
UNIT 6 SOURCES OF CONFLICT: PERSPECTIVES

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6.1 INTRODUCTION

We learnt in the previous Unit that human conflicts are omnipresent and ubiquitous. They are present in every society, in every part of the world. We also learnt that there are many kinds, types, levels and manifestations of conflict. There is no single source for every conflict. There are as many sources of conflict as there are its types and levels. Conflicts may have more than one source or reason.

Identifying and understanding the underlying sources and root causes of conflicts is a key to reducing their frequency and intensity, and eventually seeking a resolution. Since conflicts often bring destruction in their wake and are therefore costly affairs, sources of conflict are the natural foci for reforms and changes which will supposedly reduce or eliminate conflict. If the source of conflict is a psychological state called 'tension', tension reduction is an indicated strategy. If the source is ignorance, as is the case in some non-realistic conflicts, education will eliminate or minimise the 'cause' of such conflicts. A genuine and lasting solution to peace cannot be worked out unless one is familiar with the reasons and causes of different types of conflicts. Conflict resolution efforts will bear fruits only when the root causes of conflict are identified and the grievances of conflicting parties are addressed. Therefore, it is very important for us to know both the general and specific causes that result in conflicts.

It must be recognised here that adequate research has not been done by scholars / theorists of peace and conflict studies on the causes, effects and international implications of ethnic,

social and other forms of communal conflicts. Most scholars have focused their research on international armed conflicts or wars. This Unit will focus on the causes of conflicts, including armed conflicts and other non-armed conflicts.

When we analyse the causes of conflicts, we are confronted with many questions: Is there a general theory of sources of conflict? Can there be a single cause for the origin and eruption of conflict? Or, are there multiple causes of conflicts? What are the general and specific sources of conflicts?

Aims and Objectives

This Unit will enable you to understand

- The causes of conflict
- The theoretical perspectives on sources of conflict
- The general causes / specific sources of conflict
- The economic, political, ethnic, religious and structural causes of conflict.

6.2 SOURCES OF CONFLICT: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Why does conflict or violence occur? To answer this question several scholars have theoretically analysed the concept of conflict or violence. Some of the major theories are:

- i. Frustration-aggression complex;
- ii. Relative deprivation theory;
- iii. Modernization process; and
- iv. Conflict as an inherent process of social change.

Frustration-aggression theories of human conflict were developed in the discipline of psychology by Dollard and his associates. This theory was further developed by Lewin. This theory argues that frustration breeds aggression. Urbanisation, mass media, especially the television, and other such sources of information help an individual to become aware of higher standards of living experienced by people in the developed, industrialised societies. People living in underdeveloped or developing countries feel frustrated when their expectations / aspirations are not fulfilled due to lack of technology and scarcity of resources. Conflict or violence resulting out of such frustration is known as *frustration-aggression* complex.

Secondly, if an influential section of a society appropriates for itself a greater share of resources and opportunities available in that society, then the rest of the population in such a society feel *relatively deprived*. Such imbalance usually occurs during the periods of relative prosperity or development. If the fruits of progress, during the process of development, are not evenly distributed among all the constituent sections of a society, those relatively deprived of their due claims resort to violence as a means to redress their grievances. When the gap between perceived expectations and real entitlements widens, it leads to conflict or violence.

Conflicts are also directly related to the *modernization process*. Most developing countries go through this transitional phase from tradition to modernity. During the transitional period, disequilibrium between political, social and economic institutions gives way to political violence

or conflict. In the transitional period, new work ethics and value systems are sometimes at variance with traditional practices that lead to modern, developed economic institutions coexisting with traditional notions of politics and society. Such an incongruence between various institutions in a society or between institutions and processes within a realm (such as politics) leads to tensions. For example, political modernisation implies accommodating political participation of the new social groups. However, institutions that represent political modernity sometimes continue to function on the basis of primordial affiliations. Thus, political violence / conflict in the transitional societies is rooted in their failure to develop institutions responsive to the need for participation by the new groups. It is a commonly held belief that conflict or violence increases with the beginning of the process of modernisation, reaching a peak in societies at mid-points of development, and then subsiding as modernisation gains momentum.

