

Rastislav Kazansky

Assoc. prof. PhDr. Rastislav Kazansky, PhD., MBA Professor of Department of Security Studies, Faculty of Political Sciences and International Relations, Matej Bel University, Slovakia,

E-mail: rastislav.kazansky@umb.sk

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37458/ssj.1.2.3>

Review Paper

Received: November 3, 2020

Accepted: December 9, 2020

THE CONFLICT THEORY AS A PILLAR OF SECURITY SCIENCE

Abstract: *Research on conflict theory has developed rapidly, particularly in the last 15 years. This note provides an overview of conflict theory utilizing a cross-classification, wherein such research is classified both by analytic approaches and by areas of application. The note also presents an extensive bibliography of publications in conflict theory. This contribution tries to present introductions to conflict theory as a pillar of security science and its importance to the national and international level today. The goal of this contribution presents the background for the next theoretical analysis of conflicts, methods employed to resolve them, and how they may be prevented. The work is an introduction to these issues. It attempts to include a wide range of topics dealt with by the study of conflict resolution and prevention. The included deeper analysis of the issue of conflict prevention is a key part of the work. Emphasis is put on the theory and practice of conflicts, due to the importance of conflict escalation prevention in the pre-conflict phase, the phase of conflict transformation, and during the process of post-conflict reconstruction.*

Key Words: *Conflict, dynamics of Conflict, Security*

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts within the environment of international relations, whether these are domestic or interstate, have become one of the most intensely perceived security problems of the contemporary world. Their nature is usually violent, accompanied by human casualties, which may escalate to humanitarian crises and may cause enormous material, population, and ecological damage. Regions in conflict are the source of population migration, increasing pressure and they become a suitable environment for the formation of radical and terrorist groups. The destructive force of conflicts causes an economic decline of countries and, thus, increases the differences between stable regions and countries and those regions and countries with ongoing conflicts. The resolution and prevention of conflicts within international relations is a multidisciplinary approach, which draws on psychology, sociology, mass communication, development studies, studies of international institutions and political science, security studies, and, in particular, on the study of international relations.

The resolution and prevention of conflicts are most commonly understood as a part of the study of international relations, which touches upon the aforementioned disciplines. The study, analysis, and research of the theory and practice in the field of conflict resolution and prevention have had their place within the framework of international relations on a global scale for several years now. However, inside of the Slovak academic and professional environment, these issues have been established only recently. This fact made us choose these issues as the subject of our work. This work may be used in the study of several scientific disciplines but mainly when studying the issues of conflict prevention and resolution within the context of international relations.

Conflicts became more dynamic in the 21st century. This change occurred not only with the parties directly involved in conflicts, but also the parties involved in the resolution of conflicts, where we can find many different units, in addition to states. Because of this, the bulk of the work is focused on conflict prevention and resolution with the use and participation of national, regional, and supranational parties involved. However, the current dynamics of international relations move the examined issues forward too rapidly, which is why the work is reflecting of the state of events, which were current during the preparation and implementation of submitted facts.

THE CHARACTERISTICS AND DEFINITIONS OF THE TERM 'CONFLICT' IN SECURITY SCIENCE

Most theorists and experts in the field of conflictology agree that it is necessary to define conflicts -- that is to exactly and precisely determine the type of conflict. This definition is the prerequisite for the study of conflicts. Thanks to this, we can study them further and determine the causes of conflicts, the development and goal of the parties involved, and the progress and a possible solution of conflicts. The first chapter of the publication focuses on the characterization and definition of the term 'conflict'. A conflict, as a multidimensional phenomenon, may be classified into several groups according to its examined properties. The following part of the chapter deals with the various phases of the conflict, from its beginning to its end. The last part of the first introductory chapter is a list of conflict databases and projects, which examine, categorize, and divide conflicts.

