

## **Basic Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Ethnic Conflict**

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**Abstract.** This article is devoted to one of the most actual problem of modern time — ethnic conflict. At the present time, a lot of definitions of ethnic conflict, its' typology and causes are suggested. Different approaches to studying represent a problem for researchers because it's not clear what criteria the study should be based on. The purpose of scientific research is to reveal the types and reasons of ethnic conflicts and to define the main factors causing them. The methodological base of the research is formed by works of domestic and foreign authors who review the problem of conflict in social interaction. The statements and conclusions of the article can be the basis for diagnostics and prediction of ethnic conflicts.

**METHODS-** analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization.

Ethnic conflicts often occur in a multinational state. Knowledge of their types and the main provoking factors will allow to make a forecast and take appropriate measures aimed at their prevention in the future. Conflicts do not disappear by regulating them, but the use of certain forms helps to mitigate their consequences, reduce the degree of intensity and violence.

### **1. Introduction**

The main feature of our time is a significant increase in conflicts between states that belong to different civilizations. According to S. Huntington, the most large-scale, important and dangerous conflicts won't occur between social classes, poor and rich, but between peoples of different cultural identities.

Culture is a force that simultaneously unites, but also causes discord in the world of the Cold War. People who have different ideologies and feel cultural kinship will unite. Societies that are united by ideology, but separated culturally, will fall apart. Countries that are culturally similar will cooperate economically and politically.

Thus, the nature of relations between countries is determined both by the community of interests, and the difference of cultural background. Important countries of the world belong to different civilizations. Therefore, there is a danger of large-scale wars between groups and states that have different cultural traditions [Huntington, 2017].

However, despite the scientific interest in the problem of conflict, there is currently no single, universally accepted definition of "conflict."

Philosophers usually perceive conflict as the clash of opposing social groups, individuals, institutions, interests, attitudes, aspirations; discord, disagreement, strife, controversy that threaten grave social consequences [Kondrashov, 2005].

The issue of conflict has received considerable critical attention in Psychology. Psychologists study conflict as an actualized contradiction, a clash of oppositely directed interests, goals, positions, opi-

nions, views of subjects of interaction or opponents, and even conflicts of opponents themselves [Meshcheryakov, 2002].

Sociologists consider conflict as a struggle between social classes or groups; the fight of opinions, ideas; ambivalence of feelings, the opposite of motives, impulses [Kravchenko, 2004].

After analyzing these definitions, we can draw the following conclusions. All these sciences recognize the fact that the conflict is based on competing interests, but the object of studying the conflict is different. So sociologists consider the contradictions between groups and social classes. Psychologists study conflict at the interpersonal level because their focus is on the views, opinions, and positions of the participants in the interaction. Philosophy explores conflict at the level of not only groups, individuals, but also social institutions.

## **2. Problem statement**

For the first time the ancient Greek philosophers Anaximander and Heraclitus began to study the nature of social conflicts.

In the Middle Ages Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) wrote about wars. He supposed that the existence of war was in the interests of the state. [Gromova, 2000].

Conflicts existed in the Renaissance and the well-known humanists Rotterdam and Bacon argued against social conflicts calling for tolerance and compromise [Rotterdam, 1995], [Bacon 1998].

There are three stages of the study of conflict in the history of Western sociology. The first stage began in the second half of the nineteenth century and was named as Social Darwinism. The supporters of that research direction were C. Darwin, L. Humplovich, W. Sumner, G. Spencer, A. Wallace, and others. Social Darwinists described human society based on the laws of nature [Gromov, 1996].

The second stage - the first half of the 20th century was characterized by emergence of various theoretical problems - on the nature of the conflict (the functional theory of conflict of Simmel), structural functionalism of Parsons. Tasks were set in studies of that period including the choice of effective methods for resolving conflict situations that inevitably occurred in organizations, and in production [Simmel, 1994], [Ritzer, 2002].

In the second half of the XX century the theory of the positive-functional conflict of Coser and the conflict model of the society of Dahrendorf were presented. Some stages, conditions and factors of the conflict, methods of its regulation were proposed for the first time [Coser, 2000], [Dahrendorf, 1994].

The whole history of the development of Conflictology can be divided into three periods in Russia. The first period began in 1924. During that period the first conflict studies were formed on the basis of such sciences of the humanities, as well as knowledge about the conflict, which were reflected in art, religion and the media.

