Methodology for studying conflicts. Specific features of studying conflicts in the post-Soviet space

Zh.Ye. Altybayeva

L.N.Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

(E-mail: zhansulu.zhanatayeva@gmail.com)

Abstract. Conflicts in the modern world becoming more and more relevant and requires a close expertise from different perspectives. Conflict resolution, peaceful and more importantly legal regulation of the conflict are the main goals, but the way for its achievement relies on detailed research. Additionally, it is crucial to take into consideration the region of the conflict to understand the nature and deep roots of the conflict, otherwise conflict resolution would not be achieved and transfer it to a frozen state. That is why it is necessary to understand the structure of conflicts, its principles and methodology of the research. The author proposes a comprehensive methodology that takes into account these specific features and challenges. This methodology incorporates multi-disciplinary approaches, drawing from political science, sociology, history, and international relations. In conclusion, this article contributes to the ongoing discourse on conflict studies by providing a specialized methodology that addresses the specific challenges presented by conflicts in the post-Soviet space. By recognizing the unique features of this region, researches, policymakers, and analysts can develop more informed strategies for conflict prevention, management, and resolution, ultimately contributing to peace and stability in the post-Soviet space and beyond.

Keywords: conflictology, principles of conflict study, conflict studies methodology, regional conflicts, research design, actors of the conflict.

Introduction

Conflict, as an object of study and subject of analysis, is an interest to many sciences, such as political science, sociology, psychology, history, as well as international relations. Throughout the history of its existence, humanity has always been involved in conflicts. From 1990 to 1999 there were 118 conflicts in the world, with the participation of about 80 states, the number of casualties were about 6 million people [1].

In ancient times and during the Middle Ages, philosophers believed that conflict is close to human nature, since man is a creature characterized by aggression and the desire to benefit and achieve his own interest, even or especially if this interest conflicts with the interests of another person. "Lupus est homo homini" or "The human is the humans' wolf" (T.Hobbes).

There is a large number of definitions of the term "international conflict", ranging from simple "international conflict is an acute form of confrontation beyond national borders", and ending with more complex definitions such as conflicts in international relations are "a clash of conflicting interests (potential differences) around national values or issues (independence, self-determination, borders and territory, access or distribution of internal or external power), the conflict must be of long duration and of some level of intensity between at least two parties (states, groups of states, organizations or organized groups) who seek to realize their interests and win the fight. At least one party must represent an organized state.

Discussion

The study of conflict between states and regions is a direct reflection of the complete history of the relationships between the participants. That is why it is very important to consider the conflict, as well as analyze all the reasons for the emergence of contradictions between the participants. Every conflict is an actualization of contradictions. In the course of the study, it is important to remember that the main question is not which of the causes of conflict is the most important, but how these various causes interact with each other. When studying conflicts, it is very important to choose the most appropriate research method. "Method is the very first, basic thing. The seriousness of the research depends on the method, on the method of action" [2]. According to P.A.Tsygankov, method "means both the sum of techniques, means and procedures for science to study its subject, and the totality of existing knowledge. This means that the problem of method, while having independent significance, is at the same time closely connected with the analytical and practical role of theory, which also plays the role of method"[3]. In the research, a scientist or a group of scientists conducting a study mainly chooses their favorite methods and adjusts or supplements them within the framework of the object and conditions being studied, which somewhat hinders one of the main tasks of the researcher - to avoid a one-sided vision of the problem and subjectivity. For the best construction of research methodology P.A.Tsygankov recommends so-called "ideological pluralism," that is, control of science over ideology and tolerance of different ideologies. As M.A.Khrustalev noted "the main disadvantage of the science of international relations is the protracted process of its transformation into an applied science" [4].

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Also, it is crucial not forget that the study of conflicts has its own pecularities. When conducting conflict research, it is necessary to rely on the following principles of conflict research:

• "the principle of development – considering the conflict as a process, while tracing the entire evolution of the conflict.

• the principle of universal connection - conflict is not a set of individual elements, but an interconnected system.

• the principle of observing the laws of dialectics: the law of unity and struggle of opposites, the law of the transition of quantitative changes into qualitative ones, the law of negation of negation, paired categories of dialectics (matter and movement, time and space, and others).

• the principle of dialectical unity of theory, experiment and practice, that is, the connection of the empirical basis of research, which is the basis with the practical side.

