
UNIT 3 NATURE AND FORMS OF CONFLICT: INTRA-STATE, INTER-STATE AND GLOBAL

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding Unit dealt with Peace and Conflict as concepts, their intricate relationship and the efforts human beings made in limiting conflict in various ways. In this Unit we will proceed to discuss more concretely the efforts made to cope and deal with conflict in

human relations. Before we do so, it is useful to clarify the two phrases Nature and Forms of Conflict.

Forms of conflict usually refer to levels of **conflict**. For example, intra-state conflict relates to tensions and quarrels that occur within a state whereas inter-state conflict signifies quarrels, at times leading to wars between **states/countries**. Here the two types of conflicts are at two distinct levels. The term global conflict is a **new** term which can be understood as meaning somewhat different from inter-state **conflict** though it partakes of many characteristics of inter-state conflict. The word 'nature' on the other hand refers to a qualitative dimension. The qualitative nature of inter-state conflict is entirely different from the nature of intra-state conflict. Wars, for instance, are far more serious than violent quarrels that often take place within a country, even though some of them (insurrection and civil war) more or less resemble a war situation.

When it is said that the nature or quality of inter-state conflict is far more serious than intra-state conflict we are not saying that the former is quantitatively more than the latter. As a matter of fact, intra-state conflict is much more frequent than inter-state conflict. Yet, it is recognised that wars are infinitely more dangerous than crimes committed in societies, however serious they may be. This is **essentially** the qualitative difference between the two. And this qualitative difference relates to diverse factors, some of which can be mentioned. First, intra-state conflict has for long **been** under organised control, whereas inter-state conflict still largely remains without effectively organised control. **Secondly**, the extent and intensity of inter-state conflict is vastly more threatening to societies **than** intra-state conflict usually inflicts. Wars, for instance, cause horrendously high damage to society—the most important being the loss of human life and property (whether public or private). Modern wars have become even more destructive with the increased **geographical** reach and destructive power of weapons. It is not surprising that eminent **historians** and thinkers since ancient times regarded organised war as unnatural.

3.2 INTRA-SOCIETAL CONFLICT

As we saw in the previous unit, conflict at the inter-personal level constitutes the more immediately relevant factor, as distinct from purely **intra-personal** level of conflict (i.e. conflicts that go on within individuals). Though such intra-personal **conflicts** do have their external manifestations in the shape of **inter-personal** tensions **often times** boiling out into conflicts, the psychological, physical, and pathological causes of internal conflicts within individuals cannot be discussed at length for our present context of analysis. We will confine our attention to inter-personal conflict as a conditioning **factor** to the larger canvass of intra-societal conflict.

3.2.1 Inter-personal Conflict

Internal personal conflicts can be regarded as the basic **form** of intra-societal conflicts. They are the most common recurrences in all societies. It has already been noticed how this occurs either due to innate human nature or due to the clash of human natures when individuals enter into relationships either at the family or wider community levels. This can be regarded as the basic form of intra-societal conflict. Even at this plane of interaction, **issues** of sharing available resources like food, water, property and **sharing** of affections

and mutual respect play an important role in creating these conflicts. Whether inequalities in access to resources (material or non-material) are real or perceived, they are the very critical causes acting and provoking human nature in its interactions with others. It should be noted that this factor as a source of conflict pervades the entire gamut of human relationships from inter-personal to intra-societal to inter-societal.

Inter-personal conflicts do frequently escalate from being claims to property to violent quarrels. The latter assume, sometimes, criminal proportions. As the interaction among groups grows larger and wider obviously, the role of the unequal access factor increases. In that event, conflicts assume sharper dimensions. For this reason, intra-societal tensions and conflicts impinge on societal peace in a more pronounced manner. And this fact has a bearing on the nature of conflict-resolution or containment.

At the family and domestic levels, conflict resolution ordinarily is managed at those levels itself through the intervention of the elders or relatives. When disputes become more intense and intractable for settlement within the family the role of the state enters into the picture. In the previous unit it is mentioned how the establishment of the legal and the judicial systems by the state since ages past is a mechanism for conflict resolution. The 'law' so established is itself a combination of custom, usage and tradition and codified laws. The last category is what we call formal legislation made by legislatures, whether in the shape of all-powerful kings in ancient times or democratically elected legislative assemblies in modern times. The coming of democracy and the democratic legislature constitutes an important step in the participation of common men and women in making laws and through them participating in the process of conflict-resolution in their society.

3.2.2 Causes of Intra-societal Conflict

Family quarrels and feuds in the context of the larger social functions can be regarded as low-level areas of conflict. In larger groupings like villages and tribes, quarrels pertaining to water-resource, sharing of pastures or wells and river waters assume a high level of conflict. Even in hunting societies, disputes about the spoils of the hunt frequently result in violent clashes. And at the stage of settled agricultural societies, quarrels about landed property become the stock-in-trade of societal conflict. It is these type of conflicts that are generally regarded as the widely visible manifestation of intra-societal conflict encompassing in a vertical manner family disputes, community and group conflicts that affect the peace and stability of a society as a whole.

It is in view of this function of private property in causing conflict that Rousseau in his work *The Social Contract*, expressed the radical view that the person who fixed poles around a piece of land and called it his own was really the prime originator of social conflict. Later, Proudhon voiced the even more radical view that 'property is theft'. Of course, not all thinkers are as vehemently critical of private property as source of conflict. Yet there can be no doubt that in spite of positive contribution to civilization's progress, the institution of private property is a major factor in conflict generation in society.

Along with property, there are other important causes of conflict. Human groups acquire diverse types of identities. The phenomenon of the function of separate identities in societies is well recognized. Identities based on religion, caste, language are the most common

phenomenon. Affiliation with these identities and contradictions between rival centres of loyalty often generate competition, tension and conflict between different identity groups.