The term 'conflict' accompanies the human race and society from their very origins. Conflicts are present in the entirety of human history (Ivančík, Nečas, 2012). We can find several different approaches to the definition of conflict in the available contemporary professional literature. A conflict is a social phenomenon and its definition is quite complex. During the examination, analysis, and creation of a specific definition, it is necessary to take into account the structure, diversity, and complexity of this concept. In general, we can characterize a conflict (lat. *conflictio*, ger. *der Konflikt*) as a dispute, discrepancy, disagreement, armed encounter, or war. A situation where people, groups, or countries enter into a serious dispute, maybe an alternative definition. Basic meanings of the term 'conflict' include a situation in which violence is used, a struggle between two countries, or a situation in which thoughts, feelings, opinions, ideas, etc. are in contradiction (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2005).

Several authors deal with the definition of the term 'conflict'. O. Krejčí defines a conflict as a situation, in which a certain group (tribe, ethnic group, ideological group or state) or an individual is in a purposeful dispute with one or more groups or individuals. A conflict is a struggle for values relating to the maintenance or increase of welfare, status or power. Opponents of these values try to neutralize, hurt, or remove their rival or rivals (Krejčí, 2007).

According to Š. Waisová, a conflict is a social reality, in which at least two parties (individuals, groups, states), with a different outlook on certain facts or different, contradictory interests, stand in opposition (Waisová, 2002). According to her, a conflict represents a situation in which, at the same time, a minimum of two parties are striving to

obtain the same goods, which are deficient and cannot satisfy the needs of both (all) parties (Waisová, 2005).

D. Kusá defines a conflict as a state in which one or two (or more) people and communities feel that their interests are incompatible. They usually have an antagonistic approach towards each other, which they show by trying to cause the other party harm. They seek to assert their interests by influencing the other party (Kusá, 2006). F. Glasl provides a more specific definition of a conflict, as an interaction between agents (individuals, groups, or organizations), where at least one agent understands that their thoughts, ideas, perceptions, and/or feelings are incompatible with the will, thoughts, feelings, etc. of another agent (or agents) and s/he feels limited by their activities (Mischnick, 2007).

According to L. Hofreiter, a conflict represents a certain quality of relations between units of a social environment (parties involved, which may be individuals, social groups, states, or a coalition of states), which are manifested in the efforts of certain parties involved to promote their own needs, achieve their interests and objectives at the expense of and against the wishes of their opponents, or which are contradictory to the interests of their opponents (Hofreiter, 2008).

The number of definitions of the term 'conflict' depends on the complexity of its concept. Some definitions define a conflict in general and only create basic starting points from which we may further explore this concept. On the other hand, other definitions deal with certain, particular, and specific, characteristics of conflicts based on their typology. To analyze a conflict from the point of view of international security, it is necessary to lay down those properties and elements which are, in general, common for all conflicts, regardless of their specificities. While exploring this concept, we may use two basic models, which occur during conflicts in the natural environment as well as those in a social environment. The static and dynamic model.

The static model examines a conflict as a social complex, which consists of two elements. Parties participating in the conflict (people, animals, objects, theories, etc.) and the relations between them.

The dynamic model draws on the behaviorist theory of psychology. According to this theory, the 'stimulus-response' principle affects the behavior of a person. A person reacts to the stimuli from the external environment.

If these impulses are in contradiction with the interests of the object (person or group), their reaction to the situation is adequate and a conflict arises (Hofreiter, 2008). It is these relationships that have an impact on the dynamic aspect of the conflict.

However, the concept of 'conflict' cannot be put in contrast with 'competition'. During a conflict, the parties involved seek to strengthen their position and status at the expense of the others. One of the parties may even attempt to remove or destroy their opponents. Compared to this, competition means that even though the parties involved are trying to achieve the same goal at the expense of other parties, their mutual relationship is not as critical as to warrant fear of elimination of one of them (Krejčí, 2007).

Equally, we cannot identify 'conflict' with 'tension' because tension means a hidden hostility, fear, suspicion, a perception of the divergence of interests, and perhaps also a wish of superiority, or the wish of gaining independence. In this case, fear does not usually escalate from attitudes and perceptions to mutual hostile acts (Krejčí, 2007).

