Crisis in international affairs is the result of conflict of interest which implies more than mere competition. This conflict takes place when men or parties try to enhance their own position at the expense of others resulting in tension. Tension implies hostility, fear suspicion and perceived divergence of interests and desire to dominate. Tension precedes and always accompanies the outbreak of war. Crises arise at unguarded moments, sometimes under time pressure and high value consequences. The fact that crises erupt without prior planning is due to the fact that throughout the history of states, each has been made insecure by the existence of others and the action of each in pursuit of its own national security. That this is an “age of crisis” seems the least controversial of statements. The very occurrence of crises is symptomatic of the anarchic nature of interstate relations. Therefore the study of crisis gives insights into several aspects of international politics and foreign policy making as,

An international crisis is international politics in microcosm. That is to say a crisis tends to highlight or force to the surface a wide range of factors and processes which are central to international politics in general. Such elements as power configurations, interests, values, risks, perceptions degrees of resolve, bargaining and decision making lie at the core of international politics, in a crisis they tend to leap out at the observer, to be combined and related in a revealing way and to be sharply focused on a single well defined issue. ¹

Crisis illuminates the relationship between history and the larger world surrounding and replenishing it over the years. History is meant to be an argument without end and the process of re-evaluation and re-interpretation of its events is its essence. Like the physician, the historian has to get his facts straight and place them in relation to decisive turning points, their antecedents

and consequences observed and plotted on a fever chart. These turning points are the key to the process of change and they become the moments of truth which bring but the significance of men and events. In other words for operational purpose we can define the above mentioned position by stating that “A crisis in international politics is a process of interaction occurring at higher levels of perceived intensity than the ordinary flow of events and characterized by a sharp break from the ordinary flow of politics: shortness of duration; a rise in the perceived prospects that violence will break-out and significant implication for the stability of some system (or pattern of relationship) in international politics.” Such a situation is likely to make crises open-ended, unpredictable and dynamic. One of the basic facts of life in international politics is that at best of times, statesman have only a very tenuous control over events. Even if they foresee certain problems or dangers looming ahead, for example, there is often nothing they can do to avoid them. Thomas Schelling while underlining unpredictability as the hallmark of international crisis, states that the participants far from being in control of events, have to take steps and make decisions in a realm where risks and uncertainties are almost overwhelming. Crisis therefore encompasses a condition which can perpetuate all on a sudden causing panic or tension. All the same it can either peter out or flare up into a war. This has been the experience if one analyzes the relationship between crises and war. In other words to a great extent it helps us to understand the influence of crises on the course of conflict because crises should be understood in terms of the conditions which contribute to dis-equilibrium and instability. Coral Bell, therefore, observes, “The essence of true crisis in any given relationship is that

4. C.B. Marshall, The Limits of Foreign Policy (Baltimore, 1963), pp. 11-34
5. T.C. Schelling, Arms and Influence (New Haven, 1966), p. 97
the conflicts within it rise to a level which threaten to transform the nature of the relationship. The concept is of normal strain rising to the level of breaking strain.” 6 Therefore at a period of crisis the elements of straight confrontation, of challenge and provocation contribute to heighten the potential of war from a latent to central imminent position basing themselves on the essence of incertitude. 7 To manage crisis or control it, “the traditional qualities of statesmanship, wisdom, diplomatic skill and incisive judgement can prove decisive either through their presence or through their absence”. 8 Crisis cannot be done away with because crisis is just beyond that. The paramount stand is to manage it effectively, so that wars becomes less rather than more frequent occurrences in international politics. 9 Thus, crisis to a great extent can be controlled through management of the situation by dampening down the conflict and by trying to avoid high risks. But handling of the crisis is an awesome task for a crisis situation by its very nature tends to be intractable and is far from amenable to precise regulation and control. The out break of war, therefore in any circumstance is beyond anybody's comprehension. 10

The central question of this study is why war becomes unavoidable, despite the awareness of the fact that a crisis exists. The easiest method to overcome or avoid crisis is through mutual accommodation and by carefully calculated self-interest. But very often states involved in crisis may not be

7. G. Snyder, n.1, p. 127
willing to solve the issue through mutual accommodation due to the reluctance to agree on an acceptable solution. Each state usually attempts to impose a solution or engineer an outcome that is more favourable to itself than the opponent. This is because the policy maker perceives that the action or threatened action of another international actor seriously impairs concrete national interests and the country’s bargaining power. In other words the vital interest of a country is seemingly questioned by another country, which often leads to war. Therefore, it is imperative to understand (a) why nations deliberately take decisions to advance their vital interests in an aggressive manner? (b) why do policy makers disregard the consequences of their own actions? Before answering these two question a brief review of the literature on why war takes place, especially between the weaker and stronger state, is attempted.

Theories on war are many and have given different explanations for the outbreak of war, especially on why a weak nation often goes to war overlooking the power of the rival. Theorists who emphasize the aspect of deterrence argue that a less powerful will not wage a war against the powerful adversary.

The assumption is based on the notion that policy makers of a nation calculate rationally the military strength and a war is possible only if military strength is favourable. This theory is not acceptable because wars have been started with the overlooking of such considerations by a weak state against a powerful one.

