Various Conflict Theorists and their Theories

Political scientists have long recognized that conflict and the effort to resolve it are at the heart of politics, and much ink has been spilled in attempts to explain it. In the literature of comparative politics, the reemergence of nationalism or ethnonationalism in the last twenty years has raised particular questions about the sources of identity-based conflict. Even more recently, international relations scholars have asked why "protracted" conflicts are so much more difficult to resolve than the more manageable ethnic divisions addressed by consociational theorists. Protracted conflicts take a very different form from their milder cousins. They are bloody (the violence often involving paramilitary organizations); they signal the loss of authority and eventual breakdown of governing institutions; and they trigger a fragmentation of public opinion, the growth of radical counter-elites, and the evolution of a centrifugal political system. Moreover, protracted conflicts tend to be intractable, since resolving them requires warring identity/ethnic groups to make concessions they can not contemplate while under threat.

Though all the cases of protracted conflict cited in the new literature of international relations are rooted in ethnic divisions, there has been little attempt to integrate this literature and the older comparative research on identity or ethnic conflict. Seeking to synthesize these two perspectives, Elizabeth Crighton and Martha Abele Mac Iver proposed a model that explains the development and persistence of protracted identity or ethnic conflicts. They compare two cases, Lebanon and Northern Ireland, to derive hypotheses about the dynamics of these conflicts and to evaluate strategies for accommodation. Though Lebanon and Northern Ireland have been indirectly contrasted by Lijphart, who views them respectively as successful (until 1975) and unsuccessful examples of the consociational model, they argue that Lijphart's cross-sectional approach underestimates the underlying similarities of the two cases and fails to account for the continued failure of elites to reach accommodation. Their longitudinal study offers a more dynamic explanation and several promising hypotheses for further research.

They derived their explanatory model from the inductive historical analysis to follow, but in order to provide a conceptual roadmap for the reader they preface the analysis with a summary of the model. Both view protracted conflicts as "identity-driven" the result of an underlying "fear of extinction" that grows out of the experience of being a vulnerable ethnic group living with memories of persecution and massacre. Identity-driven fears are not reserved to ethnic minorities but also motivate groups comprising a plurality or even a majority of the population in conflict. According to them, in cases of protracted conflict, these fears set in train two processes which ultimately destroy public order and make it very difficult to restore.

The first arises when one identity or ethnic group manages (often with the help of outside powers and creative gerrymanders) to establish its political dominance through institutions which protect its identity. The institutionalization of domination may take different forms, but it occurs most readily where a demobilized mass public offers no challenge to the political order. Dominant institutions tend, therefore, to control conflict in the manner of "coercive regimes," which enjoy high compliance but low support. Since they are tied to the primacy of one ethnic group or coalition, they can not accommodate changes in the distribution of power between social groups. The resultant inflexibility and exclusiveness (institutional underdevelopment) leaves them poorly equipped to cope with the second process common to cases of protracted conflict, social and political mobilization.

Mobilization spawns groups willing to challenge the traditional system of ethnic dominance, so it often triggers conflict by exacerbating preexisting social tensions. Mobilized by charismatic leaders within the context of changing social forces, newly politicized groups place great strain on institutions never designed to absorb such change so rapidly. As Huntington argues, such a situation is a recipe for political instability. Attempts by reform-minded leaders within the dominant ethnic group to address demands made upon the system by the newly mobilized usually succeed only in fragmenting the dominant coalition. Counter-mobilization by disaffected conservatives

within that coalition only fans the flames of ethnic conflict. Violence directed against the dominant group by aggrieved minorities adds fuel to the fire by intensifying the fears that gave rise to conflict in the first place. Public order may break down completely in the face of such a pattern of defensive mobilization. While intervention by outside actors, often motivated by irredentism, exacerbates such conflicts, it does not explain them. Ethnic conflicts become "protracted" because of failure to deal effectively with the underlying identity-related fears of dominant groups.

