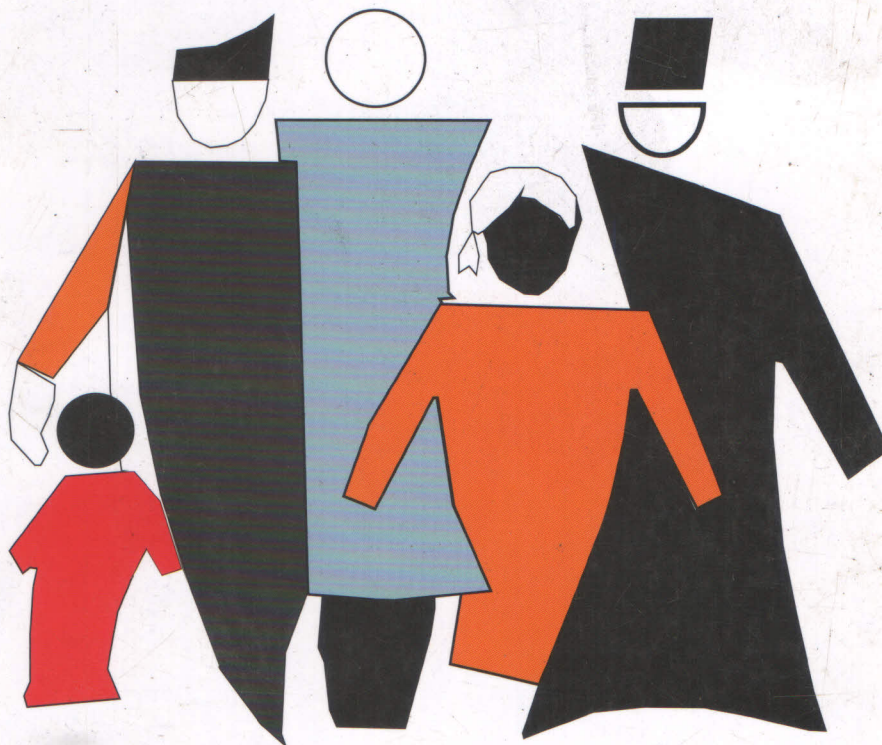


Foundations of the Social Sciences



Edited by

**Ilufeye S. Ogundiya
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Ilufoye S. Ogundiya & Jimoh Amzat

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Chapter 4

Introduction to conflict studies

- Gbemisola Abdul-Jelil Animasawun

Introduction

As a social problem, the manifestation of conflict, especially violent ones often leaves many wondering on its seeming incomprehensibility, taming, management, resolution and transformation. However, unlike peace, its presence is often too apparent to ignore which explains why individuals and states react to it hastily and making interventions that worsen the situation rather than ameliorating it. Ranging from individuals to states and the inter-state levels, conflict has proven to be Janus-faced. This is so because it can bring about development and improvement in relationships just as it can be the strongest force militating against peace, development and security. Therefore, studying conflict becomes apposite not only for nation-states but also at the level of individuals because it cannot be wished away. The inevitability of conflict and its complex manifestations have made it possible to study it from different perspectives because it manifests in different social and spatial contexts.

The study of conflict is not ahistorical. As pointed out by Williams (2006), interests in conflict span the entire length and breadth of social and political thinking. This is evident in the landmark works like Max Weber's idea of *Class, Status and Power* which identified the three as central causalities in the occurrence of conflict and the Karl Marx's concept of *Class Antagonism, Alienation*, and the desirability of *Ideological Revolution* including the Lewis Coser's assertion that linked conflict and violence to scarcity. Other scholars have illuminated in varying degrees on the problem of conflict and violence sometimes without making a water-tight distinction between the two while some have made focal examinations and interpretations of the two concepts.