When characterizing and examining political conflicts, it is necessary to define the term 'political crisis', which represents the beginning of military solving of conflicts of interests and powers. The word crisis, in post-modern terms, expresses restlessness and chaos within international politics and it also defines the concept of disorder and non-compliance on a global scale.

Not every conflict is a political crisis, but every crisis includes the state of conflict. A crisis is usually a conflict that stems from a dispute about a certain issue. In this phase, stability transforms into instability, or certainties into uncertainties in certain processes of development. A crisis is a particular moment or a period, after which a significant twist in the evolution or a change of the system may occur (Crises, crises, and crisis conditions..., 2005).

A crisis is more than simple tension or separation within international relations. O. Krejčí defines a crisis as a type of conflict that is typically represented by a sudden outburst of unexpected events and hostilities, caused by existing conflicts (Krejčí, 2007). A crisis in international politics is characterized by unforeseen and unexpected reactions from opposing parties, a feeling of great danger, a sense of a lack of time to come to conclusions and decisions and by the feeling that inactivity will have horrific consequences.

Conflicts and crises, which the human civilization faces today, become increasingly complex and harder to resolve, as a result of growing globalization (Ivančík, Jurčák, 2013a). Within international relations of the 21st century, conflicts are characterized by four basic components: a) the parties involved, b) the issues causing the conflict, c) attitudes, d) actions.

a) the parties involved in conflicts are usually the states. However, international organizations, non-state organizations, revolutionary movements, and ethnic groups may also become involved. For illustration, in the period from 1818 until 1996, states participated in 41% of all conflicts. They were some of the decisive factors in the initiation of conflicts and

belonged to the most active parties involved in international conflicts (Waisová, 2002).

Presently, the number of states involved in conflicts is decreasing while the number of non-state parties involved is rising.

b) the issues causing the conflict are the objects and/or the position the persons involved want to achieve. The parties involved in the conflict (e.g. states) attempt to gain assets which, on one hand, strengthen their power and/or their potential to obtain power and, on the other hand, take some of their power away. These are, e.g. territories, safe areas, and regions, control over resources, a world revolution or dissolution of certain states, etc. The conflicting behavior of the parties involved implies their attitudes and actions. Such behavior is caused by the fact that Party A has or gains a certain status, which opposes the wishes, ideas, and interests of Party B.

c) attitudes represent the behavior that may be expected from the persons involved. They are associated with hostility, distrust, stereotyping, and a sense of justice. They also represent a source of tension and help the leaders of revolutions and citizens to become committed and to act in the conflict.

d) actions that occur during conflicts may be diplomatic, commercial, serve as propaganda, or other. The parties involved tend to use them against each other (Krejčí, 2007).

CONFLICT ANALYSIS APPROACH

Conflict analysis is the examination of nature, causes, dynamics, and parties involved in a conflict. Exploration of these elements allows us to better understand specific conflicts and to provide appropriate and accurately targeted means by which to deal with them. On the other hand, it is necessary to realize that the dynamics of conflicts are extremely complex and we often need to use different processes to analyze them.

An analysis of a conflict happens on multiple levels (e.g. local, regional, national, or global). One of the objectives of this analysis is to define the links and relations among the given levels of conflict. It is necessary to correctly identify the point of view for the analysis on different levels. For example, the dynamics and issues of a given dispute may be different on one level than the dynamics and process on another level and they may have a different intensity curve. Understanding these links creates prerequisites for a comprehensive and explicit examination of the intervention and dynamics of conflicts. All of these levels affect one another.

Conflict analysis aims to define how it is possible to transform conflict situations and settle disputes among the parties involved. It is necessary to understand the context of the conflict, as well as the interactions between intervention and context, to understand its transformation.

This interaction is the basis for the following process, which is designed to prevent unwanted effects and, conversely, to maximize positive effects on the conflict itself.

The basic points of conflict analysis are:

- a) the profile of the conflict,
- b) the parties involved in the conflict,
- c) the reasons for the conflict,
- d) the dynamics of the conflict.

