

Structure

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a term used to mean a variety of things, in an assortment of contexts. Under the mantle of conflict are words such as fight, argue, contest, debate, combat, war and other equally evocative terms. The word conflict has been derived from the Latin word *confligere*, which means literally “to strike together”. It is impossible for two physical objects, such as two billiard balls, to occupy the same space. They conflict, and if either is in motion, the conflict will be resolved by a new position for both of them. Within the human realm, conflict occurs when different social groups are rivals or otherwise no competition. Such conflicts can have many different outcomes; one side changed, one side eliminated, both sides changed, neither side changes, nor (rarely) both sides eliminated. The popularly understood meaning of conflict is quarrel between two persons or groups. It is a physical fight or verbal duel preceded by disagreement and followed by indifference and enmity. The term may refer to isolated incidents in which a person contradicts within or two persons disagree between them or too broad and prolonged situations involving whole nation.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the Nature of Conflicts in a given society

- Examine the efficacy of various techniques of Conflict Resolution Mechanism

1.2 MEANING OF CONFLICT

Different scholars understand it differently. In the simple form, conflict refers to a situation which is “**oriented** intentionally to carry out the actor’s will against the existence of the other party or parties” (Rex, 1981, p.3).

This definition is given with an assumption that the actor pursues a desired goal which may or may not be the goal of the opposing party but the latter opposed that any way. The realisation of the goal by the actor may harass the opposing party or put it in a lower position and the very thought of losing position induces the opposing party to oppose the actor. Conflict between aggressor and victim can be cited as an example here. The encounter between murderer and victim, rapist and the raped, land lord and bonded labourer, exploiter and the exploited cover conflicts of this kind.

Some thinkers define conflict as a state of mutual antagonism or hostility between two or more parties. This refers to open clashes between individuals, street fights, or on large scale, deadly quarrels between nation states or several decades of cold war. Vihelm Aubert says, “The starting point must be sought in a state existing between two individuals characterized by some overt signs of antagonism. The term conflict here will be reserved for this state of tension between two actors. As a minimum, it must be demanded that at least one of the actors, in words or action, gives expression to a motive to frustrate the other or he actually frustrates him” (Vilhelm, 1963, p.26).

Conflict, according to some other thinkers, is a condition of incompatibility of interest or values. In the words of Jessie Bernard, “Conflict is one which arises when there are controversial and mutually exclusive goals or values pursued by different closely placed parties”(Bernard, 1957, p.40).

According to Kenneth Boulding, “Conflict exists when any potential positions of two behaviour units are mutually incompatible” (Boulding, 1963, p.4). He further defines “conflict as a situation of a competition in which the parties are aware of the

incompatibility of potential future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with wishes of the other” (ibid). In Boulding’s sense, it is clear that firstly, a conflict may exist even though there is no antagonism or hostility latent as overt between the parties. Secondly, the parties to a conflict ought to be aware of the conflict. This distinction indicates that conflict can be competition or an incompatibility.

Incompatibility may arise because the parties are like players, competing for the same prize such as power, position, authority, territory or materials or disagreement about the rules of the game. The former is a conflict of interests and the latter conflict of values, thought; the distinction is rarely clear-cut (Deuck, 1939, p.47).

A classic understanding of conflict sees it as a dynamic phenomenon: one actor is reacting to what another actor is doing, which leads to further action. Quickly, the stakes in the conflict escalate. One sequence of events follows another, and it is difficult to decipher which party is more responsible for what happens. In popular understanding it is expressed as 'it takes two to conflict'. There are many observations which evoke this theme, notably the prevalence of mirror images, that parties and issues are seeing the conflict in the same way, only reversing the picture. There are also dynamics pushing the actors in conflicts into two camps (polarisation), creating commanding leadership (centralisation), and forming institutions with particular responsibilities and little insight (secrecy and protection). The conflict takes on a life of its own, engulfing the actors and, seemingly irresistibly, pushing them into an ever increasing conflict. The idea of conflict as a social phenomenon moving by itself is powerful. It is invoked when parties say that they have no alternatives. The dynamics of the conflict have removed all other possible actions, and are said to give a party no choice but to continue to react at increasing levels of threat and violence.

For the analysis of such dynamics some tools have been developed. Game theory is a way of illustrating how parties act within the confines set up by the game itself. If the parties follow the rules, the outcomes are predictable. But it also raises the possibility that actors can change the dynamics by making particular moves or even breaking some of the 'rules' that the conflict has generated. Such an analysis was developed in the 1960s for the

polarised East-West conflict, suggesting credible de-escalating steps that could lead to positive responses. The idea was that if one actor begins to act on its own, the other(s) may follow, and thus the dynamics change direction. Some of these ideas were used for the US-Soviet relations in early periods of détente.

1.3 INCOMPATIBILITY ANALYSIS

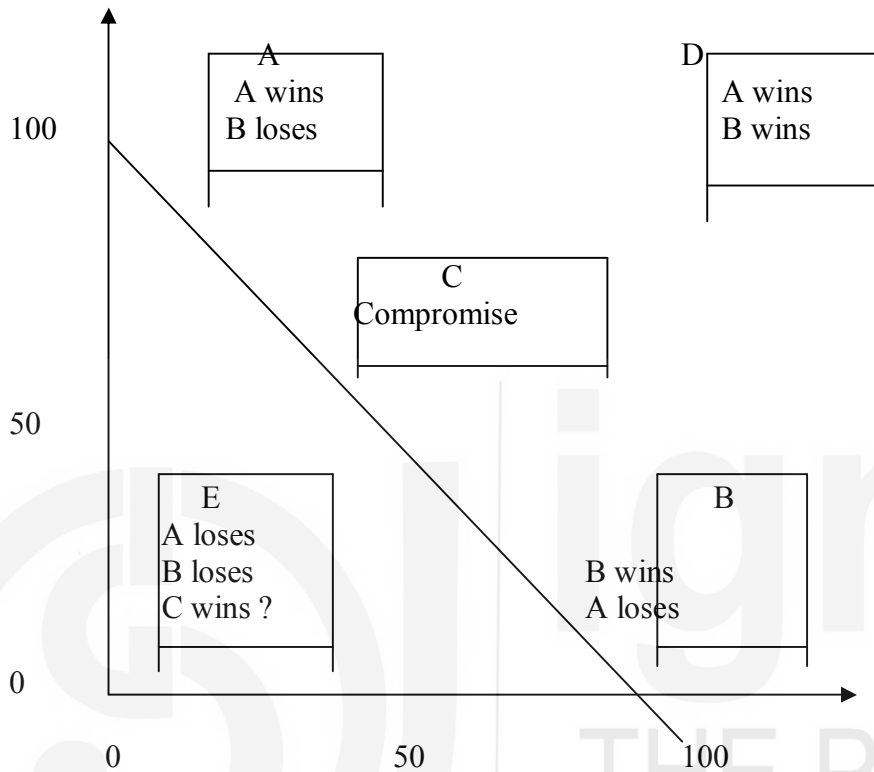
Particularly fruitful is Galtung's depiction of incompatibility as central to the dynamics of conflict. A way to do an incompatibility analysis is reproduced in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows two actors, A and B, with contradictory goals. What the dispute is about is not significant. It could concern a piece of territory, a sum of money, an attractive government post, or other scarce valuables. If A gets 100 percent of the available resources, there is nothing left for B, and vice versa. If either one wins, the situation finds itself at point A or point B, respectively, meaning complete victory for one actor and complete defeat for the other. It is an outcome an actor is not likely to abide by easily and voluntarily. Anything beyond these points may, however, be more acceptable and possible. Along the

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Figure 1.1

Analysis of Incompatibility



diagonal there are positions at which the parties may meet. C marks a classical point, where the parties divide the resources 50-50, equally much (or little) for each side. The parties may also agree on going to point E, none of them takes anything, but instead the valuables are handed over to actor C, also an agreed solution. In a more sinister scenario C may enter the conflict and take the valuables from the fighting parties - an opportunistic move by an outsider. The resources may also have been destroyed during the fighting. In the space left and below the diagonal in Figure 1, there are many outcomes. Different forms of compromise may be found here. To the right and above the line, however, there are other complications. This is where Galtung's ideas lead: transcendence. The hope is to find points of type D, where both parties can get what they want at the same time. The mathematical formulation is, of course, impossible. There

cannot be 200 per cent of something, but this space indicates the challenge of finding solutions beyond established rules and thinking. Creativity is needed for transcendence. Political battle often stifles innovation and reduces the options perceived by the actors. Sometimes, the strains of the effort may result in imaginative actions.

The dynamic approach to conflict analysis points to the significance of establishing a dialogue between the parties. This is where, for instance, finding a conference format is important. It requires that the parties can participate, but together with others who can serve as practical go-betweens and add issues which may unlock positions. It also points to the importance of confidence-building measures, not only in the military field but also in social, cultural, economic and other areas, as they can be instrumental in changing the dynamics of a conflict. Conferences and confidence-building are mostly multilateral, and in this approach the injection of mediators and facilitators is important. Third parties take a particular role in such settings.

1.4 CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

A most original idea is of conflict resolution mechanisms. This refers to the creation of independent procedures in which the parties can have confidence. These are formal or informal arrangements to which they can agree to hand over their conflict, whose solution they can accept and which can define the termination of a conflict. Such mechanisms exist in internal affairs, for instance, courts, democratic procedures, and elections called to solve a parliamentary stalemate. They are to be found in history as duels, oracles and ordeals. They are scarce in international relations, where court systems are weak and political fora easily become arenas of dispute, rather than frameworks for handling conflicts. In internal affairs, the possibilities of appeal are important, creating opportunities to review what has been done on lower levels. As part of a future conflict resolution mechanism this can also be a useful device in the international system.

Finally, it follows from this perspective that parties with non-violent methods are potentially efficient in changing the dynamics. This gives a role to peace movements but also to other groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that work for conciliation and understanding across divides. Such parties can even be involved in

conflicts and take sides, but they pursue the goals with peaceful means, not with violence. They constitute an alternative approach for a community wishing to achieve change, but not convinced that violence is an appropriate action. For instance, in Western Europe, Social Democratic ways of impacting on capitalist systems seem to have achieved more welfare, have stronger support in the public and lasted longer than did the bitterly competing Communist parties. This particular divide focused on the possibility of peaceful versus violent change.

Still, this perspective is weak in its understanding of why conflicts start. Is it reasonable to assume that conflicts really begin with conflict attitudes, or are such attitudes a result of previous behaviour and pre-existing incompatibilities? Can there be a more complex background that also has to be part of the analysis? What if the parties who often are modelled to be of equal strength in fact are highly unequal? These are critical challenges to conflict theory. This gives reason for considering alternative approaches.

1.5 TRANSCENDING INCOMPATIBILITY

In theory, there are seven distinct ways in which the parties can live with or dissolve their incompatibility. First, a party may change its goals, that is, *shift its priorities*. It is rare that a party will completely change its basic positions, but it can display a shift in what it gives highest priority to. This may open ways in which the other side can reciprocate. Leadership changes are particularly pertinent in this respect. With such changes, new possibilities are created. It does not mean that conflict resolution has to wait for a revolution. Leadership is often recruited from a limited segment of the population, and continuity remains important. Still, new leaders think differently and, thus, new leadership matters. There are also other changes that can take place. Changes in the surrounding world may be important, leading to shifts in strategic priorities. Among major powers, the rise of a new power or the fall of an old one may be such a condition. For less powerful actors, changes in major power relations have many implications. Shifts between *detente* and confrontation can be important for conflict resolution, as was clearly seen at the end of the Cold War. Economic crises can change priorities. The costs of pursuing a war may drain important resources and, thus, the chances of a peace

dividend may seem more attractive. However, the possibility for such changes should not be overestimated and it would be outright dangerous for a party to hinge a negotiation policy on expectations of change in a particular direction. New leaders may be weaker, major power relations may change for the worse, economic crises may induce less interest in compromise, etc. But it is important for the parties to continuously probe the other side, to find out if there are shifts in priority.

The second way is a classical one: the parties stick to their goals but find a point at which resources can be divided. This is point C in figure 1. It is sometimes seen as the essence of compromise, but it is only one form of compromise. It may mean that both sides change priority. However, it is done in such a way that the change by side A is coupled to a change by side B. To meet halfway, at some point which has a symbolic value, is easier for the parties. Then, it is also possible for them to defend the deal to other decision-makers and to the general public. It may appear reasonable and be in accordance with values in the society. If the incompatibility concerns territory, this may mean drawing a border approximately half the distance between the two demands. It makes sense, but only so long as the areas are not inhabited by people who will have their own interests, or if the area contains resources that should also be part of the deal. Compromise is most readily made with monetary resources. Negotiations between employers and employees have a long history of finding optimal points at which to draw the dividing line between the two sides. In many such situations, it is important for the parties to get some resources, rather than nothing.

A third way is *horse-trading*, where one side has all of its demands met on one issue, while the other has all of its goals met on another issue. It means using two separate incompatibility diagrams (Figure 1), one for each issue, and where each party gets 100 per cent. This can also be described as a compromise, but works in a different way from the division we just described. In horse-trading over territory, the idea would be that A takes area 1 and B takes area 2, although both of them have had demands on areas 1 and 2. Instead of making a complicated division, an entire piece of territory is taken over by one or the other. Again, as we noted before, this assumes that there are no particular features to the territory, or that such features somehow are equal for both (for instance,

oil in both). In a contest over political power positions, A may support B in some matters and receive corresponding support from B in others, meaning A and B abandon previous views and together form what is sometimes referred to as 'national pacts' or 'historical compromises'.

A fourth way is *shared control*. In this case the parties decide to rule together over the disputed resource. This comes close to outcome D indicated in Figure 1. A territory can be shared by being ruled as a condominium, where decisions require the consent of both parties. An economic resource can be operated by a joint company and a formula devised for investment and profit sharing. A country can be run by a coalition government, a frequent phenomenon in most parliamentary democracies. Shared control may require some degree of trust; it may also be a temporary arrangement for a transition period. Power-sharing arrangements also exemplify this. This is where all parties are represented in government according to a formula agreed upon beforehand (for each five per cent of the national vote a party gets one seat in the cabinet, for instance). Even if agreed to only for a predetermined period, it can mean that a conflict is successfully transcended, and that at the end of the period the conflict situation is very different from what it was at the beginning. This can also be applied to international regimes setting up rules for using water in shared rivers. In international affairs such arrangements may mean the beginning of regional integration; in internal affairs they can be contributions to the integration of a fragmented society.

A fifth way is to *leave control to somebody else*, which means externalising control, so that the warring parties agree not to rule the resources themselves. This is outcome E in Figure 1. The primary parties agree, or accept, that a third actor takes control. Such solutions have gained prominence in the discussions on international conflicts during the 1990s.