Erudite scholars such as Robert North, Hannah Arendt, Frantz Fanon and Francis Deng have examined conflict in its revolutionary and ideological contexts within the relationship of oppressed and the oppressor with the assertion that it is inevitable if the emancipation of the oppressed will take place. Others like William Zartman, Johan Galtung, Anthony Giddens, George Simmel, Kurt Lewin and Morton Deutsch have all provided analysis and explanations of on how to understand, manage, resolve and transform conflict. Also, the Cold War and post-Cold War years have broadened interests in the study of conflict with an attendant shift from international conflicts to intra-state conflicts. This shift has precipitated broader interests in the field with the emergence of Centres and Departments in Universities across the continent devoted to the training of students in the area. While keeping pace with the trajectory and

teleology of the field presents a challenging but interesting task, intellectual engagement of the topic can never be over-emphasized.

This chapter presents an overview of assumptions and interpretations of conflict; popular conceptions of handling conflict; theories and theorists; a philosophical delineation of violence, crisis and conflict; types and causes and tools of analysis. The essence is to stimulate the appetite of the readers towards further exploration of the concept as a social and intellectual problematic in order to broaden contributions to the field. As a step towards easy comprehension of the sub-sections in this chapter, it is important to explain such terms like discourse, concept and theory this is because they constitute the lines along which conflict is presented in this chapter.

Concept, theory and discourse

A *theory* is taken as an effort to make an aspect of reality clear. A *discourse* is a specialist register used in describing the world in a particular way that permits certain claims to the truth in a bid to justify certain forms of actions. In depicting the world, discourses deliberately ignore the existence of certain aspects of reality. Barnett (2001) observed that a neoliberal discourse typically fails to acknowledge some causes of poverty and constructs their own truths. A *concept* helps to explain, classify, and arrange thoughts even in theories and discourses. Despite having their meanings, concepts have competing interpretations. Barnett (2001) cited concepts like security, justice, freedom and democracy as subjects of considerable debates. Argyris *et al.* (1990) made a distinction between *theories-in-use* and *espoused theories*. *Theories-in-use* are those theories we apply in our day-to-day activities such as those used in child rearing. For example, "if you don't stop, you will be punished" intended to serve as deterrence. Such theories are taken without any accompanying articulation. *Espoused theories* are those that are articulated, for example, "Children ought to be given an opportunity to describe the reasons for their actions" may be taken as a theoretical statement of how children should be brought up.

Fundamentally, a theory serves as a road map for research and this is not different in conflict studies. Tidwell (2003) described a theory as a tentative explanation how to move from one point of research to another. For the student of conflict studies, theories serve as a continuous check guiding and preventing the researcher from derailing and staying within her/his defined track of research focus.

Anatomy of conflict and crisis: danger and opportunity

It is important and will be instructive to understand the internal composition of what a conflict is. Galtung (1996) inform that within every conflict lies a contradiction that is inhibiting something else or simply put a problem. Such a problem becomes a danger, especially when it is resistant to solution or change. For example, I want something urgently just the way somebody needs it, this is what constitutes the *conflict atoms* or *conflict formations* (Galtung 1996:70). Pruitt and Kim (2004) explained the difficulties of simultaneously meeting clashing needs as the essential element of conflict. Galtung (1996:70) used this as a parameter for distinguishing between *dispute* from *dilemma*. Dispute meaning: "two persons or actors pursuing the same scarce goal" and dilemma referring to: "one person or actor pursuing two incompatible goals." In resolving these two cases, there are two likely options. These are making efforts to harm the other that is, *Other-destruction* in the case of a dispute

and *Self-destruction* that is, denying something in oneself in the case of a *dilemma* (Galtung 1996).

In another vein, Burton (1997) made a distinction between *conflict* and *dispute*. Burton explained conflict as a serious challenge to prevailing norms, relationships and rules of decision making. Dispute entails management of issues and control of discontent arising from the implementation of specific policies. In this context, it encompasses responses to unfair or unjust authoritative decisions. Jeong (2008:7) defined conflict in very broad terms as:

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

Another component of conflict is energy but the age-old problem with this has been how to constructively channel the energy generated. However, a cue can be taken from the definition of crisis within the context of Chinese civilization. The classical Chinese definition of crisis is that it comprises *danger* and *opportunity*. Danger is interpreted synonymously with violence while *opportunity* is the challenge the situation presents for creation and making positive change. The preceding point to the fact that a conflict has both positive and negative potentials especially before it degenerates into physical violence. Also, it shows that conflict can occur within one individual as well between the individual and others outside the human body. This calls for a distinction between societal or social conflict and conflicts that are restricted to the one body.