• the principle of a systems approach - it is necessary to understand that conflicts are a complex structure that consists of hierarchically related subsystems. If similar positive or negative aspects have appeared not in one, but in several elements of the system, then the reasons for this should be sought primarily not in these elements, but in the system itself.

• the principle of a specific historical approach - each conflict is unique; there are no two absolutely identical conflicts in the world. This principle is based on identifying the peculiarities of the conflict, and not limiting its characterization of the conflict to knowledge obtained from a conflict of this type.

• the principle of objectivity – minimizing the influence of personal emotions, experiences and sympathies of the researcher" [2].

Studying a conflict requires a systemic picture of what is happening, it is necessary to consider certain parameters or variables. First, you need to consider the characteristics of the conflicting parties, that is, study the main interests of the parties, their resources, values and goals.

Secondly, an important factor is the communication experience of the parties, since it is this that serves as the main criterion for the enemy's assessment of each other. Based on the history of relationships, states decide whether they can trust another state, whether their interaction will be based on trust or hostility directly affects the outcome of the conflict situation. The inability to reach a compromise very often occurs not because the parties do not benefit from a compromise, but because of a lack of trust in the conscientious execution of the contract by the other party, simply a lack of trust between the two parties. It is precisely because of the complex history of relations, where each new element of the conflict builds on each other like a snowball, that conflicts between states cannot reach a peaceful resolution for a very long time. In this case, the distrust of the parties to the conflict towards each other can be illustrated by the famous concept of the "prisoner's dilemma". An example of such a situation is the conflicts between Israel and Egypt (in general, the entire Arab world), India and Pakistan, and others.

Thirdly, "the nature of conflict is complex and multifaceted, but "the basis or grounds of conflict between peoples, groups or individuals can be "diffuse" and generalized, as in an ideological conflict, or specific and limited, as in conflicts over the possession of something; the cause of the conflict may be important or secondary for the conflicting parties; they may involve the possibility of compromise or the complete subordination of one party to the other" [5].

The components of conflict are a conflict situation and conflict behavior. A conflict situation (CS) is the presence of contradictory, divergent antagonistic goals and interests and values. Conflict behavior (CB) is the specific actions of participants in a conflict aimed at eliminating contradictions, changing the existing situation and achieving victory in the conflict. KS + CB = open conflict, KS - CB = latent or suppressed conflict.

The fourth variable is the social environment of the conflict. In this case, it is worth considering various institutions, social and legal norms. Every conflict is influenced by the social environment, with which another important variable is closely related - the interest of third parties. In international relations, the most important stakeholders are the most powerful states in the system of international relations at that time. In modern international relations, scientists most often consider the reaction of countries such as the USA, China, Russia and the European Union. Interest can be expressed through a variety of actions, ranging from official statements to the deployment of troops to enforce peace or to guarantee the safety of civilians. Very often, interested parties act as mediators and seek to bring opposing parties to the negotiating table.

The next variable is the tactics or strategy of the parties to the conflict, namely how one or another side achieves what it wants, how it uses resources, what leverage it has, influences the enemy directly or through allies - all these are components of the strategy and conduct of the conflict by the state.

The final factor is the results of the conflict, both for the direct participants and for the interested parties. Calculation of benefits and losses, the consequences of the conflict, and what changes it brought not only to the external environment and relations between the parties to the conflict, but also its impact on the internal changes of each of the participants.

Conflict research methods. Methodology

The main two approaches to the study of modern armed conflicts on an international or global scale are:

1)collection and analysis of information on the parameters of armed conflicts with an emphasis on quantitative, measurable indicators. It is on the basis of this technical and empirical approach that modern conflict databases have been created. Modern databases on conflicts include: "Data on Conflicts" Uppsala University, "Causes of War" University of Hamburg, "Comparison of Wars" University of Michigan, Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research;

2)qualitative analysis of forms of armed violence and changes in the nature of contemporary conflicts. It is the second approach, which takes into account quantitative indicators, but does not absolutize their significance, that has given science the majority of theoretical and analytical developments, assessments of modern conflicts and in-depth studies of specific conflicts in certain regions of the world.