Another theory on war emphasizes on power distribution as the root cause of the war. This theory bases its argument on war on balance of power that is

11. R.N. Lebow, Between Peace and War (Baltimore - 1981), pp. 9-12
wars are normally waged by stronger states and peace is possible only when equilibrium among powers is there. \textsuperscript{14} Equilibrium in power leads to status quo guaranteeing independence of states small and big. \textsuperscript{15} Preponderance of power in the hands of a state disturbs the balance of peace. This theory underlines the fact that war can be caused by only the stronger states and if war is not there it is because the secondary states join together and form a coalition to check aggression by stronger states. \textsuperscript{16} On the contrary we have instances of weaker states resorting to war without any support from other secondary states.

Organski in his work argues that war breaks out because the weaker nation attempts to impose its will over the dominant power. \textsuperscript{17} The dominant power reacts to this by halting the challenger through its power. Thus war is by a dissatisfied state which is relatively weak yet wants to quicken the pace of its advancement. It is difficult to accept this model because nations do not go to war to lose or for being unsuccessful. Therefore, it becomes very important to analyze the compulsions of the policy makers in this regard.

Bueno de Mesquita states that wars are not accidental and national leaders make choices based on cost and benefit. \textsuperscript{18} The key leader of the initiating state perceives that his long term benefits by going to war are more than his remaining at peace. But, as stated above, the states would not go to war if not sure


\textsuperscript{16} A.F.K. Organski and J. Kugler, The War Ledger (Chicago, 1980)

\textsuperscript{17} A.F.K. Organski World Politics (New York, 1968)

\textsuperscript{18} B. Bueno de Mesquita, The War Trap (New Haven, 1981)
of success. (Moreover the cost benefit calculus could also go the other way that is it could invite a long term disadvantage of having a permanent enemy which would be then more harmful than remaining at peace without the benefit.) Bueno de Mesquita, like Morgenthau, has based his argument on the fact that the state is an unitary rational actor and the decision for the war is the product of a single actor's cost benefit calculus. This study ignores the context in which wars become unavoidable and the compulsions leading to war.

Therefore it becomes important to analyze why war becomes unavoidable, especially when a relatively weaker state attempts to challenge a powerful state triggering a crisis. As states do not go to war to be unsuccessful, therefore it appears wars are very often fought owing to calculations founded on expectations regarding the success of relations which policy makers have. Expectation, by and large, is anticipation of a salutary outcome, event or development of lasting nature, vouched by conventional wisdom as common phenomenon among people, statesmen in particular, to look for what they best desire. Expectations of policy makers need not be due to misperception of the situation but mainly due to aspirations which policy makers have. Foreign policy decisions are generally made in a national framework, in interaction with other nations and it is national aspirations and interests that are dominant. These aspirations are more likely to be in the case of third world countries which try to get involved in power politics with a low level of power to achieve high levels in world affairs, unmindful of the constraints which they have. Therefore, an attempt is made to construct a theoretical framework to understand the policy makers expectations and how the failure of expectations regarding the opponent or another international actor could lead to war.

It would be suffice to state in this context that the aspirations of policy makers possibly prevent them from judging the opponents or other state's approach to the relationship. This naturally leads the policy maker to view his
adversary or opponent's perception on the basis of his own expectations. Not attempting to understand the approach of the other state (adversary) often leads a weaker state to challenge the powerful in the hope that it will be able to exert pressure on the powerful state and achieve its goals. Expectation is often based on thought and thought is subordinate to an attitude or perception. Psychologists assert that our perceptions shape the way we understand and interpret our environment and that subjective perceptions are always different from "objective reality" in so far as "objective" reality exists. 19 This kind of approach of one state towards another with an element of expectation, is more true of states which recently acquired independence from colonialism. But when the adversary reveals his true intentions contrary to the expectation of the challenging state or the weaker state, it cause disillusionment, frustration, anxiety and fear because the hoped for results have not materialized. It is under these circumstances that the policy maker tends to resort to brinkmanship out of sensitivity to the whole relationship. It is also important to note that while justifying expectations, the self image plays an important role. Thus in the following paragraphs an attempt is made to study how expectations could form the basis of policy, resulting in neglecting the consequences of their own actions. This leads a weak state to take calculated risk based on an aggressive foreign policy disregarding the power of the rival.

The study of the crisis period leading to war becomes very complex, necessitating the analysis of the motivation of the policy maker — the chief actor in international crisis. Klaus Knorr has underlined this aspect stating,

19. The phenomenological tradition within phiolosophy for example, argues that a reality does not exist independently of its perception by the human mind. What exists is what an individual considers to exist. Since an objectives environment is ultimately unknowable and therefore irrelevant, and understanding of choice must rest on the explanation that individuals themselves offer.
"only individuals have motives expectations and interests and only they act or behave". Nations may view their place in an environment to a great extent on the exclusiveness of themselves, that is from their own angle and egocentrically. This exclusiveness often stems out of expectations which the policy maker has and as already stated expectation is based on an attitude and having adopted a particular attitude slowly there emerges a pride bordering on chauvinism. During crisis, this exclusiveness jolts the public out of their apathy towards foreign policy. Under such circumstances, it moots a supreme challenge to the wisdom, resourcefulness and courage of the policy maker involved. The participants in a crisis therefore get alerted both to the seriousness of the problem with which they are faced and to the need for a quick solution, creating a strong sense of urgency. This in turn forces the policy maker to judge the situation on the basis of his expectation. Therefore the expectation of the policy maker diverges from the objective reality. The policy maker under the influence of the urgency caused by the crisis situation becomes unaware of the complex motivations that underlie his behaviour, preventing him from realising the outcome of the situation in an objective manner. The judgement based on expectations during the early years of relationship with the adversary state shapes the events and policies are assessed and given meaning.