Sixth, there is the possibility of resorting to *conflict resolution mechanisms*, notably arbitration or other legal procedures that the parties can accept. It means finding a procedure that can resolve the conflict according to some of the previously mentioned five ways, with the added quality that it is done through a process outside the parties' immediate control. The legal mechanism builds on the idea of neutrality, distance and

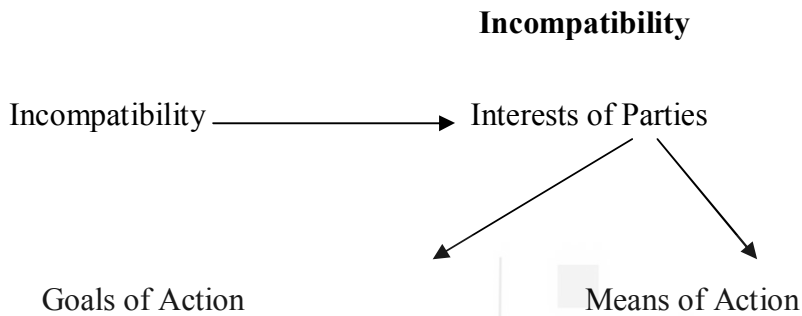
resort to precedents and history. Among conflict resolution mechanisms we would also include holding new elections and arranging a referendum, which means leaving the issue to a concerned but still non-predetermined audience. For this to be a legitimate way of ending a conflict, the conflicting parties should have a fair chance of presenting their views. A number of border disputes have been resolved with the use of arbitration. A remarkable case is the drawing of the border between Iraq and Kuwait after the Gulf War, settled according to an exchange of documents among the two parties, but under the authorisation of the UN Security Council.

Seventh, issues can be *left to later* or even to oblivion. By appointing a commission, parties can gain time, and when the commission reports, political conditions and popular attitudes may have changed. Some issues may gain from being delayed, as their significance may pale or their symbolic character may be reduced. This is an argument for not solving all questions at the same time. But it requires that there be a second chance to bring them up. In fact, the second chance is important for a loser to accept defeat or enter into a compromise. If there is a credible way in which one can return to the issue later or run in a new election, then the agreement is more acceptable. The party does not argue that the issue is given less priority, only that its time is not yet ripe. In the case of the first mechanism, in contrast, there is a significant change of position and the party does not return to its previous view.

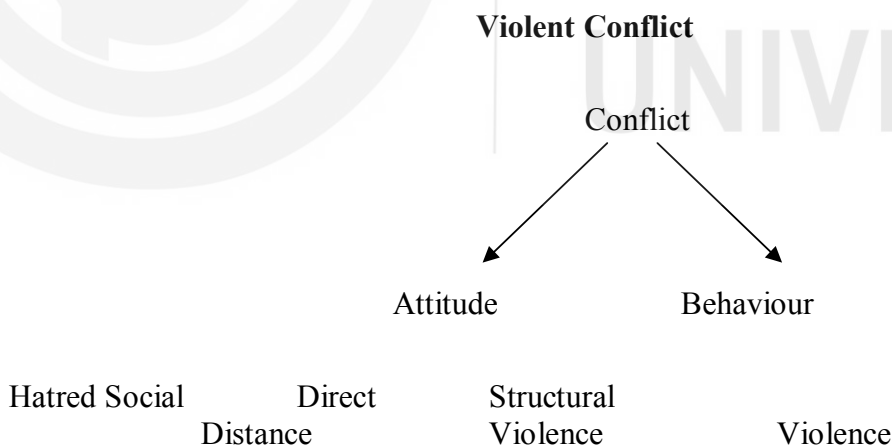
The word 'conflict' indicates patterns of behaviour. But social scientists mean it to refer to the cause of that act as well. That is to say, underlined condition for hostility which is called root conflict is equally, if not more important than the manifestation of the hostility, the behaviour. For example, killing or rape; it may be more correct to consider them as an expression rather than forms of conflict, acts indicating the existence of say social, economic, cultural, psycho-pathological, gender or personality conflict.

Conflict of interest stems from a situation of scarcity. Both the parties want the same thing but there is not enough available for each to have what it wants. The situation of scarcity is not only the condition that brings forth conflict. When the interest is intensified to the extent of becoming 'greed', even a situation of 'just enough' would bring forth conflict.

Galtung refers to conflict as some type of incompatibility. He distinguishes conflict as an undefined, latent condition, and its manifestation in terms of the attitude and behaviour of actors. A destructive behaviour and destructive attitude should not be confused with conflict. Conflict refers to some type of incompatibility: one goal stands in the way of another.



Attitudes and behaviour, Galtung explains, are usually assumed to be negative when they are related to conflict. These negative manifestations can take the form of sudden burst of hatred or direct violence. But they can also take institutionalised form of generalised social distance and structural violence.



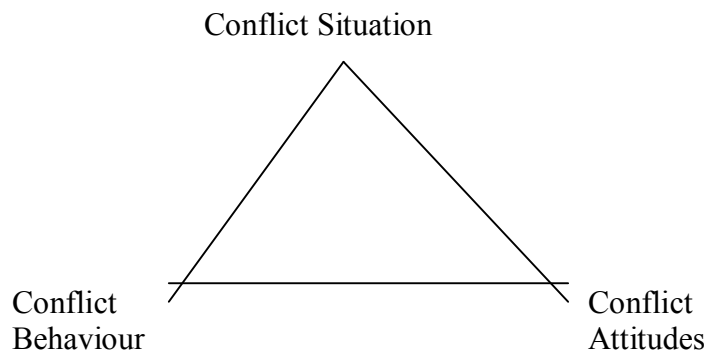
The term 'conflict' is ambiguous. It involves many factors. It may refer to the behaviour of different parties, the underlined conditions of conflict or the factors that motivate the actors for conflict. When there is a conflict, there is a continuous issue, embargo -

condition, a condition of deprivation, denial, injustice that bring forth conflict, there is character discrepancy between the party that is an inflaming volatile attitude that worsens the situation resulting in hostile outburst of action between the parties. All factors of a situation together constitute a conflict. Therefore, a clear understanding of the term 'conflict' requires a comprehensive definition which has been constructed by Galtung as "Conflict Triangle".

1.6 CONFLICT TRIANGLE

In a slightly more complicated version, the conflict triangle - introduced by Johan Galtung in the 1960s - provides a helpful analytical tool. It suggests that a conflict moves among the triangle's three corners, where corner A refers to conflict attitudes, B to conflict behaviour and C the conflict or contradiction itself (the incompatibility). A conflict sequence can begin in any of these corners. In later writings, Galtung gives somewhat more emphasis to C as a more frequent starting point. The dynamics are still most important, however, even expressed in conflicts having life-cycles. From this it follows that the resolution of conflict, conflict transformation, is a 'never-ending process'. A solution 'in the sense of a steady-state, durable formation is at best a temporary goal'. The conflict is transformed, for instance, through transcendence (where the goals are met fully for the conflict parties), compromise (goals are met less than fully for the sides) and withdrawals (goals are given up) (Galtung, 1996, pp.81-90).

Conflict Triangle



Conflict situation is one in which two or more social units or parties perceive that they are 'differentially placed' and are having mutually incompatible goals; in which there is discrepancy- what is and what ought to be, disparity, discrimination, denial of rights, exploitation, scarcity, competition etc. A situation of this kind by itself is not conflict, but is potent with conflict chances.

Conflict attitude means the aggressive or volatile nature of the parties which, in a situation of conflict, converts into behaviours. Conflict attitude can be greed, anger, impatience, frustration, fear, interpersonal tension, aggressive drive etc.

Conflict behaviour means action intended to carry out **will** ??? against the resistance of other party. It is action taken by a party in a conflict situation with the intention of making the opponent abandon or modify its goal.

According to Robert Merton, this state of incompatibility is called 'latent conflict situation'. Here the actors do not realize the urgency or the immediacy of conflict. When these actors, the privileged masters, get the energy and cognizance to translate the objective interest into subjective goal, they move to alter the situation and conflict occurs (Merton, 1968, p.3).

Adam Curle sees the linear sequence of this process (Curle, 1979, p.9).

- (a) Low awareness – of injustice but ignorantly passive. This is potential conflict [Mitchel calls this state “incipient conflict”]
- (b) A high awareness of basic conflict of interest through education and conscientization [this is latent conflict]
- (c) Confrontation of the oppressed and the oppressor through non-violence means [it is overt conflict]
- (d) Conciliation and bargaining aiming at a settlement [solution]
- (e) Restructuring the formerly un-peaceful relation.

1.7 CONFLICTS: CYCLICAL OR DIALECTICAL

While some scholars say conflict is primarily cyclical in its development and moves through a predictable sequence of stages, others say it is dialectical and stage wise process in which synthesis takes place and by which society is transformed from one state to another.

Karl Marx saw conflict developing in phases with each phase unfolding from the preceding one and leading ultimately to complete revolution. This would at last produce free society and there would be no more conflict as there would be no class. He says that the unity and togetherness of group is determined by its commonly perceived interest or goal with another group. "The separate individuals form a class or unit only in so far as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors" (Marx, 1964, p.45).

George Simmel holds that "Conflict lets social boundaries between groups, socialites and nations by strengthening group consciousness and awareness of separatedness thus establishing the identity of groups, societies and nations within" (Simmel, 1968, p.34). The function of conflict is exploited by some states for personal interest. When a nation is riddled with internal strife, the last strategy the leaders apply is declaring conflict (war) with another nation. Simmel states, "a state of conflict pulls the members so tightly together and subjects them to such uniform impulse. This is the reason why war with the outside is sometimes the last chance for the state ridden with inner antagonisms to overcome these antagonisms" (Ibid).

Conflict is generally considered as evil or as Talcott Parson says, "a disease" (Parson, 1964). "It is treated as a pathological condition equilibrium." Conflict within or without places people in stress and strain. It may result in physical altercation, destruction or annihilation or its less intensity arrests the regular course of life. In the process of conflict, huge measure of energy is depleted which, in turn, stunts the growth and development.

Sigmund Freud expressed, "Almost every intimate emotional relation between people which last for some time—marriage, friendship, the relation between parent-children—leaves a sediment feelings of aversion and hostility. When this hostility is directed against

people who are otherwise loved there is conflict” (Freud, 1948, p.55). He suggested that opposite instincts exist side by side in the unconscious, with no disharmony. Conflict occurs only when the overt, verbal, symbolic or emotional responses required to fulfill one motive are incompatible with those required to fulfill another. The situation frequently involves other motives that produce incompatible response tendencies.

However, scholars opine that conflict is a sort of ventilation that salvages individuals suffocating with the accumulation of hostility. It drains the tension caused by the precipitation of aversion and brings them all closer again.

Conversely, if anyone tries to avoid such conflict or resolves it, he would only help the sedimentation of aversion which, at a point of time, proves to be fatal, would break the relation forever. Hence conflict serves, contrary to the general belief, a unifying role. Society, in this respect, is “sewn together by its inner conflict” (Ross, 1920, p.165).

1.8 INEVITABILITY OF CONFLICTS

A final common assumption among conflict researchers is that the phenomenon of conflict, in one form or another, is an inevitable and ever present feature of society and social interaction.

The very nature of individual as a ‘unit’ of the society, brings forth reasons for conflict. The norm of Homo-Sapien is to be together. Humans live as social animals. But at the same time, every individual, despite being bound together by many commonalities and counterpetal characters, is absolutely of unique make-up. Each individual develops his own concepts, perceptions, understanding and likes and dislikes. Each is different in some ways from others. No two individuals are identical, not even identical twins are similar.

From this physiology to their cognition, everything is different. When individuals having all differences within live socially together, their interactions tend to have elements of

contradiction, disagreement and in-congenity; in other words, incompatibility in thoughts, words and deeds. Hence their relationship is potent with conflict.

The last century offered humans increased opportunities for conflict processes such as industrialization and urbanization that encourage contact among people, competition, numerous forms of group differentiation (ethnic, occupational, status) and consequent visibility of inequalities and stratification within society. Since competition, contact and visibility are prerequisites for conflict, R.W. Mack claims, “the mathematical possibilities of conflict increases both within and between societies under industrialization” (Mack, 1965, p.334).

Social research indicates a trend of high degree job dissatisfaction, labour conflicts, labour-management conflicts. Workers want better working facilities, credit for work done, leisure and recreation, while the owner demands efficiency, sincerity and more output of work, higher productivity and more profit. A worker or a farmer, with his moderate income, is constantly in conflict with the rising trend of material expectation of family. He is not able to fulfill the wants of the family members and they, under the pressure of their wants, fail to understand the bread winner and there is conflict between them.

There is a conflict between parents and children over behavioural practice, attitudes, manners, education, rights and duties, likes and dislikes etc. In family, conflict occurs on parental role, employment of mothers, intergenerational gap, material aberration etc.

Individual is, in a complex social system, in conflict at every step. One may develop quarrel with fellow passenger, in market, wherever interaction takes place. People conflict with each other in the name of religion, caste, creed, political identity, ideology etc.

Political conflicts too have constant occurrence. Clashes occur between cadres in fixing up posters, tying banners, drawing symbols on walls, campaigning for the party candidate etc. While these are at the grass roots level, the fight for recognition, equitable rights, autonomy and self-determination are major political conflicts found at the national level.

In addition to conflict with fellow beings, we find ourselves in conflict with our physical environment. The greediness of humans and their consumption needs resulted in forests being cut down beyond recovery. India's forest cover has been reduced to 11% as against the minimum requirement of 35% of the total land area. Natural resources such as fossil oil and various minerals, once regarded as inexhaustible, are being rapidly depleted. One unilateral conflict with lower beings has resulted in the extinction of many rare species and pushed many more to the verge of extinction. One clash with nature leads to less perception, unseasonal monsoon, ozone layer depletion and the resultant UV rays penetration, air pollution and consequent acid rain, raising level of sea etc. are the priori retaliation of the nature.

1.9 SUMMARY

Thus the individual is in conflict with self, fellow beings, family members, superiors, subordinates etc. Society is in conflict over faith, belief, worship, ideology, caste etc. Nations find themselves in conflict within and without. There is conflict over the maritime line and over atmospheric control. In short, humanity is in a continuous state of conflict.

Sometimes, we avoid conflict, some conflicts we accommodate, with some we reconcile and compromise with some others. Depending on the moods and temperament, we react on the occasions either aggressively or with restraints. Taking into account the nature of our relationship with a particular opponent, we respond either in a hostile manner or be passive on different occasions and regarding different methods of solving conflict. When the opponent is a dear one, like sister's son, spouse etc., we adopt more rational and humane approach to solve the conflict. Any attempt to resolve conflicts that emerge from multiple causes, therefore, has to be multidimensional if the result is to be permanent. In other words, any attempt to resolve conflicts ought to be one that deals with every cause of the conflict.

