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CHAPTER SIX

CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

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6.0 INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTS

The international system is a collection of independent political entities like tribes, city-states, nations or empires, that interact with considerable frequency and according to regularized processes (Holsti, 1987). In other words, it is a conglomeration of sovereign nation-states interacting with one another from time to time. In their interaction, the nation-states recognize no superior power or authority over them. They hold exclusive claim or control over their own territories and their attitude towards other states outside their territorial confines or frontiers is residually ambivalent. Again, in the international system, nations pursue diametrically opposed selfish national interest each fighting to attain only its goals and objectives at the expense of others.

Relations among states in the international system arise as a result of the differences in the endowments and capabilities of states. Some nations are big while some are small, some are well-endowed in various ways while some are sparsely endowed. Some nations are well-developed in endowed potentials while others are not well developed. These differences in the chemistry of states prompt them to engage in relationships outside their national boundaries.

Nations vary or differ in the manner or approach through which they pursue their goals and objectives. Some are militant while some are passive. Nations relate according to their geographical spread or location. Nations also relate in response

to ideological cleavages. For example, the former war saw pact represented the ideology of socialist countries led by the defunct Soviet Union. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an ideological camp of the capitalist states led by the United States of America. The nonaligned Movement (NAM) represents the bloc of developing nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Nonalignment is a policy of non-commitment and neutrality in the politics of the great powers of the world.

Arising from the incompatibility in the search and maintenance of the objectives of states (national interest), nations engage in conflict.

International conflicts can be seen within the framework of the world systems, the social character of the present epoch; the international political situation; the struggle of ideologies; the main diplo-military trends in alliance systems etc. Many tendencies contribute to international conflicts. These tendencies manifest themselves in different situations. Therefore one cannot have a predetermined approach to all international conflicts.

According to Bushel Okoh, any international conflict has a unique content and this in turn demands specific approach to its analysis. This is so because any international conflict includes the structure of the conflict itself. The structure of a given conflict reflects the entire stable connection and inter-relationships of all that constitutes international conflicts. For example, elements that were involved in the Vietnam conflict were quite different from those that were involved in the Angolan Civil War. In the former situation such international organization like the O.A.U. never played any major role but in Angola the O.A.U. was very

much involved.

Students of conflict and change have divergent interpretations of what conflict really is. Classical theorists of conflict of Marxian School believe that conflict come about because of contradiction in the human environment and the physical world. To the modern functionalists conflict represents all component actors within common norms and values.

6.1 THEORIES OF CONFLICT

Judeo-Christian Concept:

The Judeo-Christian theory of conflict is also known as the Divine Will. In this theory, Judaism and Christianity assign and ontological cause to conflict. Both religions attribute conflict among nations to some wrong doing against God. They interpret conflict as punishment from God to the nations concerned for staying away from the path of righteousness. Judaism and Christianity hold the belief that God sends down or allow conflict between and among nations when they turn away from or sin against Him. The Bible is full of instances when Jehovah visited the Jews with conflicts and wars on account of their departure from his ways. St Thomas Aquinas not only agree with but also propounds this Judeo-Christian view.

Christians, at times, credit Satan with conflict. To this School of thinkers, Satan etiolates conflict particularly when it occurs among friends, relations, groups traditionally mutually friendly. Even when the conflict is of an international or inter-continental dimension, the basic causes are ignored. The conflict itself is interpreted as Satan warring against men of the world.

Marxist View:

Marxism interprets conflicts among nations within the context of the class and state capitalist theory. The state is an instrument for the capitalist class domination and exploitation. Having succeeded to use the state as an instrument to suppress the

proletariat, the bourgeoisie adopt the same machinery to exploit the state and to establish dominance over them. Again, a sort of class structure appears to emerge among the states. Some are classified as major powers, while some are termed minor powers. Conflicts and wars occur as state of a particular class find themselves trapped in an apparent sort of unending scenario of attempts to exercise dominance over the other or gain control of the needed scarce resources of the world.

Thus, conflict among nations becomes an expression of class struggle among states. Marxist scholars are of the view that conflict including wars, are due to capitalism. They hold that the chief directing motive of all the modern imperialist expansion is the pressure of capitalist industries for markets and surplus products of home industry. The desire of the Western finance to find new fields of investment in underdeveloped countries bring countries into clashes with one another in the Third World Countries. Joined in this school of thought are Karl Marx, Claude Ake, Etc.

Functional Theory:

According to the theory of functionalism, war which is the highest expression of conflict is the product of the objective conditions of human society. The functional school thinks that war is rather a disease of global society carried by grave deficiencies in the economic and social circumstances of mankind. Poverty, misery, ill-health, economic insecurity, social injustice, exploitation, discrimination these, according to the functional school, are the factors which create the desperation, apathy, frustration, fear, cupidity and hatred which make the world susceptible to war.