When the political leaders are faced with the necessity of making decisions the outcome of which they cannot foresee in crises which they do not wholly understand, they fall back on their instinctive reactions, traditions and modes of behaviour. Each of them has certain beliefs, rules and objectives which are taken for granted and one of the limitation of documentary evidence is that few people bother to write down, especially in moments of crisis, things which they take for granted. But if we are to understand their motives we must somehow try to find out what, as we say, "goes without saying".

This is quite natural because the policy maker or statesman is inclined to

develop a number of informal propositions about the nature of interstate relations. Under such an influence, highly personal “rules of thumb” are developed, like the belief that an aggressive adversary will always interpret concessions as a sign of weakness or a belief that reasonable discussions and compromise would resolve most international conflict. There is no consensus on what are, the factors that underlie the assumption of the policy makers belief system. In order to understand this aspect one must try to analyze the objectives of these actors. The objectives are often based on expectations and these expectations are not based on analysis of a large number of facts and messages. Therefore, naturally the gap between the expectation and the situation becomes enormous, which the policy maker does not take into account. Thereby the policy maker during crisis fails to for see the possibility of a conflict. Following this gap, the whole processing and interpretation of information is done to justify the expectations according to the mental rules of the policy maker. This principle is termed as “cognitive consistency”. Cognitive consistency contributes to systematic bias in favour of information consistent with information that we have already assimilated. The foreign policy decisions therefore are based on beliefs about the motives of other actors. The policy makers are more responsive to the information that supports their existing beliefs than they are to the information that questions them. Any information contrary to their beliefs are likely to be twisted in accordance with their belief. “Being confident of this expectation, the policy maker adopts a stand before assessing the totality of the situation which is described as premature cognitive closure.”

23. R.N. Lebow, n.11, p. 103
25. R.N. Lebow, n. 11, p. 105
maker may not change his policy under its influence and may also adopt a rigid attitude on the matter. The policy maker is also forced to interpret unambiguous evidence to confirm the wisdom of his established policy forcing him to proceed on the data decided by him already. A policy maker may adopt such a stand because he thinks and acts in terms of interest defined as power.  

International relations should preferably be a process in which national interests should be adjusted but in the twentieth century foreign policy formulations are done on lesser interests overshadowing national interest. But often a policy maker seeks either to keep power, to increase power or to demonstrate power which works against the “concept of harmony of interests” among the nations. Pursuing interests that are non-essential to national survival contributes to conflict. Nations and their leader opt for wider goals in the name of national interests under the influence of modern nationalism combined with messianic ideologies. Diverse national experience promotes differing conceptions of national interest thereby national interest gets interpreted in different ways, with power as the ultimate goal. National interest is a necessary criterion of foreign policy, no one can have a foreign policy in disregard of national interest. Thus the policy maker tackles the adversary with a concept of national interest for which operational meaning is not clear and the policy maker often becomes a captive of policies of the past.

The policy maker is constrained to pursue an action based on one course rather than many others that might be pursued. Thus the policy maker is compelled to a single choice as leaders are encouraged to adopt a more defined position on international relations issues. The policy maker is strongly influenced by the pre-disposition which forces him to neglect how the adversary is going to react. This causes “egocentric bias” and the leaders see themselves as

28. Ibid
the central point of reference while explaining the action of others from their own perspective. Policies formulated on such a basis may fail to recognize the intention of the adversary. The failure to understand the adversary's intention prevents the anticipation of the fact that a threatening situation might occur. It creates a feeling on the part of the policy makers that things are going their way and that time is on their side. Having adopted and spelt out a policy it becomes very difficult for the policy maker to back out as in all countries the foreign affairs are likely to become the object of more emotionalism and irrationality than domestic questions. The policy makers may also lose control over the situation due to the "tenuous control" over events and even if they foresee certain problems or dangers looming ahead there is often nothing they can do to avert them. 29 The policy maker is thus compelled to ignore the limitations imposed by the environment. By being oblivious to the limitations in the environment, trade off is not possible and the policy maker even gets convinced that trade off is worse than other alternatives thereby preventing mutual reciprocity.

Policy makers are often reluctant to make important choices regarding decisions. As they are emotional beings therefore, they are not rational. Harold Leif observes,

An important aspect of emotional thinking including anxious and fearful thinking is its selectivity. Under the influence of anxiety, a person is apt to select certain items in his environment and ignore others all in the direction of either falsely proving that he was justified in considering the situation frightening and in responding accordingly, or conversely, of seeking reasons of false reassurances that his anxiety is misplaced and unnecessary. If he falsely justifies his fear, his anxieties will be augmented by the selective response, setting up a vicious circles of anxiety-distorted perception-increased anxiety. If, on the other hand, he falsely reassures himself by selective thinking, appropriate anxieties may be reduced and he may then fail to take necessary precautions. 30

29. C.B. Marshall The Limits of Foreign Policy (Baltimore, 1963), pp. 11-34
30. Cited in R.N. Lebow, n. 11, p. 107
Strong emotions imply that the importance of the matter at stake may often be overstated. The overstatement of the stakes in a dispute aggravates the crisis often leading to war. War is the worst threat to a state but this threat aspect is disregarded when expectations fail regarding the adversary's behaviour. Owing to this reason the policy maker is likely to be put under tremendous pressure from within the country. In this regard it should also be stated that as a general rule when internal factors and objectives of foreign policy are in conflict the former prevail. The internal compulsions force the policy maker to drum up passionate patriotic support for retaining his own position.