It is not as if these separatist loyalties do not coexist in the larger societies. As a matter of fact, many of the societies in the past and present have experienced the phenomenon of large multiple communities living within the fold of a single state. The state adopts diverse devices to hold itself together, devices ranging from adopting policies of accommodating competing claims of these social groups to using coercion of various degrees to contain the divisive effect of these claims. It is important to recognise that separatist and competing loyalties can sometimes threaten the very survival of the state. The state's capacity for conflict resolution at this plane, therefore, assumes critical importance.

In discussing the role of a society organised as a state in coping with the various interests, purposes and group loyalties of its constituent individuals, the theoretical formulation of David Easton, a renowned political scientist, needs mention. Easton in describing the nature of the activity, usually called politics, which the state exists to perform, defined politics as the activity pertaining to 'the authoritative allocation of values in society'. The implication of this definition is very instructive of the nature and limits of the state's role. Firstly, the state is an agent for a society as a whole and second, its role is the 'authoritative allocation of values' among the members of the society. The use of the words 'authoritative' and 'values' is most significant. 'Authoritative' suggests finality in deciding who gets what in a state. 'Values' refer to the various things that a human being wants, desires, and aspires for. These desires range from material things to emotional and intellectual wants like affection from those near-and-dear and respect from other sections of society as well as, in many cases, spiritual or moral satisfactions.

The pursuits of these values result in some getting more satisfactions and rewards and some less. Usually not all get what all they want. This process, without ever our noticing it, goes on and on. In fact, when we reflect closely— all societal intercourse throughout history consisted and consists in the pursuit of these values by human beings. The family, the tribe, the village, larger communities informally and in different ways have been discharging this function of distributing values. It is important to remember that there has always been unequal 'distribution' among people. Some feel dissatisfied that they get less of some values and some throughout history were denied most of these for generations. What we today call the deprived sections were and are a common feature at all times and places. Still the larger society manages to run, or oversee, the distribution system.

But at certain points of time, protests reach a level when some authority has to settle the issue by force or persuasion and impose a solution. This is what can be called the 'authoritative allocation of values' as different from informal allocations going on. And this task of authoritatively settling claims, protests, violent clashes, even revolutions, is performed by the State— on behalf of society. Easton's definition has the merit of emphasising the point that while the state is a society politically or legally organised its function of maintaining law and order consists in managing conflicts in society so as ultimately to decide or accommodate social arrangements under which people pursue values with different degrees of success. That is why, Harold J. Lasswell, a well known social scientist called politics as the study of who gets what, when and how.

The above discussion, firstly, makes clear the source of intra-state or inter-societal conflicts; secondly, it points to the fact that in the daily course of human activity in society, dissatisfactions and conflicts keep arising in matters relating to distribution of property, wealth and social status, recognition etc.; and thirdly, that the state comes into the picture at the stage when the conflicts become so serious as to call for state (legal) intervention.

3.3 STATE AND MANAGEMENT OF INTRA-STATE CONFLICT

In this context, we should also remember that the state's role is really directed towards correcting or making readjustments in social conflicts. The state indeed protects the status-quo for most of the time. In this role, one can even say it is the agent of a section of the society (the section that wield power and influence in it) to maintain law and order. But, then, the state also steps in at times to readjust the socio-economic order or reconcile rival claims to religious, cultural and ethnic recognition.

The state has a wide infrastructural network to deal with intra-state conflict situations, ranging from the ones like family quarrels assuming violent proportions, the ubiquitous crime as commonly understood, to group violence, to insurrection and revolutionary violence. For, the executive branch, the legislative wing and the judicial system are but integral parts of this network.

The Executive branch is the immediate agent of conflict resolution. It contains intra-state conflict through the instrumentality of existing law. In this sense, it is the status-quo maintenance organ. And the police are its monopoly sub-agents, with the civil service having the role of overall supervision. The Legislative branch has the function of making laws. In a democracy, say of the liberal democratic nature, it is regarded as the primary organ of the state to create the framework for curtailing, reducing and avoiding conflict. Very roughly, this function can be sub-divided into two parts. The first one relates to changing laws to ensure that they are capable of curtailing conflict. The second relates to the more important role of changing the laws to ensure better social and economic environment conducive to the avoidance of social conflict. The Judiciary has a complex role in conflict resolution. The most common instances of conflict-resolution are the settlements of cases between private individuals which are mostly of the civil nature. It should be remembered that the origins of this function as part of the state function was itself a revolutionary step in societies organising themselves as accredited agents of conflict resolution. It also has the narrower function of deciding criminal cases in which the state prosecutes criminals. In addition, in the very process of interpreting authoritatively the laws and a host of rules and regulations flowing from them, the judiciary has an in-built role of not only clarifying what the laws are but also, to some extent, altering the import of the words used in the laws. This the courts do to make the laws suit altered social circumstances. The courts do not always make this intention so clear because their role is traditionally confined to the reading of the words of statutes, and rules and regulations. But, all the same, this type of adaptive interpretation is recognised to be an accepted practice in our times.

However, situations do arise when the overall economic and social resources redistribution mechanisms of the state may not be able to contain conflict-engendering situations. It is in such situations, serious crisis in state and society can be said to occur. Even in such situations where pockets of dissent, resistance to the state can continue to exist, the state can, in general, survive. But when these sources of conflict, like religious or ethnic strife, economic struggle among the rich and poor, reach very severe levels, intra-societal conflict can become uncontainable. Such cases of strife are called by different names like Insurrection, Revolution or Civil War depending upon the level of conflict.