In the study of conflict, the concept of causes that stem from the interests of the participants is important. Interest may become a driving force in conflict, or an attack on an interest by another party may provoke a reaction to protect its own interest. Consideration of the conflict from the point of view of rationalistic theories of international relations makes it possible to focus on the analysis of the interests of the main, secondary, eventual and indirect actors of

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the conflict. It is also necessary to understand why states want to satisfy their interests at the expense of another state or region. Most often, the fact is that a state or a certain region begins to lay claim to the resources and territory of another region in a situation where it cannot fully satisfy its needs on its own. Accordingly, the closest source of necessary goods most often turns out to be a nearby country or region. If we take into account that each neighboring state is historically connected in one way or another, and probably had various connections in the past (trade and economic cooperation, war, alliance and other forms of cooperative action), then finding reasons for inciting a conflict is not so difficult. Of course, such a statement is not universal, and cannot always be applied, but in almost every conflict there is a party (maybe an indirect actor, or a group of individuals with a common interest) that pursues similar goals. This approach is also applicable to ethnopolitical conflicts. The growth of hostility between ethnic groups increases when one group begins to demand restrictions on the freedom of social nature of another ethnic group due to the fact that it itself suffers from the fact that it does not have the opportunity to exercise it. In the book "Conflict Analytics," author V. Svetlov states that "conflict is the presence of an imbalance in a system consisting of at least two elements" [6]: antagonism and synergy. It is important to note that antagonism is not the embodiment of conflict; it is the same equal element of the system that ensures its stable existence, just like synergy. "It is a mistakenly common identification of conflict with antagonism. Regardless of the form of its manifestation - hostile feelings, quarrel, aggression, violence, war, etc. antagonism represents a specific form of conflict resolution, a reaction to its occurrence and may turn out to be no less favorable and sustainable way of resolving it than synergy" [6]. That is, considering the conflict as an absolutely negative phenomenon is wrong. Naturally, in the presence of a large number of casualties, especially among the civilian population, a conflict that has entered an active stage with the use of weapons causes a great resonance in the international space, however, the phenomenon itself and the term "conflict" "does not have a negative connotation, it only highlights existing problems that require the greatest attention and points to points that are critical in the relationship of two or more actors - participants in the conflict. Based on the above, it can be argued that subjectivity and a certain neutrality, and sometimes even detachment, are an important criterion in the study of conflicts. However, it is worth noting the fact that in the social sciences and humanities it is very difficult to achieve complete verification or falsification of a hypothesis. The conclusion and analysis of international relations is based not only on the methods of "high theory", but is also influenced by factors such as intuition, comparison, imagination, observation and others. If hypotheses in the humanities are not demonstrative, what is their scientific significance? The main answer to this question is forecasting. The ultimate goal of studying conflicts in international relations is not only to explain the nature of the conflict, but also to determine the future trajectory of its development. Since the construction of the state's domestic and foreign policy depends on this. Forecasting and systemic analysis of conflict help to transfer the level of understanding of conflict from everyday to scientific, to determine with mathematical accuracy the causes of conflict and ways of its possible resolution.

Currently, the post-Soviet space is a region with tense interethnic relations, often based on the territorial claims of the republics. Each side appeals to the mixed ethnic composition of the

disputed territory, as well as archival treaties and maps, according to which this territory is part of a particular republic. The policy of disengagement carried out by the central apparatus of the Soviet government has already been repeatedly examined by many scientists, but many questions remain unanswered.

In one of his works, historian R.M.Masov writes: "The preparatory work carried out by the party and Soviet bodies to determine the territorial boundaries, numerical composition, compact arrangement of peoples to be united into independent Soviet socialist union and autonomous republics and regions has not been studied at all. In addition, there are other important issues that require careful and comprehensive research. For example, it has not been clarified what criterion was decisive for the inclusion of a particular settlement in the newly formed republics, how the process of identifying other factors took place, and whether economic, historical, national and other characteristics were objectively taken into account and whether they were taken into account interests of each nationality" [7].

The identities of the subjects of international conflicts are diverse. Confessional contradictions, when participants in a conflict define their belonging to a certain faith and religion and are not tolerant of those of different faiths, since they pose an existential threat to them. The racial component is also very important in determining the nature of the conflict, since the population of one country may identify themselves as different races. Ideological identity is manifested in the acceptance by a certain social group of established traditional and cultural values, which are manifested in the formation of a theoretical structure within a social group or state. It is also worth noting class, linguistic, political and other types of identity, in particular ethnic identity, which is fundamental in this study. Ethnic heterogeneity in one region, in one state, has a high conflict potential, especially if the ratio of two ethnic groups is strikingly different. Ethnic identity is the self-determination of a group of people in their belonging to a particular ethnic community. Behind ethnic identification there are always other, more important goals for the actor that require implementation: protection of one's own territorial interests, resources, power, influence. Often the ethnic cause in a conflict plays the role of a "screen" for achieving one's own rational goals, objectives and satisfaction of interests.