Causes and types

Given that conflict dates back to the inception of human history and may probably never end; therefore, the continued survival of human species will depend largely on its shrewd handling. This will, however, depend on how well we understand the causes of these conflicts. Jeong (2008) asserted that the causes of conflicts are not limited to tangible economic matters alone but also include value and identity differences. Albert (2001: 4-5) provided a snapshot of the main causes of conflicts in both local and international contexts:

The sources of...conflicts include competition for inadequate or perceived to be inadequate resources, resources going beyond financial or physical wealth, to encompass different ramifications of power. Within this framework groups competing for political power are said to be involved in resource-based conflicts, valued-based conflicts as a result of contradicting value systems, disparity in religion, ideology, and general worldview. The psychological needs of groups and individuals may also generate conflicts in communities...the way information is circulated in a community could either cause conflict or build peace. Where information is used to stir up negative emotions, the result is destructive conflict.

Therefore the basic causes are resources, clashing values, communication and psychological needs of individuals and groups. While these four categories house the main causes of conflicts, other ancillary causes include but not limited to what Adebani (2004: 330-331) considered as the most contributory causes of communal violence and these are ethnic conflicts, hatred, discrimination and oppression; religious and ideological conflicts, hatred, discrimination and oppression; socio-economic relative deprivation; perceived political inequalities, infringement on rights, injustice or oppression; lack of adequate channels for peaceful communication of protests, grievances and demands (e.g. denial of franchise or other rights participation, representation or access to media); existence of a tradition of violence, disaffection and popular turbulence; weakness and ineptness of government, police and judicial organs (e.g. under-reaction, over-reaction).

Furthermore, conflicts can also be categorized as either *destructive* and *constructive* conflicts or *functional* and *dysfunctional* conflicts. A *destructive* conflict defined and sustained by escalatory spirals leading to self-perpetuating destructions resulting from heavy reliance on threats and coercion. The means of expressing destructive conflicts is usually physical violence and its intents are to cause harm and to dehumanize the other parties in conflict (Kellet and Dalton 2001). Jeong (2008) posited that such conflicts have very high potentials for aimless violence, deception and power manipulation. *Constructive* or *functional* conflicts on the other hand, are those ones which are not harmful and also produce positive changes in societies and relationships. Jeong (2008) argued that if the outcomes of such conflicts produce not only apologies but also positive changes, compensation for past abuses, future prevention of victimization; then such conflicts qualifies as *constructive* or *functional* conflicts. However, the way a conflict is approached and expressed substantially determines if it will eventually turn out to be *constructive* or *destructive*.

Management choices: prevention, settlement, resolution and transformation

The term conflict management in this piece is taken as an umbrella caption to encompass under which choices made by parties and interveners in conflict are placed. Therefore, management in this context is normatively used without any conceptual or definitional particularities. In responding to conflicts individuals and states take some known approaches intended to arrive at certain ends which serve immediate, short and long-term purposes. The choice(s) made are often influenced by the resources, time and intent of the intervening parties and the parties involved. These concepts are conflict prevention; conflict settlement; conflict management; conflict resolution and conflict transformation. As defined by Lund (2002:17) conflict prevention is inclusive of:

...any structural or intercessory means to keep intra-state or inter-state tensions and disputes from escalating into significant violence and use of armed forces, to strengthen the capabilities of potential parties to violent conflict for resolving such disputes peacefully and to progressively reduce the underlying problems that produce these issues and disputes.