Falling short of expectations is likely to cause stress and leaders become sensitive both to the seriousness of the problem with which they are faced and the need for a quick solution which then necessitates a strong sense of urgency among policy makers. By stressful event is meant any change in the environment that typically induces a high degree of unpleasant emotion affecting the normal patterns of information processing which block the policy maker's attempt to achieve a given goal. In other words, "an individual perceives that a stimulus threatens to obstruct a goal which he is motivated to achieve." 31 Consequently, the policy maker experiences a situation which he perceives as posing a severe threat to one or more values. The policy maker therefore may adopt a conceptual rigidity and be shut out of new information on the crisis. 32 As has already been stated, it is difficult to understand the intentions of the opponent and therefore uncertainty is bound to be there. Uncertainty causes ambiguity regarding the situation preventing any kind of consensus, internally or externally. Ambiguity compels the policy maker to treat a particular conflict of interest as that of principle. When a dispute is considered a

32. O.R. Holsti, Crisis Escalation War, (Montreal, 1972), pp. 15-19
conflict of interest and each party is willing to settle for less than his ideal position rather than continue the conflict a compromise can be reached. On the other hand if the policy-maker mixes up interest with principle then compromise becomes very difficult. Thereby morality becomes a strong factor and the introduction of morality into the dispute introduces an all-right and all-wrong concept-based solution which is very difficult to achieve.

The policy-makers are sometimes beset by doubts and uncertainties because having failed to achieve their goals based on expectations, they are reluctant to make difficult and important choices due to stress. The existence of stress makes the policy maker think more in terms of immediate interests than about long terms interests of the future. The policy-maker naturally is concerned with the immediate situation and feels that there would be severe loss from any course of action adopted by him. Therefore, more often than not he will respond to such situations by procrastinating, rationalizing or denying the responsibility for the decision. This in turn prevents a mutually acceptable solution. As the original policy is based on expectation, it is not changed drastically preventing or ignoring alternate policies some of which may be suitable to the situation. This is so because the policy-maker is deeply committed to his original policy and to his declared course of action and feels that significant change from it will penalize him. Consequently, the policy-maker indulges in what is called as defensive avoidance known as "bolstering". Bolstering enables the policy maker to entertain hopes of successful outcomes and it is resorted to by the policy maker as a means to justify his policy in the

35. Ibid, pp. 50-57
36. Ibid, p. 74
absence of any feasible alternative that can be adopted. Adoption of bolstering results in exaggerating the positive consequences and minimizing the negative consequences. It also helps in warding off anxiety by projecting selective information to explain the policy. 37 This lulls the policy maker into complacency and he disregards the careful appraisal of the alternatives that would have prevented war. The adversary’s definition of its interests and how the adversary perceives the threat to these interests that are involved in the dispute are overlooked. The policy maker could also adopt a strategy that will basically protect him and becomes oblivious to the fact that his policy could encounter serious difficulties. Sharp criticism by the political opponents in the country could bring additional pressure to bear on those responsible for solving the crisis. When faced with such a problem the sensitive policy maker seeks a consensus in dealing with the problem that has a broad support. Naturally the attitude of political opponents affects the foreign policy behaviour of the policy maker, for leaders and interest groups pressing for a tough stand on the crisis will most often identify some action of the adversary nation as a clear and present danger to their own societies and positive decisions could become dysfunctional. The policy maker thus becomes insensitive to information that challenges the viability of his commitment and an irrational and disproportionate response is adopted to the problem which aggravates the crisis resulting in fatal consequences.

Past success can discourage rational thinking. According to Jervis, policy makers rely to a great extent on history and their own personal experience. 38 The lessons from the past are drawn basically to justify an already decided policy and to maintain the continuity in their behaviour. The past obstructs productive thinking because it represents only superficial learning. A solution

37. Ibid, pp. 74-95
38. R. Jervis, n. 24, pp. 227-38
that worked in the past cannot be applied to the present because the two situations bear only a superficial resemblance. This is so because, "People pay more attention to what has happened than why it has happened. This learning is superficial, over generalized and based on "post hoc ergo propter hoc" reasoning. As a result the lessons learned will be applied to a wide variety of situations without a careful effort to determine whether the cases are similar in crucial dimensions". 39 The past success also has another danger as the success is not subject to any kind of postmortem, unlike failure. This success prevents productive learning and thinking. A good example of this is the success of containment policy in Europe and the fact that the attempt to apply the same policy in Asia was not all that successful. 40

The policy maker's calculations of his interest and the assessment of what he has to gain if his projected actions are successful or what he has to loose by inaction is very pertinent in shaping the course of crisis. The greater the emphasis placed on an objective the more unlikely it is that the state will refrain from the policies that put it on a possible collision course with its rival. Consequently the aggravation of the crisis is the result of a direct challenge as the policy maker resorts to action in full knowledge and awareness that he is risking a confrontation. The calculated risk is based on a reasonable recognition of the uncertainties involved in the dispute. In this regard it should be also stated that aggressiveness is not adopted as a policy by the policy maker as if he alone had this thought. On the other hand a growing number of people begin to feel that war may be necessary and this shift in attitude convinces the leadership that certain actions could be taken. The actions in turn produce dire consequences which lead to war.

