. Tokyo: UN University Press, p. 119.

[7] Carment, David and Patrick James. *Escalation of ethnic conflict: a survey and assessment*. On-line paper, available at <http://www.carleton.ca/~dcarment/papers/escalati.html>.

[8] Gurr, Ted Robert, *People versus states,* op.cit., p. 5.

[9] Smith, Anthony D. (1993) *'The ethnic sources of nationalism'*, (in:) ed by Michael E. Brown, *Ethnic conflict and international security*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, pp. 28–29 and *ff.*

[10] Brown, Michael E. (1993) *'Causes and implications of ethnic conflict'*. (in:) Michael E. Brown, op.cit., p. 5.

into practice. The first definition contains as many as six constitutive elements: a name that reflects the development of a collective identity; a belief in common ancestry that is more important than generic ties; shared historical memories passed from generation to generation; shared culture; a feeling of attachment to a specific piece of territory; and finally, a self-awareness of the group. In sum, those elements make the scope of the notion quite large, but this does not help in reaching its essence. The second definition is simply too trivial.

Another, important proposal – made by Rodolfo Stavenhagen – is to define an ethnic conflict 'as a protracted social and political confrontation between contenders who define themselves and each other in ethnic terms; that is, when criteria such as national origin, religion, race, language and other markers of cultural identity are used to distinguish the opposing parties.'[11] By this, he turns attention to the subjective, or psychological, dimension of conflicts that do not arise because people are different, but because special meaning is attached to these differences. At the top of the list of such differences one can find a past-oriented concept of the 'self', based on ancestry and origin. This is the everlasting division between 'us' and 'them', between fellow 'insiders' and 'outsiders' who are identical with enemies. Such a division, based on inclusion and exclusion, is often able to dominate all other structures of a given collectivity (community, society). Various groups that fabricate such a sense of collective belonging are especially vulnerable to both internal and external manipulation aimed at achieving political, economic or even personal goals. Thus, it is hardly strange that an understanding of identity creates a powerful social mechanism together with the 'ruler-state' oriented concept, based on approval for citizenship of a strong state institution, and the concept oriented towards different forms of ideology, that promise to ensure a 'better' future. If the ethnicity based self-identification in any collectivity is going to prevail, then we face even more tensions because of conflicts between loyalty to civic nationhood that can be obtained or sold off, and loyalty to the nationhood based on ethnic criteria, that cannot be changed.[12]

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[11] Stavenhagen, Rodolfo. (1996) *Ethnic conflicts and the nation-state*. London: Macmillan, New York: St.Martin's Press, p. 284.

[12] See also: Stavenhagen, Rodolfo. (1994) *Reflection on some theories of ethnic conflict*, "Journal of Ethno-Development", vol. 4, no. 1 (July); De Vos, George A. (1995) *Ethnic pluralism: conflict and accommodation. The role of ethnicity in social history*, (in:) ed. by Lola Romanucci-Ross and George A. De Vos, *Ethnic identity: creation, conflict and accommodation*, 3rd ed. Walnut Creek; London: AltaMira; ed. by Byrne, Sean and Cynthia L. Irvin, *Reconcilable differences: turning points in ethnopolitical conflict*. West Hartford: Kumarian Press.

[13] Carment, David and Patrick James, op.cit.

[14] See: Gurr, Ted Robert. (1993) *Minorities at risk: a global view at ethnopolitical conflicts*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press; Gurr, Ted Robert, *People versus states,* op.cit. Quotations from the latter, p. 5 and 65.

Going through academic literature, one can meet several attempts to explain the phenomena of ethnic conflicts in all their manifestations. Some of them are based on the very nature of the international system in which ethnic groups operate, pointing to the distribution of power and patterns of amity-enmity. Others stress the importance of the domestic milieu, paying attention to the performance of state institutions and the goals of ethnic policies. David Carment and Patrick James combined the analysis of domestic attributes, interactions between groups and international interactions. On that basis they came to the conclusion that nine basic attributes and processes could contribute to the violent escalation of ethnic conflict: power transition and rapid transformations in state institutions; domination of a single ethnic group in policy-making procedures; unjust distribution of resources; channels for articulation of minority interests are weak; the military is dominated by a single ethnic group; institutions specialised in the use of coercion exist; affective motivation and ethnic cleavages are present; demonstration effects flowing from neighbouring states; third-party support.[13]