Historically, the concept dates back to the Vienna Conference of 1815 (Ackermann 2003) where nation-states decided to prevent the emergence of another Napoleon. Specific measures put in place include: mutual consultations, setting up of neutral states; peaceful settlement of conflicts and balance of power. Also, since its emergence, the United Nations Organization (UNO) has played a pivotal role in preventing the occurrence of armed conflicts around the world although constrained in some instances. The current UN charter in Chapter VI and VII empowers the Security Council, Secretary General and General Assembly to settle conflicts peacefully and to prevent the outbreak of wars and other forms of armed confrontations. Chapter VI contains provisions such as negotiation, fact-finding, mediation, conciliation, judicial settlement and arbitration all of which activated when the need arises in order to prevent wars or armed conflicts. Ackermann (2003) also identified Preventive Diplomacy made popular in 1960 by Dag Hammarskjöld who was then the UN Secretary-General as another bold attempt to prevent conflicts and wars during the Cold War years. In 1992 Boutros Ghali redefined Preventive Diplomacy in the post-Cold War context as a policy targeted at the prevention of conflict emergence and escalation based on 5 approaches: confidence building; fact-finding missions; early-warning networks; preventive deployment and demilitarised zones. As the scribe of the UN, Kofi Annan emphasized and pursued a shift from the *culture of reaction* to a *culture of prevention*.

Conflict settlement refers to all responses intended to bring about an immediate end to direct violence without dealing with the underlying causes. This approach stems from an ideological mind-set that views conflict as problem of the political order defined by violent competition for scarce political gains (Zartman 1995). In conducting conflict settlement the actors who are often military, political and religious leaders operate guided by rational choice or games theory. Typically, parties pursuing conflict settlement ensure they clarify contextual realities with emphasis on the separation of interests from positions: positions being superficial standpoints while interests refer to long-term stakes of the parties involved (Reimann N.D). The instruments used include: good offices, fact-finding missions, facilitation, negotiation and mediation.

Conflict resolution encompasses all actions geared towards addressing all underlying direct, cultural and structural violence. As explained by Burton (1990), it is aimed at removing the violent and destructive manifestations of conflict that are traceable to unmet needs and fears of the actors. Heitler (1990:2-3) defined it as situation that results when: "only when both sides share a willingness to pursue mutually optimal solutions." Tidwell (2003) shed light on the process as one characterized by talk and cooperation between the parties which often has a therapeutic effect, especially in cases of inter-personal conflicts. Burton (1990:2-3) defined conflict resolution as: "the transformation of relationships in a particular case by the solution of the problems which led to the conflictual behaviour in the first place."

Conflict transformation refers to all actions targeted towards surmounting all revealed forms of direct, cultural and structural violence. The leading scholars on the subject are Johan Galtung and Paul Lederach. Another leading exponent of conflict transformation is Gandhi through his much celebrated thesis of non-violence transformation. As a concept and process, it transcends the foci of the previous

approaches found in settlement, prevention and resolution and engenders the promotion of *cooperative relationships*. Heitler (1990:2-3) Conflict aims to address the fears and needs of the parties through a change from negative to positive attitudes as basis for promoting communication and cooperation amongst or between parties involved. Reimann (N.D) explains that in cases of social conflicts, conflict transformation seeks to empower and accord due recognition to underprivileged groups as a means of enthroning social justice.

Discourses on conflict

This has, however, produced different schools of thought and opinions which try to offer explanations of how to understand conflicts. Irrespective of civilizational or religious differences, conflict is interpreted in negative terms. Associated with the concept are fight, death, war and combat. An equally challenging task is getting a precise depiction and definition of what constitutes conflict and the limits of such. This obscurity often predisposes the linking of conflict with violence, especially in terms of manifestation. If we take physical exchanges between two people as conflict; do we equate same with hot verbal exchanges between two people? Tidwell (2003) posited that definitions of conflict can be grouped into two categories. The first are those who explain conflict as mainly subjective with focus on human actors involved. The two are described as subjectivists and objectivists schools of conflict. The other category places much emphasis on external and manifest feature of conflict or the social cum behavioural aspect of conflict. Also, there are different perspectives on the explanations of conflict as human behaviour. In this context, there are the *inherency*, *contingency* and *interactionist* perspectives (Tidwell 2003).