Will it be possible to envisage a society free from conflict? Such a society seems so remote from the world as we know it that the inevitability of continual and repetitive conflict seems more sensible, says Robert Lee (Lee, 1943, p.3). Thus it would be difficult to conceive of an ongoing society where social conflict is absent. The society without conflict is a dead society...like it or not, conflict is a reality of human existence and, therefore, a means of understanding social behaviour.

The hope of human existence is that in spite of perpetual conflict humans continue to thrive successfully, overcoming all these conflicts. On the basis of the nature of conflicts and the occasions, we tackle them with different efficiency.

Conflict is, therefore, universal fact. Our very experience pre-supposes conflict in its generation, and our knowledge, apart from its priori categories, is based on such conflict. Man is learning about himself, others and reality, his growth and development and his increasing ability to create his own heaven or hell. The desire to eradicate conflict, the hope for harmony and universal co-operation, is the wish for a frozen, unchanging world with all relationships fixed in their patterns - with all in balance.

1.10 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

- 1 Critically examine the nature of conflicts in the society today.
- 2 Discuss the efficacy of various techniques of Conflict Resolution Mechanism.

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UNIT 2 SOURCES OF CONFLICT

Structure

2.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

2.2 Inherency Theories

2.3 Contingent Theories

2.4 Interactionist Theories

2.5 Summary

2.6 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

2.1 INTRODUCTION

What are the sources of conflict? Are human beings destined always to experience conflict? Or is conflict something that can be eradicated? These are the basic questions that need to be addressed when examining structural and societal conflicts. How these questions are answered will influence the manner in which we attempt to resolve conflicts, or even whether we attempt conflict resolution. There are three basic theory types which must be considered. These types are inherency, contingency and interactionist.

A simple illustration of the schools of thought might be in order. The view that conflict is inherent has been expounded for centuries, if not millennia. One could argue that the story of Adam and Eve and the ‘fall’ is one of inherency- it was in the nature of humans to fall from paradise, it was inevitable. Eve, so the inherency argument goes, was destined to err. Her tasting of the forbidden fruit was not a matter of her exercise of free will, but rather, fundamental to her being. Thus there was nothing that could have been done to prevent the fall from paradise.

Unlike the inherency school, however, the contingent school would see the story of Adam and Eve differently. Eve’s taking of the apple resulted from some external

factors, outside of her being. She was tempted by the serpent, and persuaded to do something that she might not have done in other circumstances. Conditions, apart from herself, created powerful forces upon her behaviour, leading her to act as she did. Eve was not destined to err, but rather led to it. The fall from paradise, from the contingency perspective, was wholly preventable.

Different still from the inherency or contingency school is the interactionist view that behaviour depends upon both inherent and contingent factors, the two of which cannot be separated or further reduced. From this perspective, Eve's behaviour depended upon both her biological self-the speed at which she acted, her innate intelligence, and the rest of her genetic make up- and the external factors she found herself faced with, such as the power being exercised on her, her social situation and her status. Together, these forces combined to impact upon her and informed her behaviour.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Know the various sources of conflicts in a given society
- Understand the inherency, contingent and interactionist theories of the sources of conflict.

2.2 INHERENCY THEORIES

Hobbes made the observation that humanity is characterised by ceaseless, and indeed relentless, thirst for power. For Hobbes, humans carry within them the inherent drive to fight, which demands that societies be led by power. Only by imposing will upon the ruled can society be organised to run efficiently and peacefully. Hobbes was followed some years later by Edmund Burke who argued that the only way to curtail humanity's urge to conflict and violence is through law and custom. The writings of these British political philosophers influenced greatly the development of the democratic liberal state in the West.

One of the most influential forces in the inherency school was Sigmund Freud and his school of psychoanalysis. Fundamental to Freud's view of humanity are the contending life and death instincts. The life instinct has within it the desire for pleasure. The libido refers to the life energy within humans, though it was originally viewed by Freud as being reflected in terms of sexual energy. Opposed to the life instinct is the death instinct, or 'thanatos'. Freud (1990, p.164) believed that thanatos 'turns into the destructive instinct when it is directed outwards on to objects'. The death instinct, however, can be transformed within the person to serve the purposes of life. Making the matter even more complex, the externalisation of the death instinct, in the form of aggression, may be beneficial for the person, though harmful for those around.

Aggression, then, can be viewed as intrinsic to human behaviour, and serves as a fundamental and essential means by which humans protect and enhance their existence. Aggression, from this Freudian perspective, is carried out in the name of self-preservation, and is inherent to humans.

By extension, then, it may be said that a Freudian perspective on conflict is based upon the interplay between the life and death instincts. As aggression may be the externalisation of the death instinct, conflict more generally may be from a similar source.

Whereas Freud focused on the psychology of human action, others have focused more explicitly on the evolutionary and biologically competitive nature of human aggression and conflict. A notable proponent of 'aggression as a tool of survival' is Konrad Lorenz, author of *On Aggression*. The book, first published in 1963, expounds a theory outlining the purpose of aggression, not only in humans, but throughout the animal world. Like Freud, Lorenz argues that aggression serves a purpose in that it in some way assists the organism in its quest for survival. Rapoport (1986, p.3) holds that at its most elemental 'aggressive behavior does confer a survival advantage on the species in which it is genetically imbedded'. Lorenz sees aggression in its most basic form as serving three primary functions:

‘balanced distribution of animals of the same species over the available environment , selection of the strongest by rival fights, and defense of the young’ (Lorenz, 1971, p.40).

He argues for a special emphasis on the value of intra-species aggression, stating;

I return to the theme of the survival value of the rival fight, with the statement that this only leads to useful selection where it breeds fighters fitted for combat with extra-specific enemies as well as for intra-specific duels. The most important function of rival fighting is the selection of an aggressive family defender, and this presupposes a further function of intra-specific aggression: brood defense (ibid, p. 39).

He makes his argument using a host of examples from throughout the animal world, including Homo Sapiens.

The process of aggression is stimulated by instinct, which Lorenz notes as a much misunderstood mechanism. For Lorenz, instinct does not respond easily to manipulation, if at all. Like Freud, Lorenz sees instinct as something over which people have no control; it simply happens. Aggression, then, is quite dangerous, in that nothing hinders its expression. Furthermore, instinct need not be expressed through external stimulus; the body itself can produce the stimulus needed to create the reaction. Thus aggression becomes a dangerous instinct because its expression appears beyond any simple predictive device.

Using a Lorenzian model, then, all human social action is targeted towards distribution of the population, selection of the strongest, and defence of the young. The human aggressive impulse also gets translated into social activities, such as warfare. As Lorenz (1971, p. 275) notes, ‘we must face the fact that militant enthusiasm has evolved from the hackle-raising and chin-protruding communal defense instinct of our prehuman ancestors’. For Lorenz, then, warfare is as natural as any other form of human aggression. Perhaps the only difference

between the aggression of, for example, the rat and humans is that humans have developed an extensive and elaborate mechanism for pursuing that aggression.

Following the path of Lorenz, Robert Ardrey, in the *Territorial Imperative*, examined the role of territory in the onset of aggression. His objective was to examine the role of territory in humans. He wrote: The concept of territory as a genetically determined form of behavior in many species is today accepted beyond question in the biological sciences. But so recently have our observations been made and our conditions formed that we have yet to explore the implications of territory in our estimate of man (Ardrey, 1967, p.14).

For Ardrey, territory represents a tremendous influence over human action, and even influences the ways in which humans form social groups. Ardrey (ibid, p. 15) asks, 'How could it be that such a number of peoples in such varying environments so remote from each other should all form similar social groups based on what would seem to be a human invention, the ownership of land? Of course, Ardrey's observation of the ubiquitous nature of land ownership would be compelling if it were true, but evidence shows that there is no universal concept of land ownership. It would be more true to say that groups have a notion of physical place, without the connotation of ownership.

Relating territoriality to human behaviour, Ardrey (1967, p. 15) argues that: The principal cause of modern warfare arises from the failure of an intruding power correctly to estimate the defensive resources of a territorial defender. The enhancement of energy invariably engendered in the defending proprietor, the union of partners welded by the first sound of gunfire, the biological morality demanding individual sacrifice, even of life; all of the innate commands of the territorial imperative act to multiply the apparent resources of a defending nation.

Territory becomes the single most influential force in driving human action. Aggression, unlike in Lorenz's model, does not directly serve the species as such, but rather the group, as defined by territory. The drive to defend territory leads

humans to increase their resources, multiply their activities and place themselves in mortal danger. Yet like Lorenz, Ardrey creates a picture of aggression in which humans have no control; they are enslaved by their own evolutionary history. In fact, Ardrey paints a grim picture for the future of humanity's ability to handle conflict.

The human predicament contains two forces. On the one hand that balance of terror, the *pax atomica*, compels a general peace. In any event, war as we have known it has become both an impractical outlet for our innate psychological needs and an impractical external pressure enforcing our social amity. But on the other hand, man's cultural achievements have long since pressed him beyond a point of possible return, and if he is to survive on his irreversible course of technological mastery, specialised skill, and consequent interdependence, then he becomes with every passing year, every passing day, more at the mercy of social amity and mutual co-operation. And so we must ask: Have our cultural achievements in peacetime, eliminating the reality of natural hazard, matched our cultural achievements in wartime, eliminating the reality of enemies, so that in final sum we must face that primate impossibility, exaggerated by human achievement, reduction to zero of effective amity? (Ibid, p. 257).

What the work of Ardrey does provide, though, is some insight into the possible origins of nationalism and ethnicity. It could be argued that nations are the logical extensions of groupings of human beings, who perceive themselves as a group. In defining itself as a group, that collective then behaves aggressively to those who are not its members.

Employing classic deterrence reasoning, de Waal (Ibid, p. 11) suggests that the quickest method of countering aggressive escalation is through 'soothing remarks or body contact'. Primates, including humans, de Waal argues, have developed an intricate system of behaviour to counter aggression. This behaviour, furthermore, is innate, and is expressed primarily within the context of one's own group.

Like Lorenz and Ardrey, de Waal also argues that not all aggression is necessarily negative. Aggression, he says, serves as a method of creating the sense of a group. Unlike many other theorists, de Waal is not suggesting that it is aggression against some outside group, but rather aggression within the group. Cohesion is created, for example, by the practice of hazing, where young military cadets in military academies undergo rituals, such as cleaning toilets with toothbrushes, or standing guard in the nude. These entail aggression on the part of group members towards members of their own group. Yet from the perspective of the group, the aggression may have been useful. For de Waal peace comes, then, not out of some sense of equitable turning of swords into ploughshares, but rather through the acceptance of aggression, and of the reconciliation offered by other group members. In a sense, peace is the acceptance of inequality, the recognition that some are of a more equal status than others. To use de Wall's (1989) phrase, 'unification through subordination' may be the norm, though there is room for egalitarian resolution of conflict. It is just that egalitarian conflict resolution is not the norm.

Keith Webb (1986) has outlined the common characteristics and sources of conflict shared by inherency theories. These are:

- The fundamental disposition of individuals is towards power and dominance, violence is only an extreme but normal expression of this tendency.
- There are alternative channels for seeking power, of which collective political violence is merely one.
- The major problem is explaining why violence does not occur more often.
- The choice of violence is a question of tactical consideration.
- Tactical choices are influenced by cost-benefit calculations.
- Cultural factors play a relatively minor role, and will both inhibit and promote the use of violence.

- Factors such as the coercive balance of forces and facilitating conditions are of major importance.

2.3 CONTINGENT THEORIES

Counterpoised to the inherency arguments of the sources of human aggression are contingency theories. Contingency theories postulate that aggression is not innate, but its expression depends upon factors external to the person. As Webb (1986, p. 172) explains 'Conflict may occur through a scarcity of a competition for resources, or through a scarcity of and competition for resources, or through maldistribution of ample resources. But it may not be a necessary condition of human societies that these conditions pertain.'

The earliest 'modern' presentation of the contingency argument can be found in the writing of the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau saw humanity as having moved from a state of nature to one of society, and social intercourse. In addition to humanity's 'desire for self-preservation, which Hobbes had found basic to man, Rousseau added compassion, the instinctive abhorrence felt at the sight of another living being, and especially another man, suffering pain and death' (Germino, 1972, p.98). This compassion militates against the pure aggression and constant warfare found in Hobbes's work. Alone, humans are not innately aggressive or warlike. Ultimately, though, Rousseau notes humanity's creation of society, and thus comes the fall. It is not just any society that creates difficulty for people, but rather it is entry into the wrong sort of society. The goal, writes Rousseau, is

To find a form of association which defends and protects with the entire common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each uniting himself to all obeys only himself and remains as free as before-such is the fundamental problem of which the social contract gives the solution (Rousseau, quoted in Germino,1972).

The difficulty, of course, is that not all (or even many) forms of social association defend or protect the individual. Thus, it seems that society often hinders an individual from obtaining what is necessary to their happy and productive life. Rousseau encapsulates his perspective nicely when he writes, 'Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.'

The impact of Rousseau on later political theorists is notable. Perhaps the most important of his followers was Karl Marx. Marx's theory of class conflict was built upon a contingency argument. He argued that humans are separated from their true nature by the organisation of work. Workers are controlled and dominated by economic factors beyond their direct control. This economic system, termed capitalism, is an arrangement whereby the producers of labour are alienated from the fruits of their labour. So, a person may make a chair, but it is not **his** chair; the chair is owned by somebody else, who secures the chair from the labourer. In so doing, the producer of the chair does not receive an equitable exchange and is thereby kept in bondage to the capitalist.

The class of people who belong to the capitalists are pitted against the labouring class, or those who are alienated from their products. This tension is expressed in terms of class conflict, and is the engine by which conflict itself ends. Evolution of communism takes hold, wherein, first, political communism arises, with the state still intact. The second stage is where the state is transcended, yet it is a condition in which the owners of private property still have influence. A final stage is entered into where there is 'a genuine resolution of the antagonism between man and nature and between man and man; it is the true resolution of the conflict between existence and essence' (Marx quoted in Germino, 1972). Like Rousseau, Marx felt that society and the development of society dramatically transformed humanity's condition. Whether conflict existed or not was dependent upon society, not the behaviour of individuals.

Some may argue that Marx's theories do not really fit well into the inherency/contingency split. Because of Marx's emphasis on history- that this is,

for example, the historical epoch of the capitalists- it is difficult to know whether he is a contingency theorist or an inherency theorist. All human relations are conflictual, Marx argues, because of the historical (capitalist) epoch in which we live. The ironclad nature of such an argument suggests that there is something inherent in human behaviour. Yet the transition out of this historical epoch is in human hands, and not innate. Thus, for some, Marx's theory rests on the precipice between inherency and contingency.

