Ethnic Conflict as a Social Phenomenon - Reasons and Anatomy of Conflict

Stevan Aleksoski[a], Dejan Marolov[b*]

[a,b] Professor, "Goce Delchev" University - Shtip, Republic of Macedonia,

Faculty of Law

[b] Email: dejan.marolov@ugd.edu.mk

Abstract

The world today is characterized by multi-ethnic states: 82% of all independent countries in the world have two or more ethnic groups in their national composition. Most notably, the hallmark of the countries from Eastern and Southeastern Europe is their ethnic and cultural heterogeneity. Complex historical processes that took place in the past in these regions created states with ethnic diversity in their national structure. These processes resulted in intense inter-ethnic mixing.

Keywords: ethnic conflict; reasons; multi -ethnic

1. Introduction

While many people were hoping that the last years of the XX and the early years of the XXI century would be celebrated as years when finally the long awaited dream of peace and prosperity and of the United Europe would be achieved, now it seems that those years will be remembered as years of dramatic, often brutal disintegration and fragmentation of many countries in the world.

Today throughout the world there is a real epidemic of armed civil, religious and international conflicts spurred by strong currents of aggressive ethnic nationalism and religious fanaticism - which are often thought of as only "internal conflicts", but, unfortunately, they quickly expand beyond the frontiers of nation states.

The international community has only begun to understand the potential seriousness of these various conflicts.

Conflicts are constant contents of societies and social existence at different levels. As a phenomenon representing destructive behavior and including violence, a conflict is defined as "a dynamic phenomenon, manifest conflicting process consisting of stages of initiation, escalation, controlled maintenance, appeasement and resolution."

Theorists of conflict stress the importance of both "chronic conflict" and "deep-rooted conflicts", which is passed from generation to generation as it penetrates the psychological needs of personal identity and security, of group belonging and of (self) respect.

World scientific circles are preoccupied with trying to explain the phenomenon of ethnic conflicts and new forms of inter-ethnic relations, which have become a potential threat to democracy and world peace. The United Nations (UNCHR, 2002), believe that "ethnic" conflicts are the dominant form of antagonisms, contrarieties and unrest in the XX century.

Ethnic and cultural conflicts are becoming part of the socio-political system which, when you break out, lead to violence and destruction of the system.

There are terminology dilemmas on how to characterize the new forms of conflicts around the world: as "internal conflicts" (Brown 1996), "new wars" (Kaldor and Vashee 1997), "small wars" (Harding 1994), "civil wars" (King 1997), "ethnic conflicts" (Stavenhagen 1996), "wars in postcolonial states "(Van de Gooret 1996), "deep-rooted conflict" (Barton J.), "intractable conflict" (Kriesberg), "protracted social conflict", (Azar), etc.

There are a variety of widely accepted reasons that explain the appearance and revival of ethnic conflicts and ethnic nationalism. While strong ethnic ideologies tend to deceive us with the myth that European countries are ethnically homogeneous, studies reveal that there are many politically mobilized ethnic groups that cause a series of threats to the stability of the countries they live in. The discrepancy between the widespread theoretical acceptance of the right to self-determination and the equally widespread practice of states that refuse to tolerate their own fragmentation are the main reason for the revival of ethnic nationalism and ethnic conflicts.

Additional factors affecting the appearance of ethno-political mobilization, also include the wave of democratization that swept through Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the alienation from the impersonal bureaucratic and centralized states, and giving greater importance to one-national political parties and movements. The improvement in mass communication also allowed states to more effectively enforce the dominant national cultures and symbols in the private lives of the members of minority ethnic groups.

In our opinion, the awakening of ethnic nationalism or ethnic conflict can be seen as an attempt to maintain or to re-create a sense of identity and community under threat of cultural assimilation or destruction, but also as an attempt to achieve ethnic, minority aspirations for broader independence or autonomy. There is no single cause of ethnic conflict, nor is there a single prerequisite for maintaining inter-ethnic peace. So it is clear that the very process of creating nations at the same time creates national minorities.