39. Ibid
40. R.E. Osgood. Alliance and American Foreign Policy, (Baltimore, 1968), pp. 75-77
Having taken the calculated risk the policy maker is forced to negate these challenges by misinterpreting them. The resistance to information challenging his expectation increases in proportion to his confidence in his action and the policy maker becomes insensitive to any kind of warning.  

Thus rationalization of policy becomes inevitable and the policy maker argues that the continuation of the policy would not entail any serious loss.

Policy makers by making their expectation public in the form of commitment encourage their subordinates to report or emphasize information supportive of their expectations and preferences. Thus rigidity on the issue is formed which impairs rational thinking and the policy maker will not respond to any information that goes against his policies. The policy maker believes that he could exert pressure to force concessions from the opponent without rendering the situation unmanageable. This assumption is due to the conviction that adversary’s case is weaker than one’s own. Such a thinking occurs because the policy maker is functioning under stress and therefore he becomes prone to decide in terms of his wishes or his fears. This often leads to a far riskier and more provocative course of action and such actions on the part of the initiator enhances the adversary’s threat perception. In particular the basic values of the adversary get threatened. When the basic values of the adversary get threatened or when the adversary perceives great threats to the basic values, he also prepares to take greater risks. The enhancement of threat perception of the adversary takes place because the leadership of the challenging state may get carried away by its initial success in crisis and start to change its goals or the same can take place due to elite factionalization and domestic political

41. R. N. Jervis, n. 24, pp. 187 - 200
42. Jannis and Mann, n. 34, pp. 74 - 79
43. R.N. Lebow, n. 11, p. 115
44. C.E. Osgood, An Alternative to War or Surrender (Urbana, 1962), p. 55
cleavages. Another issue is the clarity of signals between the participants. When the objectives of one actor in crisis are ambiguous, the other tends to perceive them in their most extreme sense. In both cases - expansion of goals and ambiguity of objectives and signals - the adversary’s perception of threat is promoted and intensified. This is more likely to take place in developing countries where there is a tendency to perceive threats as directed toward the survival of the regime. Such a tendency is due to the newness of the statehood and the prevailing sense of leadership insecurity. The implication is that if responsible policy makers feel that a particular move is necessary or a certain response is required, they should not allow themselves to be deflected from the preferred alternatives due to pressure from other quarters. The policy maker should act in accordance with reasoned and logical calculations rather than non-rational domestic pressures. “They should refuse to pursue policies contrary to their own rational judgement even though such policies might serve to strengthen their domestic position or placate public criticism”. 45 This is easier said than done as individuals and organisations connected with the policy making may be highly parochial and concerned with their self interest rather than rational judgement. “One of the fundamental reasons for tension in the international system is the formulation of objectives and policies on a purely domestic basis.” 46 This is because as a general rule when internal political factors and objectives of foreign policy are in conflict, the former prevails. The security policy is influenced by domestic factors, “With the result that the national policy which goes out into the international system is as much a product of internal factors as it is of the external ones which provides its principal justification.” 47 Domestic factors dominate policy making in most of the states and anyone who offers corrective ideas could be branded as unfaithful, eccentric

47. B. Buzan, People States and Fear (Sussex, 1983), p. 238
and even disloyal. Thus domestic factors prevent rational formulation of the policy and distort, impede and confuse the process by which a state deals with threats resulting in less effective and sometimes even possible counter productive policies. Barry Buzan has underlined this factor aptly by stating that "domestic political factors will always impinge on national security policy, forcing policy makers to respond more to domestic pressures and interests than to the requirements of foreign policy." 48 Consequently foreign policy “far from being the manifestation of the national interest is the compromise and often compromised product of political bargaining among different groups and individuals with different interest values and objectives.” 49 The policy maker being as much inward looking as outward looking tends to be equally concerned with the internal factors. Moreover, the policy makers do not always have a neat well-established hierarchy of values. Often they want to promote several values simultaneously or to achieve objectives that may be potentially incompatible with one another.

In the choice of alternatives, therefore, it is crucial to know, “how much of one value is worth sacrificing for some other value.” 50 The choice becomes difficult because the policy makers during an international crisis have to operate against the backdrop of domestic pressures or subject the policies to severe scrutiny. Once the domestic pressure mounts, the statesman loses control of the situation and he has to give up calculating rationally and emotion replaces reason. 51 The policy maker feels accommodation with the adversary would damage his political image and self esteem. The crisis gets linked not only with

48. Ibid, pp. 238-241
49. P. Williams, n.8, p. 64
51. G. Snyder, n.1, pp. 241 - 242
the prestige of the leader but with the prestige and position of the nation itself. This aspect is overemphasized by the countries which had become free from colonialism as they view foreign policy as a means to give expression to their feelings of nationalism. Any attempt to bring about a compromise with the adversary or not responding to the crisis in a manner geared to the angle of national prestige is viewed as an insult to the prestige of the nation in the eyes of both friends and enemies. A conciliatory policy is considered to be destabilizing because it generates an image of weakness and expectation of future concession to the adversary. The loss of control over the situation during the crisis compels the policy maker to allow the matter to drift and wait for the solution to emerge on its own, but over a period of time the crisis becomes unmanageable and the situation results in an action-reaction process. It is observed, “The statesman or policy maker is virtually compelled by his role to view his primary responsibility as that of advancing the interest of his own nation state in competition with other nation states.” In this regard, it should also be mentioned that it is very hard to find cases of even mild international conflict in which both sides fully grasp the other’s views. The action-reaction process is not susceptible to the will and the direction of the protagonists themselves and the process becomes irreversible and the participants find themselves involved in serious hostilities. Under such circumstances a defensive move by one side may look provocative to the other, evoking from the later a further defensive reaction. Such an action reaction chain is unavoidable due to high suspicions. Belief in an hostile environment therefore conditions the decisions of the policy maker and precipitates the crisis. The situation becomes so grave that “In such circumstances the worst possible construction would be put