In recent years, the idea of a 'failed state' has come into use. Scholars cannot agree how to define the term, but most concur that state failure is one of the many challenges that the world order faces. Broadly speaking, states that have lost control or losing control over their own territory and are incapable of providing even the most basic services to their people fall under this category. In old-fashioned language, this is one aspect of failing to keep law and order. But it is much more than that. One way or another, it is linked with the state failing to sustain the authoritative allocation of the societies resources or even in appearing to be attempting to do so. This becomes a breeding ground for various types of intra-societal conflicts like insurrection and civil wars.

The World Bank lists about 30 "low-income countries under stress". The phrase 'fragile' state is also used to describe states severely challenged in sustaining themselves. States can fail because of external shocks, or they can decay from within or both. For example, Afghanistan and Angola collapsed when the external powers controlling them suddenly withdrew. In Sierra Leone and the Congo, the state was subjected to loot and thugerry mostly by internal disorder thus generating rebellion and ultimately a collapse. Civil war, in one form or another is the final symptom of state failure.

How to mend a failed state? In the past, the failed state attracted intervention usually from a relatively powerful neighbour. International law had no definite norm to judge the legitimacy of such intervention. However, due to increasing recognition of the international community's responsibility towards its members, United Nations and regional organisations intervene (like the Organisation of African States in the case of crisis-ridden states like Liberia, Sudan and Somalia) both with military force to stop civil war and with financial aid to build up the basic infrastructure of the state. Other international humanitarian aid and human rights agencies are making efforts to provide relief and restore law and order

Even more important is the international community's recent initiatives in punishing perpetrators of intra-societal conflict. Internal rebellions and civil war conditions are both the cause and consequence of ruthless military leaders or civilian dictators resorting to genocide on their antagonists. Those responsible for perpetrating social conflicts, as in Rwanda, Serbia and Kosovo in the last decade are tried by international criminal courts. The setting up of the International Criminal Court at the Hague in 1998 is a new precedent in the international society's role in the process of intra-societal conflict resolution. This is a far-reaching development because intra-societal conflict, until recently, was regarded as an exclusive concern of the state and outside intervention as quite inadmissible. The doctrine of state sovereignty strongly buttressed this attitude.

3.4 CATEGORIES OF CONFLICT AT THE INTRA-SOCIETAL LEVEL

From the above discussion on how the intra-societal conflicts impinging on societal peace and mechanisms adopted by states to cope with them, we may conveniently divide the nature of conflict in the intra-societal plane into two categories: micro-level conflict and macro level conflict.

Micro-Level Conflict

The micro-level category constitutes endemic and continuous tensions, quarrels and low-intensity violence. Family disputes, group-clashes and crimes like theft, infliction of injury and even murder can be classified under this category. Even in this regard, in contemporary times, forms of family conflicts not taken cognizance of in the past are noticed. Ill-treatment of women by men-folk and neglect of physically and mentally challenged persons by families are now regarded as unacceptable. Hence society takes measures to prevent these injustices. Micro level conflicts, though constituting less of a threat to the survival of society itself, occupy considerable part of the society's attention and action. This fact can be understood from the fact that a large section of the state's apparatus is devoted for resolving or containing the micro-level conflicts. The police, the various types of courts, the executive authority of the state and the countless number of laws and regulations the state enacts are intended to serve this very purpose. In fact, all these problems and the intended solutions are regarded as rather routine in nature.

Macro-Level Conflict

The macro-level category of intra-societal conflict is less frequent in a normal society's existence. Examples of this category are: frequent clashes between large sections of people, endemic labour unrest, inter-religious, inter-ethnic and inter-linguistic disputes. Here also the instrumentalities of the state mentioned above play a crucial role in avoiding, resolving or containing the conflict. But the macro-level category of conflict is more of a challenge to the society and the state. Such is the importance attached to this conflict that a state's health and strength is measured by its effectiveness to deal with this. However, states in dealing with this category of conflicts may themselves be tempted to resort to harsh measures in suppressing, violence. Terms like 'state violence' or 'state terrorism' which have entered into common use underscore this aspect of societal violence. In fact, Human Rights activists are concerned that retaliatory violence by the state is as reprehensible, or even more so, than conflict generated by anti-state sections within the larger society.

While 'mature' or developed societies are credited with the ability to successfully tackle this, they have not been entirely effective in doing so. For example, the United Kingdom (Britain), which is a mature society, has not been able to solve the problem of Northern Ireland, a problem of conflict between Protestant and Catholic communities, which is in existence for well over half a century. Of course in new states of Asia, Africa and Latin America these conflicts are more intense and problematic. While societies here are quite old in terms of their existence, they are quite new as political entities, i.e. as states. That is why some sociologists call them as 'old societies and new states'. Almost all these new

states which are witnessing rapid socio-economic changes have to reckon with assertion of identities (religious, ethnic, linguistic and such other) among their people often leading to intra-societal conflicts. The manifestation of these identity conflicts in different ways and the stages of escalation of these conflicts are dealt in a separate unit.

3.5 CIVIL SOCIETY IN CONFLICT CONTAINMENT AND RESOLUTION

The assertion of different segments of the society representing diverse public interests is the phenomenon we have identified as a major development in recent decades. This is what has come to be called the emergence of Civil Society, as distinct from the state. As David E. Apter points out civil society "refers to those net-works of society (such as voluntary organisations, non-governmental organisations, private educational and religious facilities, etc). How it intervenes, and the way its power is delimited defines the type of character of the state (democratic, authoritarian, etc.). ... To the degree to which government intervenes in civil society we speak of the strong "state",... that is, one where government accepts a high level of responsibilities for the welfare of its citizens. Where the responsibilities are fulfilled by bodies outside the state we speak of a 'strong civil society'. There is, however, no clear or even necessary correspondence between government intervention and social benefit." John Keane, a renowned authority on civil society, gives even a broader definition of civil society when he says that "... it properly refers to a dynamic non-governmental system of interconnected socio-economic institutions that straddle the whole earth..."