But what is this conflict? The term conflict has a variety of meanings. It is often used as a synonym for incompatible or irreconcilable. For example, we often refer to conflicting values, beliefs, or loyalties. A conflict starts when there exist two different sets of interests, aims, values, and beliefs. In other words, a conflict is a state of affairs characterized by the existence of incompatible aspect of relationship between people, groups and nations. While there is a vast and rapidly expanding literature on conflict, it is clear that research in the subject still suffers from two major shortcomings.[23] First, apart from the efforts of scholars such as Johan Galtung and John Burton, relatively little attention is paid to the development of an adequate and integrated theory of conflict. This is a significant shortcoming of modern social science, particularly given the insights now being derived from research in several disciplines. Second, Western literature still pays scant attention to non-Western conceptions of conflict. Given the prevalence of conflict in the international system, it is clear that understanding the ways in which different cultures conceptualize conflict is vitally important. Clearly, it would seem, an adequate theory of conflict cannot be culture-specific.

The liberal will hold that the conflicts which arise within society come from competing interests and goals, and are not the result of conflicts between different groups, classes (whose existence is denied), etc., or generated by underlying structures and social inequalities. The individual and the individual's behaviour is the focus, not society; a focus on knots, rather than wed. Therefore, responsibility lies with the

individual. Critical of the liberal, Marxian focuses upon the structures and relations which give rise to conflict. It opens the way for understanding systems, and explains social and economic inequalities as resulting from differences in control of the means of production; as long as those differences exist, conflict along class lines will exist. Marx's concepts of alienation, exploitation and inequality emphasize 'structural violence', not just direct, personal.

Antonio Gramsci, a noted Marxian scholar, who rejected the excessive emphasis on economic determinism, introduced the theory of "ideological hegemony", which is carried out not only through control over the means of production, but encompasses a whole range of values, attitudes, beliefs, cultural norms, and legal precepts. According to this theory, it is the ideological hegemony of the ruling class that when challenged, gives rise to conflict. Apart from these general liberal and Marxian definitions, some important definitions of various scholars are inevitable. In Max Weber's classical formulation, a social relationship is in conflict when one actor carries out their own will against the resistance of another party. For Lewis Coser, conflict is a struggle over values, status, power, and resources "in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals." The definitions of Weber and Coser are traditional in nature of understanding conflict.

Burton has suggested precise definitions of the words dispute and conflict. According to him, a dispute is a situation in which the issues are negotiable, compromise is possible, and consideration of altered institutions and structures is not necessary. It is a normal and constructive feature of social life. In contrast, conflict is deeply rooted in

human needs. It involves issues that are not negotiable: human needs that cannot be compromised. Burton regards the distinction between disputes and conflicts as vitally important even though the two are sometimes linked, as they are when disputes are symptoms of underlying conflicts. In his view therefore, conflict- including that which occurs in international system- is not over objective differences of interest that involve scarcity, although it is often defined in these terms by the parties themselves.

Conflict occurs over needs, including the needs for identity and security that are not in short supply, although the tactics used in any attempt to satisfy these needs, such as a demand for territory, may involve shortages. In short, according to Burton, traditional thinking led to the belief that conflict was about interests only and that for that reason the individual could be socialized and coerced. What both theory and practice reveal, however, is that protracted conflicts are over nonnegotiable human needs. Therefore, it is impossible to socialize individuals into behaviour that runs counter to their needs.

Changing conceptions of security

Ideas about the meaning of security changed over the course of the twentieth century, especially in the last two decades. In the Cold War, the primary security referent was the state. When both sides had vast nuclear arsenals and large conventional armed forces at their disposal, the major threats to state survival were seen as external. As the Cold War drew to an end, however, it was recognised that threats to the basic values of a community were neither solely military in origin nor always external to the state, and that the state itself could be a primary source of threat to a community or

individual. Indeed, far more people were killed by their own states than in inter-state wars in the second half of the twentieth century.