Again, war is attributed to the institutional inadequacy of the national state system. The state is at fault because it is an inappropriate and ineffectual agency for doing what has to be

done in order to promote the economic and social health of the human family.

Psychoanalytic View:

Psychoanalytic thinkers are of the view that there are some people whose approach or attitude towards life is conflict-oriented. When people with this kind of psychological make-up assume leadership of a country, they tend to adopt conflict approach to all problems and relations. Adolf Hitler of Germany provides a good example of this kind of personality

Instinct Hypothesis:

Propounded by Sigmund Freud, Emile Durkheim and Alber Einstein, this hypothesis states that man has instinctive drive towards aggression which manifests itself in violence and war. According to it, man possesses life instinct and instincts of hatred, aggression and death "instinct of pugnacity" all of which are directed towards the reduction/eliminations/stimulation/excitation of tension.

Frustration Aggression Hypothesis:

This hypothesis states that alienation/anomie/frustration is the source of aggression or that aggression is always a consequence of frustration. Frustration could be said to exist if there is dislocation between individual goals and their means, or if there is disparity between aspiration and fulfillment (Eminue, 1994).

The Territorial Imperative:

Robert Ardrey who has popularized the concept that may be called "*The Territorial Imperative*" asserts that man's aggressiveness is based on his so-called innate territorial nature. Like lower animals, birds and fish, men are said to be territorial creatures, to have in-built instincts or compulsion to possess, strive to gain, maintain and defend the exclusive right to piece of territory they like to preserve as property which is genetic and ineradicable.

Imperialistic View:

J. A. Hobson (an English Economist) and Vladimir Lenin (architect of the Bolshevik Revolution in the erstwhile Soviet Union) are, perhaps, the most prominent exponents of the imperialistic theory of conflict. According to Hobson, imperialism is a product of maladjustment or imperfections within the capitalist system in which a wealthy, minority oversees while an impoverished/"bare subsistence" majority lacks the purchasing power to consume all the products of modern industry.

6.2 CAUSES OF CONFLICT AMONG STATES

Why do men behave aggressively? Why do states wage wars? Issues raised in the two questions are analytically different. We have already provided answer for the former through the analysis of the psychological processes that go on within individual decision-makers. The latter question why states go to war pertains to the decision-making processes of national governments. Throughout history, wars have been waged as a result of deliberate decisions by political executive Monarchs, Presidents, Prime Ministers, dictators etc. and their advisers such as legislative bodies, or War Councils. Men therefore freely decide whether or not to wage war. It is unacceptable that war the most cataclysmic event in history might occur by chance as the possibility of "accidental war" implies. Therefore when a government takes a decision to wage a war, it may be for a variety of reasons, singly or in combination. The following factors account for the causes of war in the international system.

Defence of National Security:

A persistent cause of war has been the readiness of states to resort to the use of force in order to reduce or remove a perceived threat to their security and survival or to their political, economic, socio-cultural, ideological or religious value systems whether such threats are real or imagined, imminent or remote. Most nations regard their survival interests, the preservation of

their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity as strategic foreign policy objectives for which the whole range of policy instruments at the disposal of the nation could be committed in their defence. Survival security interests are those interests which involve an immediate danger to the security of one's homeland, thus requiring an all-out national effort, ranging from diplomacy to nuclear alert, to protect its citizens and their institutions from extinction or attack by foreign enemies. The Arab-Israeli wars of 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973 are a case in point (Eminue, 1994).

Territorial Expansion:

A persistent source of conflicts among nations has been the desire to acquire additional territories or to obtain more secured frontiers, such as Israeli acquisition of the Golan Height and the Sinai Peninsula in the Six-Day War (1967). Acquisition of territory is also involved in an effort to see to it that ethnic minorities demarcated by colonial powers arbitrarily into two sovereign states are brought together. Siad Barre's 1978 vision of Greater Somalia which entailed annexing the Ogaden region of Ethiopia populated by ethnic Somalis is a case in point. In August 1990, Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait which it considered Iraqi's 19th province, although it was made to retreat with heavy losses when the Allied Forces led by the US, engaged it in a 42-day Gulf War (February-March 1991).

Territorial expansion could also be effected through imperialistic designs. Hans Morgenthau defines imperialism as "a policy that aims at the overthrow of the status quo (and) at the reversal of power relations between two or more nations". The cardinal objective of imperialism is the domination of one people, their institutions and ways of life by another-militarily, economically

and culturally. Imperialism aims at establishing empires and local preponderance in the acquired or colonial territories. Some authors use the term "imperialism", "domination" and "colonialism" interchangeably, although they are analytically distinguishable.