Lewis Coser and Ralf Dahrendorf, in their *conflict theory*, emphasise the use of conflict to resolve social tensions and maintain interpersonal relations. They follow Karl Marx and George Simmel here. For them, conflict is a natural manifestation of social change because in this process some groups benefit more than the rest. Resolution of tensions through conflict is particularly marked in pluralistic open societies as it allows citizens to exercise freedom even to challenge the established norms and institutions. Others like Frantz Fanon and George Sorel maintain that conflict / violence is the *only* tool available to the oppressed people for their struggle against oppression and exploitation. Fanon, the African radical intellectual, said in his famous book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London, 1965), that the colonised people resort to violence to free themselves from the shackles of colonial rule. He asserted that rebirth of the marginalised and the neglected, would, depend on their 'commitment to violence', against the imposed 'structural violence' of the unequal and heartless society. Sorel, the French radical, spoke about the *regenerative role* of conflicts. He held that through violence and conflict, a class will discover its identity and resurrect itself. This is in sharp contrast to what Mahatma Gandhi had affirmed about 'the therapeutic results of non-violence'. Gandhi also affirmed that 'exploitation is the supreme form of violence'.

Let us briefly discuss here Edward Azar's theory of conflict (Cited in Ramsbotham and others, pp.84-96). Azar lists the 'seven main approaches' in terms of the central propositions: that conflict is innate in social animal; that it is generated by the nature of societies and the way they are structured; that it is dysfunctional in social systems and a symptom of pathological strain; that it is functional in social systems and necessary for social development; that it is an inevitable feature of competing state interests in conditions of international anarchy; that it is a result of misperception, miscalculation and poor communication; that it is a natural process common to all societies.

In his various writings, late Edward Azar developed a theory of Protracted Social Conflicts (PSC). For Azar, the critical factor in PSCs of 1970s and 80s, such as persisted in Lebanon, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Northern Ireland, Ethiopia, Israel, Sudan, Cyprus, Iran, Nigeria, or South Africa, was that it represented 'the prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation. Traditional understanding of international conflicts in the disciplines of international relations / law was not able to analyse properly the 'new kind of conflicts', which are 'distinct from traditional disputes over territory, economic resources, or East-West rivalry... revolves around questions of communal identity'. Azar considers that the distinction between domestic and international sources of conflict is artificial, as both can simultaneously act as decisive factors for the beginning and escalation of conflicts. His study of PSC suggested that:

Many conflicts currently active in the underdeveloped parts of the world are characterized by a blurred demarcation between international and external sources and actors. Moreover, there are multiple causal factors and dynamics, reflected in changing goals, actors and targets. Finally, these conflicts do not show clear starting and terminating points.

The term PSC emphasised that the sources of such conflicts lay predominantly within the states rather than between states. Azar identifies four clusters of variables as preconditions for the transformation of such conflicts to high levels of intensity.

First, the 'most useful unit of analysis in PSC situations is the identity group – racial, religious, ethnic, cultural and others'. PSC analysis focuses on identity groups, noting that it is the relationship between identity groups and states which is at the core of the problem, and that individual interests and needs are mediated through membership of social groups ('what is of concern are the societal needs of the individual – security, identity, recognition and others'). Azar links the disjunction between state and society in many parts of the world to a colonial legacy which artificially imposed European ideas of territorial statehood onto 'a multitude of communal groups' on the principle of 'divide and rule'. As a result, in many post-colonial multi-communal societies, the state machinery comes to be 'dominated by a single communal group or a coalition of a few communal groups that are unresponsive to the needs of other groups in the society', which 'strains the social fabric and eventually breeds fragmentation and protracted social conflict'.

