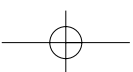
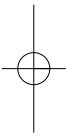
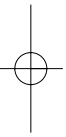
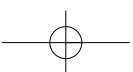
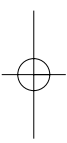
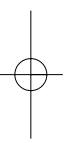




# **Part I**

## **Concepts and Analysis**





# Approaches to Understanding Conflict

# 1

Conflict dates from the beginning of human history and will probably never end. Our survival on this planet hinges on how we manage the various features of conflict that is fuelled not only by seemingly incompatible interests and values, but also by hostilities. The most destructive types of conflict such as interstate and civil wars consist of a coercive, violent mode of confrontation among adversaries. Whereas conflict embraces personal loss and societal destruction, its many features are not limited to physical violence. Non-violent forms of struggle are also prevalent in pursuit of different values, scarce resources. In bringing about important social change, resorting to force is neither necessary nor inevitable.

In order to explore strategies of managing, and possibly resolving conflicts, our goal needs to be an in-depth analysis of human behaviour and its surrounding environment. It is generally accepted that psychological and behavioural elements, as well as structural conditions for alienation, combine to fuel conflict (Azar, 1986; Burton, 1990; Kelman, 1972; Mitchell, 1981). The examination of motivational and perceptual aspects of human decision making is essential to exploring the dynamics of mass violence, arms races, and international crises. Perceived and actual threats originate from the misinterpretation of intentions or a lack of trust fed by opposing interests and power struggles. In assessing protracted conflict, major attention has been paid to the very nature of a system that reproduces incompatibility among social units. A large scale conflict arises from collective human action often precipitated or controlled by a surrounding environment.

Each year twenty to forty armed conflicts of various size rage around the world. Some conflicts have been successfully managed, but others have brought about devastating consequences such as wholesale killing (Marshall and Gurr, 2005).

In Cambodia, the unheralded mass extermination of the regime's enemy classes in the mid-1970s was marked by more than a million deaths; in Rwanda, indiscriminate killings of civilians by militia groups led to the loss of almost a million lives. Civil wars in Sudan and the Congo represented the most brutal internal wars, involving the deaths of as many as four million people, caused both directly and indirectly by armed fighting. Bosnia-Herzegovina experienced ethnic cleansing, expressed in mass killing of the innocent Muslim population by Serbian militia groups. The wars in Chechnya have been responsible for the most horrific human rights violations, while the civilian populations in Iraq have become terror victims, and are hostage to religious, sectarian violence unleashed as a consequence of the US invasion and the fall of Saddam Hussein's government.

Whereas violence and intractable conflict seem certain to remain a prominent and tragic part of the human condition, some conflicts have been successfully transformed for resolution. Many decades of struggle in South Africa ended with the building of new institutions that transferred government power to the black majority and, although all of the parties still need to agree to the overall political relations, decades-old sectarian violence in Northern Ireland has been stopped. Three decades of civil war in Angola finally ceased in 2002, moving toward political transition. The reconstruction of war-torn societies was accompanied by negotiated settlements of civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mozambique in the early and mid-1990s. These examples suggest that conflict can be transformed to avoid further hostilities and continuing violence. On the other hand, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been rekindled following a seven-year period (1993–2000) of efforts to bring harmony between the two adversaries. What are the differences that distinguish these conflicts? This is one of the questions which this book plans to address.

In understanding conflict, it is imperative to examine the sources of discontent and animosity, to identify the phases of evolving relationships between adversaries, and to illuminate the escalation of their struggles and the eventual recession of violent cycles to the peaceful resolution of differences. Given the enormity and severity of the consequences of uncontrolled violence, serious attention needs to be devoted to the regulation and management of hostile relations, even if it may take longer to resolve deadly conflicts.

The methods of intervention in any type of violence have to be associated with understanding the very nature, causes, and dynamics of the conflict. This book is intended to advance our knowledge of the psychological and structural conditions for conflict that are embedded at various levels of social and political systems. It covers the decision-making processes in the social dynamics of human interaction which can be transformed. Our analysis needs to include the causes of violent conflict and the interconnectivity of diverse elements within and between conflict systems. With this purpose in mind, the chapters in this book illustrate how conflict emerges and escalates prior to efforts to

manage and transform antagonistic relationships. At the same time, multiple types of conflict relationship at the inter-group, national, international, and global levels will be discussed in the context of past and current efforts to manage incompatible interests and value differences.

### **The nature of conflict**

Conflict represents the persistent and pervasive nature of inter-group and international competition among opposing interests and values that underlies power dynamics. The comprehension of mass violence and war needs to be based on an understanding of institutional roles besides the psychological and behavioural elements that instigate aggression. The experience of conflict is so basic that its negative effects spread to many aspects of a community's life.