The conflict profile defines a brief characterization of the context unique for the given conflict. When defining the conflict profile, it is necessary to answer a few basic questions which would help determine the nature of the conflict's environment more precisely. R. Mischnick defines the initial questions:

- What is the geopolitical, economic, political, and socio-cultural context of the security situation? Geographical localization, political, economical, and social structure, history, the composition of the population, geostrategic location, environment, etc.
- What are the acute social, economic, political, and environmental issues in the country? Destruction of the social sphere, new infrastructure, decentralization, elections, reforms, issue of refugees, military and civilian victims, or presence of armed forces.
- Which dispute-affected areas may be present within this context? The area under the influence of individual parties involved, the proximity of battlefronts to natural sources or strategic infrastructure, population exiled to the edge of society.
- Is the history of the conflict present? Key events attempt at mediation, external intervention (Mischnick, 2007).

The term 'causes of conflicts' comes to play here. A cause, in a broader sense, is a phenomenon that gives rise to another phenomenon's appearing. It is necessary to realize that conflicts are multidimensional phenomena without a single explicit cause. They have several causes, the conflict-generating potential of which is combined. On the other hand, we also have to consider the fact that the stimulus (the cause) which causes a conflict in a certain group, may remain without response in a different environment.

Generally, we can divide conflicts into the following basic categories, based on their causes:

- conflicts over identity and self-determination, which are characterized predominantly by ethnonational and ethnocultural conflicts;
- economically motivated conflicts, during which a specific type of conflict emerges solely to gain profit, a so-called "war for profit";
- conflicts based on a political basis, due to the poor functioning of the government, the inability to ensure the primary function of the state (Tomeš, 2007).

Some of the main causes of conflicts are a) structural causes of conflicts – illegitimate government, lack of government power, low political participation, unequal political and social opportunities, unequal access to natural resources, etc.; b) events that are the immediate causes of conflicts – e.g. uncontrolled security services, human rights violations, destabilizing situation in neighbored countries, increase in the ownership of light weapons, etc.; c) the so-called "*conflict defractors*" (conflict triggers) which may cause an outbreak of violence and a subsequent escalation of conflicts. Such triggers are, for example, elections in the country, a collapse of the local currency, an enormous increase in unemployment, an increase in prices or a shortage of basic commodities, a leak of the state capital, the imprisonment or assassination of a key political leader; d) factors which prolong conflict dynamics – e.g. opposing parties becoming more radical, the development of war economy, the availability of weapons, etc.; e) factors which contribute to establishing peace – a dialogue between the parties involved, the process of demobilization, reforms, anti-discrimination measures, the commitment of the civil society to maintain peace.

The parties involved in conflicts may be individuals, groups or institutions, organizations or, in the context of international relations, explicitly defined states, which are immediately (positively or negatively) affected by the conflict, which creates a conflict or works with a conflict in the process of managing or transformation of its dynamics. Parties may be directly or indirectly involved in a conflict. Parties directly involved in a conflict are those participants, who are in a direct, immediate dispute – they are the so-called subjects of the conflict. Parties indirectly involved in a conflict are the so-called third parties. They play a secondary role in the dispute. We distinguish parties involved based on their relations towards the opposing parties, their interest, goals, positions, and strategies. According to R. Mischnick, the main parties involved maybe these: national government, political parties, the security sector (police forces, the army), the private sector, local military leaders and armed groups, neighboring states, donor organizations and foreign embassies, multilateral and regional organizations, political and religious groups, the civil society, peace groups, trade unions, refugees and others.