Another kind of explanation focuses on the process of constructing stereotypes and their motivational role in determining relations between ethnic groups. In this context, a 'framework for explaining ethnopolitical violence' elaborated by Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff seems to be one of the most comprehensive efforts. Apart from the works mentioned below, it resulted in two extensive monographs built on the data related to almost 300 'ethnopolitical groups', that is 'identity groups whose ethnicity has political consequences, resulting either in differential treatment of group members or in political action on behalf of group interests', and 'ethnopolitical conflicts' understood as 'conflicts in which claims are made by national or minority group against the state or against other political actor'.[14] The initial framework consists of seven components, labelled by the authors 'concepts', which grasp the main variables responsible for the appearance, course, intensity and dynamics of ethnic conflicts.[15]

The first two concepts concern factors that contribute to ethnic mobilisation. One refers to the degree of discrimination, either economic or political, defined as 'the extent of socially derived inequalities in ethnic group members' material well-being or political access in comparison with other social groups', another is related to the strength of ethnic group identity consisted of 'shared traits, such as religion,

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[15] The description that follows is based on Gurr, Ted Robert and Barbara Harff. (1994) *A framework for analysis of ethnopolitical mobilisation and conflict*, (in:) *Ethnic conflict in world politics*. Boulder; Oxford: Westview Press, pp. 77–95. See also: Gurr, Ted Robert. (1993) *Why minorities rebel: a global analysis of communal mobilisation and conflict since 1945*, "International Political Science Review," vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 161–201; Lindstrom, Ronny and Will H. Moore. (1995) *Deprived, rational, or both? "Why minorities rebel" revisited*, "Journal of Political and Military Sociology", vol. 23, pp. 167–190.

culture, common history, place of residence, and race, the greater the strength of identity.' The next three concepts are about factors that trigger political action by ethnic groups and determine the kind of action (type of violence). So the third concept is linked with a degree of ethnopolitical leadership and group cohesion. The fourth concept concerns the type of political environment, that is, types of regimes with which ethnopolitical groups may come in conflict. They are: institutionalised democracies, autocracies, and socialist and populist states. Consequently, the fifth concept covers the severity of force used by governments against ethnic groups. The last two concepts encompass external factors that contribute to ethnic conflict. One of them is the extent of external support, including 'the entire range of active and passive support an ethnic group can receive from outside the country'. The next factor is related to international economic role since: 'Resource-rich states are likely to enjoy higher status than resource-poor states and are more likely to deal with ethnic challengers as they wish.'

So, by studying the successive indicators for each variable and looking for patterns of relationships between the variables, one is able to frame an explanation of particular real-life events. The next step then should be to formulate generalisations, make predictions and create a basis for practical action – in other words, to build a theory of ethnic conflict. Logically, two ways of building such a theory are possible: from the 'bottom' and from the 'top'.

The first way is constituted by the *inductive* approach. In the most general terms, in consists in gathering empirical data, ordering them and looking for recurrent patterns. In the simplest form, one can enumerate a set of specific factors, chosen according to certain criteria. This is, for example, how the following list of 'the characteristic signs of impending violence' was generated: 'the increase in repressive measures by states against distinct ethnic minorities or against ethnic dissidents', 'the failure of democratic mechanisms for negotiation or power-sharing between ethnic political actors', 'the emergence of essential ethnic ideologies and tightly knot ethnic political "vanguards,"' 'the rise in racist and xenophobic postures among the population, increasing economic and political disparities between ethnic groups, and legal arrangements designated to favour one ethnic group and exclude other'.[16]

Some researches stressed, however, that inductive theories and models of ethnic conflict they generate, as well as predictions and practical prescriptions stemming from them, are burden with serious weaknesses. First – and quite surprisingly – they do not provide the full, rigorous description of events they analyse since they 'do not establish a *causual* link between the variables included and the social outcome they seek to explain'. Second, they are not able to explain *how* deprivation and discontent of an ethnic group lead to strife.[17] Thus, their ability to deal with under-

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[16] Stavenhagen, Rodolfo, *Ethnic conflict,* op.cit., p. 12.

standing of the whole process of ethnic conflict dynamics is limited. Aspirations to overcome these limitations are linked to another possible way of building an ethnic conflict theory, that is, the *deductive*. In this case, the task is to review wide range of existing social and political theories in order to locate relevant components and insights and than incorporate them into a coherent system that describes and explains all stages and linkages of phenomena under consideration.

The theoretical model of ethnic conflict based on deductive approach mirrors several initial assumptions. They could be systemised as follows:[18]

1. Collective human behaviour is rational

In all their social action, people are guided by the same mechanism. On the ground of the information they possess, they attempt to achieve the goal, which has the higher priority according to their system of values. All three elements can be discovered and analysed, thus their behaviour can be understood and predicted or at least anticipated.