These networks supplement and complement the role of the state. Some times, they would even have a conflicting role vis-a-vis the state. Some of them perform welfare activities as complementary to the states' policies. Some others enter fields of activity not covered by governmental agencies. There are yet others, particularly those NGOs which seek to promote human rights, whose objects and activities may constantly challenge the policies of the political state.

3.5.1 The Contextuality of Civil Society

The evolution of civil society in its relationship with the state – has undergone major transformations in the modern period itself. Until the middle of the eighteenth century the phrase civil society was coterminous with the word 'state'. Thus, different European language terms, like *societas civilis*, *societie civile*, *bürgerliche gesellschaft*, were interchangeable terms with the State. In this phase, the ancient Roman (and the earlier Greek) identification of *societas civilis* with the state provided a continuity.

This concept of civil society began to implode after the middle of the eighteenth century when civil society and the state were seen as different entities. Civil society was identified more with the sphere of economic-social relations and the state with the political (and legal) sphere. It should be remembered that this was the period when economic capitalism emphasising free-trade philosophy came into vogue and the state was expected to keep away from this sphere. This phase extended for over a century.

Then by about the middle of the nineteenth century the anti-statal orientation of the

distinction between civil society and the state was weakened. The reinstatement of the state's pre-eminence can be witnessed in the popularisation of the legal concept of sovereignty as an attribute solely belonging to the state conferring it with the power to control all other parts of the social sphere. The 'state' therefore became the supreme institution in and of the society. In one sense this phase has its hold right upto the contemporary times. For instance, the Welfare State concept and the authoritarian concept of state power, endow the state with over-arching power and influence over society.

However, it is not as though the civil society did not react to a rear guard action against the state concept. What in political theory is called 'pluralism', for example, formulated that the state is just one among many other social institution, though, at best, it maybe regarded as the 'first among other equals'. The late nineteenth and the twentieth century saw state power and pluralism in constant contests for theoretical and practical dominance. The contest on the whole went in favour of the state. In the last decade of the Twentieth century, however, civil society projected itself with a new sharpness.

3.5.2 Contemporary Civil Society Theory and Practice

The immediate occasion for the projection of civil society in the contemporary decades could be traced to the recession of the state from some of its earlier functions. To a great extent, this is a trend accompanying the globalisation process. It is well known that globalisation promotes the expansion of private sector and puts pressure on the political state to withdraw from the economic aspect of society. This trend, in its turn left large groups of people vulnerable to socio-economic distress. It is to cater to these interests that NGOs have emerged in a big way.

But apart from globalisation, another important cause for civil society's rise to prominence is the success of its challenge against the communist totalitarian states in the Eastern European countries. There the communist states so completely dominated society that it gave rise to the joke that under communism instead of the state withering away, it is the civil society that was made to wither with a vengeance. Trade unions banned by the states, groups of intellectuals persecuted by the governments rose against the communist system with courage and perseverance and ultimately succeeded in dismantling the system. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, inaugurated this era. The Soviet Union, the dominant power in the system; itself slowly opened up primarily due to the policies of Perestroika (restructuring) and Glasnost (openness) pursued by Mikhail Gorbachev. These loosened the stranglehold of the communist system over Eastern Europe. Thus, the liberation of Eastern Europe by late 20th century is regarded as the triumph of the civil society over the state.

It should be understood that the recent resurgence of the civil society is not only due to the over reaching totalitarianism of communist state; Popular reactions to the regimes of right-oriented authoritarian dictatorships are as much responsible to this trend. In Latin America, in particular, the frequent presence of military dictatorships produced strong resentment among diverse segments of those societies resulting in the formation of human rights groups, many led by Church leaders and other organisations, as a manifestation of the civil society dimensions. These are the over-arching responses of civil society in challenging the state.

In liberal democracies, civil society plays even a more sustained role though it does not have the same anti-state projection as it did in former communist Europe or authoritarian Latin American regimes. An important study (Keane, 1998) says that 'the civil society became the refuge of liberal theory and that the civil society perspective constitutes the basic consensus of enlightened democracies'.

The significance of civil society in contemporary political and social theory has become so pervasive that in the sub-discipline of Comparative Politics within Political Science studies, it became a major topic. It is viewed as a major institutional device in participatory democracy. So much so, "civil society and allied social movements are theorised as politicising some of the activity of the state from a position outside the state institutions." It is also regarded as an answer to state activity becoming largely technicalised beyond the comprehension of the average citizen.

3.5.3 Civil Society and Conflict Resolution

From the above discussion of civil society it could be inferred how civil society institutions perform a significant role in conflict prevention, containment and resolution. It is worthwhile to refer to this point at some length.

Ordinarily, it is the state that has near monopoly in ultimately prescribing and implementing conflict resolution. But because the causes of conflict keep on increasing and the state, even otherwise, cannot always effectively function in this regard, civil society institutions entered the scene in a big way. In particular, the very spread of the idea of participatory democracy introduces, among other things, two important claims for participation of the people. The first is for the claim for more equitable sharing of society's resources and for access to the enabling rights and privileges that present day states are obliged to concede to people. The second claim refers to the very demand for participation in society's governance. Both of these points can be well illustrated from the Human Rights claims in society and the wide popularisation of democratic decentralisation.