The sources of adversarial relationships are not limited to tangible economic interests or control over power, but also extend to value and identity differences. The antagonisms in question may arise from interpersonal tensions between government leaders, labour management issues comprising multinational corporations and manual workers, disagreements between states on foreign policy directions, or international quarrels over trade imbalances and disparities in decision-making power at the World Bank or other international organizations.

Since conflict is entailed in diverse types of social interactions, its concepts have been applied to a variety of situations. The potential for conflict exists where opposing interests, values, or needs tinge our relationships with others. The latent conditions of conflict eventually translate into multiple forms of enmity in the visible issues.

In general, conflict is most popularly described as '*a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources*' (Boulding, 1962: 5). The efforts to attain desired objects become more intense in the absence of agreed rules prescribing their equitable allocation. People's expectations alter in response to a shift in their social and economic environment. If governing norms are too rigid to be adjusted to new demands and expectations, such inflexibility breeds resentment utilized for the mobilization of groups that are discontent with the status quo (Mack and Snyder, 1971). In conflict situations, the dynamics of actions and counteractions inevitably engage attempts to control the other's behaviour, often with the intent to injure or destroy the other party. In addition, violence may follow an unconstrained attempt to dominate in a fight over power, prestige, and material interests.

The essential nature of a conflict situation is easily understood in terms of the difficulties involved in meeting everyone's aspirations simultaneously (Pruitt and Kim, 2004). Goals and activities become incompatible when one's own interests are threatened by the actions of another. Parties to conflict make attempts to prevent each other from achieving desired objectives, owing to perceptions of divergent interests. Tensions can emerge due to the pursuit of different outcomes or disagreement on the means to the same end.

Thus, a conflict situation is represented by perceived goal incompatibilities and attempts to control each other's choices, which generate adverse feelings and behaviour toward each other. In the end, *'what is at stake is the relationship itself and how the relationship is defined'* (Lulofs and Cahn, 2000: 4). If the sources of discontent are left unaddressed, the conflict has the potential to affect negatively an interdependent relationship that is mutually beneficial.

The relationships in conflict are often described in terms of an exercise of coercive power. In a generic sense, power provides the ability to *'compel others to do something'* and is also the source of people's ability to exercise control over decision making on valuable positions, limited goods and services (Winter, 1973:5). In an adversarial relationship, a coercive process is linked to one party's efforts to change the other's objectives and behaviour. Thus power becomes an important element in the struggle for winning a conflict, since it is essential to engendering a desired difference in the targeted person's emotions and behaviour.

### **The context of defining conflict**

In ordinary parlance, 'conflict' has been broadly associated with tensions surrounding decisions on various choices, sometimes being manifested in confrontations between social forces (Dahrendorf, 1959). The nature of the contest can be illustrated in terms of how issues arising from a variety of competitive social relationships are defined and framed. We confront an unlimited array of issues that stem from diverse social settings. Differences in opinions, disagreement, and arguments are ubiquitous in every human relationship, whether organizational, communal, or international. Long-term grievances over economic and social inequities are derived from a failure to enhance the quality of life of a particular group (Azar, 1986).

In a broad sense, the concept of conflict has been stretched and moulded to describe any discord resulting from almost every aspect of social situations. The existential, penetrable nature of decision making over incompatible choices can impact politics down to such mundane choices as where to shop and eat. The term 'conflict' has been applied to quarrels within a family, workplace arguments as well as violent clashes between states. Thus it was declared long ago that *'the distinctions between conflict and non-conflict are fuzzy at best and at worst are not made at all'* (Mack and Snyder, 1971: 3).

While practitioners have often used 'conflict' and 'dispute' synonymously, John W. Burton (1990, 1997) developed clearer distinctions. According to Burton, conflict is interpreted in the context of a serious nature of challenges to the existing norms, relationships, and rules of decision making. On the other hand, the term 'dispute' applies to management issues and the control of discontent relating to the implementation of specific policies. In so doing, it may respond to the unfairness of authoritative decisions without questioning

the legitimacy of decision-making rooted in dominant values and established institutional procedures.

Polite disagreement, quarrel, litigation, and war differ in terms of the intensity and scope of activities (Burton and Dukes, 1990). The sources of misunderstanding and misperception are as diverse as a lack of information, misinformation, inadequate knowledge, and different interpretations of data or legal principles. Contradictory interests, hostile sentiments, and irreconcilable values are signified by antagonistic attitudes and behaviour. Beyond these elements, a destructive type of conflict involves attempts to inflict physical harm on the other side.

The bulk of interstate relations at a management level, like domestic affairs in an ordinary political setting, reflect disagreements within the existing system in lieu of hostile behaviour. If it is embedded in long-term rivalry, a simple argument may turn into a deadly contest with increased stakes. A protracted period of struggle stemming from value differences, as well as incongruent political and economic interests, is more serious than dissimilarities of opinion, mere bickering, and quarrel in electoral politics. In this situation, simply walking away from escalation becomes more difficult especially in the event of poorly handled inter-group cleavages spilling over into organized, armed clashes.