52. Jacks Levy, “Misperception and the Cause of War, Theoretical Linkages and Analytical Problems” in *World politics* October 1983, p. 87
on the action of the adversary: his moves towards accommodation would be treated with disdain and suspicion and his resolute actions interpreted as highly provocative and further evidence of aggressive intent. As a result, disaster might be impossible to avoid." The policy maker sees no alternative other than to continue in the prescribed course despite the excessive risks allowed. The state gets so deeply enmeshed in the crisis that it finds it difficult to disentangle itself unilaterally without an intolerable loss of prestige and disastrous diminution of its credibility. The protagonists consider the adversary's demands as so unreasonable that a further precipitation of hostility becomes inevitable. The danger of war, therefore, "is never greater than when the nations leaders define the situation as one in which the options are reduced to war or humiliation with a crippling loss of face." 55

With the intensification of the hostility the policy maker is forced to take particular actions not because they are beneficial, but because to keep quiet would allow the opponent to obtain advantage liable to prove decisive if the war breaks out 56. During crisis pre-laid plans prevent flexibility and the implementation of such plans could have incalculable consequences preventing the policy maker from being able to control the situation. Pre-laid plans are based on expectations and due to expectations the onset of crisis is not diagnosed. Precisely for this reason it produces behaviour which results in consequences that are not only different from those which one wished to achieve but are their exact opposite. Therefore, to escape from the situation the policy maker refuses to contemplate or confront the problem. 57 In such situations the policy maker of the initiating state projects one's own ability in an inflated manner to force

54. P. Williams, n. 8, p. 98
55. O.R. Holsti, n. 32, p. 222
56. Ibid, pp. 119
57. Lebow, n. 11, p. 222
the adversary to back down. This leads to an incremental escalation process in which two sides gradually become committed to incompatible positions, each in the belief that the opponent can be forced to give way.

Finally, they reach a stage where each state’s commitment to the prestige becomes so great that it becomes very difficult to back out. The expectation that the adversary will back out is replaced by the decision that the opponent should or must back out. Such attitudes put crises to a point of no return. Each side now believes that the opponent has considerable leeway and can back out of the conflict. When, in fact this is not so, the mistake can result in both making commitments that could have been avoided had their assessment of the others position been more accurate. Both sides hope to gain from appearing to have far more at stake than is actually the case. As J.L. Richardson puts it: “Both sides are interested in appearing to regard disputed issues as vital”. Therefore the opponent’s determination to defend the commitment is not taken seriously. As the crisis aggravates the policy maker’s freedom gets curtailed and the situation slowly starts getting out of hand and the policy maker finds himself an unwilling captive of past decisions taken without full knowledge or awareness of the probable consequences. In the earlier stages “defence mechanism” like rationalization, denial, displacement etc. were able to sustain the belief that things are within control or limits of the dispute. But fresh evidence exposes the policy maker to harsh reality, which causes anger and frustration. It is at this stage that the decision for war or peace hangs in balance. Very often, frustration produces instigation to different types of responses, one of which may be aggression. Anger and frustration blind the policy maker from opportunities to defuse the crisis. As Lebow observes, “A break down in the policy maker’s defences at this time may result in erratic behaviour or his actual paralysis.” 58

58. Ibid, p. 119
Expectations after a point even though unrealistic have to be sustained due to primacy of domestic politics in foreign affairs. Any attempt to interpret these expectations in a much more reasonable manner in the light of harsh realities would go against the expectation of the people, because public opinion becomes a crucial factor. Thus the policy maker in accordance with his commitment is forced to resort to brinkmanship.

Brinkmanship is based on the effectiveness of threat. In other words, the policy maker involved in a dispute attempts to exploit the situation to prove that the situation might go out of control. A calculable risk is being taken by policy makers in the hope that it will achieve the desired result. As Schelling observes:

Brinkmanship is the deliberate creation of a recognizable risk of war, a risk that one does not completely control. It is the tactic of one deliberately letting the situation get somewhat out of hand, just because its being out of hand may be intolerable to the other party and force his accommodation. It means harassing and intimidating an adversary by exposing him to a shared risk. 59

Brinkmanship is resorted to by deliberately challenging the adversary's commitment to force the adversary to back down from the commitment. Such a policy is aimed at achieving the goal without a war but by putting pressure on the adversary, by projecting the negative consequences of use of force. There is no attempt to start a war but an attempt to achieve specific political goals through threat of force. 60 A firm stand is taken in the hope that it will click. Policy makers who are already doing well sometimes want to go an extra step just to make sure that they will get what they want without taking note of the fact that this extra step sets into motion the process that finally leads to their undoing and a realisation that it could have been avoided if this extra step

60. R.N. Lebow, n. 11, pp. 57 - 58
was not taken. The extra step is taken because the higher the value of the issue in contention, for example territory, the greater the likelihood of the state resorting to tough stand. It also perceives that the other side is not in a position to resist the challenge or that it is deliberately trying to dominate. It is also feared that the prospect of the solution to the problem decreases as time passes and the adversary could become more powerful.