The debate between the objectivists and subjectivists can be seen as a debate between structure and agency as the more preponderant in explaining the cause of violent conflict. The *objectivists* describe conflict as existing the moment parties have a perception of incompatible goals and the feeling that the other party might constraint them in the achievement of such a goal. Gorman (2011) explained that the *objectivist* highlights the role institutions and systems as underlying the occurrence of violent conflicts. Galtung (1990:10) equated this to *structural violence*: "that which increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance." This speaks to the rigidity of social structures that hinder the emancipation of the oppressed which often makes violence attractive to the oppressed thereby leading to social conflicts. Schmid (1968: 226) illustrated this with the example of a social structure that offers the loss of one class to the other as its gain. Examples of such include slavery, sexism and caste systems which the objectivists identify as conditions which must be present for (violent) conflict to break out. This puts Class theorists in the fold of the *objectivists* which confers a prime place to Karl Marx in this context. While those dominated may not always enter into conflicts with those dominating them perhaps due to what Karl Marx describes as a false consciousness, it still does not foreclose the existence of a conflict in the thinking of the objectivists.

The *subjectivists* thinking of conflict is defined by an empirical animation of hostilities between the parties involved after the parties must have expressed incompatibilities in their goals and pursuit of same. Gorman (2011) illustrated this with the example of protests by workers for better pay and improvement in conditions

of service. In this context, there is expressed incompatibility of goals by the two parties which is expressed and manifest.

The third debate is in the context of a political-economy explanation of the cause of violent conflict also known as the greed-grievance explanation of conflict. This is a leading explanation in the relationship between development and conflict. According to Gorman (2011) its main variable of explanation is poverty based on its causation and implication in the cause and course of wars and violent conflicts. However, Paul Collier the leading theorist in this school draws attention to its limitations. This is because it focuses mainly on conflict from the perspective of an economist. Collier (2005) observed that many economists who have studied conflicts and rebellion consider them as the manifestation of organized crime. In the same vein Grossman (1999: 269) argued that "in such insurrections the insurgents are indistinguishable from bandits or pirates." Collier (2005) claimed that the economists perceive rebel movements or militias as insurgents who are conscious of the need to craft their actions as motivated by grievance in order to have international sympathy and to motivate their members so that they have something to fight and die for. So to an economist, a grievance is a conscious narrative or discourse generated based on conjured or objective grounds. The economists assert that the predictability of violent conflict depends on the feasibility and risk of predation which plays down the role of grievance either genuine or conjured.

In further appreciation of theories of conflict, Tidwell (2003) proposed their compartmentalization into functional, situational and interactive schools. The *functionalists* seek to answer the question on the social function of conflict; the *situationalists* explores the conditions that give rise to it and the interactionists attempt how conflicts are expressed including the methods and mechanisms of expressing it.

George Simmel the German sociologist can be arguably presented as a leading light in the functionalists school of conflict. He defined conflict as that which is: "designed to resolve divergent dualisms; it is a way of achieving some kind of unity even if it be through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties" (Simmel 1955:13). This definition of conflict cannot be described as serving a positive social function although it seemingly brings about order and stability in such climes. Coser (1957:197) presented conflict as: "the clash of values and interests, the tension between what is and what some groups feel ought to be." This serves a positive function because in the process, there can be development in the society through the exploration of new ways of doing things. It can facilitate the evolution or establishment of new institutions, technology and economic systems which make conflict useful as an agent or catalyst of progress in the society. Sharing this view, Tidwell (2003) claimed that conflict is a precursor to required changes in the society.

Coming from a situationalist perspective, Bercovitch (1984:6) defined conflict as a: "situation which generates incompatible goals or values among different parties." This definition is dependent on specific situations and time (personal, social, environmental or political). For scholars in this school, conflicts will arise based on the presence or absence of certain variables and time. This thinking is captured in the thesis of structural violence by Johan Galtung. This is because the presence of certain practices like sexism, slavery and caste system will most likely trigger reactions from people domiciled in such systems.