In a broad context, conflict can be compared with an intense form of competition. It is inevitable, even without direct contact, as exemplified in the efforts to expand sales in a consumer market. In the natural world, competition is considered to be an underlying rule of the game for survival, regulated by the surrounding environment, between and within species in search for food, shelter, and other limited resources.

Thus competition between behavioural units is the most universal and basic form of interaction in the world of living things, which is full of many mutually incompatible positions, for example, in the quest for scarce food or prestigious jobs. If the struggle is waged more directly and consciously, it may be regarded as a form of 'conflict'. In fact, competition is not identical to conflict, because the purpose of competition is winning valuable or scarce objects, not the destruction or injury of opponents (Mack and Snyder, 1971).

In economic transactions and sports, competition is governed by an acknowledged process of decision making. Many forms of competitive interaction may become so highly regulated and institutionalized that the participants do not challenge the fairness of the rules that determine the outcome. Thus, disputants in a legal proceeding, partisans in a legislative body, or candidates in an electoral race are seeking irreconcilable goals by means of procedures that may be so well accepted by all of the participants that violence is eschewed and hostility remains minimal.

Many types of competition are resolved automatically through impersonal forces of economic and social markets. Even market mechanisms, however, do not operate in a vacuum without regard to pre-existing power relations and

other types of arrangement that favour one over another. For example, by privileging certain communication skills, personal background, and social status, labour markets advantage one group of individuals over another. Owing to the inevitable interference of informal influence and recognition, sole reliance on market forces has not always guaranteed fairness, and has sometimes contradicted the general principles of equity and protection of public interests.

Regulations usually entail rules that bind acceptable means of contest to be adopted in pursuing contradictory goals by prescribing and proscribing conduct. In general, competitors are limited regarding what they can do to each other in the course of their efforts. Established procedures and rules may clarify the legitimate forms and degree of coercion, in addition to setting a limit on the circumstances under which a permissible level of force will even be tolerated.

The degree of institutionalization of competition differs according to how the rules have been internalized by the participants and have been supported by traditional norms or broadly accepted criteria. The effectiveness in the control of conduct is also affected by not only sanctions, available for the enforcement of rules, but also an internal sense of moral obligations.

Disputes can be provoked by broken agreements, unobserved norms, and unfair rules on access to resources. The established remedies may include group sanctions, arbitration, or court procedures. Disputes within an institutional framework can also be settled by bargaining, either directly or facilitated by professionals (Burton, 1997). International disputes can be handled by institutional procedures derived from environmental or trade treaties. For example, quarrels, stemming from unfair practice in the exchange of goods and services, have been mandated to the World Trade Organisation's arbitration panels which interpret rules agreed upon by member states. The institutionalized rules reflect the need for the professional management of international disputes.

Weak central authorities and judicial institutions, in combination with ambiguities in rules, lead to unregulated competition and struggle. In this situation, conflicts outside judicial and bargaining processes emerge, along with the weakening of central authorities. The requirements for new rules arise from modifications in technology and economic systems that create uncertainties. A lack of a world authority, in conjunction with a weak international legal system, has been one of the main obstacles to regulating the clashing interests and differences in values that are commonly manifested in an international conflict (Goodman, 2005; Waltz, 2007).

Given anarchy in an international system, many serious quarrels have often been handled through military force. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 represents the ignorance of established international procedures such as votes at the UN Security Council following the UN inspection of Iraq for weapons of mass destruction. The use of force and torture can be asymmetric and unjust in places such as China-occupied Tibet, but the international community has not



made more concerted efforts to mitigate that suffering. New types of violence (such as terrorism), which are increasingly prominent in the international scene, certainly require different approaches to our understanding of conflict that cannot be contained in normal interstate relations.

### **Socio-psychological dynamics**

Diverse forms of competition between parties with incompatible goals can be explained, in part, by subjective character. However, any events also have to reflect an underlying objective situation that contains contentious values, power imbalances. Equally importantly, inequitable social and economic relations have to be felt by those who organize protest. Thus, *'material bases of social life as well as psychological aspects of social relationships'* have the main impact on behavioural responses and interactions (Fisher, 1990: 31).

The subjective side of conflict, anchored in perceptions of each other's intentions and interpretations of behavioural responses, suggests that decision making is not always rational, far from the reflection of the real events in the external world. Poor communication, or miscommunication, and the stereotyping of adversaries are often ascribed to the misperceptions and misrepresentation of evolving events. The degree to which subjective components differ from the objective reality can be an indicator of how realistic might be an actor's response to a given conflict situation.