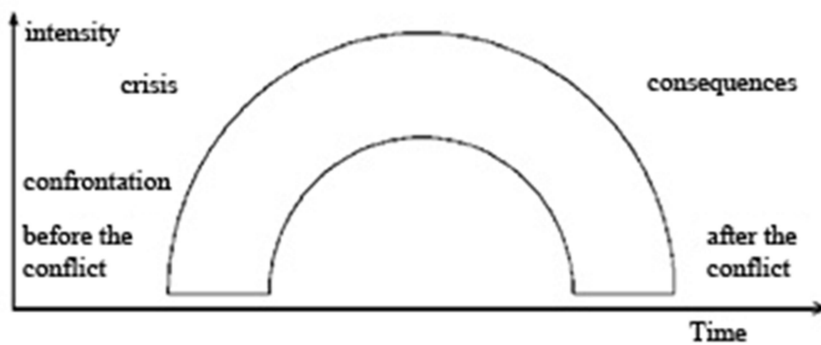
The parties involved may pursue global interests, political ideologies, political participation, political commitments, economic activities, resources, or religious ideals (Mischnick, 2007).

We can understand the dynamics of a conflict as a result of the interaction among the conflict's profile, the parties involved, and its causes (Hofreiter, 2008). All conflicts and disputes within international relations go through certain developmental stages and levels of intensity, during their course. Research and correct understanding of these development stages are a necessity if we wish to effectively interject, appropriately solve, and prevent the escalation of conflicts. Understanding the relations between the parties involved in the dispute is a key factor when determining how to solve a conflict. A change in the code of conduct, goals, interests, or how the parties involved negotiating can change the dynamics of the conflict.

Every conflict has certain phases (stages), which follow one after another. Long-term studies have shown that not every conflict necessarily needs to go through all of the stages. These may be interrupted during the conflict (e.g. after negotiations or mediation by a third party), they may be repeated after a certain interruption or return to a stage of lower intensity. In some cases, conflicts may stagnate at certain points for decades. Experts look at phases of a conflict in different ways. They approach the stages of conflicts differently but the evaluation of the level of intensity of violence over some time is key. In general, we can summarize these studies into the following phases (stages) of conflicts:

- the pre-conflict phase,
- the confrontation,
- the crisis,
- the consequences,
- the post-conflict phase.

Chart 1 phases of conflicts



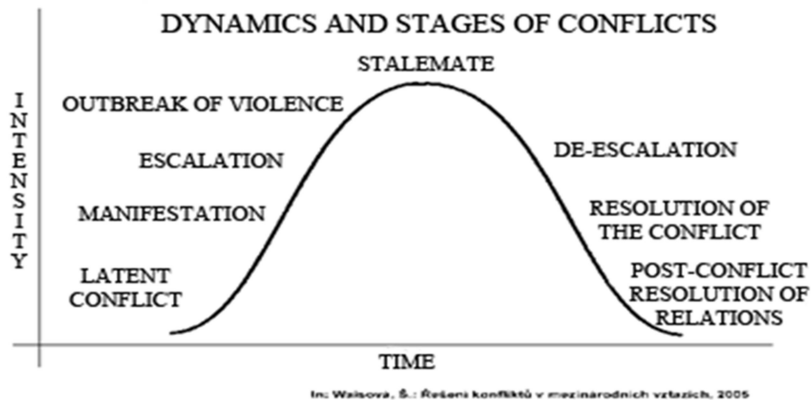
Source: Mischnick, 2017

There is always a potential for the existence of a conflict when the parties involved have identical objectives, needs, interests, and values, the achievement and satisfaction of which is limited. This latent phase is the phase before the conflict itself when the dispute is not yet shown openly. It is characterized by a tension between the parties involved in the conflict, or by the effort to avoid mutual conflict. The dispute may not occur at all, if there is no "trigger event" or "incident", which leads to the opening of the conflict and then to the second phase – the confrontation. At this point, the opposing parties begin to accumulate resources and, possibly, search for allies in case the dispute will escalate. The crisis is the peak stage of the conflict, in which tension and violence are the most intense. At this stage, the opposing parties usually cease all communication. The next stage of the development of the conflict is the consequences which every crisis inevitably leads to. One of the parties involved may defeat the opponent, back down, and accept the terms of the opposing party, or surrender. In this stage, there is a possibility to settle the dispute. During the stage after the conflict, a situation that allows a non-violent settling of the dispute may occur. On one hand, there is a possibility to settle the relations between the parties involved, on the other hand, things may return to the pre-conflict phase if the causes of the conflict have not been adequately resolved.