In some crises the policy of brinkmanship triumphs in bringing about trade-off. By resorting to brinkmanship, a “quid pro quo” arrangement could be worked out. As Lebow observes, “Brinkmanship crisis in which trade-off is the real objective can usually be identified by the initiator’s attempt to link resolution of the crisis to the satisfactory resolution of other issues of conflict.” Such a trade-off is possible where both powers are evenly matched. If the adversary is strong and if it attempts to dictate peace by suggesting a compromise the weaker state will not accept it and the greater the disparity between the two, the less likely negotiations will succeed. Such an attempt to dictate the compromise is seen by the weaker state as an act of bullying and it will resist all such compromises.

In brinkmanship the use of threat or intimidation is particularly dangerous because there is great deal of uncertainty about how an antagonist perceives such tactics. The danger becomes more acute with the negation of the adversary’s commitment because “it is a mere instrumentality in crisis where the primary objective of the initiator is to humiliate the adversary by demonstrating his weakness to the world”. The adversary takes it as a challenge because it

61. Z. Maoz, “Power, Capabilities and Paradoxical Conflict Outcomes” World Politics January 1989, p. 242
62. R.N. Lebow n. 11, p. 59
63. Ibid
fears that acceptance would weaken its influence throughout the world. 64 Both the participants in crisis, view the cost of disengagement as very high. Any kind of disengagement could be detrimental strategically, territorially and economically. It can harm the nation's bargaining reputation and reneging in the face of challenge will undermine its domestic authority. In such a situation "A government that commits itself to defend a particular interest increases the cost of any subsequent retreat. This is the very raison d'être of commitment." 65

Therefore an important question that needs to be answered is why the state resorts to brinkmanship. The political vulnerability of the leader or the policy maker itself comes under challenge domestically. The unexpected negative response of the adversary state to the initiator’s commitment shatters the image of the leader. The adversary's challenge to the commitment is seen as a threat to the security of the state. It also takes the initiating state by surprise and places it at a disadvantage and the attempt to achieve a fait accompli goes awry. Thus the political vulnerability of the policy maker increases the necessity for success in foreign affairs. The need to buttress his position at home, compels the policy maker to lead a tough foreign policy in spite of the risk involved. 66 Leaders find it difficult to resist the public demand for a tough and aggressive foreign policy. The policy makers become prisoners of circumstances or sometimes they create a situation through their own ineptitude. Sometimes aggressive posture is adopted, not with the idea of threatening the adversary but mainly to extract concessions from the adversary. The failure of this attempt forces the policy maker to pursue a policy based on "crime of passion".

It is during such serious crisis that the opponents of the policy maker try to take advantage of the situation to seize power, triggering of an “intraelite

64. Ibid
65. Ibid, p. 61
66. Ibid
competition for power". The state is not an unitary actor and it consists of many actors with diverse interests who bargain for power. 67 The failure to put pressure in domestic policies is compensated by actively involving in the international relations of state which Allison describes as.

Men share power. Men differ about what must be done. The differences matter. This milieu necessitates that government decisions and actions result from a political process. Sometimes one group committed to a course of action triumphs over other groups fighting for other alternatives. Equally often, however, different groups pulling in different directions produce a result or better a resultant, a mixture of conflicting preferences and unequal power of various individuals - distinct from what any person or group intended. In both cases, what moves the chess pieces is not simply the reasons that support a course of action or the routines or organizations that enact an alternative, but the power and the skill of proponents and opponents of action in question. 68

The policy makers thus feel that they face serious threat to their national or political interests and to overcome it they resort to brinkmanship.

The confidence to indulge in brinkmanship is contributed by the role of the powerful third state in the crisis. The probability of support from the third state influences the thinking of the policy maker of the initiating state. The support of the third state raises the expectation that the adversary will back down. This expectation gets strengthened with the shift in alliances, especially if there is a commitment of a great power or powers to the initiating state and lack of such a commitment to the adversary. This provides enough confidence to the initiating state to put pressure on the adversary to back down. Sometimes this leads to miscalculation of the situation leading to war. In this regard it should be stated that the initiating state while trying to put pressure on the adversary may forget to take note of the fact of how the potential ally defines

67. Ibid p 70
68. G.T. Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (Boston, 1971), p. 145
the situation and its cost benefit calculus. Such a notion is entertained about the ally because of the tendency to believe that one's own commitment is justified and the ally would perceive the threat in the same way as one does oneself. Levy observes in this regard, "Even if the expectation of support is an accurate one, the estimation of the effects of that support in the war effort may be misguided, again leading to a false sense of optimism". 69 Such a sense of thinking often results in overlooking the intentions of the adversary.

The apparent support from a powerful state or states makes the initiating state adopt a tough stand on the dispute. The initiating state also decides to resort to force in a restrained manner because it feels that the opportunities at hand are suitable to achieve its aim and to alter the status quo which is unbearable to it. They are influenced by the reasoning that along with the support of an ally limited military action is possible. If it does not act now, it will never be able to do so because the adversary is unprepared for a war now due to internal circumstances in that country.