2. Ethnicity is a constructed social phenomenon

Although ethnicity is related to distinguishing cultural or physical characteristics such as language, religious beliefs, traditional behaviour, occupations etc., or regional differentiation, nevertheless it is socially constructed. Ethnic identity appears and strengthens under certain social and political conditions and is continually re-created through a multitude of socialisation processes. The content of identity undergoes changes simultaneously to modifications in the social and political environment.

3. Conflicts have a general, common structure

Characteristic of particular conflicts is not unique, neither overwhelmingly culture-bond; some of the fundamental features of all ethnic conflicts occur in every case. They appear for certain reasons which are traceable, evolve through different stages that can be distinguished, and result in recurrent consequences that are possible to identify. Specific instances of conflict are, but a manifestation of the longer-term processes.

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[17] Tellis, Ashley J., Thomas S. Szayna and James A. Winnefeld. (1997) *Anticipating ethnic conflict*. Santa Monica and Washington: RAND, Arroyo Center, p. 4.

[18] *Cf.*: Bloomfield, Lincoln P. and Allen Moulton. (1997) *Managing international conflict: from theory to policy*. New York: St. Martin Press, pp. 106-111; Tellis, Ashley J., Thomas S. Szayna and James A. Winnefeld, op.cit., pp. 5-8; Gurr, Ted Robert, *People versus states,* op.cit., pp. 3-5, 224-227 and other.

4. Each stage of conflict development is influenced by several factors

Ethnic conflict cannot be captured by single reason-result model; quite contrary, development of models capable of grasping multiply causation is necessary. There are complex patterns of factors responsible for conflict dynamics, embedded in social and political structures. Under certain conditions, structural violence evolves into direct violence. Some of the factors mentioned above lead toward violence; others contribute to peaceful solutions.

5. Patterns of factors can be changed by deliberated action

Despite their deep historical roots, complicated social connections and complex political conditions, ethnic conflicts remain susceptible to intentional action. Such action must be deliberated in a double sense. It should be based on verifiable knowledge of goals, which are possible to achieve and means that can be implemented, and should take into account the whole complexity of conflict, among other things, position of all sides engaged.

The five assumptions indicated above should be supplemented by one more that reflects the principal goal of the present exercise, that is, an attempt to formulate the basics for the concept of *advanced conflict prevention*:

6. Building of a theory of conflict helps to introduce advanced conflict prevention

Theoretical knowledge of how ethnic conflicts emerge and develop allows for a change of time perspective and the enlargement of a repertoire of available means. The fundamental goal in dealing with conflict can then be, first, to move from the management of existing conflicts to prevention of their occurrence and escalation. Second, to move from traditional prevention to advanced prevention, that is, from minimisation of violence to maximisation of peaceful ethnic relations.

In sum, the above mentioned assumptions allow for sensible and heuristically useful construction of ethnic conflict models that are capable to grasp their dynamics and complexity.

DYNAMICS OF ETHNIC CONFLICT

Among the most complex models of conflict escalation and de-escalation, at least three deserve special attention. One of them has been elaborated within the framework of a project developed by Lincoln P. Bloomfield and Allen Moulton at the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology, US, under the acronym: CASCON (Computer Aided System for Analysis of Con-

flict). The authors of PIOOM project – the Interdisciplinary Research on Root Causes of Human Rights Violations project hosted by the Centre for Study of Social Conflict at the Leiden University, Holland – have built a second interesting model, covering certain types of domestic conflicts. The third model, aimed at investigating the rise of an ethnic group challenging the state, has resulted from the research conducted in the Strategy and Doctrine Program of RAND's Arroyo Center (federally funded research and development centre sponsored by the United States Army).

CASCON inductive model of analysis seems to be comprehensive and matured; moreover it is successively updated.[19] It covers many more types of conflicts than only ethnic or even inter-state, but is nevertheless very instructive since, as proved elsewhere,[20] factors that facilitate the violent escalation of international crises are to a large extent consistent with conditions associated with ethnic conflicts.

The CASCON methodology consists of the following steps. First, a list of *cases*, that is, conflicts that are to be analysed, is compiled. Next, another list, namely list of *factors*, comprised of relevant events and conditions, which are generalised for comparability reasons, is prepared. Finally, every factor is coded, which means that a specific value is ascribed to it. Then various comparisons, a search for regularities and generalisations and several statistical operations are possible.

The original CASCON database contains 85 cases (conflicts) that can be grouped by geographical location, conflict type (interstate, primarily internal, intervention, colonial); the issue disputed (ethnic, governance, independence, resources, strategic, territory); and the highest level of intensity reached during its duration. All of these cases can be examined from the point of view of the significance of 571 factors identified by authors as relevant in conflict analysis. They are classified in 10 categories: previous or general relations between two main sides of the conflict; great power or allied involvement; general external relations; role of international organisations; ethnic; military-strategic; economic/resources; internal politics of the sides; communication and information; and actions in the disputed area. Each factor is coded according to the following scale: much, some or little influence towards the use of military force; little, some, or much influence away from use of force; no influence in either direction but present in the case; false or not present in the case; and no information available.