Second, Azar identified deprivation of human needs as the underlying source of PSC. 'Grievances resulting from need deprivation are usually expressed collectively. Failure to redress these grievances by the authority generally leads to PSC. Unlike interests, needs are non-negotiable, so that, if conflict comes, it is likely to be intense and vicious. In particular, Azar cites security needs, development needs, political access needs, and identity needs (cultural and religious expression). Arguing for a broader understanding of 'security', Azar linked this to an equally broad understanding of 'development' and 'political access'. For him reducing conflict situation requires reduction in levels of underdevelopment. Groups which seek to satisfy their identity and security needs through conflict are actually seeking change in the structure of their society. Unless satisfactory amelioration of underdevelopment occurs, conflicts cannot be resolved. Studying PSC leads one to conclude that peace is development in the broadest sense of the term.

Third, in the contemporary world the state is endowed with authority to govern and use force where necessary to regulate society, to protect citizens, and to provide collective goods. Azar states that 'Governance and state's role' is a critical factor in the satisfaction or frustration of individual and identity group needs. Most states, according to him, which experience PSC, tend to be characterised by incompetent, parochial, fragile, and authoritarian governments that fail to satisfy basic human needs. Though in western liberal theory the state 'is an aggregate of individuals entrusted to govern effectively and to act as an impartial arbiter of conflicts among the constituent parts', treating all members of the political community as legally equal citizens, this is not empirically what happens in most parts of the world. In many newer and less stable states political power / authority has been monopolised by the dominant identity group which uses the state to maximise their interests at the expense of others, especially the minorities.

Finally, there is the role of what Azar called 'international linkages', in particular political-economic relations of economic dependency within the international economic system, and the network of political-military linkages constituting regional and global patterns of clientage and

cross border interest. Most modern weak states are porous to the international forces operating within the wider global community: the '[f]ormation of domestic social and political institutions and their impact on the role of the state are greatly influenced by the patterns of linkage within the international system'. Although Azar's analysis is not the last word on the subject, it does provide us new perspectives in understanding the root causes of some of the PSCs.

Summarising this section of theoretical perspectives, we can provide here a synoptic sketch of the illustrative causes of conflict. Determining causes of conflict can be of three types: systemic and structural conditions, proximate (enabling) causes and immediate (triggering) causes. These factors can be internal or external to the conflict. These types of causes overlap and interrelate. Let us elaborate these causes.

Systemic causes and structural conditions relate to parties' material circumstances, environmental deterioration, population growth, resource scarcity and competition, the colonial or Cold War legacy, breakdowns of values and traditions, poverty and marginalisation of certain ethnic groups. Failed states are a fertile ground of conflicts.

Proximate factors include:

- Governing elite express exclusionary ideologies (beliefs that elevate some ethnic group or class to a position of superiority over other groups).
- Competition occurs among governing elite in a context in which the state security apparatus has few constraints.
- A charismatic leadership emerges that attracts a mass following through abstract appeals to a group's destiny.
- Severe economic hardship or differential treatment occurs for certain ethnic or other groups. Scapegoats are sought.
- Provision and distribution of public services decline.
- Government responds to threats by enacting emergency measures or suspending rule of law.
- Paramilitary organisations and militias grow or conduct training exercises.
- Arms flows increase.
- Politically active communities are increasingly polarised.
- The state's perceived legitimacy appears to erode.

Triggering Factors include:

- A regime enacts new discriminatory or restrictive policies such as abuses of human rights.
- Clashes occur between regime supporters and targeted groups.
- Politically active groups receive external material or rhetorical support.
- Sudden economic events such as price drops affect large numbers of people.
- Political leaders call openly to overthrow the government or expel certain groups.

In the introduction of the Unit we raised two questions: Can there be a single cause for the

origin of conflict? Or, are there multiple causes of conflicts? On these questions, Mack and Snyder hold that most social scientists now accept the principle of multiple causality of conflict; hence there is no one basic source of conflict. Although it is true that all conflicts do not have same general sources, some writers have pointed out that some generalised sources can be identified and empirically tested. For instance, two writers “ Rose and Rose (cited in Mack and Snyder, pp.15-16) have asserted that three primary motives underlie intergroup conflict: (a) desire for acquisition of scarce values (political or power conflict); (b) desire to convert others (ideological conflict); and (c) desire to prevent contact with inferiors (racist conflict). Let us now look at the general sources of conflict.