Peripheral ethnic groups which are defined as national minorities in a politicized climate, characteristic of the formation of nation-states, reject the legitimacy of the state because it is dominated by an alien group. Nationalism, equating the allegiance to the state with belonging to the nation, by definition transforms the members of national minorities into the enemies of the state. These national minorities themselves are also potential nations and often separatist movements they engage in, which often leads to the creation of smaller and new nations - countries. Nationalism causes counter -nationalism, therefore it is considered that nations - states in themselves contain the seeds of their own destruction. This is the dilemma national movements are faced with. To protect their unique culture and history, they must create nation - states exactly modeled on those they fought against. However, in doing that, they "lay the foundations for internal erosion" of these cultures they seek to protect.

2. Materials and methods

This paper use qualitative methods and descriptive research.

3. Ethnic conflicts

Deeper understanding of ethnic conflicts depends on the understanding of many aspects of ethnic relations and ethnic interactions between ethnic groups. In the context of finding the causes of ethnic conflicts, social sciences are still far from getting closer to explanations. They move towards the estimates that the reasons are multiple, interdependent and variable. Social sciences provide numerous insights and research data that explain the phenomenon of ethno-political mobilization and development of ethnic conflicts. Scientific explanations of armed conflicts regarding community go in the direction of emphasizing the mutual connection between economic conditions, or lingering economic and political inequality, human rights violations, etc.

An important factor in the consideration and explanation of ethnic conflicts is the answer to the question: how different actors-ethnic groups or states understand and see territory?

For ethnic groups territory is an important part of group identification and ethnic identity. The control over a certain territory, for a state and for one ethnic group, means a secured identity. For a state, the control over a territory is directly related to its physical survival (territorial sovereignty and integrity are fundamental values of the state and its unity). When two ethnic groups or two countries feel they have the right to control the same territory or part of the territory of a state as a guarantee for their survival, then a conflict occurs as a result of the conflict of interest.

Ethnic groups show greater interest in the control of the territory they are geographically and historically linked with and where they are concentrated in a considerable number than in the territory where they are dispersed or scarce. The control over territory is the crucial factor for the survival and stability for both the ethnic group and the state. The birthplace (homeland) is a specific category of territory, which lies at the foundation of the identity of an ethnic group. It is not an object that can be changed, but an inseparable attribute of group identity.

This shows why the members of an ethnic group are willing to sacrifice in order to establish control over the territory they consider their birthplace/native soil: because it represents the opportunity to use their language, cultural expression and religious practice. It is this intimate relationship with the territory considered one's homeland and the identity component of territoriality that differs ethnic groups from the state.

When a certain ethnic group concludes that it controls a certain part of a territory of a country and believes in the legitimacy of that right, this creates a situation where the demands of that ethnic group beyond the frames of basic demands and take the form of special demands. The control over a certain territory and the likelihood that it will lead to specific ethnic demands depend on the physical distribution of the ethnic group and its members on the territory of the state in question.

Two principles lie at the core of the legitimacy of an ethnic group's demand for territorial autonomy: birthplace or residence and majority rule.

According to the first principle, members of an ethnic group consider that the right of control over a territory that they consider their native soil derives from historical continuity and their commitment to it. The control over this territory is vital to the ethnic group, because this affects how economic and political resources are distributed, how many foreigners can immigrate to that territory, which language will be used, how it will be financed, etc.

As an example of the dilemma in relation to these two principles we will take the territory of Kosovo. Both Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo sought to control the territory of this province, citing the historical importance of the territory in the creation of their national identity. Both Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo have the legitimate right to this, however, Albanians have something that Serbs do not have, and that is the majority.

The principle of majority rule is simple: if one ethnic group represents fifty percent or more of the population in a region, it can govern. Like the principle of legitimacy, the rule about the majority is also important for three reasons. First, it is one of the important democratic principles. This implies that if democracy is seen as being legitimate, then all the demands based on the majority status must also be perceived as legitimate. Second, majority is quantitative and easily recognizable. Third, the majority rule often enables ethno-political mobilization and solidarity in solving persistent collective problems, i.e. the majority principle allows ethno political collective action, including violent methods in promoting and publicizing their interests.

4. Anatomy of conflict

There are two types of goals conflict: goals focused on success and goals focused on conflict

"Goals directed towards success" are the only ones in which "the persistent party will achieve certain growth in its power, military security, economic well-being, ideological support, or will punish its enemy."