One of the most important issues that Marx brings to the fore is the role of economic and social organisation and their collective impact on human behaviour. In the early part of the twentieth century, John Maynard Keynes, the noted British economist, brought attention to the flaws of European economic organization following the end of World War 1 and into the Great Depression. Keynes was not in any sense a Marxist; he was a follower of the democratic liberal tradition. To Keynes, the main social problems that he encountered included unemployment, disease and hunger. These are the causes of human misery and humans can act in ways to prevent them. It is the duty of government, then, to use its powers to influence the economy by stimulating investment, through a variety of means.

Keynes did not see humanity as innately tied to economic deprivation. He wrote: But what counsel of hope can Revolution offer to sufferers from economic privation, which does not arise out of the injustices of distribution but is general? The only safeguard against Revolution is indeed the fact that, even to the minds of men, who are desperate, Revolution offers no prospect of improvement whatever (Keynes, 1920, p. 296).

The alternative to the inadequate revolution was, of course, an economic system which provided for an increase in the general welfare of the citizenry. Implied throughout of course, is the concept that deprivation, poverty and hunger are causes of social conflict. This underscores many an economist's theories of human behaviour. Where Marx saw the state as, ultimately, working against the interests of humanity, Keynes saw it as perhaps the only alternative to social decay and

violence. Keynes was neither the first nor the last to suggest that the state could resolve the ills which frustrated humanity's existence.

Implicit in many contingency theories is the argument that when humans are faced with a force that frustrates their normal behaviour, they become aggressive. This seemingly rigid link between frustration and aggression, however, was in need of modification. One can easily see that not all frustration leads to aggression- at least certainly not in any immediate sense. Most people in a traffic jam do not jump out and start assaulting those around them, though many may feel the impulse. Clearly, the relationship between frustration and aggression is more complex. It is also clear that aggression is not the only response to frustration. For example, it has been argued that frustration can lead to individuals becoming helpless. In the face of ongoing frustration, parties may, instead of becoming aggressive, acquiesce and simply surrender as a coping mechanism. Martin Seligman (1975) described coping helplessness as learned helplessness. It is equally unclear what is meant by frustration and what causes frustration? Is frustration always from an external source? Is a frustrating event an objective phenomenon, or subjective, or both? Equally difficult is aggression. Is aggression always a physical act? Is there such a thing as symbolic aggression? Is there such thing as internalised aggression, and if so, how do we know? Can frustration be stored up, to result in aggression at a later date? While Dollard et al. seek to address many of these questions, they do so in a sometimes less than convincing manner, so that these questions represent the many difficulties that impact upon the frustration-aggression hypothesis.

The existence of a social prejudice against a group of people is evidence, first, that those who have the prejudice have been frustrated and, secondly, that they are expressing their aggression or part of it in fairly uniform fashion. Race prejudice, then, can be explained with the help of the present hypothesis (Dollard et al., 1969, p. 151).

Racism, then, exists when the frustrated target their frustration on a group. That group, using this argument, may or may not be the source of the frustration, they

may simply be scapegoats. In Australia for example, the attacks against Indian students can be founded upon frustration felt among the native population and result in aggression against the Indian students. Of course, the Indian students would feel frustrated having received the aggression of the natives and would themselves behave aggressively.

Placement of the frustration-aggression hypothesis in the contingency theory camp rests upon the observation that if there were no frustration, then there would be no aggression. By extension we may also say that if there were no frustration, then there would be no conflict. So, the expression of conflict seems to be dependent upon some factor outside the human organism.

Albert Bandura argued that there are three primary sources of human aggression. Those sources are familial setting, sub cultural context and symbolic modeling. Social learning takes place in the family, and from that environment we develop models of appropriate behaviour. Simply stated, Bandura's argument is that violent families produce violent offspring. By extension, then, it can be argued that conflictual families produce conflictual offspring.

A second source of aggression can be found in subcultures. Bandura (1973, p. 97) explains: 'The highest rates of aggressive behavior are found in environments where aggressive models abound and where aggressiveness is regarded as a highly valued attribute'. So, for example, in street gangs with a premium on violence, individual members of the gang would be expected to be violent. This is not too surprising, but Bandura (Ibid, p.98) asks why not people in violent environments should be violent, but 'why anyone residing in such an environment should adopt a markedly different style of life'. Why is it that a person raised in a violent environment may not be violent? Of course, one reason why people may not become violent is that many people may simply aspire not to be violent. Living in a violent environment does not make one an automation, desiring only that which is readily available. This desire for things other than violence may lead parents to instill in children values and behaviours that are in and of themselves counter-

violent. Bandura does suggest, though, that there is a strong capacity to instruct a group in the ways of violence. He makes his point in suggesting that the military is an excellent example of making otherwise relatively non-violent persons violent.

A final category of social learning comes from symbolic sources. Bandura argues that a major source for the transmission of violence is television. Television transmits pictures of violence, impressions of violence and even the symbolic culture of violence. We learn how to cope with 'reality' through television, and are susceptible to its messages. This is especially true among the young of society.

Television as a source of social learning, especially as a device for transmitting conflictual values, is an area that has been debated hotly over the years. There appears to be no easy answer to the question, primarily because it is so difficult to isolate television-watching behaviour from the rest of our social interactions.

Through the interaction of these three areas we are invested with the culture of violence and aggression, and given models of how to deal with conflict. Using Bandura's model it is possible to speak of a culture of conflict, an organisation which is conflictual, or even a conflictual nation.

In sum, the contingency theory school holds that conflict and aggression are dependent upon factors outside the individual. In general, contingency theories hold:

- Individuals are basically pacific.
- Under special conditions the pacific impulses may be diverted.
- The major problem for conflict theory is to explain the frequency of violence.
- When special conditions arise, other human dispositions may be activated.
- Collective violence is affected rather than coolly calculated.
- The tendency to violence may be affected by cultural learning.

- Two further minor factors affecting the use of violence are coercive balance between forces and other factors facilitating the successful use of violence (Webb, 1986).

2.4 INTERACTIONIST THEORIES

A third school is the interactionist, which combines elements of the contingent and inherency schools. There really is no body of literature that rejects the premise that behaviour derives from either nature or nurture. Instead of debating this old and apparently unending debate it ought to be rejected outright. Wrangham and Peterson call the nature versus nurture debate Galton's Error, after Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin. Galton took the phrase 'nature versus nurture' from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Since then scholars have been engaged in trying to ascertain the relative contributions of the two. Wrangham and Peterson (1996) rejected Galton's Error, arguing that it is a false choice. The best course is to cast off the reductionist impulse and instead focus on how both genetics and social interactions commingle to create human behaviour. Both the inherency and the contingency school suffer from difficulties that make exclusive reliance upon their assumptions questionable. The inherency school ignores social grouping, and when it does focus on such groupings, inherency theorists simply say society is what it is, and results from genetics. The contingency theorists also suffer some significant difficulties, prime among which is the inability to deal with clear biological limitations on human behaviour. For example, if intelligence is a matter of genetics, and has an influence over conflict behaviour, then how does the contingency school cope?

The interactionist approach is best illustrated by examining height. A tall person becomes tall, relative to others, through two influences. One influence is genetics; a person is tall in part because of his or her genetic constitution. The tall person, though, is also tall because of social factors, such as the availability of high – protein foodstuffs. Citizens of Japan are now increasing in average height, owing to a change in diet. It was not that the Japanese are genetically short, but rather that

their diet inhibited the full expression of their genes for height. So, the height of the Japanese (and everybody else for that matter) is governed by the interplay between genetic make-up and social environment.

Burton has argued that needs satisfaction is essential to society. In this sense, his work reflects that of many of the inherency theorists. Human beings are motivated by a series of drives, or needs, which compel them to act. As Burton (1990, p. 36) explains, 'From the perspective of conflict studies, the important observation is that these needs will be pursued by all means available. In ontological terms the individual is conditioned by biology, or by a primordial influence, to pursue them, 'Needs, however, do not exist in the biological world alone, but rather in a social milieu. Needs satisfaction behaviour is expressed socially, and so the social setting influences the degree to which they may be satisfied. In this sense, then, Burton's work also draws on contingency theory, in that the satisfaction of needs is dependent upon the social context.

An example of the interaction between inherency and contingency in the satisfaction of needs is found in an impoverished ethnic group. Burton would argue that this group has, among other needs, a need for security. This need will be pursued doggedly. The satisfaction of this need may come either collectively or individually. Whether it is satisfied depends upon not only the behaviour of the individual, but also what is available in society. As Burton argues, though, basic human needs are not scarce, there is no limit to security. Yet there may be social limits, in terms of acceptability. While theoretically a person may undertake any behaviour in order to satisfy a need, they may feel constrained by what is regarded as 'acceptable' social behaviour. Those who seek to satisfy needs by any means necessary are often labeled deviant. Those who fail to satisfy their needs and suffer accordingly also can be deviant, but instead can be labeled maladjusted or even neurotic.

In the above example, people behave in many ways in order to satisfy their needs. Some will follow a conservative path, strictly adhering to their interpretation of

‘civil’ behaviour. Others, though, will seek other means, some labeled eccentric and others labeled ‘anti-social’. Eccentric behaviours might be extreme forms of religiosity; others might be forms of nationalism. More ‘extreme’ behaviour, though, might be termed ‘revolutionary’ as individuals seek to secure their security needs. In many dispossessed groups there have been messianic movements, extreme forms of nationalism, and strict conservatism. All these behaviours can be understood through the need for security; that is, the need to make oneself secure.

The primary criticism to be leveled against the interactionist school is that it does not reduce behaviour to a simple cause. In this sense, it is perhaps not as satisfying as the inherency or contingency arguments. Some may see a rejection of the nature versus nurture question as surrender- a sort of intellectual throwing up of the hands. It would be unreasonable, though, to accept such criticism. The nature versus nurture argument is reminiscent of the alchemists search for a way of converting iron into gold. Try as they might, they could not do it. It is likely that behaviour can never be reduced to a single cause.

In sum, the interactionist school holds the following:

- Individuals are often pacific, but violence as such is not aberrant.
- Conflict is one, but not the only response, to unmet needs.
- Human behaviour varies enormously, with impulses that are often not clear.
- Collective violence may be either reactionary or coolly calculated.
- The tendency to violence may be affected by cultural learning, tempered by inherent impulses.

2.5 SUMMARY

The division between inherent, contingent and interactionist theory is not the only way to divide the Theory World into conceptual pieces but gives ample opportunities to know and understand the sources of the conflict. (???????) There may be the case with all social conflicts based on communal, ethnic and racial

issues. There may be some objectives at the centre but, owing to a number of conflict lanes simultaneously operating which the group experiences, there is always displacement of frustration through various defence mechanisms to avoid or resolve conflict. Conflict has more than one source because of the practical spill-over and displacement of frustration or disappointment.

2. 6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the various sources of conflict.
2. Critically examine the inherency, contingent and interactionist theories regarding the sources of conflict

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Structure**3.1 Introduction****Aims and Objectives****3.2 Focusing on Conflict Dynamics****3.3 Focusing on Basic Needs****3.4 Focusing on Rational Calculations****3.5 Identifying Key Elements in Conflict Analysis****3.6 Summary****3.7 Terminal Questions****Suggested Readings**

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'Conflict' continues to be an elusive one in spite of efforts by peace-researchers and social scientists to clarify it. The common preoccupation with the phenomena of conflict necessitates theoretical work on basic concepts of analysis so that different perspectives and different observations can be brought together. Much work still remains to be done; but an increasing number of insights have been gained in modes of conflict analysis, though little has been achieved in the field of conflict resolution.

The different modes of analysis are brought together under three headings. There are approaches which emphasize (1) conflict dynamics, (2) needs-based conflict origins, and (3) rational, strategic calculations. These constitute distinct forms of analysis. However, they do intersect and many writers use them interchangeably.

Aims and Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Understand and examine the various methods of Conflict Analysis
- Identify the key elements in conflict Analysis

3.2 FOCUSING ON CONFLICT DYNAMICS

Most of the analysis in this section has already been discussed in Unit 1. Nevertheless, it is important to rewind some of them for understanding the conflict dynamics. The classic understanding of conflict sees it as a dynamic phenomenon; one actor is reacting to what another actor is doing, which leads to further action. Quickly, the stakes in the conflict escalate. One sequence of events follows another, and it is difficult to decipher which party is more responsible for what happens. In popular understanding it is expressed as ‘it takes two to conflict’. There are many observations which evoke this theme, notably the prevalence of mirror images, that parties and issues are seeing the conflict in the same way, only reversing the picture. There are also dynamics pushing the actors in conflicts into two camps (polarisation), creating commanding leadership (centralisation), and forming institutions with particular responsibilities and little insight (secrecy and protection). The conflict takes on a life of its own, engulfing the actors and, seemingly irresistibly, pushing them into an ever-increasing conflict. The idea of conflict as a social phenomenon moving by itself is powerful. It is invoked when parties say that they have no alternatives. The dynamics of the conflict have removed all other possible actions, and are said to give a party no choice but to continue to react at increasing levels of threat and violence.

For the analysis of such dynamics some tools have been developed. Game theory has already been discussed. Such an analysis was developed in the 1960s for the polarized East-West conflict, suggesting credible de-escalating steps that could lead to positive responses. The idea was that if one actor begins to act on its own, the other(s) may follow, and thus the dynamics change direction. Some of these ideas were used for the US-Soviet relations in early period of détente.

The dynamic approach to conflict analysis points to the significance of establishing dialogue between the parties. Here, a conference format is important and requires that the parties can participate, with practical go-betweens and add issues which may unlock positions. Confidence-building measures are important not only in the military field but also in social, cultural, economic and other areas. Conferences and confidence-building

are mostly multilateral, and the role of mediators, facilitators and third parties take a particular role in such settings.

Conflict resolution mechanism refers to the creation of independent procedures in which the parties can have confidence. These are formal or informal arrangements to which they can agree to hand over their conflict, whose solution they can accept and which can define the termination of a conflict (Coser 1967; Galtung 1965; Schelling 1960). Such mechanisms exist in internal affairs, for instance, courts, democratic procedures, and elections called to solve a parliamentary stalemate. They are to be found in history as duels, oracles and ordeals. They are scarce in international relations, where court systems are weak and political fora easily become arenas of dispute, rather than frameworks for handling conflicts. In internal affairs, the possibilities of appeal are important, creating opportunities to review what has been done on lower levels. As part of a future conflict resolution mechanism this can also be a useful device in the international system.

Finally, parties with non-violent methods are potentially efficient in changing the dynamics. This gives a role to peace movements but also to other groups and non-governmental organization (NGOs) that work for conciliation and understanding across divides. Such pursue the goals with peaceful means, not with violence. They constitute an alternative approach for a community wishing to achieve change, but not convinced that violence is an appropriate action.