The *communication interactionists* defined conflict as: "the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals" (Folger *et al.* 1993:4). Two key words in this context are *interdependence* and *perception*. Tidwell (2003:34) explained interdependence as: situations where one party's future actions are dependent upon another party's actions, and *vice versa*." Tillet (1991:8) shed light on the role of perception in precipitating conflict: "Conflict does not only come about when values or needs are actually, objectively incompatible, or when conflict is manifested in action; it exists when one of the parties *perceives* it to exist."

Theories of conflict

Studying conflicts requires a firm grasp of its different theoretical explanations by different theorists. Way back to the nineteenth century, different scholars have espoused diverse views of conflict. Amongst the leading thinkers on the subject of conflict was Karl Marx who took profound interests in the problem of class conflict. This sub-section of the work is not meant to present all the scholars or theoreticians on conflict but to present those whose views have had strong impact on its understanding and management.

George Simmel's work titled *Conflict* (1955) provides an insight into theories of conflict by studying the role of the individual in small groups as well as role of small groups in a larger whole. From this point of view, conflicts serve both integrating and divisive functions in the society. Simmel posited that there is an innate desire for sympathy and hostility within man. According to Simmel (1955:15):

Just as the universe needs *love* and *hate*, that is, attractive and repulsive forces, in order to have any form at all, so society too, in order to attain a determinate shape needs, needs some quantitative ratio of harmony and disharmony, of association and competition, of favourable and unfavourable tendencies.

The above implies the positive and negative realities of conflict which in the opinion of Simmel serves a desirable positive function in the society. Conflicts are likely to end up in three ways and these are: victory, compromise or conciliation. However, the likelihood of any of these outcomes depends on a number of factors such as the relationship of the parties, the character of the parties, the powers within their disposal and the issues in conflict.

Lewis Coser an American sociologist presented his own idea of social conflict and shares the views of Simmel about the social function of conflict. His ideas of conflict were presented in his influential work entitled *The Functions of Social Conflict* published in 1956.

According to Coser (1968: 47-48):

Conflict is not always dysfunctional for the relationship within which it occurs; often conflict is necessary to maintain such a relationship. Without ways to vent hostility toward each other, and to end express dissent, group members might feel completely crushed and might react by withdrawal. By setting free pent-up feelings of hostility, conflicts serve to maintain a relationship.

In highlighting the positive social functions of conflict, Coser (1968:48) argued that:

Conflict not only generates new norms, new institutions...it may be said to be stimulating directly in the economic and technological realm. Economic historians often have pointed out that much technological improvement has resulted from the conflict activity of trade unions through the raising of wage levels.

It should be pointed out that the social functions of a conflict are largely determined by the way it is expressed and handled by parties concerned. Tidwell (2003) observed that the most outstanding contribution of Coser to the study of conflict is visible in the fact that he directs the mind of the researcher to the functional and dysfunctional roles conflict can serve in the society. Comparatively, the views of Simmel and Coser represent a continuum because they both dwell on the social functions of a conflict which in itself is a departure from the common notion of conflict as something to be wished away and avoided.

Kurt Lewin was a German-born American academic who wrote extensively on conflict in the first-half of twentieth century. He enunciated the field theory as a method of: "analysing and causal relations and building scientific constructs." (Lippit 1968:226). The main features of the Lewin's field theory were: psychological explanations of behaviour, consideration of the total situation, systemic causation instead of historical and an approach characterized by dynamics. Allport (1997) points at the introduction of a unique way of studying the interdependence between the individual and the group through the use of certain concepts as the uniqueness of Lewin's approach in understanding man's behaviour in conflict.