The second period (1924-1992) was characterized by the study of conflict within a framework of such disciplines as law and sociology.

The third period - 1992 and to the present Conflictology differed from other sciences. In spite of the fact that it became an independent science, it was related to other interdisciplinary fields of knowledge. During that period a general theory of conflict was developed on the basis of the system approach [Antsupov, Baklanovsky, 2016].

Sociological aspects of the study of conflict were very often considered in the field of inter-ethnic relations. These problems were researched by Deiko (2013), Dugin (2011), Gurieva (2012), Khazanov (2015), Luchsheva (2015), Shnirelman (2012), Tishkov (2012), Zdravomyslov (1995), and others.

Modern conflict researchers study mainly ethnic conflicts. So, Desrosiers and Vucetik analyzed causal - effect relations of conflicts, and they believed that they were still little studied in conflict resolution, and therefore it was very difficult to identify all causes of conflicts [Desrosiers, Vucetic, 2018].

The problems of migrants from Yugoslavia, their integration and conflicts with the local community were discussed in the work of Hall. The scientist tried to answer the question how ethnic conflicts

affected the opinion of people who saw refugees, and whether they supported the ideology of the conflict after the devastating effects of the war [Hall, 2018].

Having conducted a study, Chinese scientists came to the conclusion that a large number of mosques and other religious institutions were a deterrent factor to ethnic conflicts. A higher level of inter-ethnic inequality and an increase in ethnic violence was most in evidence only in areas with low and medium number of mosques [Xun Cao, Haiyan Duan, Chuyu Liu, Yingjie Wei, 2018].

An article of Thiesson, Darweish was devoted to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Many of the representatives of the Israel-Palestine community rejected and publicly criticized contact interventions such as dialogue with citizens, and organized meetings between Palestinians and Israelis [Thiesson, Darweish, 2018].

A group of researchers headed by Bauer made an attempt to answer the question why the behavior of the masses was easily changed from cooperation to aggression. They experimentally examined whether ethnic hostility was contagious. Using motivated tasks, they measured their willingness to sacrifice their own resources in order to harm members of other ethnic groups.

Representatives of an ethnic group behaved destructively if the harm was done to representatives of their own ethnic group. Scientists have concluded that ethnic conflicts could quickly spread even in societies with minor signs of ethnic hatred [Bauer, Cahlikova, Chytilov, Zelinsky, 2018].

It should be noted that the problem of conflict occupies a huge place in modern domestic and foreign science. However, difficulties arise when trying to choose a unified theory for the analysis of conflicts, since a different approach, a typology and classification of conflicts is necessary for different research objectives. Today much of the research concerns the issue of ethnic conflicts, but only a few of them answer the question why some ethnic conflicts can last for years and decades, and it is very difficult to eliminate them.

### **3. Urgency of research**

Urgency of the research is due to the following reasons. Our country - the Russian Federation is distinguished by its national and religious diversity. Therefore, there are a number of conflicting factors in society.

The multicultural composition of the population has been formed for many centuries, and is currently changing significantly due to the intensive migration process, so the migration factor can give rise to a growth in the ethnic identity of the indigenous population and lead to ethnic conflicts. Many regions of the country vary considerably in terms of socio-economic indicators and the standard of living of the population. There is a high level of unemployment among young people and the elderly in some regions of the country. As a result, the economic factor can provide a background for the growth of social conflicts. Social policy can cause social conflicts in the country. The cost of education and medical care are significantly reduced. Special feelings - frustration and hopelessness are raised by the pension reform proposed by the government of the country. Thus, at the moment it can be assumed that there are some factors that can lead to social, ethnic, and political conflicts. These three factors are often interrelated. All this predetermines the urgency of the study of the theoretical aspects of ethnic conflict as a social phenomenon.

Having regard to the above, the author has set the following tasks: to identify key reasons of ethnic conflicts; to consider the typology and factors of their occurrence.