Nevertheless, this perspective is weak in its understanding of why conflicts start. Do conflicts really begin with conflict attitudes? Or, are they result of previous behaviour and pre-existing incompatibilities? Can there be a more complex background? These are critical challenges to conflict theory and require alternative approaches.

3.3 FOCUSING ON BASIC NEEDS

A **Classical** writer in social conflict theory Lewis A. Coser argued in 1965 that the conflicts as well as the violent actions stem from not being accepted in society, a matter of dignity, political access and power. The riots were not random burning and looting, but

struck against those who had treated members of another ethnic community in a condescending way. Coser points to a remedy: access to the political system. He writes that 'only where there exist open channels of political communication through which all groups can articulate their demands, are the chances high that the political exercise of violence can be successfully minimized' (1967, p.106). This means that violent conflict can be terminated by satisfying needs for access. This, furthermore, has to be maintained over time. The solution is likely to be found in building new institutions, whether formal or informal.

In his work on 'protracted social conflict' twenty years later, Edward Azar outlined ideas for explaining the duration of conflicts and the repeated failure of conflict resolution. He was concerned, for instance, with the civil war in Lebanon which, by the time of writing, had raged for more than a decade. This and other protracted conflicts dealt with such needs as security, identity, recognition and participation, factors which are identical to those that Coser singled out (Azar and Burton, 1986, p.29). These contributions by Coser and Azar result in a different approach to conflict resolution. If the basis of a conflict is the denial of particular needs, then the resolution process must identify those needs and include ways of answering them. Negotiations have a tendency to give advantages to elite, and if agreements 'do not touch upon the underlying issues in the conflict (agreements) do not last'. Instead, Azar finds, conflict resolution requires decentralized structures and ways in which psychological, economic and relational needs can be satisfied (Azar and Burton, 1986, pp.30-39).

This thinking is part of a materialist theoretical tradition and constitutes a significant element in class analysis. But Marxist theorists seldom have come to an understanding of conflict resolution. On the contrary, much Marxist thinking is based on the idea of continuous conflict, ending only with the defeat of the oppressive system, at this time, Capitalism. Negotiation and compromise were not part of the political formula, or of the academic study. Only in the reformist, Social Democratic version was conflict within Capitalism manageable. When Soviet leaders argued in the late 1950s that peaceful

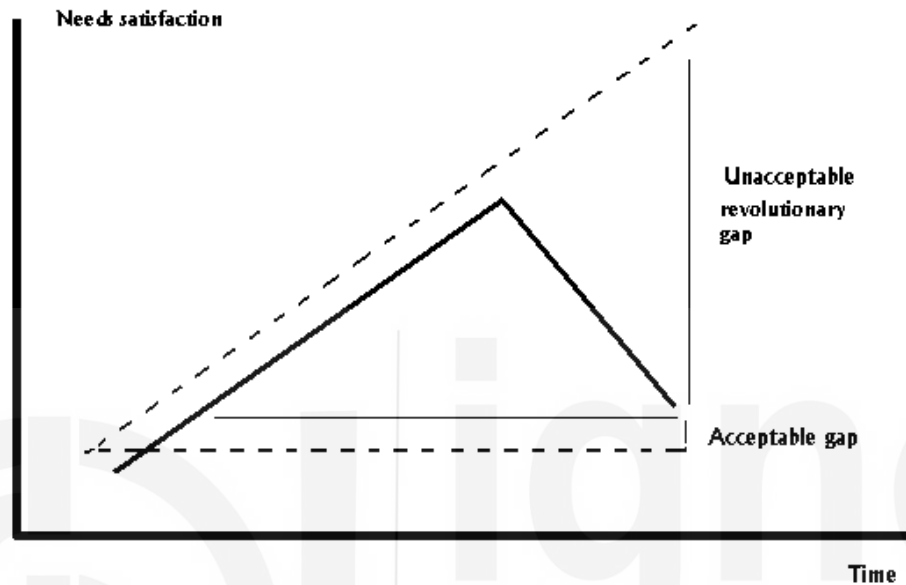
coexistence with Capitalism was possible, it resulted in a rupture with more orthodox Communism, for instance, the People's Republic of China under Mao Tse-tung.

Another root of the idea of conflict stemming from frustration is the approach of analyzing revolution as emerging from unsatisfied needs. Theories of deprivation have been given thoughtful consideration in a number of works and been exposed to empirical tests (Davies, 1971; Gurr, 1970). The results are mixed. In his elaborate treatment of relative deprivation, Ted R. Gurr found support for 'relative deprivation' as a systematic way for conflicts to become violent. In his later work on ethnic groups, Gurr reports factors that were associated with escalation into violent conflict, most notably the negative effects of the removal of autonomy for a particular group. It often becomes an important reason for the group to revolt (Gurr, 1993). The observation is linked to Coser's reflections on dignity and political access. The removal of channels of influence may spark violence. Thus, the creation of such channels can be important in terminating violence and making non-armed conflict a constructive part of the political process.

These theorists refer to concepts such as frustration and deprivation. What they provide is an analysis of social frustration. Basic needs are not met in a particular society; instead they are out of reach for a group, which thus becomes frustrated. The conflict originates in or feeds on this frustration. It comes close to classical studies on frustration as resulting in aggression, and aggression as stemming from frustration (Dollard et al. 1939), which has given rise to considerable debate and revision. For instance, it has been asked if aggression is the only way to direct frustration, and whether there are other possible explanations for frustration and conflict behaviour (Fry and Bjorkqvist, 1997, pp.26-32). Coser restricts the argument to the denial of dignity and access, not necessarily to other frustrated objectives.

The sequence is captured in James C. Davis' figure on revolution, drawn in figure 1. It shows pointedly how a gap emerges and when the difference between expectations and frustration becomes obvious. As the **Figure 1** is

Figure 1



constructed, expectations are always higher than what is accomplished. A certain difference is, therefore, manageable. The achievements are seen as the lower line in the figure. When the gap becomes too large, however, it is likely to be unacceptable. This may happen, for instance, if the economy ceases to grow after a period of sustained growth. The actual achievement becomes considerably lower than was expected and thus discontent rises. This leads to a revolution of rising expectations, it has been argued. Interestingly, **Davis** finds in his study that this pattern fits with the economic performance of several countries before a revolution breaks out. This does not settle the issue, however. For instance, a question is whether or not the same experience has occurred in a number of other countries, but without revolution. Frustration, as described by Davies, may be theoretically interesting, but does it hold up empirically? Gurr's initial study did not result in strong correlations (1970), but his work focusing on what we may call political frustration suggests intriguing relationship (1993).

The model in Figure 1 is confined to internal, or intrastate, situations. Revolutions are directed at the leaders in the same society. How can frustration result in international conflict? John W. Burton, who has written extensively on conflict resolution, suggests there is a 'spillover' effect. Conflicts, 'especially at the international level', he says, 'are a spillover of some internal institutional or personal problem'. These are ways in which leaders 'divert attention' (Burton, 1996, p.41). Thus, internal conflict may arise from a group's reaction to discrimination, and the resulting disturbances are diverted by the government into international conflict. This is a popular theory. Theoretically there are, however, a number of other ways in which frustration can be **diverted covered (???)**, for instance, in the Roman slogan of 'Bread and Circus' meaning that basic economic necessities were met and that spectacular shows were arranged to give the populations interests other than politics.

As we saw in the conflict dynamic perspective, ending of conflict is not necessarily part of the approach; conflicts are transformed, not eliminated. Similarly, we may ask, is it at all possible to meet all the needs that humans and human groups may have? If not, then conflict resolution becomes but a way of managing conflict, possibly channeling it, but not ending it. Alternatively, we may ask if there are some needs that are possible to meet, and if so, are these the ones which are important to handle in order to reduce the amount of violent conflict in the world? The researchers using this approach still owe us answers to such questions.

There are distinct conflict resolution techniques that follow from this, no matter what the origins of the conflict. One is the problem-solving workshop, which, according to Burton, was first used in the middle of the 1960s for the Confrontation Crisis and involved representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore (Azar and Burton, 1986, pp.46-47; Burton, 1987). The three governments nominated participants and the workshop was held in London College at the Centre for the Analysis of conflict. The meeting lasted for ten days, and was controlled by a group of scholars. With this, a tradition of workshops was initiated. There is now a broad array of different approaches (Broome 1997; Doob 1970; Fisher 1983; Kelman and Cohen, 1976). Increasingly there is also learning, for

instance, of cultural difference in problem-solving approaches (Strohschneider and Guss, 1999). The original purpose of the workshop was to go beyond the parties' stated positions and reach the underlying needs (Rouhana, 1995). Theoretically, such an analysis should not necessarily assume that all parties are equally responsible for a conflict. In practice, the workshops have included the opposing sides, trying to make them understand each other's needs. Thus, the approach becomes quite symmetric (Rouhana, 1995). If one side were defined as the more aggressive, as the causal analysis may suggest, workshops would actually be designed to work with only one side.

However, the problem-solving workshops cannot, by themselves, lead to the solutions. It is more likely that they set an agenda and thus, inform the parties on the needs of the other side. They will be able to act on a more complete understanding of each other's preferences. Still, needs may not be met in a society, due to a lack of resources or the way scarce resources are managed. Thus, equitable economic policies become central, as a way of preventing future conflicts as well as handling acute crises within a society. Although this is easily said, there may be unexpected effects. It may, for instance, result in serious conflict with other actors that can lead to fears and frustrations of others. There are also arguments against economic equality. Discrepancies are said to be the way in which economics develop. Certain differences in income and wealth are important as they give incentives to work hard (Olson, 1971). However, with the same logic, too large and growing differences would create a revolutionary potential and that is, of course, the starting point for Marxist analysis. It is expressed in the figure above. It is reasonable to assume that a society, in order to sustain itself, needs to distribute economic resources relatively equitably to all citizens. This may be equally true whether the economy as a whole is growing or declining.

This, then, relates to conflict inside one society. Does it also translate into an international community, where a few countries are very wealthy and many are very poor? Certainly, resentment exists, and forms of terrorism build on this fact. The logic of the argument would not halt at the border of states. It does not require spillover arguments either, as frustration emerges once the differences and injustices are seen. In

today's world they are apparent. But, a sceptic could ask, is this manageable through a problem-solving workshop? Also, is a global policy for a fair economy feasible?

A final point: aggression has victims and perpetrators. When needs and grievances are seen by actors to coincide with ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural or historical lines, they add elements which make a situation even more explosive. In many riots, it is not the distant leaders who feel the direct impact of rage, but those who are closest to the mobs, be they shop owners, weak, poor, women or children. They have to face the destruction, in Indonesia in 1998 (targeting property of the Chinese population, but also the Suharto family). Other examples are Kosovo 1999 (first targeting Albanians, then Serbs, Romas) and East Timor (first pro-independence groups, later leaving pro-Indonesia groups in fear). The aggressive group, the perpetrators, needs a closer analysis, not only the societal relationship. One may ask: why did this group think that atrocities against another group would improve their lot? Were there alternative thoughts? Are there outside incentives for pursuing these actions? Who is actually participating in actions? There are many and legitimate questions asked about this form of mobilisation of popular energy and why it takes a particular direction. Such questions, furthermore, lead to ideas about the possibility of non-aggressive reactions for more constructive uses of accumulated energy. In most revolutionary situations, there are groups that share the sentiments of the militants, but find other courses of action to be more effective. Internal debates on the appropriate course of action within a particular group are important. The outside world can impact on this debate in ways which may favour conflict resolution.

Limitations

With the needs-based approach it is the difficulty of meeting an individual party's need that is the origin of the conflict and the key to its solution. The analysis aims at locating unmet needs. It may then be more important to work with one particular actor than another, although different sides are represented. In an asymmetric situation it is a matter of conveying to the dominant group the perspective of the dominated, but also to clarify to the dominated constraints on the dominating side. In the conflict dynamics approach it is basic that the actors are treated in a similar, symmetric fashion, as all have some responsibility for the conflict and, thus, also for the solution of the conflict. The two

perspectives contrast with each other, but they do not necessarily exclude each other. Let us see if this is also true for the third perspective on conflict resolution.

3.4 FOCUSING ON RATIONAL CALCULATIONS

Actors' incompatibilities and actions as stemming from the circumstances are the ones in which actors find themselves. The actors individually or as a system of actors have to handle conditions that drive them apart. The third perspective assumes that actors have their own rationality, form their own judgments, make decisions, pursue strategies and, thus, initiate the chain of events that lead to war. The reversal of this, that is, ending wars and reaching agreements, has to be seen in the same light. There is a need for actors to make calculations that can terminate a conflict, but at the same time ending war is not the actor's only interest. A good presentation of this thinking is found in the publications of I. William Zartman, but many have worked in similar directions (Fisher and Ury, 1981; Stedman 1991).

The idea that wars rise from a rational calculation is, of course, not novel. It is part of an established realist and neorealist thinking about the origins of wars. The new twist is to see the ending of wars in such terms. Paul Pillar did pioneering work (1983) in this field. The ideas of Zartman have brought the approach further, without leading to the construction of formal models and illustrative diagrams. Zartman outlined such ideas before the end of the Cold War, and continues to adhere to them (Zartman 1989a; Zartman and Berman 1982; Zartman and Rasmussen 1997). The literature of the type presented in *Getting to Yes* (Fisher and Ury, 1981) rests less on explicit calculation, but still applies a rationalist perspective. The purpose is to understand the real interests of the parties, and thus look beyond their stated positions. Roger Fisher and William Ury introduced a set of notions which were primarily geared to negotiations in general, although the authors were clearly thinking of their utility for armed conflicts and war. In later work, Charles W. Kegley and Gregory A. Raymond state that such calculations have to include moral arguments, to provide a basis for justice in ending war and increase the chances of durable settlements (Kegley and Raymond, 1999). The rational approach,

which focuses on the ending of war, appears fruitful and politically relevant. Its main assertions need a closer inspection.

The parties, which may be states, groups or movements, initiate war to win them, it is assumed. This means that the parties, or at least the initiator, make internal calculations showing that the benefits outweigh the losses when escalating a conflict to a violent confrontation. Such calculations may look different for the opposing sides, but in principle the variables and their values are the same. One side makes a calculation for starting the violence, the other for defending itself against the attack. As time passes and nobody wins, the initial calculations are affected and have to be revised. The potential benefits from victory are reduced as the costs increase. At the same time the fact that so much time, energy, resources and human life has been invested-destroyed –makes it difficult not to continue, until the final moment of victory is reached. Otherwise the investment would be lost and the suffering meaningless. The parties, in Zartman's analysis, look towards the future. If that does not include a reasonably early chance of victory, but instead suggests a continued stalemate, perhaps even a catastrophe for the fighting sides, then there are elements of a 'ripe moment' for resolution. In Zartman's words, the conflict offers nothing but a 'flat, unpleasant terrain stretching into the future' (Zartman, 1989, p.268).