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[19] The discussion that follows is based on the authors' presentation of CASCON (in:) Bloomfield, Lincoln P. and Allen Moulton, op.cit., pp. 98–147. Supplementary information and updates are available from the CASCON homepage: <http://web.mit.edu/cascon/>.

[20] Carment, David and Patrick James, op.cit.

After several rounds of exercises with CASCON and on the basis of information gathered from other sources, I would reduce the main factors leading towards peaceful resolution of conflict in the following way:

1. Sides agree to participate in negotiation.

Experience shows that negotiation means overcoming powerful political as well as psychological barriers. Moreover, the number of possible negotiation forums is still growing due to international institutionalisation processes and so-called track two or multi-track diplomacy.

2. Sides have open and accessible means of communication.

If communication is not managed effectively, and information is not exchange in a transparent manner, prejudices, misunderstandings and false expectations usually dominate on both sides. It should be noted that this factor concerns both political constituencies and political leaders responsible for mobilisation – or not – of their supporters.

3. The (so-called) world opinion is able to exert its influence.

This seems to be a factor of growing importance inside the framework of global civil society that sometimes is even able to mobilise against various forms of violence and bring about foreign intervention.

4. The domestic opposition plays mitigating role.

The role of domestic opposition is growing in parallel to the world democratisation processes and dissemination of ideas of human rights, even if in the short term democratisation implies more incentives and opportunities for domestic strife.

CASCON also makes it possible to pursue an analysis that focuses on ethnic conflicts only. Ideally, such analyses will lead to the identification of factors pushing away from or towards the use of force. However, limited and rather out-dated database in this field makes this look doubtful. On the one hand, the significance of economic factors and external intervention could be discovered. For example, the fact that a status-quo side is dependent on external economic aid could assist efforts to diminish violence. On the other hand, the role of particular factors often changes and the same factor can push towards violence in some cases and away from it in other cases. In my opinion, an enlargement of the database (recently a new case have been added, namely: 'Kosovo 1989-'[21]) and a rethinking of the analytical model – in order to include the post-Cold War ethnic conflict in East-

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[21] See <http://web.mit.edu/cascon/cases/case_kos.html>.

Central Europe and elsewhere – could help to refine those findings. The point is not only that more cases must be taken into account but also that more factors should probably be introduced, especially those related to structural violence.

The CASCON model of conflict dynamics is based on the principal CASCON criterion, that is, the use of military force and comprises all types of conflict. It is called: 'Dynamic phase conflict model'. The first phase is labelled 'dispute' and consists of quarrels about an issue, with no military aspects. A quarrel separates the sides, but force is not considered. The second phase, labelled 'conflict' (in the narrow sense of the word), concerns the situation when military options develop. Military preparations or deployments take place but there are no hostilities. One or both sides are preparing for, or threaten that they will use military force. The third phase, 'hostilities', is about organised armed conflict – fighting involving organised units. The fourth phase, 'post-hostilities', occurs when conflict remains and the threat of military action continues. The fifth phase, also labelled 'post-hostilities', takes place when conflict disappears and only disputes remains unsettled. Finally there is a 'settlement', when dispute is ended.[22]

A sophisticated scheme has been developed inside the framework of the PIOOM project. Looking for statistical indicators of conflict escalation and mitigation, the authors of the project first prepared a matrix consisting of four collective types: indicators of general and specific conditions pushing towards escalation and de-escalation of conflict. Next they distinguished as many as 15 areas where such indicators could be found, labelling them 'situations': social and demographic, political, legal, media, religious/ideological, minority, labour, internal economic, external economic, external security, internal security and military, migration, human rights, victimisation, environmental and resource. Finally, employing a survey of the existing literature, they identify almost 400 particular indicators.[23]

The PIOOM model is constituted by 'a five (ideally) stage model of conflict escalation'. Its scope has been narrowed to two general types of domestic conflicts: conflicts about the control of the state, and conflicts about the control of portions of the territory of a state or about social institutions along religious, ethnic, and/or linguistic lines as well as inter-group violence between segments of society. It also has five stages. The first, labelled 'stable peaceful situation', is characterised by a high degree of political stability and regime legitimacy. The second stage is labelled 'political tension situation' and concerns growing levels of systemic strain and increasing social and political cleavages, often along factional lines. Stage number

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[22] The description of phases in CASCON model is taken from Bloomfield, Lincoln P. and Allen Moulton, op.cit., pp. 99–102.