### **4. Findings**

Most countries of the world are characterized by ethnic diversity. Therefore, numerous problems and contradictions give rise to ethnic and religious conflicts within multinational states. Today the serious discussions and analysis of conflicts are conducted in terms of two approaches. Some researchers believe that there is no ethnic conflict, but there is an interrelation of the ethnic factor with political, socio-economic, and cultural contradictions. Moreover, according to Dugin, doubts occur how to qualify ethnic conflicts. Since, there is no consensus how to determine that a conflict is an ethnic one. Dugin

believes that the conflict can be considered as ethnic if the status of the minority and the majority of the conflicting parties are defined [Dugin, 2011].

Other researchers, such as Shnirelman, refer to ethnic conflicts as those where at least one of the conflicting parties is speaking on behalf of an ethnic group or if Public opinion describes rapists and their victims in ethnic terms [Ethnicity and religion in modern conflicts, 2012].

The methodological bases for the study of ethnic conflicts are research papers that are devoted to the theoretical aspects of inter-ethnic relations in social interaction. Depending on the purpose of the study, everyone can choose one or another theory that will explain the source of ethnic conflicts.

Ethnic conflicts can be caused by cultural differences. The American researcher S. Huntington believed that the most significant conflicts of global politics would take place between nations and groups belonging to different civilizations in the near future [Huntington, 2017].

In opinion of Huntington, the conflict occurred on two levels. Groups were fighting for land and power against each other at the micro level. Different civilizations competed for influence in the military and economic spheres at the macro level [Huntington, 2017].

The most complete typology of ethnic conflicts was presented in the study of L. Luchsheva. She systematized the classification of conflicts, proposed by domestic scientists, according to the stages of conflict, by territorial scale, depending on the goals of the movement and the spheres of manifestation.

In the late 1990s. E. Pain and A. Popov identified conflicts of stereotypes and conflicts of ideas according to the phases of conflicts. Stereotypical conflicts indicated latent stage when there were no clear contradictions, but the negative was activated against opponents. Conflicts of ideas completed the latent stage by the nomination of historical claims, the rights to statehood (the former republics of the USSR) and land (Ossetia, Ingushetia, Chechnya), and then they went into action conflict — into protest meetings. With regard to territory, some scientists consider interstate, regional and local conflicts of ethnic groups. This often includes domestic conflicts between the central government and the region with a dense ethnic population.

There are socio-economic, cultural, and language and territorial conflicts among them. According to the spheres of manifestation, S. Alekseev identified the following ethnic conflicts: ethno-territorial, ethno-economic (monopoly of various types of economic action, natural resources, etc.); ethnosocial (social stratification and status of ethnos), ethno-political (claims to self-determination and secession); ethnocultural (monopolization of cultural activity and the imposition of language, culture, traditions of one ethnos to representatives of other ethnic groups); ethnoreligious (agitation of religious hostility, prevent from the performance of religious ceremony by believers of other religions, a ban on the construction of house of worship); ethno-demographic and ethno-migration (change in the ratio of the number of indigenous people and migrants); mass psychological (hostility and cognitive dissonance) [Luchsheva, 2015].

In order to avoid and prevent ethnic conflicts, scientific professionals need to know factors that may further lead to them. These include population growth; desire to have state autonomy, certain historical events, developed infrastructure, and repetition of inter-ethnic conflicts. S. Gurieva proposed universal signs of conflict to predict the growth of inter-ethnic tensions. This is a requirement of a certain ethnic group of greater autonomy than it owns at the present time. If a minority had once its own statehood in the past, there would be a risk of military operations. The high degree of organization of self-determination activists increases the risk of taking up arms. Ethnic groups with high birth rate are more likely to fight for self-determination. If an ethnic or religious group was being racially harassed, the government would have a chance of war for secession. It is conceivable that if earlier representatives of a particular ethnic group fought for independence, military struggle would begin [Gurieva, 2012].

## **5. Conclusion**

Ethnic conflicts most often occur in a multiethnic state, where both interethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts may occur. The main cause of ethnic conflicts is a hostile relationship between ethnic groups, the

power sharing only on ethnic grounds, the struggle for influence in the economic and cultural sphere, cultural differences.

Knowledge of the types of ethnic conflicts and the main factors causing them, will allow predicting and taking appropriate measures aimed at their prevention and control. Conflicts do not disappear by regulating them but the use of certain forms helps to mitigate their consequences, reduce the degree of intensity and violence.

Conflicts are necessary because they are the driving force of social change, but they should not escalate into a full-fledged conflict. Therefore the main task of politicians is to avoid social conflicts.

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