The result is an open invitation for increased role for non-governmental institutions. They play a role in making these people aware of their entitlement to these claims. The effect of this is an even more extensive role in conflict avoidance, containment and even in conflict resolution. Public health and educational entitlement are good examples in this regard. The preservation of environmental balance is another instance. These entitlements, as is by now well known, sometimes bring the people and governments in conflict. Yet in the final analysis, the intervention of the voluntary non-governmental agencies also brings about an adjustment of claims and counter claims. A few examples will illustrate this trend. The NGOs' role in the promotion of minority-rights invoking the rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and the UN Declaration of Human Rights and by bringing pressure upon the government to implement these go a long way in containing long-term potential for conflict and, above all, in achieving just ends for society's peace. Similarly, in issues relating to displacement of thousands of people when large irrigation and other developmental projects bring large-scale disturbance to their natural habitat, the NGOs concerned perform the whistle-blowing function and much more in helping avoid damage to larger public interest.

Another important aspect of the civil society's intervention in conflict resolution is that it is also a counter-wailing power to the play of market forces in society. It has been noted

how economic liberalisation and globalisation make the state less salient in the social process and project the market (the economic sphere). Given this trend, NGOs and allied institutions are now concerned as much with protecting larger social purposes from the free play of the market as from the policies of the state.

Having said all this, civil society theory is riddled with doubts about its democratic proclivities along with its potentialities for generating conflict also. However, the present purpose of our discussion is to spotlight the nature and extent of its role in attending to social interests as a parallel organ to the state as also realise that both civil society and the state converge at points as also diverge into even opposite direction. Yet both claim to be resolvers of intra-societal conflict.

Let us now examine inter-state conflict, whose extreme manifestation is war.

3.6 INTER-STATE CONFLICT

It can be stated that ordinarily wars can always be said to arise from inter-state conflict though not all inter-state conflicts may result in war. The primary method by which inter-state conflicts are resolved is politics. It is only when inter-state politics which is conducted through diplomacy fails that states resort to war. In the famous words of Carl Von Clausewitz, war is "the continuation of politics by other means". In one sense, this definition implies that war is a part of diplomacy. But in a more important sense, it means that war cannot be an end in itself and that 'diplomacy' still has to play its critical part during the war and even after it terminates. In many instances, diplomatic activity is intensified either directly between the parties to the war or through the intervention of 'third parties' like international organisations, regional organisations or friendly nations.

As we noted in the previous unit, there is an essential difference between intra-state conflict and inter-state conflict. In the former case, the state itself resolves the conflict, in which process, judicial settlement of conflict forms a significant part. Yet, this process becomes less effective when intra-state conflict assumes larger scale rebellions, insurrection or civil war. The point is that in inter-state conflict judicial settlement of disputes has come into vogue only in very recent times, and even now its role is rather marginal. Arbitration and adjudication of disputes between states now play only some part in resolving inter-state disputes. Therefore, after diplomacy, mediation, arbitration, conciliation and adjudication of intra-state disputes are the important methods by which disputes are settled.

Let us now reflect on war as the outgrowth of disputes.

3.7 REFLECTIONS ON THE PHENOMENA OF WAR

Usually, in this context the cause of war forms the subject of discussion. Since the causes of war are being dealt with in a separate unit, here some of the philosophical aspects of war are taken up for consideration. Here it will be appropriate to mention the views of some eminent thinkers who have enquired into the deeper motivations of war. Two categories of analysis will be presented. The first deals with a conceptual analysis of the foundations

of conflict (and war) as theorised by an eminent contemporary political theorist, Kenneth N. Waltz. The second is the analysis of the famous theorist of modern warfare, Carl von Clausewitz. The latter analysis more directly relates to war as the conscious choice of states, its objects and nature, leaving aside other causes that motivate wars. Other important philosophies and approaches of war are also examined in this section.

3.7.1 Waltz's Analysis of War

Kenneth N. Waltz makes the most comprehensive analysis of the causes for international conflict and war in his book *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. Examining the theories of conflict propounded by eminent thinkers from the beginning of history, Waltz classifies the three major sources of war as arising from a) Human Nature and Behaviour b) The Internal Structure of States, and c) International Anarchy. He describes these three factors as three 'images' of international relations behaviour.

1) Human Nature and Behaviour

"According to the first image of international relations, the focus of the important causes of war is found in the nature and behaviour of men's. Wars result from selfishness, from misdirected aggressive impulses, from stupidity – other causes are secondary and have to be interpreted in the light of these factors".

2) The Internal Structure of States

"It is society that is the degrading force in men's lives, but it is the moralising agency as well". This image concedes that while human nature has a lot to do with conflict (Image 1), it is the very nature of the organisation of the people into a society (a state) that introduces the more critical element of collective will that makes conflict more manifest. Thus the second source of conflict is the internal character of the state-the public beliefs and practices, opinions and expectations, political systems and institutions of government that frame human behaviour. Waltz's illustrates the point thus: "The state plagued by internal strife may then, instead of working for the accidental attack, seek the war that will bring internal peace". What is to be noted here is that intra-societal conflict is sought to be resolved or diverted by resorting to inter-societal (inter-state) conflict.

3) International Anarchy

If the structure of the state and its system of governance shapes human behaviour, then the structure of the international system must also shape state behaviour. "With many sovereign states, with no system of law enforceable among them, with each state judging its grievances and ambition according to the dictates of its own reason or desire, conflict, sometimes leading to war is bound to occur....Because each state is the final judge of what is necessary for its own cause, any state may at any time use force to implement its policies. Because any state may at any time use force, all states must constantly be ready either to counter force with force or to pay the costs of weakness. The requirements of state action are, in this view, imposed by the circumstances in which all states exist."

Waltz's three images are three distinct ways of locating the causes of war, While Waltz has separated the three for analytical purposes, they are indeed overlapping, as none of the

three is in itself sufficient to fully explain the causes of international conflict. Some thinkers laid emphasis on one, some on the second, and some on the third.