[23] See: Schmid, A. P. (1996) *PIOOM masterlist of potential and 'good prospect' domestic conflict (de) escalation indicators*. Leiden: PIOOM (September).

three is about 'serious political conflict' and signifies the erosion of the political legitimacy of the national government and/or rising acceptance of factional politics. Stage four is 'low intensity conflict' – open hostility and armed conflict among factional groups, and regime repression and insurgency. Finally, the sequential model reaches stage five: 'high intensity conflict', with massacres or open warfare among rival groups and/or mass destruction and displacement of the civilian population. The PIOOM's model also contains two thresholds: 'political crisis' and 'humanitarian crisis'. The former results from 'destabilising strains in the political system that enhance the risk of transition from rule-based conventional politics to destructive (proto-violent) politics'. The latter is an effect of 'further deterioration of the political system that increases the risk of a transition to politico-military struggle which also deeply affects the lives of large sectors of the civilian population'.[24]

The theoretical model developed at the Arroyo Center differs significantly from the previous ones. Contrary to them, it is based on a deductive approach: 'the project sought to draw on existing scholarly knowledge about the evolution of communitarian and ethnic conflict'. Its authors want to picture 'the social processes and dynamics that lead to ethnic and communitarian conflict and state breakdown' and find the answer to two fundamental questions, related to conflict dynamics: 'Under what conditions are ethnic groups likely to take up violence against the state in order to accomplish their goals? When are they more likely to favour the peaceful pursuit of group aims?'[25] To this end a three-stage model is elaborated, pointing first to conditions that may lead to formation of an ethnic group, second to mobilisation of a given group for political action, and third to its possible competition with the state.

Up to now, the reasoning sounds extremely interesting. The weaknesses of inductive approach were mentioned earlier. Turning attention to intrastate conflicts is fully justifiable; after all, most wars during last 50 years have had internal character and about ¾ armed conflict casualties were civilians.[26] The questions authors ask concern both escalation of conflict and triggering the de-escalation mechanism. Unfortunately, the analysis that follows the starting point mentioned above seems to mix up ontological and epistemological aspects of conflict dynamics.[27] Describ-

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[24] The description of stages and thresholds in PIOOM's model is taken from Schmid, A. P. (1996) *Monitoring conflict escalation,* (in:) *Prevention and management of conflicts: an international directory*. Amsterdam: Dutch Centre for Conflict Prevention, pp. 30–33.

[25] Tellis, Ashley J., Thomas S. Szayna and James A. Winnefeld, op.cit., p. 3.

[26] Renner, Michael. (1999) *Ending violent conflict*, Worldwatch Institute: *Worldwatch Paper* 146 (April), p. 17.

[27] The model is presented in Tellis, Ashley J., Thomas S. Szayna and James A. Winnefeld, op.cit., pp. 9–19 and discussed in details on pp. 59–118.

ing the first stage – the potential for strife – the authors pay most of their attention to the ways of assessing it rather than to its essence. First, they introduce the concept of 'closures' used in the Weberian sense as processes of 'subordination whereby one group monopolises advantages by *closing off* opportunities to another group'.[28] Such processes can occur in the political arena that relates to governance, administrative control and command over the means of coercion, in the economic arena that concerns production of wealth and distribution of resources, and in the social arena that consists of all matters connected with effective claims on social esteem. Second, the authors call for assessing closures in each of the three arenas from the point of view of the existing distribution of power, wealth and status, and from the point of view of gaining access to these goods. As a result, one is able to assess whether potential for ethnic strife exists or not.

Transformation of potential strife into likely one – the second stage – takes place when some 'catalytic elements' come into being. Tellis, Szayna and Winnefeld than focus on ontological aspects and indicate five such elements: (1) incipients changes in the balance of power, that is, 'recognised alterations in the power relations and closures in a given society; (2) tipping events, that is, 'specific events that, under certain conditions, galvanise a group into political action,' (3) identity entrepreneurs, that is, 'individuals who, for self-interested reasons (…) find it profitable to contribute to creating a group identity and bear the costs of mobilising that group for political action,' (4) financial resources and competent organisation, that supplement leadership; and finally (5) the possibility of foreign assistance.[29] Variations in intensity and relations among these factors have an impact on the possibility of an ethnic strife and their mutual reinforcement and correlation can lead to the next stage – transformation from likely to actual strife.

