CHAPTER 2
THEORIES OF CONFLICT

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Conflict is a pervasive element in our society. There is a possibility that it could occur at any time in our society. It can occur between persons, group, organizations and nations. The growth in the gap between the rich and poor has become inevitable with the emergence of industrial societies and free market economic systems. The development of more destructive technologies and the willingness to use them indiscriminately increased the cost for forceful solution of conflict. The last century survived in two Great World War and many of regional wars. Unfortunately, the new millennium started with many acts of terrorism and wars. Latest in this row was Iraq and Afghanistan war.

2.1 Conflict Theory

The roots of modern theories of conflict can be traced back to Max Weber, Karl Max and Sigmund Freud. Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Adam Smith are important writers in western tradition of conflict analysis. There have been different theoretical approaches to understanding conflict. Psychologists have focused on intrapersonal conflicts. Social psychologists have concentrated on inter-personal and

inter-group conflicts. Economists have focused on economic competitions, labour negotiations and trade disputes. Political scientists have specialized in political and international issues. The word 'Conflict' has many meanings in every day life. In a broad sense the term 'conflict' includes disagreements, debates, disputes and active efforts to prevent someone from obtaining what he wants to secure. The term conflict, Roderick ogley simply defines as "incompatibility in the aim, goals or interests of two or more individuals, groups or other units[1]." Some thinkers define conflict as a state of mutual antagonism or hostility between two or more parties.

2.2 Origin of the word 'Conflict'

Many reasons are behind the origin of 'conflict' in our society. Early in this chapter we have defined definition of conflict. Many theoreticians have expressed their views on the origin of the word conflict at different levels. Conflict is generally considered as a tendency to perform two or more incompatible responses at the same time, resulting in emotional, mental and physical levels. The incompatible action may originate within individuals or between, two or more individuals or within groups or two or more groups. Kenneth

Boulding says, "Conflict exists when any potential positions of two behaviour units are mutually incompatible"[2]. A classic understanding of conflict is a dynamic phenomenon; one actor is reacting to what another actor is doing, which leads to further action. Quickly, the conflicts 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'[3]. Both parties are right to think that the other side is provocative, dangerous and malevolent. Each side, however, is blind its own policies and behaviour contribute to the development of the other's hostility.

Conflicts may arise then the parties are like players, competing for the same prize such as power, position, authority, territory or materials or disagreements about the rule of the game. There are various factors enhancing the conflict behaviour in parties. Misperception, impoverished communication, hostile attitudes, over sensitivity to difference, misjudgments, anarchic social situations and competitive spirit lead to distorted views that may intensify and perpetuate conflicts.

Ho-won Jeong is an international peace researcher who pointed out that relative deprivation, dissatisfaction of basic needs, failure of organizational functions, asymmetric power relations and dominant social structures are the important components in the origin of conflict[4]. Relative deprivation exists when people feel that their expectations of conditions for life have not been satisfied. If people's hopes and desires far exceed what they can realize, they may have more dissatisfaction with their current situations. The expectation to improve unsatisfied material and social conditions tends to go up with time. However, the economic and social capacity to meet these expectations does not increase simultaneously. Their expectations are likely to rise disproportionately to what society can actually provide. Frustration deepens when manifested reality does not match anticipated reality[5]. Basic requirements of human beings are both physical and psychological needs. Food, shelter and other basic material necessities are needed for physical survival. Love, affection, security and self-esteem satisfy psychological needs. Lack of this physical and psychological conditions of human beings are responsible for the stage of conflicts[6]

Power imbalance of human beings can have possibility to asymmetric relations. The unequal distribution of decision-making

power is a source of latent conflict. The structural origin of group conflicts can be related to the arrangements of social roles attached to domination and subjection. The two distinctive sets of groups are produced by authority relations. One group has a position of domination while the other is in a position of subjection. Opposed interests derive from power differences and then to conflict[7].

2.3 Characteristics of Conflicts

The nature of conflict can be understood in terms of how the problems are defined and framed. In general conflicts between opposing parties are differences of opinion and interest. Each conflict has its own peculiarities, their qualities are different. Some conflicts are classified in the character-basis is symmetric and asymmetric. The conflict of interest between relatively similar parties is called symmetric conflict. That means conflict between two individuals, two employees and two similar organizations etc. Conflicts may also arise between dissimilar parties such as a majority and a minority, an established employer and his employees, a Government and group of rebels, a master and his servants etc. In asymmetric conflict, structure

has possibility to top-level party always win, lowest level party always loses[8].