Differences in perceived interests, values, and needs are perhaps the most basic elements in the motivations behind social conflict. Inter-group conflict often represents different ways of life and ideologies with implications for incongruent views about relationships with others. Feelings of injustice emerge from the suppression of inherent social needs and values that have existential meanings (and which cannot be compromised). In discussion about substantive issues, however, the perceptual difference alone does not illustrate the existence of objective realities that are independent of the awareness of opposing parties.

Inter-group relations are constrained by a superimposed political structure besides their own internal dynamics. Thus the analysis of social conflict needs to focus on how group processes are linked to structural conditions, such as oppressive social relations and exploitative economic systems. Diverse dimensions of conflict dynamics can be illuminated in terms of the nature of evolving power relations in favour of one party over another as well as psychological impediment. For example, the Chinese quest for superpower status and the US response reflect the objective reality of a rapid increase in Chinese military strength and economic wealth, accumulated as a result of the huge trade surplus with other parts of the world. At the same time, US-China relations face different expectations and psychological uncertainties about the future roles of China, and American acceptance of the ambitious new power that challenges Western democratic values and political interests.

The mixture of objective and subjective elements varies under different circumstances, which are influenced by the level of power asymmetry and other aspects of conflict relationships such as moral asymmetry. A general audience can accept the moral and political legitimacy of each partisan's claims differently. While one party may lack the objective physical capacity to change the other's behaviour, its moral legitimacy may draw public support that creates a new reality for the struggle waged by marginalized groups. Even though China has far superior military and diplomatic power unmatched by the exiled government of Tibet, the latter's yearning for autonomy and freedom has been widely supported by many Western politicians and by the public, who are sympathetic to the Tibetan cause. In creating a new subjective reality, the Chinese government has completely rewritten existing Tibetan history with the intention of distorting the objective historical facts.

The relationships between subjective and objective elements in each party's decision making also change along with the evolution of conflict. Negative psychological processes, which obscure objective reality, are derived from the escalation of hostilities. Emotional aspects, including anger, hate, pain, and fear, intensify following material loss and physical destruction. The de-escalation of adversarial interactions is accompanied by the objective realities of the conflict's devastating impact and ensuing efforts to assess the existing realities more seriously. While changes in enemy perceptions are necessary for reducing mutual enmities, such change has to be embedded in alterations in certain realities, such as the removal of specific policies or visible actions (for example, economic sanctions or military strategies) that continue to cause harm to others.

The efforts to change psychological relationships (reflecting hatred and resentment) will be fruitless as long as the objective realities of alienation and marginalization continue under oppressive political arrangements (Jeong, 2005). Understanding an adversarial relationship would have to go beyond the issues of misperceptions and emotional attributes of conflict, entailing decision-making power which dictates substantive outcomes.

The difficulties in the establishment of objective reality through the subjective understanding of the world has lent to an intersubjective frame of conflict analysis that allows the meanings of conflict to be constructed through social interaction. Our perception and cognition are biased by our values and motivations, whereas communication is often charged with emotions and misinterpretations. Thus, *'the reality out of which we operate'* has to emerge from our shared senses, which also reflect our subjective experience in an objective world (Fisher, 1990: 6).

## **Conflict situations**

In conflict situations, two or more social entities are connected to at least one form of antagonistic interaction, through interference with one another's efforts



to satisfy their needs and interests at the expense of those of the other(s). The perceived goal incompatibilities are likely to promote conditions for adversarial relationships, since the other entity is seen to be a barrier to achieving the goal. A manifest struggle can be waged through the obstruction of the other party's quest for valuable objects. The contradictory claims to scarce status, power, and resources are often represented in purposeful efforts made by actors to defeat, thwart, remove, or at least neutralize, their rivals (Coser, 1964).

The contest is inevitable when the goals of opponents are mutually exclusive as a result of the negative impact of one side's choice on the other. Thus, a manifest conflict process involves direct and indirect efforts to undermine the adversaries' goal-seeking capability. The manifest struggle is contrasted with latent conflict situations in which groups may not be even aware of their opposing interests. Disharmonious interests between economic classes, for example, would not automatically translate into specific expressions of organized interests without mobilization efforts.

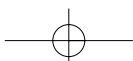
As discussed above, the most commonly accepted description of a conflict situation focuses not only on incompatible ends but also on irreconcilable relationships. Goal incompatibility, in itself, does not necessarily constitute antagonistic conflict situations, in that the parties might still find ways to live in peaceful coexistence (Bartos and Wehr, 2002). When one party attempts to control another in order to deal with the incompatibility, however, this can result in a process of inflicting psychological and/or physical harm. Such negative interactions based on hostile emotions can be fuelled by means that are not acceptable to the other side.