One of such concept is the idea of life space consisting of the psychological environment and the individual. This is instructive in understanding how the psychological environment affects the conflict behaviour of the individual which also enables predictions to be made about the likely behaviour of the individual. Another area of focus identified by Lewin is the relationship between the satisfaction of needs and expression of conflicts. Lewin (1997:71) argued that:

whether or not a particular event will lead to a conflict depends on largely on the tension level or on the social atmosphere in the group...a need in the state of hunger means not only that a particular region within the person is under tension but also that the person as a whole is on a higher tension level. This holds particularly for basic needs, such as sex or security.

Through the above, the conflict-precipitating potentials of unmet needs of the individual is brought to the fore.

Morton Deutsch, an American social psychologist is popular for its seminal work that dwells on how to make conflict productive. He differentiates between *constructive* and *destructive* conflicts. Deutsch identifies uncontrolled escalation as a defining feature of a destructive conflict while a constructive conflict is defined by a constrained or regulated expression. There are three main determinants of conflict in

the views of Deutch. These are contact and visibility of differences, perceived incompatibility and perceived utility of conflict (Tidwell 2003).

John Burton, former Secretary of the Australian Department of External Affairs has done extensive work on conflict. Remarkably, Burton prefers an analytical problem-solving approach to the age-old system of power bargaining. It is also worthy of note that Burton differentiates *needs* from *interests* in analysing conflict behaviour. *Needs* in his context are basic human requirements for the sustainability of life and most of the works on human needs in conflict studies have their roots in Maslow, Sites and Burton (Tidwell 2003). In rejecting the system of power bargaining, Burton posited that conflict becomes inevitable because institutions are designed with a mind-set of power and not for the purpose of meeting needs.

While criticisms against these theorists abound, it is evident that most of these theorists have demonstrated reasoned and broad explanations of conflict that transcends the obvious to the more intricate issues in understanding the conflict causes and behaviour of man in conflict.

Theories of conflict: inherency, contingency and interactionist

The dominant theories of the reason for conflict, especially violent ones are captured in these three compartments: inherency, contingency and interactionists approaches. They also speak to the unending debate between nature and nurture in comprehending predisposition of man to violent conflicts.

The inherency theory is squarely located in the thinking of Thomas Hobbes and perhaps this explains why violence or violent conflict is also referred to as the Hobbesian problem of order. Hobbes (1974) explained that humanity is characterized by unquenchable and relentless thirst for power and resides within a human body that has an inherent inclination to fight thereby warranting that societies be led by power. Edmund Burke a British rhetorician and politician also shared this view asserting that man is naturally conflictual. In maintaining law and order, the duo affirmed the centrality of a superior power, law and order. This Hobbesian interpretation that conflict and strife are part of human nature where life is nasty, brutish and short and where, in the absence of strong rule, humanity will descend into a state of war is a philosophy that persists, especially in international debates on the character of war and how best to avert conflict and consolidate peace (Gorman 2011).

Till date, Sigmund Freud retains his prime position as a leading psycho-analyst in explaining the inherency of the instinct to be violent in man. This is illustrated by the presence of the instinct of life and death in man. The *libido* typifies the life energy in man while *thanatos* illustrates the death instinct (Freud 1990). Hall (1954:100) explained the Freudian concept thus:

"By taking aggressive action a person protects himself from being injured or destroyed by his enemies. Aggression also helps to overcome barriers that stand in his way of the satisfaction of his needs." Therefore, by directing energy at an external object, the actor in such circumstance is engaged in the preservation of his life. It can, therefore, be argued that aggression is intrinsic to man and essential for the protection and enhancement of existence. Thus, aggression from the perspective of Freud is carried out by man for self-preservation.

In the context of a struggle for scarce resource, David (1980:29) defined aggression as: "a tendency to engage in hostile and intentionally destructive acts." This speaks to the instrumentality of aggression for individual and group preservation. Also, it explains the innate and evolutionary nature of aggression as defined by Wilson (1975: 248-249) that: aggression is genetic in the sense...that its components have proved to have high degree heritability and are therefore, subject to human evolution." Gorman (2011) traced this as the origin of the work of Konrad Lorenz who studied the behavioural pattern of aggression in animals where conflict is used as part of the process of natural selection - survival of the fittest.