Another important character in the analysis of conflict is realistic and nonrealistic conflicts. There is some distinction between realistic and nonrealistic conflict. Realistic conflict has specific outcome, but nonrealistic conflict has no specific outcome. The source of realistic conflicts exists in every social system as long as people raise opposing claims to power, positions and economic resources as well as argue about different values. The realistic conflict resolves easily but it has some specific intentions. The non realistic conflicts have, provided tensions and hostilities. It is created only in unsatisfactory situations[9].

In another type of conflict is protracted conflict, these conflicts persists for very long periods, some for generations after generations, socio economic, political, religious conditions last for years. Internal and external conditions are enhancing the conflict situations. For Edward Azar, a peace researcher conducted many studies in the field of protracted conflicts[10]. Srilanka's ethnic conflicts, Israel-Arabic dispute, Chinese- Tibet, Indo –Pakistan issue are the best examples of protracted conflicts.

2.4 Types of conflicts

Conflict can be classified by the forms and structure. Some different types of conflicts are described below.

a. Individual Conflict

Individual conflict occurs in two ways. One is within individual; other is in between two or more individuals. An intra-psychic conflict is the conflict which an individual experiences within the self. It arises from our drives, instincts and values pulling against one another. Intra-psychic conflict is one of the precursors of interpersonal conflict[11]. Many social scientists have insisted that conflict is a human invention, not biological necessity. Different societies individuals create conflicts for different reasons, including pride, prestige, revenge and quest for resources.

Communication is a vehicle to individuals in exposing their views, opinions and comments[12]. When two individuals are meeting together they are communicating their ideas. Under special conditions one individual cannot agree with another's ideas. Then it is in the stage of conflict. The some psychiatrist mentioned that Frustration and Aggression is one of the important factors in human conflict. Aggressive behaviour is produced by frustration which may be

increasing the discrepancy between expectations and realities[13]. Then the social system had major role in the individual's character formation. Their likes and dislikes, values and modes of behaviours are those of this social system. Bad social conditions, such as poverty or political repression are made to seem even worse by high expectations that conflict with unpleasant realities.

b. **Class Conflict**

In exploitations of one group by another is the main source of class conflicts. This form of conflict grows out of one class holding itself superior and trying to dominate another for its own interests. These interests may be social prestige, religious objectives, or political power or economic advantages. In the Marxist paradigm conflict between classes arise out of differing material interests. In a capitalist society, two main classes can be identified. The means of production such as land and factories are monopolized by a few people; the bourgeois class owns the capital and material resources needed for mass production. The workers provide labour in exchange derive from the ownership of the means of production. The business classes dominate the working class until the latter organize to protest exploitation. This type of exploitation is the main source of class

conflict. The intensity of conflict in a capitalist is linked to the concentration of economic and political power in one class[14]. In a class conflict super position may result from the subjugation of one class by another.

c. **Economic conflict**

Economic conflict is the biggest problem in our society and the world. In general, we understand that all people would like to better living conditions. For assuring peaceful and satisfactory life, they wanted certain goods and services. Shortage of these goods and services causes dissatisfaction which gests converted into frustration and leads to conflict[15]. Poverty is a world wide phenomena, it is not homogeneously distributed. Even now more than70% of world's poor still live in rural village in Asian- African countries. Poverty is easy to identify, wherever it is found: high levels of unemployment, poor nutrition, inadequate health care and education, little or no savings, high level of indebtedness, inadequate housing[16]. This type of poverty can breed dissatisfaction, which in turn can lead to conflict.

Social and political factors also can contribute to income disparities. When wealth accumulates in the hands of few and large majority live under perpetual poverty, the situation constructed as one

of the potential in economic conflict[17].   The poor people are more likely to seek food and land than overseas conquests.   In the contemporary world, impoverished peasants may occasionally pose a threat to their own governments.   Over growth of population is increasing the economic disparities.   High level population growth in poor countries will not only prevent a closing of economic gap between rich and poor, it will actually widen the gap.

d Environmental Conflict

.   Modern technology brings forward many advantages in human beings.   It has very badly affected our environment. It generates much air and water pollution.   Traditionally we understood that political and military power is only threat to our national security.   But is must be expanded to include growing impacts of environmental stress locally, nationally, regionally and globally.   There are no military solutions to environment insecurity.

Environmental degradation is taking place in two forms.   One is the over use and eventual depletion of the resources and second is the degradation of the resources through pollution[18]. Modern technology produces large amount of toxic by products, which are polluted in air, water and soil, automobiles spew out vast quantities of additional air

pollutants, as do power generators and widespread, large scale burning forests and grassland[19].