The emotional realities, embedded in interactional dynamics, can be defined by the underlying psychological patterns of a struggle. Hostility and other related feelings can be ascribed to the cognitive appraisal of threat to one's own interests and existence. The perceptions of threat, along with an affective reaction to the other's aggressive behaviour, activate intense feelings of anger, anxiety, and fear.

Incompatibilities in goals can be more easily managed or removed by the clarification of misunderstandings if the perceived difference is illusory, or is not based on real sources. If each party's intentions are not to obtain the same object desired by the other, an understanding can be reached to permit each party to accept the fact that they are not actually attempting to achieve the goal believed to be the same.

Different degrees and types of goal incompatibility shape the course of a conflict. The de-escalation of conflict may follow the abandonment of goals pursued earlier when the goals cease to be perceived as attractive. In particular, the appeal of goals is likely to be reduced by a rise in the costs involved in acquiring them.

Deep divisions can also be overcome through transformation of the structures of goal incompatibilities. The salience of goals may differ, depending on the level of the stakes and involvement of each party in their pursuit. There will



no longer be a conflict if one party gives up the special interest the other desires. The partial attainment of goals through their subdivision may also give rise to some satisfaction. Disputants can jointly seek mutually desirable solutions by pursuing a superordinate goal. Integrative solutions based on mutual satisfaction can strengthen collaborative relationships, maximizing long-term benefits.

### **Intractable conflict**

Intractable conflicts are highly pervasive, encompassing many aspects of the relationship, often among multiple actors. They can take place between individuals, between ethnic groups, and between sovereign states. In contrast with easily manageable interest-based disputes, disagreement over religious or other types of value (with existential meanings), can evolve into threats to individual or collective identity. Large scale inter-group conflicts such as civil wars tend to add an enduring and intransigent character to the experience of total investment in the fight for survival.

Whereas intractable conflict may begin in much the same manner as mundane conflict, *'a distinct set of dynamics, circumstances, and issues'* makes prolonged conflicts even more immune to resolution efforts (Coleman, 2000:429). Their effects become widespread in almost every dimension of human life, with the threat of annihilation accompanied by an entrenched and dangerous process of escalation. While there are objectively identifiable issues and external situations, the perceived intractability of a conflict is sustained by subjective processes of meaning making that contribute to inflexibility.

Partisans are not likely to change their positions on needs or values that are regarded as vital to their own core identities and survival. The questions of clashing religious, ethical, or personal beliefs are not easily compromised when challenges to them generate feelings of threat. Most importantly, however, the inevitability of a costly fight becomes acceptable due to systemic and psychological distortions within a group or country (Babbitt, 2006).

Repeated and concerted attempts to resolve deep-rooted, long drawn-out conflicts are resisted by the delegitimization of each other's security needs. The denial by one party of the humanity of the other is a basis for the justification of the continuing conflict. One's own beliefs on physical, territorial, cultural, and economic survival become justifications for every expression of conflict behaviour. Because of the emotional involvement and irreversibility, partisans have a strong desire for vengeance. Pessimism prevails in feelings of hopelessness about the potential for ending the vicious cycle of attacks and revenge.

Conflict is often negatively transformed through the ups and downs of a continuing fight. An unresolved conflict over a long period of time, for example, between the United States and Iran, between Israel and Syria, and between the Greeks and Turks in Cyprus, is likely to resurface repeatedly with intervals of dormancy and activity. A high level of intensity and destructiveness is maintained by a sustained period of escalation, before intense physical

or psychological fighting eventually subsides. Temporary settlements may be reached at the end of an intense period, but each ending awaits another ebb and flow of confrontations and hostilities. The persistence through the repeated cycle over time is characterized by sporadic increases in occasional outbreaks of violence. These protracted conflicts have lasted for several generations in Northern Ireland and Arab-Israeli rivalry, and the contentious relations between North Korea and the USA.

The psychological states and experience of intractable conflict reflect chronic feelings of uncertainty, pain, stress, and grief in company with a sense of hardship, lack of control, and helplessness, particularly in such places as Palestine and Chechnya. At the same time, psychological mechanisms are adapted to the challenges of intractable conflict, including the ability of endurance (Pruitt, 2005). Positive self-identity is boosted in a struggle with an enemy to strengthen determination and solidarity. Patriotism becomes a rallying point in withstanding enemy attacks and absorbing sacrifices. Threat is emphasized to cope with chronic stress and to mobilize the society to win.

External conflict distracts attention from internal problems, furnishes unity and coherence, and allows the development of a sense of purpose (Deutsch, 1994). On the other hand, a deep investment in the continuation of the conflict can stem from displacing the original sources of grievance into such non-rational psychological elements as scapegoating others for purposes of tension relief and the projection of disapproved aspects of oneself onto the adversaries. In many tribal communities that lost their land to invaders, scapegoating is sadly reflected in the self-infliction of wounds such as alcoholism and family abuse that were previously unprecedented.