Discussion

Determining the conflict potential of a state in the post-Soviet space consists of several components. Firstly, as a rule, countries that have gained independence from multinational states have a desire to preserve their sovereignty, and, as a result, base their statehood on an ethnic basis, "on the basis of the dominance of the "titular" ethnic group in the political, economic and cultural fields" [8]. This approach may cause indignation on the part of the non-titular ethnic group of the state. This happened in 1990 in the Kyrgyz SSR, when the state decided to provide plots for housing construction to the Kyrgyz population of the region. Dissatisfaction with the socio-economic policies within the region led to armed clashes among the local population, as such policies were perceived as a threat to security and a violation of the rights and interests of the Uzbek population. Secondly, the period of the collapse of the Soviet Union is a time of flourishing of national self-awareness in the post-Soviet space. Differences between the two

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ethnic groups (Kyrgyz and Uzbeks) served as the basis for ethnic divisions. Since ancient times, the Uzbeks led a more sedentary lifestyle, engaged in gardening, agriculture and trade, while the Kyrgyz, on the contrary, were representatives of a nomadic culture and preferred to engage in livestock farming. As a result of the increased degree of competition, the level of prosperity of Uzbek citizens exceeded the level of prosperity among the Kyrgyz population, which became an irritant to the Kyrgyz population. Pressure from privileged and social positions in favor of the Kyrgyz population worsened the situation and caused discontent on the part of the Uzbek population, making them feel disadvantaged and unprotected by the government due to the very weak representation of the interests of the Uzbek diaspora in the ruling echelons of the country.

The Georgian-Ossetian conflict of 2008, like the conflict in Osh, has a rich history and is a striking example of a conflict in the post-Soviet space with elements of ethnic conflict. It began back in Soviet times, when South Ossetia and Abkhazia were regions within the Georgian SSR. In 1990, Georgia decided to abolish the autonomy of South Ossetia and divided the republic into districts, which caused discontent among the Ossetian population, which escalated into an armed conflict resulting in the death of about a thousand Ossetians [9]. Such an aggressive policy of Georgia led to the fact that when Georgia left the Soviet republics, South Ossetia and Abkhazia decided to exercise the right to self-determination and preserve their identity by remaining part of the Russian Federation. In part, this decision was made by the leadership of both regions in order to protect their territory from the influence of the Georgian authorities and to obtain protection of their interests under the auspices of Russia. That is, in this case, the state decided to sacrifice its sovereignty in order to preserve its identity. An interesting fact is that Georgia in the 90s (the period of gaining independence) is an interesting example of a state in which serious problems were observed in the relationship between the titular ethnic group of the country and all non-Georgian ethnic groups of the republic. The concept of a "broken nation" was formed in the state; South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Adjara were perceived by the Georgian people as territories that were illegally and unfairly taken from the Georgian people. The period of gaining independence in Georgia is closely connected with the revival of the so-called national pride. A long stay as part of a multinational state, the predominance of the Russian language over other languages in the republics gave rise to a wave of rejection of the Soviet past among the newly independent states. Despite the fact that the initiative to annex South Ossetia and Abkhazia to the Russian Federation came from the states themselves and the people as a whole, and was legal according to international law, the situation was interpreted as imperial behavior on the part of Russia not only by Georgia, but by the entire Western world. The fact is that both sides perceive the 2008 conflict in completely different ways: for the Ossetian-Abkhazian side, the experience of communication with Georgia is the constant desire of the Georgian side to incorporate South Ossetia and Abkhazia both politically, demographically and socially. During the Soviet period, the Georgian SSR implemented a policy of resettlement to Abkhaz and Ossetian lands, and the idea that Georgians and Abkhazians were one nation was actively promoted in scientific circles. Tbilisi often imposed politics on Sukhum, which caused a wave of indignation on the part of the Abkhazians. As for Georgia, they first of all turn to history. Ossetia and Abkhazia have long been considered the territory of the Georgian state, therefore,

in the minds of the Georgian people, these lands are considered originally Georgian, and the desire of these peoples to develop separately from Georgia is nonsense. Georgia also believes that it was precisely because Ossetia and Abkhazia were part of Georgia that they retained their ethnic characteristics, unlike the Caucasian peoples of Russia, who, according to Georgia, were strongly influenced by Russian culture and Russified to a much greater extent. For Georgia, the conflict of 2008, as well as the conflicts that took place in the 80s and 90s between Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, is primarily the struggle of the Georgian people for the territorial integrity of Georgia.