This recognition led to the concept of human security, linked to the protection of human rights. In the 1990s, the idea that international peace and security depended on the prevention of wide-scale abuse of human rights was increasingly emphasised. The notion of sovereignty as authority over people and territory was modified to embrace the idea of sovereignty as responsibility, where a state has a recognised duty to provide for basic human rights in its own territory and to be concerned about the abuse of rights elsewhere.[37] The concept of security places individual at the centre. The protection and safeguard of individual rights has become quintessential for global peace and security. Insecurity increased when human rights are sacrificed, and human security is enhanced where the rule of law and human rights are respected. It can be said that conflicts deepened because of the abuse and violations of individual rights at different conflict zones. In order to realise human security, coercive measures adopted by states need to be de-emphasised to pave the way for dialogue, interaction and cooperation.

For Azar, "Protracted Social Conflicts" arises from the historical context, and from the denial of basic human needs of access, identity and security, as well as through the role played by the state, international political and economic linkages and the military in politics. If the state and the minority nationalities choose suppression and armed resistance as their strategies, a conflict may then become destructive. Destructive conflict then results in a more dependent and exploitative pattern of development, a distorted pattern of governance and a militarized form of politics. According to Azar, this leads to the further denial of basis needs. The result is a protracted cycle of institutional deformation and destructive conflict. On the other hand, if there is sufficient capacity in governance and society, if politics is not too militarized, and if the international

environment is supportive, states may instead choose accommodation, and the identity groups may choose political forms of confrontation. This can lead to a pattern of constructive conflict that in turn promotes legitimate decision-making capacity, strengthen autonomous development and sustains civil rather than military politics. For Azar, all these are conducive to the meeting of basic needs. The model goes beyond simple and behavioural explanations and suggests how pattern of conflicts interact with the satisfaction of human needs, the adequacy of political and economic institutions and the choices made by political actors.

According to Johan Galtung, conflict is much more than what meets the naked eye as 'trouble', direct violence. There is also the violence frozen into structures, and the culture that legitimises violence. Direct violence will be in the form of real or threatened military action against other parties whether provoked or not, whether to settle conflict or initiate it. Structural violence or indirect violence comes from the social structure itself-between humans, between sets of humans (societies), between sets of societies (alliances, regions) in the world. The two major forms of outer structural violence are well known from politics and economics: repression and exploitation. Behind all this is cultural violence: all of it symbolic, in religion and ideology, in language and art, in science and law, in media and education. The function is simple enough: to legitimise direct and structural violence.

In fact we are dealing with violence in culture, in politics and in economics, and then with direct violence. We need a concept broader than violence, and also broader than peace. Power is that concept. Cultural power moves actors by persuading them what is right and wrong; economic power by the carrot method of quid pro quo; military (or 'force' in general) power by the stick method of 'or else'; and political power by producing decisions. For Galtung, the "conflict triangle" entails three elements: the attitudinal aspects, the behavioural aspects, and the conflict itself. Moreover, conflict,

according to Galtung, is incompatibility in a goal-seeking system. These goals include needs, values, interests, although basic conflicts involve basic human needs, such as, security, freedom, welfare and identity. Patriotism, as opposed civic nationalism, is one source of such an incompatibility as it fosters the myth or feeling of belonging rather than law or reason. In Galtung's view, conflict resolution depends on correcting the steep Self-Other attitudinal gradient on both side, correcting the behavioural polarization and destructive machinery, and removing the goal incompatibilities. The incompatibility which arises between parties may be eliminated by transcending the contradiction, by compromise, by deepening or widening the conflict structure, and by associating or dissociating the actors. To fight against direct, structural and cultural violence, the strategy Galtung advocates is non-violent revolution.

According to Hugh Miall, Conflict Theories, if viewed narrowly, will be seen to concentrate overly on the conflict party level, focusing on parties, issues, goals and so on to the exclusion of the context within which the conflict is situated as well as of the factors which characterize the self-fueling of conflicts, e.g. markets and cultures of violence. It is possible, however, to add more representation of the background, for example building on Galtung's simple triangular formulation of conflict. On to 'contradiction', we can build 'context'; on to 'attitudes' 'memory' and on to 'behaviour' 'relations'. This recognizes that the meaning of a conflict depends largely on the context out of which it arises. The attitudes the parties have towards one another are shaped by previous relationships. The behaviour they adopt is not purely reactive but is based on their memory of what has happened in the past, expectations of what may happen in the future.