Soil erosion is another environmental degradation, which make villages, towns or regions uninhabitat and thus transforms the local population into environmental refugees. As the population increases, especially in the poorest countries marginal land is brought under cultivation leading to further erosion by wind and water, desertification and additional loss of long-term productivity[20].

Acid rain, ozone layer depletion, green-house effect are important factors, which contribute to environmental degradation. Chloroflouro carbons are more harmful gas, are produced by the waste of refrigerants, propellants etc. The production of chlorofluorocarbons has led to an accelerating depletion of the ozone layer which protects life on the earth from harmful ultraviolet radiation[21]. The growing dispute over the nuclear power serves as another illustration. The powerful explosion at Chernobyl hurled radioactive debris far into the atmosphere, transporting it across large areas of the northern hemisphere[22]. In the use of military power applied for whatever reason inevitably causes environmental degradation itself, as was tragically demonstrated by the recent Iraq war and Afghan war.

Increasingly, the super national impact of environmental degradation encompasses global implication. It threatens no longer only the lives of particular individuals or communities, but the well being and survival of entire nation and continents.

e. Social Conflict

Social conflict is a relationship between two or more parties who believe they have conflicting goals. Such views are inherent in human relation. But this does not mean that every social relationship is entirely or even partially conflicting all the time. These major sets of factors are often proposed as the basis of social conflict, those within one or more parties, the relation between the parties of social conflict are found in inequality in political power or in property ownership or in incompatible religions or ideological convictions[23]. Some scholars argued that population density; homicides, suicides, alcoholism and urbanization are ever increasing the social conflict.

All religions teach us the same truth, love and peace. The language, interpretation and mode of communication in all religions are different methods. Some of them believed that, their religions are prominent, only their religions teach right things and other religions are not right. This kind of thinking is one of the important causes in social

conflict[24].   In early India some socio-religious issues like cast oppression, child-marriage, untouchability etc.   Ideological conflict is the one of the important factors in social conflict.

Increasing the population density is the biggest problem in our social system.   High densities of population have produced unemployment, homeless people and unavailability of better living conditions, mass poverty, and starvation.   When the industrial regions or rural societies in which population growth have exceeded available land, it can lead to a dangerous kind of national restlessness. Increasing the disparity among rural-urban sector created more problems, Concentration of more power and development are now in urban sectors.   More and more people are moving to town and cities, their movements crowding the unban sector.

f. Religious Conflict

Religious conflict is more violent and more dangerous than any other conflict.   Some fundamentalists believed that their religion is superior to other religions.   It is the main issue behind religious conflicts.   At present in the world today some religious leaders misuse in the name religion in their own interest.   Religions have contributed to the peace of the world but they have also led to division, hatred and

war. Fundamentalism is not confined to one religious tradition. It is visible in different in parts of the world. The major world religions differ in their attitudes towards conflict. Conflict in world religions in various categories, include the following: sacrifice, persecution, martyrdom, inquisition, witch-hunt and holy war. All these words are related with conflict and religion[25].

Justwar and Jihad are two words used in some Christian and Muslim theologist. In the year 1960s some Roman Catholic theologians have adapted the theory of justwar under the impact of liberation theology, arguing that the church supports a justwar could in principle also endorse just revolution. Some Muslim militants used the word Jihad. It is based on the conception of Islam a universal and hence it is always conceived as a battle between Muslims and non-Muslims[26].

India is a pluralistic society, people believed in differed religions, and has been living in peaceful coexistence. In recent times, violent conflicts have corrupted the majority Hindus and minority Muslims. Another communal conflict at the present times, with strong religions undertones, is that between Jews and Arab in Israel and Palestine.

g. International Conflict

In the international level conflict are of two types. One is in the form of injustice of the dominant nations over the dominated and the other is the conflict in the form of war between countries[27]. Economic exploitation, racialism, discrimination on the grounds of colour and ideology, disparity among nations in the matter of natural resources and others are the main forms of injustice and exploitations found in the international society. The last century itself witnessed two so called Great World Wars, besides many smaller wars in various regions. From the beginning of 1990 until the end of 1999 the world saw 118 armed conflicts, in the course of which approximately 6 million people were killed. Arms race is increasing in the present world. One of the reasons in conflict arises out of mutual suspicions among the big powers. Most sophisticated, deadly and devastating weapons are invented day by day out of this suspicion. Infact developed and developing countries spend huge money in armament industry.

Thus the previous century world faced the severe problem in the invention of nuclear weapons. Hydrogen bomb released enormous amount of energy. It is a great threat in human beings in the new

millennium. In the new era another conflict coming in the form of terrorism.

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