In fact the three images explain the cause of all human conflict, not merely international conflict. For instance, the first two images explain the causes of intra-societal conflict as well. The innate aggressiveness of human nature combined with the nature of the organisation of society (or state), the latter of which may itself be considered as a product of human nature, contributes to the external manifestation of conflict. The third image, International Anarchy, can be considered to be the immediate cause of international conflict.

3.7.2 Clausewitz's Theory of War

It is Waltz's last image, International Anarchy, under which political states are sovereign unto themselves and freely use force against other states, that figures prominently in theorising on war in general. Carl Von Clausewitz the celebrated nineteenth century German author of "Von Kriege" ("On War"), brought out this factor with great emphasis.

His well-known definition of war as "the continuation of politics by other means" is already mentioned. More important for present analysis is his view that war is a rational instrument of national policy, that is, state policy. In the final analysis, therefore, the 'state' is the primordial actor in the process of war. And the 'object' of war is further summarised by Clausewitz thus: "War is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will."

From this definition it follows that every war ought to end in a complete victory of one side over the other, and that 'moderation in war is an absurdity' since failure to utilise all the force at one's disposal defeats the purpose of war. War conceived in this way Clausewitz calls 'war in abstract' or 'absolute war'. In real terms, this is close to total war, which the First and Second World Wars of the last century approximate to. However, it should also be mentioned that Clausewitz himself says that real wars differ from abstract war, because idealised conditions are never realised. So, in real experience, there is always the discrepancy between real wars and idealised mechanical processes of War.

3.7.3 Other Philosophies of War

Anatol Repoport, the editor of one of the English editions of Clausewitz's book classifies the philosophies of wars into three categories.

The Eschatological philosophy of War: This theory is based on the idea that history, in many cases, will culminate in a 'final' war signalling the unfolding of a hidden grand design – divine, natural or human. Examples of this view are the Crusades and Holy wars which were waged as means of unifying some portions of the world under a single faith or single ruler. In modern times, the American doctrine of manifest destiny (propounded during the late nineteenth century) and the Nazi doctrine of the Master Race, represent two different types of belief in messianic missions.

The Cataclysmic View: This theory views war as a catastrophe that befalls some portion, or the entire human race. No one in particular is held to be responsible for war and no one in particular is expected to benefit from it. Leo Tolstoy's, *War and Peace*, depicts war

in this manner. Tolstoy attributes wars to the action of unknown historical forces and holds actions of kings and strategies of military commanders to be quite irrelevant to either the outbreaks, or the outcomes of wars.

The Political Philosophy of War: Clausewitz is the outstanding proponent of the political philosophy of War. It is called 'political', because it considers the institution of war as an instrument of national or state policy. In the idealised view of this, war 'ought' to be rational, i.e. based on estimated costs and gains; it 'ought' to be instrumental, in that it should be waged to achieve a definite goal (never for its own sake) and finally it ought to be national, in the sense that its objective should be to advance the interests of the nation-state. Machiavelli, the Fifteenth century thinker, had advanced a similar theory, but Clausewitz's restatement is significant because it synchronised with industrialisation of society and warfare (with the development of new weapons, recruiting mass armies and adoption of new strategies of waging war).

The Eschatological and Cataclysmic theories philosophise about war in terms of either divine or historical causes. Clausewitz's theory finally traces war to the intention and will of nations. It can be seen that his theory is in consonance with the manifest causes of war because one cannot rationally establish the operation of intangible and 'divinely' imposed reasons for war. Clausewitz himself provides the explanation why idealised total war cannot always be a reality. However, even small-scale wars can be explained in terms of Clausewitz's theory.

While the greatest claim of Clausewitz's theory is to reflect reality based on the notion of the sovereign will of the nation or state, that notion of sovereignty of the state has itself been challenged over the last century and half. The slow erosions of the right of a state to do whatever it pleases has been compromised first in the area of conduct of war itself and later in many other spheres of inter-national conduct. Both the League of Nations and later the U.N. imposed severe limits on the states' right to go to war. As we shall see later, the rise of global civil society movement has further contributed to limiting states actions in the arenas of conflict and peace. Many writers have therefore modified Clausewitz's philosophy of war in the light of changing nature of international relations.

3.7.4 The Doctrine of Just War

Despite the general revulsion for war, the institution of war survived unabated. Even the pacifist orientations of religious discourse could not deter societies from going to war against each other. One of the important developments of the compromise between religion's aversion to war and the compulsions of states to resort to wars is the origin of the doctrine of Just War. This doctrine is particularly associated with the Christianity though other religions traditions also recognised the concept of just war. The ancient Indian idea of Dharma Yuddh is an example. It is necessary to advert to the Just War doctrine briefly as it developed in the West.

Just war doctrines abounded during the Middle ages in Europe as a dimension of Canon Law (Church-established law). They resulted from the attempts to accommodate the pacifism of Christian teaching with the spread of Christian domination of Europe and beyond. As the church had gained space in the secular realm, justification for organised war was thus integrated into the realm of human activity.

In his reputed treatise on Just and Unjust Wars, Michael Walzer, treats the subject of Just Wars more in the context of a state resisting aggression than that of a state initiating aggression. Walzer encapsulates the theory of aggression in six prepositions that constitute the core of Just War. They are:

- i) There exists an international society of independent states
- ii) This international society has a law that establishes the rights of its members – above all the rights of territorial integrity and political sovereignty.
- iii) Any use of force or imminent threat of force by one state against the territorial integrity or political sovereignty of another constitutes aggression and a criminal act.
- iv) Aggression justifies two kinds of violent response: a war of self-defence by the victim and a war of enforcement by the victim and any other member of international society.
- v) Nothing but aggression can justify war
- vi) Once the aggression has been militarily repulsed, it (aggression) can also be punished.