Then the authors of that model stress that whether strife actually results from the interaction between two competing sides depends on the bargaining process between them, and they assume that one side is constituted by the challenging group and another – by the state which is challenged (which, of course, is the simplest case). But saying this, they rather move to epistemology again, since they formulate the next set of guidance instead of characteristics of the real mechanisms. Namely, they postulate to examine two crucial domains that shape the bargaining process. They have in mind, first, the components of state power: (1) the state's *accommodative* capacity – determined by 'the nature of the institutional structure, the prevailing norms of governance, and the cohesion of ruling elites,' (2) the state's fiscal capacity – that 'pertains to the issue of how a state can ameliorate the demands

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[28] As above, p. 78 (my emphasis). The original quotation comes from Murphy, Raymond. (1988) *Social closure: the theory of monopolisation and exclusion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 8.

[29] As above, quotations from p. 12 and 13.

of mobilised groups short of using force,' (3) the state's coercive capacity – that is, its 'ability to conclusively attempt suppression of political mobilisation by force'. Second, they want to take into account the capacity of mobilised group: (1) *accommodation* – 'its ability to be accommodative vis-à-vis the state,' (2) sustainment – 'its ability to sustain political campaigning for redress of its grievances,' and (3) cohesion – 'its ability to maintain the cohesiveness of its emerging group identity'. When the capacities of mobilised group meet the characteristic of state power, the possible results are: negotiation, exploitation, surrender, intimidation by the group or repression by the state. The last two outcomes lead to violence.[30]

One more project – and one more model – should be taken into account in order to supplement the picture. I have in mind the 'Minority at Risk' project conducted at the Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, US, since 1988 and headed by Robert Ted Gurr, and the risk model based on the theory of ethnopolitical conflict, as presented in Gurr's most recent book.[31] Although rather not intended as escalation/de-escalation model, his theoretical framework for understanding the causes of ethnopolitical conflict and anticipating the risk factors for ethnopolitical rebellion provides with coherent theory that indicates two decisive thresholds of conflict dynamics. The first one is constituted by circumstances in which political mobilisation of ethnic (ethnonational) group occurs; the second is linked to factors that trigger their actions.

When identifying factors responsible for conflict dynamics, Gurr makes the following general observations.[32]

1. The greater the salience of ethnocultural identity for a group, the easier is for leaders to mobilise its members for collective actions

The salience itself depends on the extent to which given group differs culturally from other groups, its relative advantage or disadvantage over other groups, and the intensity of their conflicts with rivals.

2. The greater the shared incentives among members of the group, the more likely is their participation in ethnopolitical action

The incentives, by turn, are shaped by the extent of the group's material, political and cultural disadvantage, the historical loss of political autonomy, and the extent to which force has been use against it.

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[30] As above, quotations from pp. 14–15 and 17.

[31] See chapter 3, *The etiology of ethnopolitical conflict*, chapter 7, *Assessing risk of future ethnic wars* and Appendix B. *The analytic basis of risk assessment* (in:) Gurr, Ted Robert, *People versus states,* op.cit., pp. 65–95, 223–260 and 295–309. Minorities at Risk project has its own web page at <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/ /cidcm/mar>.

[32] See Gurr, Ted Robert, *People versus states,* op.cit., pp. 65–92.

3. The greater the cohesion and mobilisation of a group, the more frequent and sustained is its participation in political action

Four factors contribute to this feature: geographic concentration of the group, its prior organisation, its formation of coalitions, and the authenticity of its leaders.

4. The greater scope of opportunities and choices a group has, the more complex are the ways in which identity, incentives and capacity are translated into ethnopolitical actions.

Among the state context of ethnopolitical action one can find the use of state power, and the advancement of transition to democracy and its institutionalisation. The international context of ethnopolitical action is shaped by extent of foreign support and effects of diffusion of conflict from nearby regions.

By default, the factors mentioned above are examined rather from conflict escalation point of view. As the author label it, ethnopolitical groups can pursue their interest using strategies of 'conventional politics', such as electoral politics, lobbying, or control of local government, or using strategies of 'unconventional politics', that is 'protest' and 'rebellion'.[33] But the whole reasoning could be reverted in order to look for causes of withdrawing from spectacular measures and return by the group to every-day politics.

ADVANCED CONFLICT PREVENTION AS DE-ESCALATION OF CONFLICT

So far I have cited the projects related to quite large domains of possible social conflicts, starting from conflicts of mainly international character and gradually approaching discussions that focus on clearly intra-state conflicts. This is not strange, since ethnic conflict does not constitute a unique phenomenon, quite contrary – as some authors say – it is 'closely related to other forms of conflict' and can be studied in a meaningful way with common theoretical tools.[34] However, the scope of the model of conflict dynamics has to be narrowed further if one wants to work effectively with ethnic conflict and switch to advanced conflict prevention. Also, a qualitative definition of levels of conflict escalation/de-escalation is neces-

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[33] As above, p. 28-30.
[34] Ed. by Lake, David A. and Donald Rotchild (1998) *The international spread of ethnic conflict: fear, diffusion, and escalation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 343–344.

sary to avoid rather scholastic debate on how many deaths counts for an 'armed incident' and how many for a 'war' (and how to separate the figures from population data of a given group or country), when 'ethnic' mobilisation becomes 'political' struggle, what does it mean 'protracted' conflict, 'root' sources etc.