As reflected in inter-ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and Northern Ireland, some psycho-analysts argue that longevity of conflict is ascribed to the accumulation of animosities and to other negative emotions that are often supported by collective memory (Volkan, 2006). In intractable conflict, collective emotional orientations determine the content and nature of social identity. Institutional or popular narratives, based on a shared account of the history, fulfil psychological needs through the glorification of past events. At the same time, a selective bias contributes to the dehumanization of adversaries.

Protracted civil wars in Africa tend to perpetuate a culture of violence and fear, which radicalizes militia groups and condones human rights violations. The new generations, who are growing up in an intractable conflict, have no conception of reality other than conflict and believe that it is normal to live in such a society. The bedrock of intense social violence is found in cases in which physical or emotional abuse, along with gross injustice, is routine.

### **Constructive versus destructive conflict**

If conflict is considered, in itself, to be neither bad nor good, an important question is what conditions give rise to a constructive or destructive conflict process.

What are the criteria for being constructive or destructive? How does a conflict move in a destructive, rather than constructive, direction? When can a conflict become more constructive? It is the context of a struggle and communication patterns that, in part, determine the nature of a conflict.

The constructive or destructive phenomena of conflict can be framed by the feasibility of transforming adversarial relationships, in part, enhanced by mutual understanding. Distinctions can be made as regards the processes facilitating or inhibiting communication. The consequences of the struggle can be judged in the context of achieving justice for the victims. The positive and negative aspects of conflict also need to be assessed in light of the means of waging conflict, violent versus non-violent, which have long term consequences for future relations. The objectives of conflict, understood by each party, are likely to influence their choices of action such as the destruction of adversaries or the pursuit of mutually acceptable goals.

Functions of conflict may simply include the search for an outlet to discharge an aggressive instinct in enmity outside of the group. As the struggle becomes an objective in itself, adversaries may feel that they simply have to fight, no matter about what. Thus conflict waged for internal psychological needs does not serve any purpose other than the release of tension, making it difficult to bring about a negotiated settlement. The failure to control negative emotions and feelings allows conflict to take its own course, independent of original causes and triggers.

The increasing alienation of disenchanting groups is prone to create clashing value systems and subcultures. The dysfunctions of social conflict, manifested, for instance, in the rise of ultra-nationalist movements in Europe, are revealed by the attack on the core values of Western democratic society, maladjustment, and disintegration. Unregulated conflict interferes with the normal operation of any organization or system, and reduces internal cohesion, impeding clear and effective communication. Resources are mobilized for destructive purposes, instead of productive social and economic activities.

By nature, a destructive conflict is sustained by escalatory spirals that produce self-perpetuating damages following a heavy reliance on threats and coercion. Violent behaviour, encouraged by a dehumanization process, is designed to cause harm to other conflict participants (Kellett and Dalton, 2001). A destructive course of hostile interactions has a very high potential for aimless violence, deception, and power manipulation. Excessive violence by militia groups in places such as Darfur in Sudan needs to be controlled by humanitarian intervention forces.

Although conflicts tend to have negative connotations, not every conflict is harmful if it ultimately produces a creative element for changing societies, while achieving the goals and aspirations of individuals and groups. If the outcome brings about positive changes, as demonstrated by not only apologies and compensation for the past abuse but also future prevention of victimization, that can be considered to be constructive. Non-violent conflict that is

aimed at the transformation of oppressive relations is inherently good and serves as a vehicle of liberation, in contrast to the consequences of accepting the superficial harmony of the status quo.

In change oriented theories, conflict is viewed as an inevitable process of social progress. The costs and benefits of the conflict ought to be judged in the context of any given situation involving the availability of alternative means to violent resistance. Even though a positive social change, geared toward justice and equality, must be gained through struggle, the sole dependence on coercive force perpetuates a cycle of violence, making conflict resolution a more distant possibility. As illustrated by the example of terrorist acts, anyone who depends on violent means for short-term success loses moral credibility and authority, no matter how justifiable the sources of grievance might be.

A conflict becomes disparaging when it turns into a mere power struggle for unilateral gains. A positive outcome of conflict cannot be produced if the participants are dissatisfied in the process of settlement, retaining a sense of loss. When one party achieves a victory, that leaves a bitter legacy of defeat experienced by their adversaries. The decrease in discord would be assisted by the existence of a prior experience of cooperation besides efforts to explore a creative response to difficult issues. Obtaining a mutually satisfactory agreement relies on the circumstances for negotiation that allow partisans to maximize their joint outcomes.

### **Root causes of conflict**

Most conflicts involve value differences and power disparities, whereas misperception and miscommunication play an important role in the evolution of adversarial relationships. Even though a conflict may originate from economic and other material sources, it can be quickly expanded to identity differences with escalation. In most complex conflicts, a variety of issues, such as the availability of resources and basic human needs, are interrelated with each other.