A more specific definition of the various stages of a conflict may be found in the study of Š. Waisová, who divides conflicts into seven phases, displayed in Chart 2.

- 1) latent conflict,
- 2) manifestation of the conflict,
- 3) escalation of the conflict,
- 4) a stalemate in the conflict,
- 5) de-escalation of the conflict,
- 6) resolution of the conflict,
- 7) post-conflict settlement of relations – peace-building

Chart 2 dynamics and stages of a conflict



Source: Waisová, 2005

We may find many divisions, typologies, and classifications of conflicts in the contemporary professional literature. Several factors play a part in the genesis of conflicts and the behavior of the parties involved. It is, in particular, the history of the parties' mutual relationship, their nature, their perception, and explication of the conflict situation. When examining conflicts, it is necessary to delve into their essence and to understand their basic nature. We may then divide conflicts into multiple groups according to multiple criteria. These divisions will depend on the common features and criteria which we will consider essential and crucial to express the main basis for the conflict. According to L. Hofreiter, such features and criteria are:

- the parties involved in the conflict (intrapersonal, interpersonal, between an individual and a group, between groups, between states or groups of states);
- the level of the conflict (horizontally or vertically oriented conflicts);
- the nature of the needs that caused the conflict (material, immaterial, spiritual);
- the duration of the conflict (short-term, quick, long-term, etc.);
- the consequences of the conflict (constructive, destructive) (Hofreiter, 2008).

Social nature affects the investigation of conflicts. According to Š. Waisová, during classification, it is necessary to include (Waisová, 2005): 1. research of the background of conflicts (the geopolitical and economic status of the parties involved, the history of their mutual relations and the history of the conflict itself), 2. the type of parties involved (states, non-state organizations, international organizations, movements for independence, revolutionary or insurgent groups, etc.), 3. research of the character and nature of the opponents of the conflict, 4. research of the causes of the conflict (the subject of the dispute),

5. research of the environment and the context of the conflict (who is involved in the conflict, who is supporting the opposing parties, which party is seeking a solution).

By investigating the aforementioned characteristics of conflicts, we can get a comprehensive image of the nature of the conflict, the stages of its future development, the strategies and means of the parties involved, etc. Based on the definition of these properties, it is possible to define the causes of the dispute, the parties involved in the conflict, and how we can specify conflicts.

When analyzing a conflict, we may use the following classification: a) natural or physical conflicts, when an individual stands in opposition with nature; b) social conflicts, when a person (social groups) stands in opposition to another person (social group); c) internal or psychological conflict when an individual conflicts with themselves, their desires conflict with their options and their conscience (Hofreiter, 2008).

L. Hofreiter also distinguishes the following types of conflicts (Hofreiter, 2008): conflict of relations (an aversion toward another person, etc.), conflict of interests (the clash of different interests and needs), conflict of values (the dispute about what is right or wrong, correct or incorrect), a structural conflict (organizational structures with an imbalance of power), a conflict of information (different sources and interpretation of data).

Classification according to interests is another possible division: The interests of the parties involved differ and they depend on several factors (needs, desires, concerns, etc.). Conflicts take place when these factors clash. They relate, in particular, to the areas of a) resources (territorial, financial, personnel and material) and their distribution, which means the contribution to the process of the fund and resource distribution and the process of political decision-making; b) identity (of social, religious, cultural and political communities and of communities with which individuals identify); c) values (specifically those that stem from religion, ideology or the system of government); d) status (relating to individuals or social groups and their status in society, their compliance with and respect towards values and traditions) (Kusá, 2006).

The current conflict theory within international relations recognizes two types of conflicts, the symmetric and asymmetric conflict. Asymmetric conflict is a conflict of interests between relatively similar parties involved, for example, between states, political parties, etc. An asymmetric conflict is a conflict between different groups, for example, between a minority and a majority, employees, and employers, the government and rebels, etc. During such a conflict, the dominant party has better conditions to assert its interests, values, and needs, because it has the means and resources to do so. The proportionality of

power and a change of the status of the parties involved is a solution to an asymmetric conflict (Hofreiter, 2008).