In my opinion,[35] three levels of conflict escalation/de-escalation are of crucial importance for ethnic conflict dynamics – without discussing at the moment whether they are 'stages', 'thresholds', 'phases' or maybe 'turning points'. They can be summarised in the shape of the following ideal scheme: ethnic peace[36] – politicisation – securitisation (which is presented here still as a working proposal and of course needs further elaboration and support by systematic empirical research.

Level 1. Ethnic peace.

The natural, inherent differences between various ethnic groups are successfully accommodated rather than suffering a policy of exclusion, domination or assimilation. It means that the differences (contradictions, disputes) are recognised as something real but not perceived as a threat to an identity of any group. They are neither mixed with other kinds of differences (political, economic) nor exploited to cover them. Each ethnic group has a freedom to define its identity vis-à-vis another but not at the expense of it. There is no problem with cultural autonomy for a given group or its institution; in particular, a minority language can be admitted as an official one within state bodies and educational institutions can be established whenever desired.

Not only the multi-cultural framework works but also necessary channels to express ethnic groups' needs, interests and aspirations are open. Elites that identify themselves with various groups ensure that no moves pushing into escalation are made ('negative' aspects of peace in Galtunian sense) but work on creation of conditions that eliminate all premises for such moves ('positive' aspects) as well. Every group enjoys access to the political institutions it wishes and democratic processes are not interfered, neither lead to stipulation of ethnic conflicts.

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[35] The main lines of reasoning are based on my earlier work: Kostecki, Wojciech. (1999) *Ethnicity and autonomy in East-Central Europe: in search of advanced conflict prevention*. University of Cambridge: Global Security Fellows Initiative, Occasional Paper No. 14.

[36] On the concept of 'ethnic peace', 'democratic ethnic peace' etc. see Aklaev, Airat R. (1999) *Democratization and ethnic peace: patterns of ethnopolitical crisis management in post-Soviet settings*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 9–100.

Level 2. Politicisation

An issue has arisen that is not successfully accommodated but becomes part of public policy, which requires a high-level decision, and allocation of resources. Ethnic groups are mobilised around competing goals and their perception of inequality becomes a triggering factor for open conflict. There is a large social space for various forms of political organisation and the creation of political leaders. The sense of loyalty among members of the minority usually pushes them to demand territorial autonomy.

Politicisation itself does not necessary mean that next step will lead to violence or coercive solutions. On the contrary, politicisation can be a requirement for gaining enough public support to keep developments inside given group under control as well as deter hostile action against it. Whether or not the conflict escalation stops in this point depends on group's goals – are they restrained or immoderate, and characteristics of the environment – on absence or not of well-established and positively valued democratic procedures, signals and impulses stemming from abroad, attitudes of international organisations etc.

Level 3. Securitisation

The disputed issue is presented as creating an existential threat to a given ethnic group – that is, to the non-negotiable components of its identity, and therefore justifying the implementation of extraordinary measures to handle it. There are calls for emergency procedures, special support and priorities in the face of other, non-existential threats. Moreover, external involvement, fuelling the tension, becomes likely.

The ultimate result of the securitisation of ethnic conflict is usually one: direct violence. Its intensity and duration depends on the historically accumulated 'conflict energy', that is, recurrent patterns of enmity, durability of prejudices and stereotypes, etc., and willingness of the sides engaged in conflict to bear the costs of struggle. The spill-over effect can provoke more sides to enter the conflict, so its containment and moderation becomes more and more difficult.

Now, another crucial point is that the usual way of working on conflict prevention consists on looking for factors, which *stimulate conflict* in order to eliminate them. In such an understanding, to prevent a conflict means to *minimise* its violent manifestations and refers to *late* phases of its development. One could indicate here various political and diplomatic as well as economic instruments, self-restriction measures enforced by fear of retaliation, participation of outside peace-keeping forces that prevent escalation, or restriction from movement towards extremes caused by identification of some spheres common interests of the parties involved. However, all these measures and strategies seem to be rather costly and rarely lead

to real elimination of conflict potential; one could say that in fact they often only 'freeze' the conflict and not solve it.

What I propose – and call *advanced conflict prevention* – is to look at the problem another way around, that is, to identify main factors that *facilitate peaceful relations* between various ethnic groups and to compile a list of feasible measures aimed at promoting them. Inside such an approach, to apply advanced conflict prevention means to *maximise* peaceful arrangements that exclude the outbreak of violence and refers to the *early* phases of conflict development. In its ideal form, advanced conflict prevention aims at the elimination not only of the most visible, direct (physical) violence but so-called structural violence, that is, violence embedded into the social/political system, as well.