From the above, it is clear that in an international society of independent states, the right of sovereignty and territorial integrity is inviolable. Propositions iii – v define aggression, which alone justifies a victim resorting to war. The crucial aspect of the exposition of just war is that it is conceived as defensive war and nothing is mentioned about when an initiation of a war can be regarded as just. Presumably, it never is. Thus, pre-emptive wars logic is ruled out.

However, it is necessary to recall the simple truth that war is a two-way process and the party that retaliates, as well as the one that initiates, almost always justify their actions on some legitimising 'facts'. And the latter's justifications are not unalloyed with pre-emptive logic. Ancient Indian Jaitra Yattras for expansion of territory by a powerful monarch were not always regarded as unjust. Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese writer on War is most reticent about discussing the justness or unjustness of war. Perhaps, the most telling example was that of the conduct of Athens at the height of its power and glory during the Peloponnesian War, in the 5th century B.C. The chief antagonists were Athens and Sparta. Athens proudly called itself the School of Hellas (teacher of Greece), but yet committed aggression against the tiny neighbouring city state of Melos, which though a colony of Sparta, chose to remain neutral in that war. The Athenian leaders unabashedly told the Melians that Athens had the right to subdue innocent Melos because of the exigencies of the war, that might makes right, and that a nation concerned with defending its interests should not take into account moral considerations. Athens subdued Melos and put to death all its able bodied males and taking all its women and children into slavery.

The Greek historian Thucydides analysed the Athenian conduct as establishing a new way of looking at politics, though he regarded it as a lien to Greek temper and ethos. A modern historian of Greece, regarded the Melian episode as showing that "the principle of force forms a realm of its own, with laws of its own", distinct and separate from the laws of moral life that govern individual human conduct. Even though the coming of the Christian era brought scruples like the Just War doctrine, soon these scruples vanished as the

Church leaders and the European emperors themselves resorted to wars against each other. Just War doctrines became exercises in sophistry. Then, as the Middle ages waned and the Renaissance dawned, thinkers like Machiavelli boldly separated the spheres of individual morality and 'morality' of states. This practically ended any pretence of testing wars on the just-war touchstone. Even though the idea of avoiding war among states recurs often, the attention was diverted to other methods than on referring to the just war doctrine.

3.8 GLOBAL WARS

The concept of global conflict can be understood in different ways. Since we have focused on war which is the extreme manifestation of inter-state conflict, a similar treatment is accorded to this concept. Accordingly, our focus is on global war **which** is treated as a quantitative extension of a local war into continental proportions and then its spread beyond. Just as the wars of Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries shaped into the First and Second World Wars, so the prospective conflagrations of this century have the potential to become global.

While the threat of superpower Armageddon was itself a possibility during the Cold War years, the transfers of nuclear and other highly destructive weapons, the extension of Cold War alliances into local and **regional** quarrels, posed the challenge of local wars getting out of control. In the case of the Korean and Vietnam wars, each of the superpowers were almost **directly** aligned with the original belligerents and wider ideological confrontation was a factor that foreboded a global war. Fortunately, the very fear of a globalised conflict restrained the superpowers from **directly** joining these conflicts. The superpower 'balance of terror', as founded on the deterrence doctrine, was instrumental in this process of restraint.

In many other instances too, the alliance relationships of the big-powers with local powers, provided the probability for local wars like the Israel-Arab conflicts, the anti-colonial conflicts in northern and southern African regions and the Sino-Indian War-escalating into global wars. This is also termed as the outcome of 'new post-war linkage patterns'.

3.8.1 The Qualitative Dimensions for Global Wars

Apart from the extension of local or regional war, the stage for global war is much more directly set by the nature of contemporary weapons. Simply put, this is an outcome of 'Global Weapons' and 'Global Strategies'. For, the devastating capacity of nuclear weapons and the global strategies devised to take advantage of these capabilities followed as an inevitable corollary. One can easily understand how any war could quickly become global, at least one with direct global effects.

One should add to this the assumption of 'global interests' by the superpowers. Because of the fear of reciprocal **reach** of the enemy, the superpowers frequently extended their 'security perimeters' – almost making the ends of the earth as coming under their defence interests. Thus, US strategists claimed "that the USA has world-wide vital interests, and should ensure that it has the capacity to protect them all."

3.8.2 Nuclear Weapons and Cascades of Consequences

Because the factor of nuclear weapons is the independent variable in the conversion of

wars into global wars, as the number of nuclear weapons states increase defacto, the global war phenomenon is brought all the more near. Jonathan Schell, in his recent volume, *The Unfinished Twentieth Century*, highlights this point thus: "A global drama, in which decisions regarding nuclear arms in any part of the world touches off cascades of consequences throughout the world..." That is, as nuclear weapons are accrued by states involved in regional conflicts so do global war threats increase.

Even though the Cold War scenario may no longer be as relevant as before, the very emergence of a single superpower – the USA only further engenders the claim for global interests. Many critics say that the USA now affirms such claims with the self-proclaimed role of the world policeman. Especially after 9/11, its assumption of the leadership of the war against international terrorism confers some credibility to this claim. But this claim is now joined to another claim of installing democratic regimes in other parts of the globe. Now the U.S. defence and foreign policies are unabashedly based on the assertion that as the single major power, its paramount interests are global and its economic and military capabilities have the necessary global reach to protect its claims and interests.

3.8.3 International Terrorism – A Trigger for Global War

Even though international terrorism did not originate only with the Al Qaeda perpetrated attack on the US locations on Sept 11, 2001, it did symbolise the high watermark of the phenomenon – as constituting a true global threat. The U.N. General Assembly defined global terrorism as "Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes – whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other nature that may be invoked to justify them". Given this definition from the world body itself, the global potential of terrorism can be clearly assessed.