If the parties find this stalemate to be painful, what Zartman calls a 'hurting stalemate', it may lead them to strategic rethinking. There may be a chance for peace. Not necessarily, however. If none of the sides is comfortable with the present and can see no way forward to win the dispute-perhaps only fearing more destruction, without breakthrough-this is likely to be a moment requiring a change of action. At this point the parties might agree on a ceasefire, to reduce the pain, have a chance of recuperation, even getting an opportunity for buying new weapons. It could be time for a pause, perhaps calculated on what is needed before a new offensive. It is a limited strategic rethinking, where the goals are maintained. A cease-fire, in other words, many slow down the move towards a settlement, and instead prolong the fighting. This is an important dilemma in conflict termination. Many have strong opinions on this, but there is little empirical study on the

conflict resolution merits of cease-fires. However, the hurting stalemate can also be turned into an 'enticing opportunity', as Zartman has termed it. It can be used for a move forward to settlement, not simply freezing the present situation, the status quo. Here enters another of Zartman's concepts, the need for 'finding the formula'. There must be a way out for the parties, the weaker as well as the stronger. This line of argument gives an important role to outside powers. They can point out that there is a stalemate, and a danger of catastrophe in the near future, 'precipice' in Zartman's words, and they can suggest alternatives for settling the conflict (Zartman, 1989).

The calculations that go into the decision making of the warring parties are, by necessity, complex. Let us attempt to project the situation for two sides at different times in a conflict. In the first stage, the dominant side, A, expects to be able to prevail by defeating the other side, B, and keep control over the resources in dispute, be it governmental power, territory, or something else. Actor B at this time expects considerable sacrifice, as B knows it is challenging a dominant actor, threatening to change the status quo, to achieve an improved standing in the long run. Thus, the expectations are different. Side A may be less psychologically prepared to manage a sustained battle than is B, for whom this has been a plan for a longer period of time. In terms of casualties, for instance, B may be prepared to accept more pain than A. At a certain moment in time, however, the equations change. The war has become longer than planned. A has had to invest more and all of A's other policies are affected. The gains from the conflict are decreasing, the costs are mounting. For B, the expectation of victory in a reasonably short period of time was not fulfilled. The status quo, the challenger learns, is more entrenched than expected. Victory and associated gains are postponed into the future. The balance between benefits and costs of war may not break even. This is one of the appropriate moments for ending the war, a ripe moment. Neither side is winning within the time framework it had expected nor with the resources it had, at its disposal. The prognoses are gloomy for both sides. A stalemate exists in the minds of the leaders. If it is reflected on the battlefield, in the form of trenches and unbreakable defensive lines, there is a stalemate in the war, and it might be the right opportunity for interjecting ideas of conflict resolution. It may come

right after one side has tried and failed to break the military stalemate with an offensive, for instance.

However, the same calculations can pull the equation in a different direction. It may be argued that one side, be it A or B, has now used so much of its resources that the effect of making a 'final' offensive is only a marginal additional cost, and the gains from such an offensive could be so much greater. Some of the losses could be regained. Failed negotiations, Zartman observes, means that at least one party 'saw the cost of concessions as being greater than the cost of continuing conflict (Zartman, 1995a; p.33). The calculations become increasingly geared to marginal utilities. With a particular, measured, military or political move, A might be able to strengthen its position, so that A will not have to make this particular concession. In a negotiation, in other words, a party may have alternative actions that rest outside the realm of the talks. The term used by Fisher and Ury for this is BATNA, the 'best alternative to negotiated agreement'. In the same way, there might be a 'best alternative' to continued warfare, of course. There are always choices. Each of them carries different costs and benefits. At a certain point, however, terminating the war becomes rational to the warring parties, and an agreed ending can be reached.

The rational calculations are difficult to see from the outside. At a certain moment in time, it may be possible to argue rationally for a continuation of war as well as a search for peace. This makes it difficult at a particular time to determine, with some certainty, that there is a ripe moment. In fact, two different calculations can confront each other inside the parties. The rational model may appear parsimonious and simple; in fact, it may be less operational. However, this approach attempts to specify something that goes further than we have seen in either the dynamic or the needs-based approaches. It tries to specify when a conflict can be brought to an agreed ending. Neither dynamic approaches nor needs-based analysis can readily point to shifts in the conflict that would signify when and how it can be ended or transformed. The rational calculations are also closer to the practical policy-makers, who are themselves as capable of forming policies and

moulding the future. In the previous approaches such actors are more likely to be regarded as objects of circumstance rather than subjects of will and power.

The policy prescriptions that follow from the rational approach are many. More than the other two approaches, the outside world has an active role, particularly when we are concerned with conflicts in smaller countries. It seems legitimate to influence the parties in the direction of conflict management and resolution. Outsiders may be influencing the calculation rather than the dynamics or the needs. The calculus for conflict and conflict resolution can be affected, for instance, by rewards and punishment. Assistance to one or both sides may be a credible promise made by the outside world. This can be done on condition that the primary parties end the war. It is likely that reconstruction programmes interest the fighting sides. There can also be sanctions for not going into negotiations or for not compromising. This can come in the form of reductions in aid, loss of preferential treatment in trade, a ban on investments, etc. These are measures contributing to the economic constraints for parties already burdened by the war effort. Such steps are generally seen to be legitimate for achieving conflict resolution. Their effects on the parties may be counter-productive, however, and the success record of explicit uses of sanctions is not impressive.

Even more controversial is whether rewards and punishment can or should be administered by military means, in the form of direct military attacks on one party, aiming at tipping the military balance in favour of the other. NATO's bombing in Bosnia in 1995 and in Yugoslavia during the Kosovo crisis in 1999 is in this category. Did they achieve what had been planned? What is the balance of pain inflicted and pain relieved, for instance? Such actions raise legal issues and ethical questions, not only instrumental ones. Also, the decisions to use military arsenals are not taken lightly by the outsiders. They are likely to be available only for some few conflicts, of particular interest to particular outsiders.

The fact that the outside world can have a strong impact on conflicts involving smaller countries raises an increasingly important question: who are the parties that should settle

a particular conflict? In line with the dynamic perspective, as many actors as possible should be involved. There is a preference for a broad agenda and liberal rules of invitation. In the needs-based approach, the opposite is favoured. The workshops should be held far from the scene, have little media access, and concentrate on a limited number of parties, who act as representatives, not as individuals. For an approach building on rational calculations, however, the answer is simply that those who count should be in. There is, in Zartman's writing, a repeated observation that not all parties need to be involved in a peace deal. It may be desirable to have as many as possible included, but it is not always necessary. Another calculation can be made: which parties are needed to make an agreement durable? Some parties may create difficulties, and their interests may be better left for later. In the dynamic approach, the incorporation of as many actors as possible is important. It is not only seen to be more democratic, it is said also to be more fruitful, as there are more issues and there is a larger potential for trade-offs. The outcomes, too, will be more innovative.

Limitations

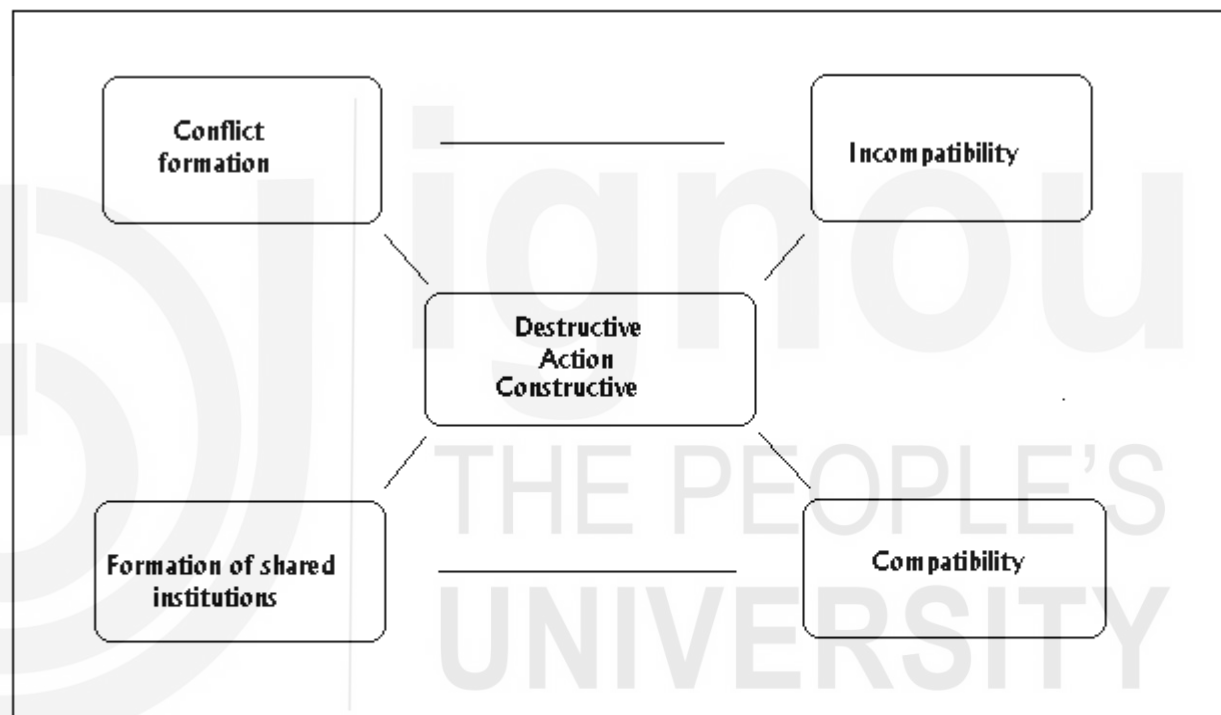
From a rational calculation perspective, larger meetings and intensive dialogue can appear as a waste of resources and time. The urgency of solving a conflict, using the ripe moment, may be lost. In the rational calculation perspective, timing is very important. Opportunities should be seized, particularly in a situation where a war is ongoing. This requires swift action, often by a few, determined actors. The dynamic and needs-based approaches see conflict resolution as a process and, thus, do not advocate rapid action and political manoeuvring. Ripe moments may come and go. This is not the way conflicts will ever be solved, they would argue.

3.5 IDENTIFYING KEY ELEMENTS IN CONFLICT ANALYSIS

Living with or dissolving the incompatibility is a central element in the conflict analysis. This is learned from the dynamic approach to conflict for instance, in differentiating between position and interests and getting into the calculations of the parties. The focus on the needs of parties brings with it a close look at the parties themselves, their needs perceptions and the history behind the conflict. These are elements which also are important for an analysis of rational calculations. There is a relationship between conflict

behaviour and changing positions, as indicated in terms such as action-reaction, but so are carefully, rationally calibrated moves. In all, the three approaches have many shared features. They are, as a consequence, all useful. They illustrate different elements in the conflict process and how it can be turned into a peace process. **Figure 2** describes this and suggests a shared framework for the analysis.

Figure 2



(Recheck on the diagram. Arrows are not delineated ???)

The dynamics of conflict are illustrated by the arrow in Figure.2. There are no convincing arguments for assuming that a conflict always starts in one corner. It is more fruitful to assume that connections exist and are more fluid. The different boxed require

some closer description. First, in the box on conflict formation is located the creation of parties, which we have stipulated to be an integral part of conflict analysis. Some parties are formed deliberately to make conflicts; other may be there for other purposes. When a party is formed, it begins by making itself known, developing its identity and giving itself a role in the conflict to which it adheres. The history, recruitment and financing of a party are important to understand, as well as its internal decision-making. If there are needs in the society on which its actions purport to be based, then, of course, those needs have to be focused. To this also belongs whether a party really represents the needs of a larger share of the population.

Second, obviously, an analysis of the incompatibility is necessary. What are the conflicting interests, what is the relationship between interests, positions and needs of the actor or of the population it claims to represent? The actors are likely to have an internal priority in terms of issues. Some are more basic than others. It is important for the analyst to have an idea of such hierarchies; third, there are the actions. Conflicts are fuelled by destructive actions, actions aimed at reducing the influence of the other side, and enhancing the influence of its own side. Thus, this box in Figure 2 not only involves actual warfare but also the making of alliances, finding friends, and locating of financiers, as well as preventing the opponent from doing the same. These are seen, by the parties, as integral elements of their struggle. The conflict strategies are important elements in the analysis.

In figure 2 however, a statement of great consequence is made. It is argued, in line with the dynamic approach, that behaviour can be changed, and that such a change is strategic in making a conflict take a different direction. That is described as constructive action. These are actions that aim at bridging the gap to the other side. Included are measures such as confidence-building, but also unilateral actions. The now classical example is the visit by Egypt's President Sadat to Jerusalem in 1977. It was an unexpected action. It was not clear how the Israeli government would receive it. With the support of the US administration, it helped to change the dynamics in the Middle East conflict. Such measures are rare, and risky ways; but many recent wars have contained unilateral and

constructive moves. Thus, the behaviour of the opposing sides is the element in the conflict that the parties themselves watch most closely, they will ask, for instance, if a positive announcement is followed by positive steps. If not, the former is regarded as propaganda and the latter as the reality. The proof of 'good intentions' is 'good actions'.

Once there is a shift in behaviour, the parties in a cease-fire, may build compatibility through traditional peacekeeping; the lower half of Figure 2 comes into operation. A dynamic development may follow and build momentum. The parties may start searching for compatible positions (shared needs or a formula meeting interests of the primary parties) and, when they find them, there will also be attempts to create new structures through which these can be expressed. This can be simple negotiation for a (multilateral conferences) but also transitory forms of government or even entirely new permanent bodies (the European Union (EU) could be regarded as a way of ending the earlier Franco-German conflict, although it is more often described as a measure to prevent a future one). The detection of compatibilities and the formation of new organisations mean that dynamics are created which may generate more constructive action. Thus, Figure 2 describes two processes, a process of conflict formation and escalation in the upper half of the figure, and one of peace-building and shared interests in the lower half.

The utility of figure 2 can be demonstrated with the phenomenon of spoilers and spoiler management introduced by Stedman. It can now be located theoretically. Spoilers are those actors who have no interest in the conflict process shifting from the higher to the lower level in figure 2. If there is a peace agreement, as postulated by Stedman, then a spoiler aims to prevent the dynamics in the lower level from spinning further. This runs counter to interests held by particular groups. Thus, violent action can be used to attempt to shift the conflict back into the higher level. If successful, peace moves are spoiled, for the time being. When a conflict is locked in the upper part of figure 2, most actors are spoilers as long as they all pursue destructive action. Thus, it makes sense, as Stedman does, to link the spoiler phenomenon to a peace agreement or at least a fairly entrenched peace process. In a way, a spoiler is a party still living in the dynamics of the upper level, preferring to be there at least as long as its interests are not met. This illustrates also the

importance for the custodians to make clear that the situation has changed and decisively moved into the lower level of Figure 2. The custodians have to show in action that they are committed to preventing the conflict from sliding back to the dynamics of the upper level.

