

can also be indicated by the onset of specific immediate events: e.g. imposition of special emergency/internal security laws in minority and/or frontier areas, electoral/plebiscite results declared void by the state, removal/dissolution of local or regional governments in minority areas, banning of minority and ethnic nationalist political parties and associations, arrest of minority and nationalist political leaders, attacks on and arrests of press reporters, banning of independent and minority media outlets, and the use of state-controlled/official media to promote nationalist and xenophobic intolerance of identifiable minority (ethnic, religious) groups. Such events can indicate the presence of a deep disagreement between groups over the very political structures and identity of the state itself, the closure of avenues for dialogue, and the final preparation for violent oppression and resistance.

B) Polarisation / Potential for Conflict

This category includes the longer-term, historical conditions which provide the fertile soil for inter-group hostility and conflict. In terms of the political mobilisation of marginalised groups, common indicators are: strong ethnic group cohesion/solidarity and ethnic nationalist leadership, politicisation of ethnic collective identity (e.g. clan, tribe) by nationalist elites, the proliferation/fragmentation of such elites and allied militant organisations. In many cases there is a history of violent inter-group conflict, and collective group memories of victories and defeats, which will be invoked by elites to accelerate polarisation. Recent riots and massacres where perpetrators have gone unpunished, or where government inquiries were insincere, can greatly inflame enmity and provide the context or "excuse" for massive retaliation. Another important indicator here is the presence of refugees and/or internally-displaced, and the camps that sustain them. Un-integrated, un-repatriated refugees are often a sign of a conflict that is merely in a dormant phase, and camps often become the staging ground for militancy and extremism (e.g. Rwanda and RPF, Palestine and HAMAS).

Some early warning approaches refer to this category as "accelerating factors", an intermediate stage between conflict trigger incidents and the structural conditions referred to below. The HEWS system at DHA, for example, makes this distinction in its methodology. Such delineations, however, are ultimately arbitrary, and in actual cases of conflict escalation the factors that one might group under "accelerating factors" versus "triggers" could be almost interchangeable with each other depending upon the specifics of each situation. It may be, particularly for the conflict analyst or desk officer concerned with setting operational priorities, that a broad distinction between near-term/dynamic and longer-term/relatively static factors is quite adequate.

C) Structural / Societal Tension