The operations of terrorism are mostly anonymous but its effects are manifest. The nature of international terrorism can be described as one with centre anywhere and circumference everywhere.

Two rather paradoxically opposite implications for global war flow from this threat. First, the imminent possibility of terrorist groups acquiring nuclear devices and either using them or black-mailing with threats of their use create horrendous prospects. Secondly, the response to this threat should also cause concern. The U.S. response to 9/11 has been one of a mix of motives in which exploiting the threat of international terrorism has been conspicuously evident. The vital complexities of global war are thus further complicated by terrorism.

3.8.4 Clash of Civilizations and Global Wars

A new perspective on global scale confrontations appeared in the shape of the idea of clash of civilizations. Propounded by Samuel Huntington in 1993, this idea holds that the economic and ideological antagonisms of the 19th and 20th centuries will be overtaken by antagonisms over culture and cultural identity. "Nation-states will remain the most powerful actors in the world...but the principle conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of civilizations." He further stressed that "The clash of civilizations will dominate

global politics. The fault lines between Civilizations will be the battle lines of the future." Huntington may have derived this idea from the increasing hostility between the Islamic world and the U.S. led Western states as underscored by the Gulf War (1990) and the rise of China as a candidate–superpower perceived as a potential challenge to the U.S.

The cultural and civilizational dimensions of contemporary regions are no longer the same as centuries ago and Huntington is severely criticised for over-stating his theory. His critics have argued that the world's future fault-lines will fall not between the major states or civilizations, but between the growing nexus of democratic market-oriented societies and those 'hold out' states that have eschewed democracy or defied the world community in other ways. In this view, it is these holdout states that have access to weapons of mass destruction which are likely to trigger wars with global ramifications. This reading of the cause of future wars formulated by the U.S. during the Clinton Presidency, is now extended by the neo-conservatives in the Bush Administration, targeting international terrorism and the so-called rogue states, and seeking to deliberately install democracy world-wide, if necessary by war.

3.9 THE PERSISTENCE OF UNCERTAINTY ABOUT ITS EXISTENCE

The foregoing analysis of the origins and theories of war only bring to the fore the grand dilemma of war as an organised human institution. On fundamental issues there can be no finality as to the precise causes or solutions. Perhaps, as in the case of all major issues pertaining to the human condition, only approximations to truth are possible. The prevailing uncertainty can be illustrated by referring to two apparently diametrically opposite views by eminent scholars.

Michael Howard, the foremost historian and theoretician of war, in his recent book, *The Invention of Peace* (2000), says that the pursuit of peace is an artificial pursuit, with no certainty of final success. Yet with the values of humanism and enlightenment this pursuit can only hope to succeed.

Margaret Mead, the renowned anthropologist, on the contrary says that it is war, not peace that is a human invention. Putting the insights gathered from studying diverse human communities, she poses the question in her book *War is only an Invention –Not a Biological Necessity* (1940), whether war is a biological necessity, a sociological inevitability, or just a bad invention? With refreshing hope, she concludes: "... If we despair over the way in which war seems such an ingrained habit of most of the human race, we can take comfort from the fact that a poor invention will usually give place to a better invention."

Is human-kind now nearer the goal of that 'better invention' which Mead mentioned, and Michael Howard too did not despair of?

3.10 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have discussed the nature and forms of intra-state, inter-state and global conflicts. In our discussion on the sources of intra-state or intra-societal conflicts we

observed that in our daily course of **human** activity; dissatisfactions and conflicts keep on rising in matters relating to distribution of property, material resources, social status or recognition.

While most of the intra-societal conflicts are resolved within social groups, when they assume serious dimensions, the state, the highest organisation within a society, steps in to manage and resolve them. The states have a wide infrastructural network to deal with a range of intra-societal conflicts, from family quarrels which **assume** violent proportions to the group violence, to insurrection and revolutionary violence. As we saw, the state relies on various mechanisms, including the use of force, to cope with such conflicts. Some macro-level conflicts may become **uncontainable** and threaten ~~the~~ the very existence of the state. Such challenges are more frequent in the developing countries, though developed or 'mature' societies are not altogether free from severe intra-state conflicts. States which are incapable of sustaining are described as 'fragile states' or 'failed states'.*

The civil society has an important role in conflict prevention, containment and resolution. Apart from the fact that the state cannot always **function** effectively in managing conflict, what gives a push and legitimacy for the activities of the civil society networks is the spread of the idea of participatory democracy. As we noted, there has been a major transformation in the civil society-state relationship in the last three centuries. In recent times, the recession of the state from some of the earlier functions leaving large number of people vulnerable to social and economic distress has led to the assertion of the civil society, both in theory and practice.

The unit also examined inter-state conflict, particularly focusing on the extreme manifestation of such conflict, that is, war. This section reflected on some of the important approaches for the understanding of study of war. While the thrust has been on the comprehensive analysis of conflict by Waltz and of war by Clausewitz, other important philosophical approaches and theories of war find mention here.

The unit also examines global conflict, a new **term** that has acquired currency in recent times. While the concept has varied connotations, here it is treated as a quantitative extension of the extreme form of inter-state conflict war. The main **theories** and causes of global war find mention here.

3.11 EXERCISES

- 1) What according to the author are the main sources of intra-societal **conflicts**?
- 2) Examine the role of state in the management of conflict.
- 3) What is civil society? **Why** has it gained prominence in the recent past?
- 4) Comment on the role of civil society in the resolution of conflicts.
- 5) Describe the basic motivations of war as analysed by Waltz.
- 6) What are the various explanations and theories on the **prospects** for global war?