6.3 GENERAL SOURCES

There are certain general sources which cause conflicts. Let us discuss them here.

6.3.1 Aggressive Human Nature

Many social psychologists and social scientists believe that human nature is basically responsible for the origin of conflicts. They assert that human beings have certain innate/inherent features, such as, aggressiveness, love / lust for power, position, and authority, love for war and so on. Sigmund Freud suggested that opposite instincts exist side by side in the unconscious mind of every human being, with no disharmony. Conflict occurs only when the overt, verbal, symbolic, or emotional responses required to fulfill one motive are incompatible with those required to fulfill another. When a person is motivated to engage in two or more mutually exclusive activities, a conflict situation arises. For example, in a monogamous society a man cannot marry two women at the same time, no matter how attractive they are to him. Thus it is clear that psychological concepts like, hostility, aggressive impulses, or antagonistic sentiments do bear on conflict. Rubenstein cites the biblical story of Cain and Abel to illustrate the psychological aspects of human nature. This biblical tale (narrated in Bible) is common in all three major religions of the Middle East – Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The story goes that Adam and Eve had two sons – Cain and Abel. One day God asks both of them to offer sacrifices to Him. Abel (who was a nomad and shepherd) sacrifices the firstborn of his flock of sheep, and God accepts it. Cain (who was involved in agriculture), the elder son, offers a sacrifice of farm produce, God spurns his offering. In consequence, Cain hates Abel. He had feelings of anger and jealousy against Abel and develops a personal animosity against him and one day he kills his brother. God punishes the killer by driving him from the soil (exiling him) and condemning him to wander the earth as a fugitive, but he protects him against vengeful men by marking him with a sign. Cain settles in the ‘land of Nod, east of Eden’, where he becomes a founder of cities.

This story tells about the many sources of conflict: non-recognition of Cain’s sacrifice, sibling rivalry, vulnerable target (Abel was young and weak), frustration-aggression factor, and inequality (as Cain’s offering was considered equally valid).

Some scholars consider that conflict has the unconscious and the biological bases. They wonder if there are some innate, endemic qualities in societies – and human beings – which predispose them, more or less unconsciously, to engage in conflict. Presuming that according to Reynolds, Falger and Vine, ‘nothing can move us to act in particular ways more strongly than those elements in our psyche that we are completely unaware of’, socio-biologists have been investigating whether some aspects of the proclivity for conflict may be ingrained in ‘the genetic code’ (Jayram Saberwal, p.16).

6.3.2 Socio-economic and Political Inequalities

The links between economic inequality and conflicts have been confirmed since Aristotle's time. Aristotle wrote in *Politics* that 'inferiors [slaves] revolt in order that they may be equal, and equals that they may be superior'. He added further that 'Inequality is the mother of all revolutions'. James Madison in *the Federalist* characterised inequality in the distribution of property as the 'most common and durable' source of conflict. Frederick Engels had argued that political violence results when political structures are not synchronised with socio-economic conditions. 'Poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere', declared the constitution of ILO in 1919. All these statements candidly explain the intrinsic relationship between socio-economic inequalities and conflict. Also, they establish that there is relationship between poverty and human rights. Poverty can be both a cause and a result of human rights denials. In other words, while the non-fulfillment of human rights often causes poverty, poverty in many cases is a cause of human rights violations. The realisation of all human rights and efforts to eliminate extreme poverty are mutually reinforcing. The protection of human rights is instrumental to the reduction of extreme poverty. All efforts to eliminate poverty must be based on human rights.

In the present age of globalisation, poor people as well as the poor / underdeveloped nations are getting marginalised. It is true that global economic integration is creating opportunities for people around the world, but it is also leading to widening the gaps between the poorest and richest countries. Many of the poorest countries are marginalised from the growing opportunities of expanding international trade, investment and in the use of new technologies. Thus, in the contemporary times, globalisation is emerging as a major cause of conflict at various levels- intrastate and interstate.