"Goal directed towards conflict" represents the place where "the persistent party" will achieve a defined higher level of national dynamism, national honor, position, influence of some internal group on some other group, or

achieve an increased number of jobs, or will achieve an increase in the national profile - all of this as a result of involvement in a conflict and, virtually, regardless of its outcome.

No one starts a war without being clear, foremost, "what objective should be achieved with the help of the conflict and the way in which it will be implemented." When we consider the genesis of the conflict and its anatomy, we have to take into consideration the environment in which the conflict/dispute emerges.

4.1 There are six stages of conflict:

1. *Conflict is a part of the "dispute".* Such disputes go through a series of stages. Within each stage there are forces which, in turn, will direct the dispute towards its resolution, or in the direction of the "occurrence of hostilities." In order for any dispute to exist, it is necessary that there are two sides. This means that there is a dispute when the goals of the two groups are not compatible. This stage is known as the stage of denial.

2. "Stage before the onset of hostilities" begins when one of the "parties" in the dispute decides on military option, or when it brings in that option. The second stage is the one in which the use of armed force becomes potentially possible or, at the very least, "reasonably expected." This may include a sign of strength, movement or paramilitary formation, increased levels of readiness, partial mobilization, etc.

3. *When goals become "more strongly fixed"* and the possibility of compromise is reduced, the conflict can pass into the third stage, "beginning of hostilities." This can happen deliberately or accidentally. During the hostilities an armed conflict occurs because of achieving military objectives, and there is a possibility of intensifying that effort. Many analysts would call "intensification" the "escalation of the means employed" or the "escalation of the ways in which those means are used."

4. Once you the hostilities are finished, for any reason, the conflict is moving into the fourth stage, i.e. the "*stage after the end of hostilities.*" During this stage the conflict may continue, but the fight is at least temporarily suspended. At this stage at least one of the parties in the dispute still determines it by using military terminology. If the "altercation" cannot be directed towards some form of a "peaceful solution", then it is possible for it to return to the stage of hostilities. However, once the use of military assets stops, the conflict ends. But the dispute may still remain. The conflict ceases when the dispute is no longer determined in military terms, real or potential.

5. The fifth stage is the "*stage of denial*". In fact, the military option is rejected, but there are still unresolved issues in the dispute - they may or may not be the initial issues - in this case, the conflict is over, but this is not the case with the dispute itself. Of course, what for one side is the solution to the other may represents a dispute. If the parties manage to resolve the issue, or, if they stop taking care of this issue, then the dispute is resolved.

6. *The solution as the sixth and final stage* - historically seen, it is achieved in a small number of conflicts. Usually the dispute cycles go back to the beginning of the process. The seed of the next conflict is often sown in the current conflict. This is especially true in cases when there is no clear vision in terms of the stage of hostilities.

There are six main ways in which disputes/conflicts can be finished. The conflict part of a dispute can finish with a "truce" or "ceasefire". The second kind of "end of conflict" is the conclusion of "a formal peace treaty." In some cases, such treaties are meant to indicate the source of the initial dispute. Formal peace treaties, as a result of the time needed to negotiate to their conclusion, nowadays have ceased to be "means for ending conflicts." However, they are means to end disputes or, at least, means for managing disputes.

The third mechanism for ending a conflict but also for ending a dispute is "a common political agreement." This form of agreement usually stimulates the way in which a conflict will be ended, and can indicate the way in which peace will be preserved. When the existence of a country is in danger, a fourth way is the conflict to be ended by a unilateral announcement of victory by the winner. The fifth way of ending a conflict is "capitulation". World War II might have ended with capitulation, but it was then followed by a series of agreements. The last form of ending a conflict is a situation where one party withdraws from active participation in the conflict.

4.2 Crisis management

The Alliance's Strategic Concept of 2010 enacted a comprehensive approach to crisis management thus providing NATO's involvement in all stages of the crisis and the opportunities for using different ways of solving the crisis which depend on the nature, extent and severity of the crisis itself. Sometimes the resolution of crises takes place through diplomatic ways, and sometimes more rigorous measures are required, such as military operations. Article 4 of the Washington Treaty provides that: "The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened."