Composition of a Government:

The attempt by one government to topple the government of a country whose disposition to policy orientation it dislikes may lead to conflict. These types of conflicts often contain strong ideological overtones. The purpose is always to overthrow one regime and, in its place, install another government; more favourably disposed to the interest of the intervening party. The former Warsaw Pact's invasion of Czechoslovakia to replace Alexander Dubsek's reformist government; thus paving the way for re-introduction of orthodox communism, and the invasion of Uganda by Nyerere's Tanzania to topple Idi Amin's tyrannical regime are cases in point (Eminue, 1994).

Protection of Economic Interest:

Nations could go to war with the primary aim of protecting their economic interests abroad. Among such economic interests worth protecting by use of military force are the sources of strategic raw materials such as uranium, oil, gold, etc. The enthusiastic leadership which the United States gave to its Western coalition members during the Gulf War of 1991 is attributable not only to the fact that the US is a self-styled "policeman of the world" but also to the fact that oil is at the bottom. Both Iraq (the aggressor) and Kuwait (the victim of the aggression) are among the 5 original and founding members of OPEC. Studies by Western scientists aimed at finding alternative sources of energy have only demonstrated the

"continued utility of petroleum over all other sources of energy". In response to the increasing use by the developing nations of economic resources as legitimate instruments of conducting diplomacy (e.g. the 1973-4 Arab Oil Embargo), Western nations have adopted measures which threaten world peace and security. Such measures may include diplomatic arm-twisting to threats of military aggression. In 1974, President Gerald Ford said that throughout history nations have had to go to war over natural resources. Ever since then, there have been well-documented accounts of US Military Interventionist plans and statements against Third World countries.

In 1975, US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger announced that US would henceforth consider using military force in the Middle East under conditions of grave emergency if, for instance, the industrialized world becomes threatened with strangulation (Business Week, February, 1975).

Preservation of National Prestige:

Prestige refers to the amount of respect, reputation and power a nation has or thinks it has or wants other nations to believe it has in the international system. The source of a nation's international prestige may be the nation's power, population, wealth (actual or potential) technological advancement, ideology, culture, etc. A country also tends to boost its international image by developing a reputation in the international community of being a "responsible" and "law abiding" nation-in meeting all its international commitments, including treaty obligations arising from international transactions. This underscores why coup-makers in Third World countries always stress, in their coup speeches, their determination to respect all obligations and commitments entered into by the ousted governments. The importance of this affirmation, as observed by K. J. Holsti, is that "a government that persistently breaks treaties, defies

resolutions of international organizations and capriciously twists the accepted meaning of legal doctrines will lower its credibility (prestige) in diplomatic negotiations and hence its influence. Leaders whose countries join alliances usually commit themselves to defending and supporting their allies wherever such allies face threats of military attacks. They are duty bound to meet such commitments as a way of safeguarding the alliance against erosion.

Nigeria not only declares the African continent to be the center-piece of her foreign policy, she also makes Decolonisation, Non-alignment and Anti-Apartheid postures vital aspects of her diplomatic efforts. Such declarations set parameters by which Nigeria's foreign policy initiatives shall be judged and the amount of prestige, which she enjoys, will depend on the extent to which its diplomatic behaviour accords with those declarations. In order to defend its prestige as a country expected to provide leadership role in the African Continent, Nigeria has engaged in peace-keeping operations in recent years in Chad (twice) as well as in Liberia (ECOMOG), among others.

Diversionsary Tactics:

In the face of growing opposition or inability to meet the "revolution of rising expectations" at home, political leaders may deliberately exacerbate foreign conflicts which would enable them to rally the support of their nationals, stir up their emotions in the face of an external threat to their survival, albeit in an effort to divert attention from teething domestic problems which they lacked either the political will or the willingness to solve. The strategy which political leaders consolidate their positions to achieve greater internal cohesion by diverting domestic resentment abroad through reliance on nationalist or patriotic favour, though dangerous, could serve as a "safety valve institution". Raymond Tanter has suggested a positive correlation between a foreign war (the Vietnam War) which the

United States embarked upon for a long time without apparent success and the incidence of its domestic discontent. An American anthropologist has hypothesized that if intra-group aggressive impulses become strong enough to threaten a nation with internal disruption, the nation may attempt to preserve its cohesion or integration by displacing the aggressiveness through external war. Another hypothesis of social conflict theory also postulate an inverse relationship between internal and external conflicts. External aggression is expected to increase as internal violence within a group decreases and vice versa. (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 1971:234-5). W. Howard Wiggins agrees that national leaders sometimes "consciously design aspects of their foreign policies with an eye to fending off domestic oppositions or gaining support at home" (Wiggins, 1969:221).