Substantive issues of conflict can be tied to a range of contested objects (namely, wealth, power, and prestige) and their conditions of availability. In addition, reasons for the struggle may be based on feelings of deprivation, injustice, inequity, and frustration beyond incompatible roles and positions. A challenge to the existing relations also arises when the expectations of various groups are not met in a given social structure.

Manifold socio-economic and cultural concerns are often mixed with political issues such as the status of minority groups (Ross, 2007). In Europe, the prohibition of Muslim women's headscarves has become a symbolic issue in national politics, because the matter raises questions about tolerance and diversity in a pluralistic society. The long animosity between Tutsis and Hutus since the independence of Rwanda is characterized by group competition traced back to the colonial period. The political and military elites of the Tutsis

and Hutus have organized violent campaigns to dominate state institutions. In Sudan, Burundi and other ethnically divided African countries, the discontent of marginalized ethnic or racial groups resulted in several decades of civil wars. Political violence, as happened with the Muslim youth riot in France in October and November of 2005, can be attributed to a systemic failure to incorporate marginalized groups.

Deterrence strategies, based on threats and punishment, are unsuccessful, or inoperative, when the accumulation of deep resentment by the oppressed groups seeks an outlet for violence (Burton, 2001). Fear does not always suppress human behaviour. Many conflicts of injustice are rooted in a history of colonialism, ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, or human rights abuses.

As each group wants to maximize its influence in a tense stalemate, a struggle for dominance is not easily amenable to quick resolution. In a situation featuring the severe imbalance of power, the more powerful are more likely to exploit or abuse the less powerful. Salient inter-group distinctions serve as a means of maintaining or strengthening one's predominant power base. In an ethnic or racial conflict, hierarchical relations have been established by a denial of access to decision making and by the rejection of power sharing political institutions. Along with these circumstances, the deprivation of cultural autonomy and economic opportunities may instigate an uprising. The imposition of policies on the prevention of ethnic language education in Kosovo was one of the most contentious issues felt by Albanian inhabitants prior to their insurgent movements of the mid-1990s.

Inequitable access to economic and social opportunities is often associated with a lack of political participation. The dissolution of the federal government in the former Yugoslavia has followed economic collapse in the midst of rising levels of hostilities among multi-ethnic groups and nationalities. The primary issues of decades old conflict in Northern Ireland have revolved around the Catholics' desire to be united with Southern Ireland and the Protestants' insistence on staying within the UK. This struggle reflects, in part, a history of political dominance, economic inequality, and disparity in access to education, health care, housing, and jobs.

## Levels of analysis

The complexity of conflict differs, depending on whether it focuses on interpersonal, inter-group, and international relations or global agendas. The sources and situations of conflict reflect issues at different levels of relationships. A deep rift, rooted in organizational structures, differs from mere emotional, personality conflict. The internal split, derived from competition among multiple factions, has an impact on capabilities to fight with external enemies.

The social recognition of divisions within multi-ethnic and multiracial society interferes with various types of decision making in politics and social life



such as the selection of friends. In establishing their relationships with others, people tend to perceive themselves in terms of racial, ethnic, religious, or other social categories. Reflecting the antagonism among members of diverse communities, elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina have further deepened political divisions, with voting patterns roughly along ethnic lines.

These categorizations have complicated human relations at various levels. While the political elite may pursue territorial ambitions and compete for economic resources, excessive nationalistic aspirations have led to the denial of self-determination for minorities. The treatment of Muslims in American society may mirror a larger public perception in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks. In more repressive societies, an individual level conflict may be traced back to structural causes of injustice. For example, a quarrel between Tibetan and Chinese youths in a train can be seen not only in terms of personal dispute, but also in the overall context of the Chinese occupation and domination of Tibet. The police may easily accuse the Tibetan youth of subversive activity if he engages in arguments with a member of the dominant Han nationality. Thus, ethnic and racial conflicts have implications for the conditions of individual well-being.

While the state is the most important unit in international relations, ethnic, religious, and other identity based groups have played an important role in determining contemporary conflict issues across or within state territorial borders. An identity group in multi-ethnic states makes an essential demand for autonomy. In the aftermath of two World Wars and colonial struggles, many groups have been put under the control of new sovereign state power that does not afford political and economic opportunities for minorities. The minority rights of Kurds scattered across several different Middle Eastern countries have been suppressed in Turkey, Iran, and Syria. The status of Kashmir has been a source of long contention among many factional groups that have different affiliations with India and Pakistan. Tibet and Aceh were annexed by China and Indonesia, respectively, without the consent of the inhabitants. The recognition of group-level rights has become essential to the solution of many contentious contemporary conflicts.