3.6 SUMMARY

The fact that behaviour is the point combining the two dynamics makes clear its dual nature. It may promote one or the other development, but it is also the juncture at which conflict dynamics can change from one loop to the other and back again. It means that conflicts are not unilinear, for instance, moving from frustration to conflict in behaviour, positions and parties, new frustrations and new calculations all affecting the dynamics. It means that conflicts are not simply escalating and de-escalating, or that they are easily predicted and calculated. They are all of these simultaneously and that is the reality with which the analysts have to cope.

3.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Critically examine the various methods of Conflict Analysis
2. Identify the key elements in Conflict Analysis.

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Structure

- 4.1 Introduction**
 - Aims and Objectives**
- 4.2 A Simplified View of Conflict Assessment**
- 4.3 Methods of Conflict Resolution**
- 4.4 Limitations of Conflict Assessment**
- 4.5 The Challenges That Lie Ahead**
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 - 4.5.3 The Importance of Cultural Differences**
 - 4.5.4 Conflict within the Field of Conflict Resolution**
 - 4.5.5 Learning to Learn**
 - 4.5.6 Encouraging Innovation**
- 4.6 Summary**
- 4.7 Terminal Questions**
 - Suggested Readings**

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings engage in conflict, aggression, warfare, violence that seemingly equate with the human condition. Equally, humans have sought, as long as there has been conflict, to handle conflict effectively, by containing or reducing its negative consequences. Treaties, ceasefires, agreements and handshakes are all symbols of human endeavours to reduce the negative consequences of conflict. Some attempts at reducing those negative consequences work better than others. Why? Why is all that in one instance a handshake and an apology may end weeks of enmity, whereas in another instance a handshake or apologies do absolutely nothing? Conflict Assessment seeks to come to grips with explaining why people engage in conflict, and identify ways in which conflict may be resolved.

Conflict assessment is now recognised as a legitimate, indeed important, topic of academic study. Justification for the study of conflict assessment appears daily; rising levels of domestic violence in the post-war era, the birth and growth of nuclear stockpiles, and the increasing level of dissatisfaction with the status quo- these and a myriad of other concerns serve to galvanise attention on resolving conflict. Even before these modern-day ills, however, humanity has been locked into patterned ways of dealing with conflict. As Galbraith (1996, p.3) comments, 'The real world has constraints imposed by human nature, by history and by deeply ingrained patterns of thought'. Much of the focus of conflict assessment has been on techniques or methods by which conflict may be handled. The focus has been largely upon individual actors, or a small collection of actors, working to resolve interpersonal, organisational or community conflict. International conflict assessment has also been an area of keen focus, but has been left largely to the diplomats and practitioners at the UN. The literature on conflict resolution focuses on 'how to do it', with scant attention paid to situational and contextual issues. Yet a more textured and mature approach to conflict assessment demands examination of these contexts and situations. Without an examination of those factors that constrain assessment, there can be no effective, long-term efforts to resolve the more difficult social conflicts that face us today.

This lesson introduces the reader to the essential ideas found in the study of conflict assessment, but perhaps more importantly, it puts conflict assessment in context. Secondly, it is important because the conflict assessment is largely inadequate, if and when it ignores the societal and structural constraints imposed on a given conflict situation. Conflict does not occur within a vacuum. Conflict assessment texts emphasize the imaginative, creative generation of alternative, empowerment of the weak, and the search for non-violent change. Yet the search for alternatives, empowerment and non-violence occurs within a social and structural context. Problem-solving and conflict resolution cannot be removed from the social environment. For example, when scholars recommend that those seeking resolution of conflict focus on the problem and not the person with whom one is in conflict, they are making some very real and unhealthy assumptions about the nature of conflict. A peasant woman whose family has been killed

by members of a rival ethnic group is unlikely to be able, or want, to separate the person and the problem. For her, the people are the problem. Often this is the reality in which many would be conflict resolvers and themselves. One may wish to have her see that, in fact, her problem is not with the people she so bitterly despises, but with unsatisfied needs, hidden motivations and so on. It is, however, difficult and even questionable to engage in such a transfer to meaning. The question arises, what kind of thing will replace her hate of her enemies? What psychological, social or other concept will she be persuaded to adopt? In shifting her conceptual vision of where or whether her enemy resides, the third party may accidentally create a new and more powerful enemy. Then again, such a shift in meaning may be the only plausible way in which third parties can unlock a conflict. It is a risk that any third party must face, if resolution is a serious objective.

So, the task here is to present a picture of conflict assessment within the context of many of the societal and structural constraints. The end result is that conflict assessment is a more difficult and challenging task than may sometimes be suggested.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand

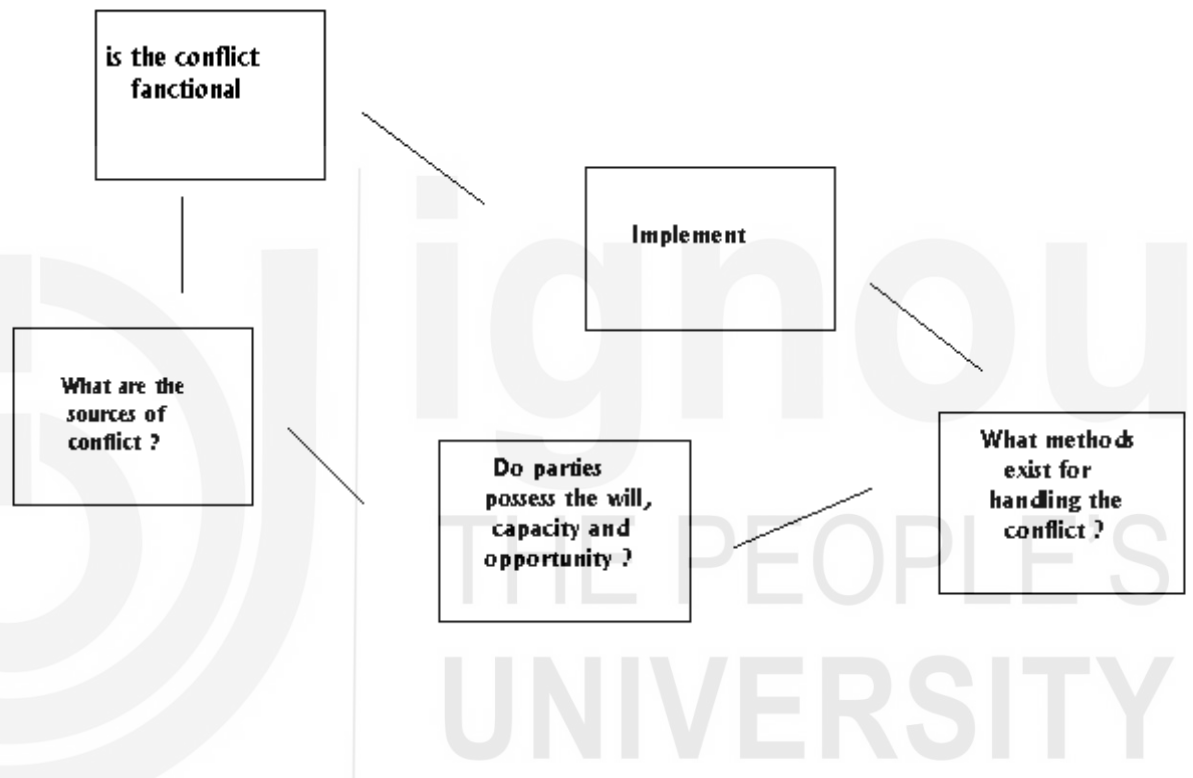
- The meaning and significance of conflict assessment
- The limitations and challenges of conflict assessment.

4.2 A SIMPLIFIED VIEW OF CONFLICT ASSESSMENT

Conflict assessment is best thought of in cyclical terms. Consider Figure 1. Most people or institutions that consider using conflict assessment do so only after having asked the question, 'Is this a good conflict? One can substitute the word 'good' with functional, valuable, profitable, useful, justifiable, and so on. The point remains that the decision to 'resolve' a conflict is a value choice, and is subjective. Even corporations appearing to be motivated by the 'bottom line' will make value choices about how long they will incur a loss before they will intervene, some companies will suffer financial loss for a long period if a given conflict meets other desired outcomes. This situation refers to the

question of functionality, that is, when faced with a conflict and the possibility of assessment, parties will ask, 'Is it functional'? The answer, even when dressed with seemingly objective rationalisations, is ultimately subjective and value-laden.

Figure 1



After having decided, for whatever reason, that the conflict is ‘non-functional’, parties and interveners ask, ‘What are the sources that drive this conflict?’ This question is usually not asked in any existential manner; rather it is a very practical and goal-driven question. It may be restated as ‘What are the sources of this conflict that I need to know about so that I can resolve it?’ Given any conflict or problem there is a range of possible information about that conflict, a range of knowledge needed to engage in problem-solving is described by Simon as being within a ‘bounded rationality’, where one seeks information about a problem only to the degree that it will solve that problem (Simon, 1957). The sources of conflict stretch far deeper than what any bounded rationality would consider. Much has been written about the origins of conflict, some arguing that conflict is in human nature and inherent to being human. Others argue that humans encounter conflict contingent upon social learning or social influence. There are, however, some very difficult questions that arise out of the search for causes, including the following;

- Can conflict be reduced to one or two causes?
- How does an intervener or party to the conflict know a cause?
- Does knowing a cause necessarily make resolution any easier?

Although identifying causes of conflict is loaded with problems, in practical terms, the interveners or parties are able either to identify the causes or to rationalise causation and move forward.

Opportunity

Parties or interveners must ask whether the necessary and sufficient conditions exist, to facilitate resolution. Those conditions are opportunity, capacity and volition. For conflict to be resolved, there must be the opportunity to do so; for example, there must be time to try to resolve conflict. A workplace where the employer will not allow parties time to discuss their conflict is one where the opportunity for resolution is slim or non-existent. The origins of curtailed opportunity are found in many different places, ranging from intra- and interpersonal sources to societal and social limits on opportunity. A bad

relationship with a boss reflects an interpersonal constraint on opportunity, whereas South African apartheid represented societal sources.

Capacity

A second condition needed to resolve conflict concerns the capacity to resolve. Those in conflict must have the ability to resolve, that is, they must possess the skills and resources required for resolution. This is why communication is so often raised as being central to the assessment of conflict. Often, though people confuse communication and resolution. Communication does not necessarily lead to resolution, because if parties communicate conflictual behaviour, then it appears that communication is fuelling conflict, not resolving it.

Volition

A final requirement for resolution is volition, or will. Without some desire to engage in assessment conflicts will persist. Desire may be from a humanitarian perspective, fatigue, or other sources. The will to resolve, or volition, certainly need not be benevolent. Parties do not have to like one another, they do not have to have goodwill or warm hearts; they may simply be tired of fighting. Whatever the motivation, parties must possess the volition to resolution.

If the conditions of volition, opportunity and capacity are no-existent, several possible outcomes emerge. One possible alternative is that conflict assessment may still be attempted, though obviously without success. A second alternative is that those trying to resolve the conflict will simply quit, making note of some of the difficulties to resolution. A third possible alternative is that some remedial action will be taken to alter the situation. In a workplace, the employer may be persuaded to create opportunities for employees to take the time to try to resolve a conflict. The persuasion of course, may be through the good offices of an intervener, or through a strike or some other action. Parties lacking communication skills will receive training, or those lacking resources will be empowered through alliance with the more powerful or through inhibiting the power of

the other party to the conflict. Finally, those lacking the volition may be persuaded through various means, ranging from moral persuasion to the use of violence.

There are obvious problems encountered when conflict is considered in a large sense. For example, how does one increase the conflict assessment skills of an entire society? How does one increase the resources of a weak party when the stronger party can veto such action? Finally, if a party is so filled with hate and loathing that an entire culture is predicated upon the vilification or enmification of one party, how can the volition for conflict resolution be created?

Equally, the question arises as to what extent these necessary and sufficient conditions need to be answered before one can move on. In group conflict, does the entire group need opportunity, capacity and volition, or does only the leadership need them? How much capacity is enough? Do they only need enough capacity to be able to engage in negotiation, even though they are likely to suffer badly? Or do they need a greater capacity? How does one know how much capacity a party has? The USA appeared to have ample capacity in fighting the Vietnam War, yet history proves otherwise. They are no meaningful objective measures of capacity, so that decisions about capacity are tenuous at best. The same difficulty exists around the issue of opportunity, in that the measures of opportunity are arguable. Yet the lack of objective measures should not dissuade the researcher, or the practitioner, from examining these factors.

4.3 METHODS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Having examined the opportunities, capacities and volition of each party, one moves to identifying the methods for conflict resolution. These methods, generally, are well known and catalogued. They include negotiation, mediation and facilitation. Yet each method will be crafted to the specific situation—if not intentionally, then at least through the implicit assumptions of those intervening. This process of moulding the ideas of practitioners and parties with real-life action is vital, and central to the process of conflict assessment. The manner in which theories about human behaviour in general and conflict resolution in particular are tied to behaviours is the central question in conflict

assessment. The link between theory and action, or praxis, is profoundly influenced by societal and structural factors. Beliefs, values and culture all impact not only upon what one thinks, but upon the action taken. Therefore, while many methods of resolving conflict exist, they are limited by the world within which they operate.

4.4 LIMITATIONS OF CONFLICT ASSESSMENT

The many texts on conflict assessment, acting as guides as to how to resolve, present their case within a given context. More often than not it appears as if processes for handling conflicts are superimposed upon the context. For example, rather than examining the needs of the context, mediation is applied to a whole range of conflict without due consideration of its appropriateness.

A further limitation on context is found in culture. Methods such as mediation or facilitation may not be appropriate within a given cultural context. This simple point is not, however, well discussed within the writings of conflict assessment. Yet it would seem obvious, for example, that in cultures in which to speak directly about a conflict is regarded as inappropriate, many Western methods would simply not work.

As figure 1 shows, the final step in conflict assessment is to return from implementing a method for resolution to evaluating whether conflict is functional or non-functional. Once again, this is perhaps the most value-laden element of the process and one that requires the most reflection. One person's dysfunctional conflict is another's functional process. It depends largely upon the perspective, value and beliefs of those in conflict. Equally, the functionality of the resolution process is largely dependent upon the values, beliefs and perspectives of those involved.