Consequently, advanced conflict prevention aims at elimination not only of, as it was said, the 'unbelievable brutality' of some ethnic conflicts but attempts to remove what was described as: 'A pattern of social discrimination involving little or no violence may be the most important manifestation of ethnic conflict'.[37] Besides – and what is most important – this approach could contribute to another fundamental issue that reads: 'why is it that in some societies existing cultural differences are not perceived as important and not actualised in dramatic forms, whereas in others they represent basic identities and are seen to lie at the core of human and political interactions?'[38]

As far as the politicisation-securitisation conflict model is concerned, the role for advanced conflict prevention is to achieve de-securitisation and then de-politicisation of ethnic conflict. *De-securitisation* consists in moving an issue down the above escalation scale, so that no special powers or portentous efforts are required. Instead, it is presented as a non-survival concern that can be dealt with within everyday politics and as a matter of choice. *De-politicisation*, in turn, means moving the issue off the political agenda and coping with it by administrative procedures. The competition between ethnic groups is channelled into open cultural expression and ethnic diversities remain recognised.

In both instances, the assumption is that mutual recognition of existing differences will lead to specific action aimed at preventing ethnic mobilisation and demands for unilateral concessions. Such action is based on the exertion of influence on all parties engaged in possible conflict to adjust their positions one to the other without exposing the survival of somebody's identity to risk.

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[37] Both quotations from: Forbes, H. D. (1997) *Ethnic conflict: Commerce, culture, and the contact hypothesis*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, p. 14.
[38] Tishkov, Valery. (1997) *Ethnicity, nationalism and conflict in and after the Soviet Union: the mind aflame*. London: SAGE, PRIO & UNRISD, p. 296.

Drawing from the East-Central European transformation experience one could formulate a 'Decalogue' of undertakings advanced conflict prevention should consists of. Five of them belong to the realm of domestic strategies. These are: democratisation, marketisation, privatisation, civil society building, and a change in mentalities. *Democratisation* means getting rid of remnants of totalitarianism and building parliamentary democracy and the rule of law. *Marketisation* consists in the replacement of the centralised planned economy by free market mechanisms. *Privatisation* involves the transition from public (that is, in fact, state) to private property. The *building of a civil society* is a movement from the 'state as an instrument in the hands of the ruling class' (as the old Marxist axiom says) to a society based on human rights, ethical considerations and identification with common interests. And to *make changes in mentalities* attempts to replace passive and self-centred attitudes by sharing responsibility and tolerance towards dissimilarity.

Another five strategies have international character. Two of them are far-reaching and based on long-term vision. One strategy consists in encouraging and facilitating *democracy building* and stems from the assumption that western-type, liberal and permissive democracies are effective in preventing internal conflicts – including ethnic one. This strategy derives from the so-called 'grand' structural approach. Another strategy, *resource allocation*, refers to the other 'grand' strategy for addressing ethnic differences, namely, the distributive approach, based on the thesis that economic well-being results in the sense of security among ethnic groups and reduces their motivation for conflict. Two other strategies serve as a kind of functional supplement. The first welcomes *anticipatory adaptation* to Western requirements from East-Central European states; the second sets a kind of *international subsidiarity* principle by demanding that these states settle their problems between themselves. Finally, the fifth strategy is *operational* and goal-oriented; it covers issues of preventive diplomacy, fact-finding and early warning arrangements.

In sum, advanced conflict prevention envisages:

1. Keeping ethnic conflict potential on the lowest possible level but at the same time having in mind that an attempt must not be made to create or reconstitute monolithic national identity.
2. Implementing preventive measures early enough so that no enforcement action is necessary; instead, processes of mutual adaptation to differences are stimulated and carefully maintained.
3. Working on mechanisms that change threat perception of possible adversaries, exclude possible hopes for foreign consent for conflict escalation, and thus limit their choice of means to non-violent and 'low-level' activities.

Among the question, which remain, one is whether and to what extent advanced conflict prevention requires prior agreement between competing parties and if

necessary, how to arrive at that agreement? Or another way around, is it possible to identify and put in motion areas of common interest and benefits without bringing the parties to the negotiation table first? Even more urgent question could be: how – in practical terms – to create the consensus and political willingness to undertake preventive action even if its rationality is not in doubt? But another question is answered. If, as it is often said, the most difficult aspect of preventing violence is 'knowing what methods to apply, with what actors, and when', then at least the last issue *when* is clear: the sooner the better.