To a great extent policy maker's beliefs shape his expectations. "Individual's belief system represents all the beliefs, hypotheses and expectations that he is convinced are valid at a given moment in time. In other words, the individual locates the information coming to him on a scale of belief and disbelief. Thus the belief system takes on a central role in the processing of information." 70 In other words the individual's belief system has a central role in his expectations and assumptions. O. Holsti states that beliefs are the key to understanding often unexamined assumptions in which the policy is formulated. 71

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69. J. Levy, n. 52, p. 93
70. Y.I. Vertzberger, Misperceptions in Sino - Indian Relations (Colorado, 1986), pp. 29 - 30
system could be understood in relation to the concept of role which consists of attitudes, responses, decisions, functions and commitments towards other states. Scholars like Robert Manadal and William Scott and Lebow have linked the role to national images and full national self-images influence the foreign policy. According to Lebow, "national self images almost invariably contain a commitment to some idea or principle that is concrete, tangible and readily understandable to members of the nationality. Such images usually draw upon myths and embellished memories of past purpose." 72 This creates a feeling of confidence about oneself. It also promotes the role of integration and instills a sense of common purpose. According to E.Renan. "What constitutes a nation is not speaking the same tongue or belonging to the same ethnic group but having accomplished great things in common in the past and the wish to accomplish them in future." 73

The emphasis on the national purpose is always stronger by the countries with ethnic and linguistic diversity 74 The best way to overcome the problems caused by the above mentioned diversities is by emphasizing on national purpose. The national purpose is also an attempt to compensate the loss of what they had earlier suffered by reflecting on the glory of nations achievements in contemporary world affairs. National self-image strives for a sense of importance and purpose especially in the changed environment. The nations self image gets linked with nationalism and it gets integrated into the emotions of the people. Hence no nation attempts to examine the self-image with objectivity. 75 The national self-image apart from creating a high expectation about self also contributes to deliberate rejection of adversary's views. It naturally creates

72. R.N. Lebow, n. 11, p. 197
73. Quoted from Ibid p. 197
74. Ibid
75. Ibid, 198
Viewing the world from their own sense of expectation leads to a likely construction of similarities between themselves and the adversary state and attempts to predict behaviour of others in accordance with one's own goals. This results in overlooking the intentions of other states. Policy makers thus become committed based on expectations of their goals and this commitment causes them to have pride in themselves. The pride in oneself compels the policy maker to determine the nation's policy overlooking the interest of the state. The policy maker thus becomes a prisoner of one's own commitment and self-image of the nation, failing to realize that others do not see the situation in the manner in which he wants them to see. This failure creates an idealized image about one's own nation and the idealized image sustains the expectation of the policy maker and every action is explained favourably with this image in mind. In other words all goals are seen as mutually compatible and a chosen course of action as supportive of all of them. Policy makers will see their actions as beneficial to other states and these actions support the benign image policy makers hold of their nation. 76 This belief is further substantiated by another tendency of assuming that others will interpret one's behaviour as one desires. This notion is due to the assumption that others understand the context in which one acts and also the belief that other will understand the motives and actions as benign and will interpret them as the policy maker wants them to. But when the rival questions these assumptions the initiating state attributes motives to them. 77 The flattering image about themselves compels them to view the whole dispute from their selfish point of view. This causes a feeling of self-righteousness and self righteous posture compels the policy maker to adopt a moral posture on the international relations and wanting this moral

76. R. Jervis, n. 24, pp. 146- 47
77. Ibid, pp. 67- 68
posture to be accepted by the other side as the basis of relationship. It is on this moral basis that the attempts to establish a "special relationship" is made. The policy maker expects the reservoir of goodwill to overcome any difference between them. Such a thinking is fraught with romantic images, distortion, irrelevant generalizations and inconsistencies which prevents the understanding of the adversary's determination in defending his interests in case of a conflict.

**Conclusion**

This discussion therefore suggests that in modern times wars have been fought due to conscious decisions by policy makers and it is due to this reason war has remained one of the oldest scourges of mankind. The conscious human decisions on war are probably due to expectations of policy makers formed under the influence of aspiration which they have in world affairs. To realize the aspiration often the policy maker views the whole situation from his own angle, especially from his own commitment. Consequently there is no attempt by the policy maker to grasp the adversary's view. Such an attitude on the part of the policy maker is due to his concern for retaining his own position. Thucydides was correct when he said that men go to war for reasons of honour and fear. The fear of losing honour if one compromises drives the policy maker to aggressiveness.

The honour of a nation is built upon the expectation of the policy maker and his commitment is based on these expectation. To justify one's commitment, if not achieved, "each side", out of frustration, believes the other to be bent on aggression and conquest, to be capable of great brutality and evil doing, to be something less than human and therefore hardly deserving respect or consideration, to be insincere and untrustworthy etc. To hold this conception of the enemy becomes the moral duty of every citizen and those who question it are denounced ......... The approaching war is seen as due entirely to the hostile inten-
This conception of enemy is a part of the game of brinkmanship to put pressure on the adversary to force him to back out. After a point when the policy maker finds truth too threatening, he is forced to remain on the collision course because politically risky actions under such a situation can provoke public debates over the leadership qualities and the ability of the leader to lead the country. Naturally the policy maker's commitment becomes further stronger preventing any via media to the dispute. Thus the idea stance adopted by the policy maker is one of aggression which perhaps insulates him to keep his position secure.