The case of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh demonstrates elements of irredentism. "Epigraph to Susan Woodward's book The Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Decay after the Cold War: "Why should I be a minority in your state when you can be a minority in mine?" can be considered the motto of all adherents of irredentism" [10]. A large number of nearby territories (Nakhichevan, Karabakh, Kars, Anatolia, etc.) are considered by Armenia as regions that rightfully belong to the Armenian people, since the Republic of Armenia is the heir of Great Armenia. The fact that a large number of ethnic Armenians live in these territories is further evidence that the territories were illegally transferred to other states. However, neither Azerbaijan, nor Turkey, nor Georgia agree with such territorial claims. But for Nagorno-Karabakh - home to 137 thousand 380 (99.74%) Armenians out of a total population of 137 thousand 737 people in 2005; 145 thousand 450 Armenians out of a total population of 189 thousand 29 people in 1989; and 112 thousand Armenians out of a total population of 125 thousand in 1926 [11], it is obvious that Nagorno-Karabakh should be founded in accordance with the interests of the titular ethnic group, that is, the Armenians. According to Valery Tishkov, "Perhaps aspects of behavioral psychology and socio-psychological mechanisms play a more significant role than traditionally previously thought. We have enough evidence to prove that groups with a degraded status, who are the objects of discrimination from the dominant environment, often express fear for their existence even when objective demographic, political or cultural conditions do not give rise to such conclusions. This "alarm response" stems from an exaggerated sense of danger and leads to "extreme action in response to even mild danger" [12]. That is, there is often no discrimination in relations between the titular ethnic group and the minority, but there is an unjustified sense of danger.

Conclusion

The collapse of the USSR and, as a consequence, the collapse of the bipolar system led to a large number of conflicts on the territory of countries that were previously part of the Soviet Union. Cooperation during the Soviet past turned into clashes of interests and led to conflicts. There was mutual substitution within the "dialectical pair" – conflict and cooperation. These two concepts are inseparable and are the main characteristics of the system of international relations. "Processes of international cooperation always include a conflict dimension, and vice versa, every conflict presupposes one or another degree of cooperation of its participants" [13]. That is, the states - former members of the USSR – in the 90s moved from the stage of close cooperation to the stage of tense relations with each other. These conflicts became, rather, cruel

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and tragic symptoms of social, economic and political restructuring after the collapse of the system of power in the USSR. Numerous interethnic and territorial conflicts turned the evolutionary collapse of the Soviet Union into a revolutionary collapse. The "Parade of Sovereignties" that took place after the collapse of the USSR showed that the purposeful speculation of the idea of sovereignty, as well as its denial, brings not so much positive as negative consequences, leading to a state of civil war and aggravating relations between states and ethnic groups. The long suppression of the sense of self-determination among the peoples of the republics led to the fact that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the independent republics were overwhelmed by a wave of self-determination. The line that separates ethnic patriotism from nationalism has been crossed. Throughout the existence of the USSR, the process of self-determination took place as a long process of socio-political creativity of the people and a reflection of their historical, intellectual and spiritual values and potentials.

Today, self-determination is closely related to international law and territorial changes of the state. That is, the people have the right to self-determination and, accordingly, to territory, from which it follows that the state does not own the territory, but acts within a certain territory, and does not have the right to dispose of the territory, bypassing the interests of its citizens. In fact, this dispute is the subject of the study of international law, which priority is the territorial integrity of the state or the right to self-determination of the people. However, each of these two categories has its own subtleties and not all cases that claim to be the category of self-determination of a people actually correspond to the principles of self-determination in international law. Many states cover violent separatist movements with the label of "freedom of self-determination." But it is worth noting that the canons of international law do not accept violence in any form, which makes this kind of separatism neither legal nor legitimate. This approach to considering the relationship between state and territory is very close to democratic values, according to which the priority is the population of the state, the people are the main element of the state, and not territory and power, which are secondary structural elements of the state. Interestingly, it was from 1990 that conflicts began to be increasingly classified as international or interstate conflicts, and from 1945 to 1990, conflicts were most often classified as civil or internal conflicts.