The outcomes of conflict at a global level often reflect power asymmetry among multiple actors, including tribal, indigenous populations, advocacy groups, and multinational corporations in such issue areas as rainforest destruction, overfishing, and many other important issues that will determine the future of human civilization (Leatherman and Webber, 2006). Many non-state actors such as environmental and religious groups operate not just at local but also global levels. In dealing with global issues, opposing positions may emerge between blocs of countries across different issue areas. On global warming, in concord with China and India, the Bush Administration opposed the European initiatives to implement an international treaty on the control of greenhouse gas emission levels by each country. Japan, Norway, and Iceland

defied an international ban on whaling despite opposition from other Western countries, which gave voice to the public outcry, responding to protests of anti-whaling citizen groups.

Hostilities at a given level can affect the dynamics of conflict relationships at other levels in complex ways. When President Bush called Kim Jong-Il, the North Korean leader, a 'pygmy', it did not help to manage the issue of nuclear weapons programmes pursued by Pyongyang. In its negotiations with the American government, the North Korean leadership has continued to complain that it was not treated equally and respectfully, justifying its position in not giving in to demands of nuclear disarmament. The accusations of alleged Pakistani support for the ousted Taliban forces by President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan have been enmeshed in his acrimonious relationship with Pakistan's President Musharaf, hampering US war efforts against Al Qaeda.

According to Immanuel Kant's moral theory, human behaviour should not be treated differently at personal, communal, national, and international levels. The behaviour of individuals seeking recognition in society is no different from that of identity groups whose political status and legitimacy is denied. The need for development and autonomy of the individual is often explained by the same motivation of an identity group seeking human security. The suppression of individual esteem and group autonomy has generated a demand for human rights protection and self-determination. In the aftermath of some recent civil wars, government leaders (for example, Slobodan Milošević in former Yugoslavia and Charles Taylor in Liberia), responsible for atrocities and massacres, were brought to the international criminal court, even though they claimed that these acts were committed by their subordinates.

## Overview

Every conflict involves political, moral, and psychological dimensions. Identity and power differentials underlie the social, psychological dynamics of conflict. The motivations for waging conflict range from the pursuit of narrow interests by sectarian groups to the promotion of justice. The sources of conflict in many non-Western societies are rooted in imbalance in economic and political systems that encompass disparity in the distribution of wealth, legislative and administrative power among ethnic, religious groups. The global context of conflict spawns opposition to discriminatory treatment and protests against war or environmental destruction.

In general, conflicts can be categorized in terms of types of actor and adversarial action, ranging from war to non-violent struggles. International conflict is not necessarily restricted to hostile interstate relationships or ethnic warfare. The response to terrorism, for example, has global implications that require analysis of complex relationships between the emerging political forces in the Islamic world and the legacy of Western domination in the Middle East.

Interaction patterns in conflict situations can be ascribed, in part, to the attitudes and behaviours of the parties. In addition to the psychological basis of animosity, we need to examine relationships between parties, not only symmetric but also asymmetric, on both political and moral dimensions. The process of actualization of latent sources of conflict has an impact on the formation of issues beyond the selection of responses, whether violent or non-violent. In addition, many conflicts reflect characteristics of different issue areas: ethnic, racial, religious, labour, environmental, etc.

This volume focuses on the causes, processes, and conditions of conflict as well as the behavioural patterns involved in antagonistic interactions between adversaries. More specifically, it explains the escalation, entrapment, de-escalation, and termination of conflict. In so doing, it sheds light on diverse phenomena, ranging from group dynamics to the structural transformation of an adversarial social system. The establishment of a new relationship would not naturally follow an official agreement reached at formal negotiation settings without healing past grievances.

Whereas this introductory chapter has reviewed basic concepts and principles, the next chapter illustrates the analytical frameworks and elements that are entailed in understanding conflict. In Chapter 3, various sources of conflict are attributed to dysfunctional psychological mechanisms, social systems, and the role of identity and power in the creation of social boundaries and hierarchies. Chapter 4 examines conflict situations in light of socio-psychological aspects of competitive behaviour and the role of cognitive and institutional processes in decision making.

Chapter 5 assesses a conflict process in the context of the relations both between and within parties as well as the external constraints on inter-group interaction. The complexity of conflict relationships is discussed in Chapter 6, providing a typology of different patterns of interlinkage between actors, issues, and time. In addition to deepening our understanding of an action-reaction model, Chapter 7 covers organizational, behavioural variables involved in conflict dynamics.

In explaining escalation, Chapter 8 reviews conflict spiral models that feature the psycho-political dynamics to dominate each other. Chapter 9 looks at de-escalation in terms of diminishing hostilities and other conditions for bringing about conciliation. Specific strategies and modes of de-escalatory action are discussed in Chapter 10. After reviewing the types of conflict outcome, Chapter 11 focuses on the implications of various methods of ending struggle.