6.3 INDICATORS OF CONFLICT

Conflict according to Umoh (1966:50) has indicator which also include action. In general, some common forms of actions include:

- a. Protest notes
- b. Denials and accusation
- c. Calling ambassadors home for consultations
- d. Withdrawal of ambassadors assigned to the enemy's capital
- e. Threat of limited or total economic boycott or embargo
- f. Threat of serious consequences if certain actions by the opponent do not cease.
- g. Extension official denunciation of the opponent with propaganda at home and abroad.
- h. Application of limited or total economic boycott or embargo.
- i. Formal break in diplomatic relations.
- j. Exemplary non-violent military action-alerts, canceling

- leaves, partial and full mobilization
- k. Harassment or closing of travel and communication between the antagonists citizens
- l. Formal blockades
- m. Exemplary limited use of force reprisal
- n. War.

6.4 FEATURES OF CONFLICT

Conflict has certain intrinsic and phenomenal nature or traits (Umoh, 1996:34). Some of the easily observable features of conflict include:

Permanence:

Conflicts is a permanent feature of social relations. Virtually all human relations contain characteristics of conflict and areas of possibilities of disagreement. Disputes may occur even during periods of cooperation among individuals or groups. Ralf Dahrendorf (1959:135).

International relations has historically, been a series of competitive acts, with looses rules, moving toward ill-determined goals over a period of time (Hoffmann, 1965:209). Because international relations have not fundamentally changed, conflict including war, remains possible. According to Hoffmann:

So long as states are what they have always been competing Wills, so long as their leaders do not yet possess those terrifying Weapons literally capable of destroying the earth . . . there is a strong chance that war will indeed break out . . . the differences between states stimulate competition and competition leads to war

Guide to Behaviour:

Conflict acts as a guide to behaviour and social relationships. It also provides the impetus that sustains social morality, ethics

and law. The desire to avoid conflict and its acceptable consequences encourage the observance of laws and regulations in society and promotes mutual respect. According to Schaller (1996:78) conflict usually works as a technique for organizing a community and for accelerating the pace of social change. It helps to sharpen the issues involved in the controversy and to enable the people to distinguish more easily between the different points of view. Debate is one method used by conflict to clarify the divergent points of view and value judgements. Conflict heightens tension, provides an impetus for critical examination, and supplies a floodlight of publicity which exposes the issues for study by all interested persons. Conflict has a great utility in helping the individual citizens to choose among alternatives.

In the words of Saul Alinsky:

The uses of conflict can be justified, not only because it provides the most fertile ground for creative thinking; it only produces compromises, it also yields new ideas which might not have been conceived without the stimulus of conflict (Schaller 1966:78)

Catalytic Value:

The catalytic nature of conflict is summed up in the words of Dahrendorf (1959:135) thus:

'all that is creativity, innovation, and development in the life of an individual, his group, and his society is due to the operation of conflict between groups, individuals, and emotion within one individual'

Conflict lies at the bottom of society. The society is founded on conflict. Human beings were chased by conflict into society and

civilization. In this the social contractors, notably, Thomas Hobbs, John Locke and Jacques Rousseau have agreed. For example the conflictual condition of man in the state of nature forced him, in Hobbes thinking, to abandon the state of men to keep 'covenants and accept community life' (Olafson, 1959:651).

6.5 CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Where actual conflict exists between nations, there are three basic procedures for the resolution of such conflict. These are: negotiation, Mediation and Adjudication.

Negotiation:

Negotiation has been defined as a "process in which explicit proposals are put forward ostensibly for the purpose of reaching agreement on an exchange, or on the realization of a common interest where conflicting interests are present." In other words, negotiation is a form of interaction through which individuals, organizations and governments explicitly try to arrange a combination of some of their common and conflicting interests. The act of negotiation presupposes the existence of unresolved differences between states.

Conditions necessary for successful negotiation include: existence of common grounds, existence of focal point, respective strengths of parties, existence of communications links, national interest, specificity of objective under contention: skills and specialization, and possibility of increased pay-off.

Mediation:

Third parties sometimes wade into conflicts between their neighbours in order to arrest the incidence of such conflict spilling over into their territories. According to Oran Yong, the

process of Mediation may be divided into major parts. The first part is an action taken by a third party in order to help the opponents to begin or continue bilateral discussion or to help them implement decisions already reached. It does this through either of the following processes: (a) Good Offices (b) Data Source (c) Interposition (d) Supervision. The second part of mediation is bargaining, which involves (a) persuasion (b) enunciation (c) elaboration and initiation (d) participation.

Adjudication and Arbitration:

This is the final procedure for the resolution of actual international conflicts. This approach is the process of submitting an international dispute to a body of individuals called upon to decide on the merit of the parties. The prerequisites for successful adjudication and arbitration include: (a) The existence of legal issues (b) Voluntary submission of the case by both parties to the tribunal (c) Continued conflict, and (d) The willingness to accept an award rather than bargain for a compromise outcome. The best known international tribunal in modern times is the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at the Hague.

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