The context, according to Miall, of conflict includes the society in conflict and the wider international and regional level. Within the society, crucial background aspects are culture, governance arrangements, institutions, social roles, norms, the rules, and codes in place in a society, its path of development. For example, in conflicts involving ethnicity, minorities or challenges to the state structures, it is the very structure of the state that is at issue. As globalization proceeds, local conflicts are inevitably influenced by wider economic and political forces. These have tended to strengthen trade investment and technological networks in some areas of the world, but also to marginalize other areas such as Africa and the former Soviet Union. The result of weakening of states and economies in these areas and, in some cases, the creation of a real crisis of the state. Relationships involve the whole fabric of interaction within the society in which the conflict takes place as well as beyond to other societies while memories are part of each party's socially constructed understanding of the situation, shaped by culture and learning, discourse and belief. The way groups remember and construct their past is often central to the mobilization for conflict, and thus a crucial matter to address in reconciliation and cultural traditions work. Context, relationships and memories are all part of the issue connecting the contradictions, attitudes and behaviours, within the wider background in space and time. He builds on Varynen's approach of the five types of conflict transformation, such as, Context Transformation, Structural Transformation, Actor Transformation, Issue Transformation and Personal Changes of Heart or Mind within Individual Leaders or Small Groups

The human needs for identity, recognition, security (human security unlike state security) and personal development play a particular important role in the analysis of contemporary conflicts and in designing of strategies to transform them. In recent years, the suppression or the deprivation of the human need for identity has come to be seen as the primary source of identity-based conflict. In this context, the theory of threatened group identity points to the growing importance of identity consciousness in contemporary politico-armed conflicts. People are increasingly conscious of who they

are and are asserting their political, cultural, social and economic needs. As issues of identity has come to the fore, "people are increasingly realigning themselves on the basis of ancestry, religion, language, values and institutions, and are rejecting distant and alien rule."

According to Rothman, conflicts are basically the conflicts of identities. For Rothman, identity-driven conflicts are rooted in the articulation of, and the threats or frustrations to, people's collective need for dignity, recognition, safety, control, purpose, and efficacy. Identity-based conflicts are deeply rooted in the underlying individual human needs and values that together constitute people's social identities, particularly in the context of group affiliations, loyalties, and solidarity. Identity-based conflicts in parts of Africa, Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Sri Lanka, the Middle East, Naga national movement in India and Burma, and dozens of other conflict zones around the globe are characterized by longstanding, seemingly insoluble tensions.

While these conflicts may well be manifested in conventional ways, such as rivalries over territory or competition for scarce resources, these conflicts are often more deeply rooted in existential issues like cultural expression and survival itself. Rothman made a distinction between identity-based conflicts and resource-based or interest-based conflicts. Resource-based or interest-based disputes are obvious, observable, and tangible. They are usually concrete and clearly defined, and the outcomes each side seeks are bounded by the resources at stake: more or less land, wages and benefits, or military and economic power. However, many other conflicts like the identity-based conflicts are relatively intangible and deeply rooted in the more abstract and interpretative dynamics history, psychology, culture, values, and beliefs of identity groups.

In fact such conflicts are so intangible and hard to define because they arise from the depths of the human hearts rather than the material world. Although theoretical distinctions between identity and interest conflicts may be valid, the differences are not so neat or clear-cut in practice. It is fair to say that all identity conflicts contain interest conflicts; not all interest conflicts contain identity conflicts. Conflicts that start primarily as interest-based, when ignored or poorly handled may evolve into identity conflicts; the longer a conflict continues, the more people connect their dignity and prestige with the dispute. Conversely, identity conflicts addressed as if they were primarily about resources may grow from bad to worse. Given the natural human disposition for the concrete and measurable, identity conflicts often are misidentified as resource-based disputes and approached inappropriately.