In the final analysis, what is presented here is a very textured view of conflict assessment. Rather than advocating the methods of conflict resolution, as so many texts do, this is more discussion of the factors that impact upon the resolution of conflict. Fundamental to this argument is the observation that resolving conflict is not a simple thing. If it were simple, then perhaps it would occur more often. Rather one examines the class, **ethnic**,

gender and nationalist conflicts that have lasted for generations, and one may feel a strong sense of despondency about their eventual resolution. Yet positive steps towards resolution do occur, but against the backdrop of some of the things that have been mentioned here. The necessary and sufficient conditions to conflict assessment, for example, must be satisfied to some degree before progress can be made. Equally, accounting for the profound historical animosity that exists between peoples will go a long way towards providing practitioners of conflict assessment with a better understanding of the difficulties that lie before them.

One of the real difficulties on studying conflict assessment and its constraints lies within society and its structure. How does one gain access to a conflict? Most students of conflict assessment feign temporary access through clinical placement, short participant observation sessions, or action research projects. While this is a laudable step in the right direction, it is really quite insufficient for truly coming to grips with the profound nature of conflict. A major difficulty in studying conflict assessment rarely suffers the threat of the conflict in any long-term and enduring sense. Students may suffer a threatening or violent incident, but then they go home and are, hopefully, debriefed. Yet parties to conflict do not get such luxuries. This presents those who conduct conflict assessment research with some very real problems. Gaining an understanding may be better than none at all, but then again, a glimmering of an understanding may be just enough to give rise to some truly profound mistakes, as opposed to some obvious and stupid ones. As the saying goes, one may have just enough knowledge to be dangerous. These methods seem to be the best answers right now to the problem of understanding, though perhaps better ones have yet to be created. Possible ways of helping students understand conflicts include providing a good background briefing of where the potential hazards might lie.

4.5 THE CHALLENGES THAT LIE AHEAD

Some of the questions and challenges that theorists, researchers and practitioners of conflict resolution will face in their work in the years ahead are the following:

4.5.1 Readiness

The first question is, how can readiness to resolve conflict constructively be fostered in individuals, groups, and nations?

People and institutions are seldom ready to undertake significant change. Yet competitive and avoidant approaches to resolving conflict are ingrained in many people and institutions; collaborative, integrative approaches represent a new way of thinking and acting for them. The collaborative approach generally goes against the prevalent competitive style of resolving conflict modeled in families; by the media; and by many of our leaders in sports, business, and government.

The first task is, quite often, simply to make people aware that there are options available to them when in conflict other than to fight or flee. This is largely what most preliminary training or coursework in conflict resolution attempts to achieve; to make people aware of their own competitive or avoidant tendencies in conflict, and of the fact that they have a broad menu of available options. For these educational experiences to be successful, it is important that they effectively engage and inspire students sufficiently to motivate them to try something new and to develop the skills necessary to begin resolving conflict constructively.

A separate but related concern with regard to readiness has to do with our ability to assess and engender a degree of authentic readiness for disputants involved in a conflict. Collaborative negotiation and mediation are voluntary processes that require the disputants to engage in them willingly if they are to make real progress toward understanding each other's needs and reaching agreement. At times, disputants may 'act cooperative' during a negotiation process, while having no intention of following through once an agreement has been reached. This was thought to have occurred at the Cambodian Peace Accords in the mid 1990s, an exemplary collaborative peace process that fell apart upon implementation because the parties reneged on the agreement. Work

needs to be done on developing better methods of assessing and fostering disputants' genuine willingness to collaborate and make peace.

Systems must also be readied. Research has shown that unless schools and districts are sufficiently motivated to embrace a change initiative such as instituting a programme of conflict resolution training, it is likely to fail. This readiness must exist for a majority of the system, including regents, board members, superintendents, principals, teachers, other professional staff, students, and parents.

Finally, awareness of constructive responses to conflict needs to be wide-spread among the general population. One way of attaining this is for the field to attempt educating prestigious individuals in high-profile positions within a given society.

These efforts hope to foster a new type of political process, and a government that models respect, care and common sense in addressing the issues, conflicts, and visions of the people it represents. A general shift in attitude and response to conflict could come about if those in influential positions of high visibility (political) were to model constructive strategies and skills.

4.5.2 Change Agents

Secondly, how can we help people in the field of conflict resolution understand and develop skills in their roles as change agents?

The field is increasingly aware of the fact that very often conflict professionals have to act as change agents within the systems in which they work. Whether intervening in a professional relationship, a family, an organisation, a community, or a nation, it is useful to think about conflict resolution systemically. This has two implications, one practical and one political. The practical concerns the need to broaden understanding of what we do. Much of the emphasis of past work in the field has been on training conflict specialists in the skills of getting disputants to the table, facilitating a constructive process, and reaching an agreement. However, there is increasing recognition of the

problems that occur in implementation, both in helping to ensure that disputants can effectively implement their agreements and in implementing effective mediation and training programmes within larger systems.

In the case of disputes between individuals, it is not uncommon for good agreements to fall apart because of problems with implementation or changes that occur after the agreement is made. Conflict specialists need to be better trained to help disputants anticipate future problems and to build in feedback mechanisms so that if problems occur with implementation, the disputants will attempt to resolve them collaboratively or return to the table to work them out.

Considerable challenges can also occur in implementing mediation or training programmes within systems. There is increasing recognition of the difficulties of implementing any lasting change in systems with regard to dispute resolution mechanisms and the need to identify the processes and conditions that give rise to successful implementation. Introducing cooperation and conflict resolution concepts and practices into systems often involves a paradigm shift in how people see and approach problems. Fostering this type of fundamental change in the norms and practices of a system requires that conflict specialists have the necessary skills to motivate and persuade, organise, mobilise, and institutionalise the change. These skills need to be adequately integrated into the training of conflict specialists who work in systems, particularly complex ones.

The second implication of defining our work in terms of change concerns the conflict resolver's level of awareness of the political repercussions of his work. Intervening in part of any system in some way affects the whole system. If one department in an organisation undergoes a substantial change in how it functions, this is likely to have an impact on the entire organisation. It is therefore important for the intervener to be informed about the political context in which he works and to be aware that the intervention has a potential impact on the balance of power existing within the system.

4.5.3 The Importance of Cultural Differences

The third challenging issue is, how can our growing recognition of the importance of cultural differences be used to improve the practice of constructive conflict resolution and to help develop universally valid theories in this area?

Most scientific theories and models of practice have the laudable aim of being universally true. Theories commonly assume that the basic ideas in the theories related to cooperation and competition, equity theory, social judgement, communication, self-control, persuasion, and so on, are applicable to, say, the aborigines in Kakadu as much as to Park Avenue sophisticates, to people living in caves as well as to astronauts. However, most theories are developed in particular societies with their particular cultures, gender roles, and other characteristics.

Theorists often do not articulate their assumptions about the relations between the theory and the social context in which it is to be applied. Does a theory developed in the United States implicitly assume that the social context is one in which there is a market economy and individualistic values are strongly held? If so, it may only be applicable in social contexts similar to the ones in which it was developed. There is a strong need for the field of conflict resolution and the social sciences generally, to develop explicit knowledge about the social context that is assumed in its relevant theories.

Even if the basic ideas of a theory are applicable in a variety of social contexts, specific implementation of its ideas is always dependent on the characteristics of the social context in which they are applied. Thus effective implementation of any of the theoretical ideas depends on whether a practitioner is working in a social context (such as the American one) that is individualistic, has low power distances, is strongly task-oriented, has low uncertainty avoidance, and is masculine and modern, or in a social context that differs significantly on any of these dimensions.

In general, scholars and practitioners can respond to these concerns in several ways. Firstly, it is important that both scholars and practitioners be aware of their own

gendered, cultural and societal mindsets with regard to their work (Fisher, 1988). Kimmel offers a useful stage model for self-examination in this area along a dimension from ethnocentrism to understanding. Some degree of mindfulness of our own biases and assumptions can help us examine our theories, models, and practices for similar biases and make them explicit.

Secondly, a significant amount of work has been conducted in the last two decades on identifying the psychological dimensions on which people differ due to variations in culture, ethnicity, religion, and gender (See Hofstede, 1980; Kolb and Coolidge, 1991; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Segall, Lonner, and Berry, 1998). Conflict specialists, working cross-culturally, need to be informed about these dimensions and be mindful of how they affect the way people make meaning in conflict situations.

Thirdly, scholars and practitioners need to better distinguish those elements of conflict resolution that are universal and therefore applicable across cultures from those that are not. For example, Deutsch has suggested that specific values such as reciprocity and nonviolence universally occur in enduring, voluntary and significant relations of cooperation and constructive conflict resolution. The cross-cultural universality of the linkage between such values and constructive conflict resolution is different from the culturally specific usefulness of certain prescribed process (such as recommendations to 'separate the people from the problem'. To openly express one's needs, or to take an analytical approach to understanding the issues); these are likely to vary considerably across cultures, gender, class, and so on.

Lederach (1995) has suggested practicing an 'elicitive' approach when offering conflict resolution training across cultures. He argues that 'prescriptive' approaches to training, which view the trainer as the expert and participants as passive recipients of predetermined knowledge, models, and skills, are often inappropriate in many cultures. Lederach advocates an approach where the context expertise of the participants is emphasized and combined with the process and content expertise of the trainer, so that the trainer and the participants together create a new model of constructive conflict

resolution that is specifically suited to the resources and constraints of the particular social context in which the participants are embedded.

4.5.4 Conflict within the Field of Conflict Resolution

Given the existence of much conflict in the field of conflict resolution (as among the scholarly discipline, between theorists, researchers, and practitioners; and among training programmes and graduate studies for scarce resources-students, clients, grants, and so on), how can the field learn to walk its talk and model how conflicts can be resolved constructively?

The field of conflict resolution has become, ironically, a fairly competitive arena. This competition and the resulting conflict between individuals, disciplines, programmes, and institutions pose serious challenges to progress in this field.

For example, the various scholarly disciplines often approach conflict from contrasting perspectives. Take a dispute over water rights between two neighbouring tribal groups. A social psychologist is first concerned with the characteristics of the parties, their prior relationship, the strategies and tactics they use in the dispute, their respective needs in the situation, escalatory dynamics, and so on. A legal scholar working in this area, however, is concerned with prior treaties or contracts, land rights, the existence of legal precedents, and so on. A scholar of international affairs may be oriented to contextual or structural factors such as the balance of power in the dispute or the national or regional sources and implications of the conflict. Scholars from anthropology, business, history, and economics may emphasize other aspects of the situation.

At one level, these orientations are due simply to the varieties of educational training and task orientation. At a deeper level, however, beneath many of the disciplinary contrasts are ideological and value differences. If conflict is believed to exist within a unitary ideological frame (where society is seen as an integrated whole in which the interests of the individual and society are one) as opposed to a radical frame (where society is seen as comprising antagonistic class interests), it requires one kind of response and not another.

Similarly, whether one's primary orientation to conflict is competitive or cooperative dictates strategy.

These and other variations in how conflict is understood and approached typically come into conflict themselves when scholars or practitioners attempt to work together. These days, because many of the significant conflicts that societies face are rooted in political, economic, and social histories and are fuelled by social and psychological dynamics, the analysis and resolution cannot be adequately conducted from any one disciplinary perspective; for this, a multidisciplinary framework is required. But the traditional reward systems and orientations of the disciplines lessen the chances for such an approach. Combining traditional disciplinary paradigms and methodologies with multidisciplinary ones is a daunting task, though an essential one if the field of conflict resolution is to offer effective solutions to some of the world's most perplexing problems.

Second, there is a growing concern in the field of conflict resolution over the substantial gap between theory and practice. Many practitioners of conflict resolution dismiss the contributions of theorists and researchers, particularly if the research challenges their own opinions or methods. At the same time, scholars often fail to use the expertise of highly skilled practitioners in their development of theory, and research designs often fail to take into account what practitioners and policy makers want or need to know. In fact, a recent evaluation of the eighteen, mostly university-based, Hewlett Theory Centers found that the work of most practitioners surveyed was largely unaffected by the important contributions generated by the various centers (theory, publications, and so forth). At the same time, much of the research conducted at these centers was found to be 'removed from practice realities and constraints'. This lack of effective collaboration between scholars and practitioners hinders the development of the field and is a significant loss for both scholars and practitioners.

We must practice what we preach, and learn to work together across orientations, organisations, and disciplines, and between theory and practice. There is much strength in the diversity of our field, but there to be a unified approach. There is a need to begin this

work by engaging in a series of discussions exploring the various ideological, value, disciplinary and theory-practice conflicts that exist in the field and affect the ability to work together. Initiatives such as this one can help to build the bridges needed for collaborative, multidisciplinary scholarship and practice.

4.5.5 Learning to Learn

How can we learn to learn about our methods and practice? The field of conflict resolution has been criticised for being broad, but not deep. The issue is whether work in this area is both based on sound theoretical thinking and systematically studied and evaluated in a manner that allows the field to grow. The practice of conflict resolution is not evaluated, or poorly evaluated. This is a lost opportunity to learn, to understand the conditions under which certain tactics and strategies are more or less effective, and to build on what is effective and discard what is not. Systematic evaluation of conflict resolution practices needs to be conceptualised and implemented at the onset of intervention, not as an afterthought. Additionally, there would be benefits in examining the long-term effects of training and mediation programmes.

4.5.6 Encouraging Innovation

How can we foster creative innovation in thought and practice of constructive conflict resolution? Betty Reardon, a renowned peace educator, has stated that ‘the failure to achieve peace is in essence a failure of the imagination’. In addition to studying what we already do, it is essential that we develop new methods and ways of thinking about conflict that move beyond our current approaches. As the nature of the conflicts that we face changes, so must our thinking and our strategies for resolution. This often requires adopting a novel point of view. We must continuously view our current understanding of conflict and conflict resolution as merely a beginning- the first few steps toward the much needed means for finding ‘a better way’ of improving and enhancing human conflict interaction.

4.5 SUMMARY

Conflict assessment is essential to understand the dynamics of conflict and different ways to resolve the conflict. Conflict assessment demands examination of the contexts and situations that lead to conflicts. Without an examination of those factors that constrain assessment, there can be no effective, long-term efforts to resolve the more difficult social or other conflicts that we face today. Opportunity, capacity and volition are central elements that help in conflict assessment. This Unit also highlighted the challenges that confront the field and how to overcome difficulties inspite of diversified backgrounds. This understanding makes the process of conflict resolution flexible and achievable to a great degree.

4.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you mean by Conflict Assessment? Discuss its relevance for Conflict Resolutions.
2. What are the challenges that lie ahead in Conflict Assessment?

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