Due to globalisation, the gap between the rich and poor is widening and some people are reaping the harvest and becoming billionaires, whereas billions are not able to earn \$2 dollars a day. In 1998, the UNDP said the assets of the world's 358 billionaires exceeded the combined annual incomes of countries with 45% of the world's population. In 1999, the sales of the world's top six firms, at \$ 716 billion, exceeded the combined GDP of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The report of the UNDP for 2000 disclosed that the super rich get richer. The combined wealth of the top 200 billionaires was \$ 1,135 billion in 1999. Compare that with the combined incomes of \$ 146 billion for the 582 million people in all the least developed countries (Cited in Vijapur, 2009, pp.77-78).

The horizontal inequality (i.e. inequality among groups, in contrast to vertical inequality which measures inequality among individuals) is the fundamental source of organised conflict. When certain minority groups are denied of political and economic empowerment, they tend to engage in conflict with dominant or majority group which controls political power. If political and economic space is provided to marginalised groups in the political system, such inter-group conflicts can be resolved. For example, political participation can occur at the level of the cabinet, the bureaucracy, the army and so on; economic empowerment comprises employment, land, livestock etc.

The Naxalite movement in many states of India, since 1960s, is caused by huge socio-economic disparities between land-owning feudal classes and poor peasants. It has been started by the ultra leftist / communist parties who believe in radical socio-economic transformation in society in which they seek to bring about through such extra-constitutional methods as using guns. They aim at establishing an egalitarian social system and redistribute the wealth / land proportionately among persons in society. Violence by naxal groups uses

extremist means such as kidnapping the state officials, politicians, killing police and security personnel, etc. to achieve their goals.

6.3.3 Denial of Human Rights

Conflicts can involve disagreements about rights or denial of rights. These can include human rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or they can be more narrowly defined in national or state constitutions or laws. In all of these cases, the problem (or conflict resulting from the denial of rights) is not easily negotiable: people do not negotiate about their religious beliefs nor do they compromise their basic rights. They fight for them. There is always a human rights angle/dimension at the core of every conflict.

6.4 SPECIFIC SOURCES

Most conflicts have specific sources. There can be as many sources as there are conflicts. However, we discuss below some of the major specific sources, which contribute towards the origin of the specific conflicts like religious, ethnic, racial or caste conflicts.

6.4.1 Religion

Religion has often acted as one of the major sources of conflict. Since religion provides a worldview of its own, it comes in clash with other religions. Sometimes, we find inter-religious and intra-religious conflicts. Regarding the former category of conflicts we can give the example of Islam, which began a career of conquest in the seventh century with the thesis that it was the only true faith and was necessarily in conflict with all other religions. The doctrine of *Jihad* (holy war), as understood by Arab Muslims then, brought the Muslim state in conflict with the non-Muslim state of unbelievers. Belief in *Jihad* induced continuous attacks by the Arabs upon the decadent Roman Empire and rising Christendom during the seventh and eighth centuries and resulted in extensive Muslim conquests in the Middle East, North Africa and Spain. Christendom, however, reacted militantly in the Crusades of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries turning on Islam with the doctrine of papal sovereignty of the world. The Ottoman Turks then took the leadership of Islam, and during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries were almost continuously at war with Christian Europe, conquering Constantinople, the Balkans, and Hungary, as well as most of the Arab world. Turkish power waned, and eventually the Ottoman Empire broke into national states, as did the Holy Roman Empire. Today Christian and Muslim states coexist and cooperate in the United Nations. Both the *Jihad* and the Crusades are things of the past.

Different interpretations of the religion by the followers of the same religion cause intra-religious conflicts. Many examples can be cited in this regard. We find frequent Shia-Sunni conflicts in many parts of the world. Similarly, religious differences between Protestants and Catholics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, ended by the Peace treaty of Westphalia which recognized the sovereignty of territorial states and the authority of the temporal monarch to determine the religion of his people if he wished. Since then Protestant and Catholic states have been peacefully coexisting (Wright, pp.16-17).