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Ж.Е. Алтыбаева
Л.Н.Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті, Астана, Қазақстан

Қақтығыстарды зерттеу әдістемесі. Посткеңестік кеңістіктегі қақтығыстарды зерттеудің ерекшеліктері

Аңдатпа. Қазіргі әлемдегі қақтығыстар тақырыбы барған сайын өзекті болып келеді және әртүрлі көзқарастарды ескере отырып, мұқият қарауды қажет етеді. Жанжалды шешу, бейбіт және одан да маңыздысы, жанжалды құқықтық реттеу негізгі мақсаттар болып табылады, бірақ оларға жету жолы егжей-тегжейлі және жан-жақты зерттеуге байланысты. Сонымен қатар, қақтығыстың табиғаты мен бастауларын түсіну үшін жанжал аймағын ескеру өте маңызды, әйтпесе жанжалды шешуге қол жеткізілмейді және жанжал мұздатылған күйге өтеді. Сондықтан қақтығыстың құрылымын, оның принциптері мен зерттеу әдістемесін түсіну қажет. Автор көрсетілген ерекшеліктер мен мәселелерді ескеретін кешенді әдістемені ұсынады. Бұл әдістеме саясаттану, әлеуметтану, тарих және халықаралық қатынастарға негізделген пәнаралық тәсілдерді қамтиды. Қорытындылай келе, бұл мақала посткеңестік кеңістіктегі қақтығыстардан туындайтын нақты мәселелерді шешетін мамандандырылған әдістемені ұсына отырып, қақтығыстарды зерттеу бойынша жалғасып жатқан дискурсқа өз үлесін қосады. Осы аймақтың бірегей ерекшеліктерін мойындай отырып, зерттеушілер, саясаткерлер мен талдаушылар қақтығыстардың алдын алу, басқару және шешудің неғұрлым негізделген стратегияларын

Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университетінің ХАБАРШЫСЫ.
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жасай алады, бұл сайып келгенде посткеңестік кеңістікте және одан тыс жерлерде бейбітшілік пен тұрақтылыққа ықпал етеді.

Түйін сөздер: қақтығыстану, халықаралық қақтығыс зерттеудегі принциптер, қақтығыстарды зерттеу тәсілдеме, аймақтық қақтығыстар, зерттеу дизайны, қақтығыс акторлары.

Ж.Е. Алтыбаева
Евразийский национальный университет имени Л.Н. Гумилева, Астана, Казахстан

Методология изучения конфликтов. Особенности изучения конфликтов на постсоветском пространстве

Аннотация. Тема конфликтов в современном мире становится все более актуальной и требует тщательного рассмотрения с учетом разных точек зрения. Разрешение конфликта, мирное и, что более важно, правовое регулирование конфликта являются основными целями, но путь к их достижению зависит от детального и всестороннего исследования. Кроме того, крайне важно учитывать регион конфликта, чтобы понять природу и истоки конфликта, иначе разрешение конфликта не будет достигнуто, и конфликт перейдет в замороженное состояние. Именно поэтому необходимо понимать структуру конфликта, его принципы и методологию исследования. Автор предлагает комплексную методику, учитывающую указанные особенности и проблемы. Эта методология включает в себя междисциплинарные подходы, основанные на политологии, социологии, истории и международных отношениях. В заключение, данная статья вносит свой вклад в продолжающийся дискурс по исследованию конфликтов, предоставляя специализированную методологию, которая решает конкретные проблемы, возникающие в результате конфликтов на постсоветском пространстве. Признавая уникальные особенности этого региона, исследователи, политики и аналитики могут разработать более обоснованные стратегии предотвращения, управления и разрешения конфликтов, что в конечном итоге будет способствовать миру и стабильности на постсоветском пространстве и за его пределами.

Ключевые слова: конфликтология, принципы изучения конфликтов, методология изучения конфликтов, региональные конфликты, акторы конфликта.

Information about author:

Altybaeva Zh.Ye. **–** PhD student at the Department of International Relations, L.N.Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan.

Алтыбаева Ж.Е. **–** Халықаралық қатынастар кафедрасының докторанты, Л.Н.Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті, Астана, Қазақстан.