

# The Autonomous Silesian Voivodship and its Legacy

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## I. Introduction

In the early 1990s, Ted Robert Gurr created a model of ethnopolitical mobilization and ethnic conflict.<sup>1</sup> The model was intended to explain why ethnic groups rebel. In its framework, he included three core variables: political action, mobilization, and active grievances. The model also contained predisposing variables, such as indicators of group identity and status. Since then, the model has evolved significantly (the newest version of the All Minorities at Risk project)<sup>2</sup> and has been commented on and tested by other authors.<sup>3</sup> Of the variables included in the AMAR model, active grievances are the most interesting for me here. These encompass demands made by leaders to serve the betterment of the political situation of their ethnic group. Thus, they represent political interests perceived by at least part of the non-dominant group. Among predisposing variables, the loss of autonomy can indicate political discrimination (using state coercion to maintain control over the group and territory).

Gurr's hypothesis assumed that mobilization of ethnopolitical groups is motivated both by grievances about group status and by the situationally determined pursuit of political interests.<sup>4</sup> Grievances stem from the past, and interests look to the future. Therefore, we can say that ethnic mobilization and conflict arise between what was and what can be. The past is understood here both as factual history and as collective memory – narratives about the past recognized and shared by a community. What can be is the political agenda of the representatives of the non-dominant group.

In this paper, I look at the problem of autonomy for the region of Upper Silesia, trying to answer two questions: What does “autonomy” represent today for Silesians? And what did it represent in the past? The arguments are made against the flow of time – starting from the present day and going backwards.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ted Robert Gurr*, *Why Minorities Rebel: A Global Analysis of Communal Mobilization and Conflict Since 1945*. “International Political Science Review/Revue internationale de science politique” Vol. 14, No. 2, 1993, p. 161–201.

<sup>2</sup> *Johanna K. Birnir/David Laitin/Jonathan Wilkenfeld/Agatha S. Hultquist/David Wague-spach/Ted R. Gurr*, *Socially Relevant Identity, Addressing Selection Bias Issues and Introducing the AMAR (All Minorities at Risk) Data*. CIDCM Working Paper. CIDCM: Maryland, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> *Gregory D. Saxton*, *Repression, grievances, mobilization and rebellion, A new test of Gurr's model of ethnopolitical rebellion*. *International Interactions*, 31 (1), 2005, p. 87–116.

<sup>4</sup> *Ted Robert Gurr*, *Why Minorities...*, 166–7.