We may also define asymmetric armed conflict as a large-scale armed military confrontation of the armed forces of the participating states, coalitions, or other integration groups (alliances, pacts, etc.), the result of which is usually easily measured, e.g. by freeing or occupying a certain territory, by the destruction, defeat or elimination of a known adversary, by achieving set objectives, etc. Unlike the symmetrical armed conflict, an asymmetrical armed conflict is a relatively small-scale and low-intensity military confrontation, in which the parties involved differ by their strength and tactics. It is mostly a conflict, in which a superior external military force, represented by a state (alliance, coalition, group), enters into a military confrontation with an inferior internal military force, represented by a state or non-state party, the territory of which is where the conflict takes place. Since the "weaker" party cannot succeed in an open military confrontation, because its capabilities, capacities, and resources are incomparably smaller, it attempts to succeed by using asymmetric operations and forms of struggle (Ivančík, 2013a).

CONCLUSION

For a long time, states played a dominant role in the system of international relations. Among the main goals of the states was to ensure their security and existence, and to strengthen their power. Security and power of countries were threatened by goals, intentions, activities, and behavior of other countries, which aimed to maintain or increase their power and security. The activity and behavior of states in the international system had the nature of individual and independent units. There was no superior institution that could solve internal or international conflicts. The area of intra-state relations was ordered hierarchically and it set rules and standards for possible conflict resolution between intrastate subjects. The creation of primary principles of the international system (sovereignty, territoriality, and non-intervention) and their acceptance allowed only exceptional interventions into the internal affairs of individual states. Observance of agreements between the conflict sides usually depended on a self-imposed approach of the opponents themselves.

The resolution of violent disputes and conflicts in human society is one of the most important and most complex mechanisms which take place within international relations. As we have pointed out, each conflict situation represents a unique and specific event, which requires an individual approach. At the same time, these are neither static nor monocausal phenomena. Particular conflicts have their dynamics of development and evolve through different stages. These stages are then the main determining elements for the choice of methods, strategies, mechanisms, and devices for conflict resolution. We must take account of the environment, in which the conflict takes place, the number of sides to the dispute, their geopolitical placement, history of mutual relations, and last but not least, the will of the parties involved. Although the intervention of third parties (individuals, countries, governments, or regional and international organizations) may help to solve the conflict, it becomes ineffective as long as the participants reject it.

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Rastislav Kazansky

Vanredni profesor Katedre bezbednosnih studija, Fakultet Političkih nauka i međunarodnih odnosa, Matej Bel Univerzitet, Slovača

Teorija sukoba kao stub nauke o bezbednosti

Rezime:

Istraživanja teorije sukoba brzo su se razvijala, posebno u poslednjih 15 godina. Ovaj rad daje pregled teorije sukoba koristeći unakrsnu klasifikaciju, pri čemu se takva istraživanja klasifikuju i prema analitičkim pristupima i prema oblastima primene. Rad je takođe, zasnovan na obimnoj bibliografskoj građi u teoriji sukoba. Naučni doprinos ogleda se u pokušaju da teoriju sukoba predstavi kao stub nauke o bezbednosti i od suštinske je važnosti za nacionalnu i međunarodnu bezbednost danas. Cilj ovog rada predstavlja teorijska analiza sukoba, metode koje se koriste za njihovo rešavanje i način na koji mogu biti sprečeni. Rad pokušava da uključi širok spektar tema u funkciji proučavanja, rešavanja i prevencije sukoba. Uključena je dublja analiza pitanja sprečavanja sukoba kao centralni deo rada. Akcenat je stavljen na teoriju i praksu sukoba, zbog važnosti sprečavanja eskalacije sukoba u pretkonfliktnoj fazi, fazi transformacije sukoba i tokom procesa postkonfliktna rekonstrukcije.

Ključne reči: Konflikt, bezbednost, dinamika sukoba