There has been a global revival of inter-religious and intra-religious conflicts in recent decades. The frequent communal clashes in India are examples of the former. These conflicts lead to 'simultaneously a cluster of multiple conflicts: legal court cases, mass media campaigns, re-writing of history, legislative debates, and riots in the streets. No wonder the course, and the many faces, of a conflict at times leave us bewildered'. (Jayram and Saberwal, p.498). The ferocious civil strife in Algeria between the radical Islamists and moderate Muslim or secular

opponents that has claimed the lives of nearly 100, 000 people since 1992 is example of intra-religious conflict (Rubenstein, p.63).

6.4.2 Ethnicity

Ethnicity can be one of the sources of conflicts. Since the demise of authoritarian (communist) rule in the erstwhile Soviet bloc states of Eastern Europe, ethnic conflicts have sprung up. Also, whenever great empires disintegrate, ethnic rivalries break out. The authoritarian regimes generally suppress ethnic histories of various ethnic groups. Ethnic conflicts can also erupt in other situations. Scholars of ethnic studies have identified many reasons of ethnic conflicts. Let us discuss them.

First, in Brown's view, systemic prerequisite for ethnic conflict is that national, regional, and international authorities must be too weak to keep groups from fighting and too weak to ensure the security of individual groups (Brown, p.6). Whenever empires collapse or become instable, different ethnic groups decide to provide for their own security. Ethnic conflict is most often caused by collective fears of the future and the domination of one group by another. Most ethnic conflicts stem from the failure of political, economic and social institutions to pay sufficient attention to the grievances and perceived needs and fears of significant groups in the state. *Second*, ethnic conflicts focus on the false histories (not empirically tested or scholarly established by dispassionate method) that many ethnic groups have of themselves and others. These histories are usually passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. These stories become part of a group's lore. Distorted and exaggerated with time, these histories present one's own group as heroic, while other groups are demonised. Grievances are enshrined, and other groups are portrayed as inherently vicious and aggressive. Group members typically treat these ethnic myths as received wisdom. *Third*, in some multiethnic societies, there is a tendency for political parties to be organised along ethnic lines. When this happens, party affiliations are a reflection of ethnic identity rather than political conviction. Under these circumstances, elections are mere censuses, and minority parties have no chance of winning power. If these parties become victims of a "tyranny of the majority", their leaders may start separatist movements. *Fourth*, many countries have inadequate constitutional safeguards for minority rights. Even in places where minority rights guarantees exist on paper, they are often inadequately enforced. In short, constitutional and political reforms are needed in many places to address important ethnic grievances (Brown, p.11). *Fifth*, Ali Mazrui says that many conflicts in the Third World are due to great-power intervention. Mazrui has pointed out so forcefully:

There has certainly been a change from the old days of Pax Britannica. Whereas the old imperial motto was 'Disarm the natives and facilitate control', the new imperial cunning has translated it into 'Arm the natives and consolidate dependency'. While the British and the French once regarded it as important to stop 'tribal warfare', they now regard it as profitable to modernize 'tribal warfare' – with lethal weapons (Cited in Ayoob, p.243)

6.4.3 Racism

White racial domination in South Africa of blacks (during the early 20th century, when Gandhi's struggle in South Africa for the rights of people of Indian origin there), and the establishment of apartheid laws since 1950 created racial conflict in South Africa represent the good example to illustrate how racism can cause conflicts. Earlier in the 19th century the United States had to suffer a civil war for a period of four years over the question of abolishing slavery. In 1858, before the outbreak of civil war, Lincoln had stated that 'A house divided

against itself cannot stand. A government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free'. Racial discrimination can be an immediate factor of ensuing conflict.