The Resolution of the Security Council of the UN 1510, NATO expands its presence in Afghanistan by creating PRT - Provincial Reconstruction Teams, i.e. Provincial teams for reconstruction. These teams are international teams having the task to extend the authority of the central government and to establish a safer environment for carrying out the reconstruction. Civilian and military personnel were members of these teams [1].

The most important NATO's mission until today is the mission in Afghanistan, which was established with the mandate of the UN in 2001 and was led by NATO in August 2003, as ISAF - International Security Assistance Force. The mission consists of about 50,000 troops from 48 different countries deployed throughout Afghanistan. The primary task of this mission is the spread of power of the Afghan government in order to create an environment conducive to the functioning and the development of democratic institutions and to the establishment of the rule of law.

The ISAF mission in Afghanistan is planned to finish by the end of 2014 with the gradual transition of security responsibilities onto the Afghan national security forces and the police. However, after this period the mission will continue with training and counseling as well as with support of combat operations of Afghan forces.

The NATO Alliance entered the territory of Kosovo in 1999 after the bombing of Yugoslavia in order to end the humanitarian crisis and to preserve peace and security. Today in Kosovo there are about 5,000 Allied soldiers

working as part of KFOR NATO forces. Since 2008, when Kosovo declared its independence, the Alliance decided to continue its presence there based on resolution 1244 and to assist in the creation of professional and multiethnic Kosovo Security Forces [2].

However, the military intervention of NATO over Yugoslavia in 1999 under the name "Operation Allied Force" is one of those military interventions that are considered illegitimate. There was no agreement by the UN Security Council for the implementation of this operation, and the bombing was carried out under the guise of humanitarian intervention.

After the attacks on the United States on 11.9.2001 year by NATO a series of measures were taken to counter the modern international terrorism. In October 2001 the Operation Active Endeavour was launched, which directed its focus to detect and deter terrorist activity in the Mediterranean.

The forces of "Partnership for Peace" including a Russian battle-cruiser, some members of the program "Mediterranean Dialogue", and of the "Istanbul Cooperation Initiative" took part in this action [3].

Weapons of mass destruction are also one of the priorities to the Alliance and this is connected with terrorists and terrorist organizations. The existence of the opportunity to purchase and use this kind of weapons by terrorist organizations is a real threat. Therefore NATO plans to control access to such weapons and their spread, and the development of the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea is considered the greatest security threat.

With the development of the Internet and modern technology cybercrime has become a real threat to the modern world. Cooperation of NATO with its partners has significantly improved thanks to new technologies and the Internet, but the threat of possible terrorist attacks on these technologies and communication systems has also emerged.

At the end of this paper we must also mention, in its context, the conflict of Russian "separatists" and Ukrainian armed forces in Ukraine, which led to the secession of the Crimea and other parts of Ukraine where there is a majority of Russian population as one of the challenges for NATO, current for 2014, for which the Alliance as well as the leaders of its member states, foremost the heads of the US and UK showed great interest. The fighting in Ukraine in both countries resulted in numerous military and civilian casualties, devastation of schools and homes, destruction of aircrafts etc. We must say here that this is not just about an ethnic conflict, but it is a delicate state of confrontation of interests and influences. Whether and how to involve NATO in solving this problem is an issue that deserves great attention. Ukraine is in front of Russia's gates, and the possible entry of the Alliance in this country is a kind of provocation to Russia which is considered the eternal opponent of NATO. The only loser in this battle of major powers is the Ukrainian people that would take decades to recover from this mutual fratricidal war [4,5,6,7].

5. Conclusion

Coping with crisis situations is one of the goals of the UN and NATO that has experience, capabilities, skills and practice in dealing with different types of crisis situations in different parts of the world.

Crisis management in certain volatile regions is commonly referred to as peacekeeping operations, but there are other types of operations that have specific goals and mandates. Whether NATO will be involved in the resolution of a crisis is decided on a case by case basis. This means that the decisions, as well as other decisions of the Alliance, are made by consensus among the member states, but often with the consent of the UN as well.

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