6.4.4 Caste

Social hierarchy or stratification of society also is one of the major sources of conflict. Caste system in India assigns different social, professional and legal status to the people belonging to different castes. Lower castes and untouchables are the worst victims of caste-conflicts. Official data reveals that atrocities and crimes against ex-untouchables abound. The decade 1990-2000 indicates that a total of 285,871 cases of various crimes against them were registered countrywide. This means that an average of 28,587 cases of practice of untouchability and atrocities against Scheduled Castes were registered every year during the 1990s. These include 553 cases of murder, 9990 cases of grievous hurt, 919 rapes, 184 kidnappings/abductions, 47 dacoities, 127 robberies, 456 cases of arson, 1,403 cases of caste discrimination and 8,179 cases of atrocities. In other words, every hour more than three cases of atrocities against them are registered, and every day three cases of rape and at least one murder are reported. Scholars of peace and conflict studies describe caste-conflicts as structural violence.

6.4.5 Ideology

Discussion of ideology as a factor for triggering conflict has figured through out in this Unit. We all are familiar with the fact that the ideologies of Marxism, Fascism, Nazism, totalitarianism and religious fundamentalism have caused many conflicts. Cold War or ideological war between the Super Powers was the best example to illustrate this point.

6.5 GLOBAL SOURCES OF CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS

Since the end of Second World War, most of the interstate conflicts were caused by Cold War between two Super Powers – the United States and the USSR. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Cold War came to an end. But this led to conflicts within the states. The former communist states of Soviet bloc experienced ethnic conflicts (Yugoslavia) and secession demands (Czechoslovakia, Chechnya etc).

There are analyses of the systemic sources of conflicts themselves. Setting aside the 'clash of civilizations' hypothesis of Huntington which predicts future conflict across the fault lines between civilizations and, in particular, a geo-political struggle between 'the West and the rest', the main focus is on three interlinked trends: deep and enduring inequalities in the global distribution of wealth and economic power (as the rich developed countries, constituting 20 per cent of the world population, control and own 80 per cent of resources, whereas the 80 per cent poor from the developing world own and survive with 20 per cent of global wealth and resources); human-induced environmental constraints exacerbated by excessive energy consumption in the developed world and population growth in the underdeveloped world, making it difficult for human well-being to be improved by conventional economic growth; and continuous militarisation of security relations, including the further proliferation of lethal weaponry (it may be noted that \$176 billions-worth of weaponry was exported to the Third World between 1987 and 1991). As a result, 'the combination of wealth-poverty disparities and limits to growth is likely to lead to a crisis of unsatisfied expectations within an increasingly informed global majority of the disempowered'. The probable outcome of this, argues Homer-Dixon, will be three kinds of conflict: scarcity conflicts mainly at interstate level over oil, water, fish, land; group-identity conflict exacerbated by large-scale population movements; and relative-

deprivation conflicts mainly at domestic level as the gap between expectation and achievement widens (cited in Ramsbotham and others, p.90). With the demise of the second world after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the first and the third worlds are seen to be confronting each other all the more starkly.

6.6 SUMMARY

The identification and understanding of sources and causes of conflict is a key to reducing the occurrence of conflicts. If the sources and underlying causes are eliminated and grievances of conflicting parties are addressed, conflict resolution will be easier.

There is no single source of conflicts. There are many sources of conflict. This Unit discusses two types of sources – general and specific sources. Under the rubric of general causes three important sources are discussed. They are: aggressive human nature; socio-economic and political inequalities; and denial of human rights. Under the specific sources we discuss the role of religion, ethnicity, race, caste and ideology in causing conflicts of these kinds.

The Unit also discusses many theoretical perspectives on causes of conflict, such as frustration-aggression complex, relative deprivation theory, modernisation processes, and conflict as an inherent process of social change. The frameworks of scholars like Dollard, Lewin, Fanon, Coser, Marx, Sorel, Gandhi, Dahrendorf, Azar have been discussed. From their analyses we learn that most social scientists now accept the principle of multiple causality of conflict; hence there is no one basic source of conflict.

6.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss briefly the general sources of conflict.
2. What are the specific sources of conflict?
3. Examine the significance of relative deprivation theory and frustration-aggression complex as sources of conflict.
4. Explain Edward Azar's theory of Protracted Social Conflicts (PSC).

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