In broadening the scope of the explanations of what drives man to violence, Konrad Lorenz authored a book titled: *On Aggression* in 1963. The thrust of the book focuses on the evolutionary and biologically competitive nature of human aggression and conflict. Lorenz contends that aggression serves three main functions and these are: "balanced distribution of population of animals of the same species over the available environment, selection of the strongest by rival fights and defence of the young" (Lorenz 1971:40). Going by this model, then all social actions of man is aimed at these three. Lorenz considers warfare as an inherent mode of aggression in man going by his assertion that: "we must face the fact that militant enthusiasm has evolved from the hackle-raising and chin-protruding communal defence instinct of our pre-human ancestors." (Lorenz 1971:275).

In a similar vein, Robert Ardrey reinforces the centrality of territoriality and territory in constituting a basis for aggressive behaviour by man. In this context, aggression does benefit the group more than the individual. Ardrey (1967) argued that the urge to defend one's territory leads humans to increase their resources and activities while putting themselves in mortal danger all informed by the conviction to defend their territory. Aggrey like Lorenz argued that all of these are possible because man has no control over its instincts of aggression, especially in conflict situations. The thesis of Ardrey's work provides insight into militancy and bestiality that characterize conflicts woven around ethno-religious conflicts and wars of irredentism. Webb (1986) quoted in Tidwell (2003:48) presented an outline of the basic features of the inherency theory:

The fundamental disposition of individuals is towards power and dominance; violence is only an extreme but normal expression of this tendency; there are affirmative channels for seeking power, of which collective political violence is merely one...the choice of violence is a question of tactical consideration; tactical choices are influenced by cost-benefit calculations; cultural factors play a relatively minor role, and will both inhibit and promote the use of violence...

There is also the cultural inherency theory of conflict. The repository of this is found in nationalism and claims of identity tied to territory. This has found renewed expression, especially in the idea of nationalism and ethnicity since the end of the Cold War when sub-Saharan Africa became the poster of horrendous forms of ethnic cleansing and barbarism. The bestiality of conflicts within the continent gave vent to the idea of *trusteeship* in the quarters of liberal interventionists (Gorman 2011). *Trusteeship* entails the taking over of ungovernable countries and placing them under international control due to their inability to manage their affairs (Cooper 2003).

In terms of location of inherency, ethnicity provides one of such locations and the role of identity (de)construction cannot be ignored. In this context the emergence of *We* versus *them* becomes the basis of defining who is a member of the group and who is not. The continuous process taken by this (re)definition underscores the assertion of Anderson (1991) that identities including national ones are made, remade and produced through various processes to create *imagine societies* to which people stick to. This aligns with the view that identity is a social process of constant (re)creation and reproduction and has become the basis of self-identification.

At the international level, Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations provides another location for the inherency of conflicts. Huntington (1993) claimed that with the end of the Cold War, international conflict will not break out over clashes related to kingdoms, state and ideologies but clash of civilization or identities will be the most salient factor in explaining the causes of conflict. The most telling example of this is the clash between Islam and globalization as led by the United States. In arriving at this assertion, Huntington (1993:35) predicted the inevitability of a *clash of civilizations* given the bloody borders of Islam and Western policies and positioning on global issues. This *clash of civilizations* influenced the neo-conservative responses from the US against the attacks of 9/11 and constructed Islam as warlike, fundamentalist and aggressive. However, this reductionist interpretation has been countered by Jacoby (2008) who analysed different contexts of militant political Islam and posits that instead of generalizing, each situation should be analysed in its context.

Contingency theory

The earliest mention of the contingency argument can be found in the works of French thinker Jean Jacques Rousseau. In a departure from Hobbes' state of nature Rousseau perceived humanity as having transited from a state of nature to that of society and social intercourse (Germino 1972). In addition to man's innate desire for self-preservation as the motivation for aggression, Rousseau also identified man's insuppressible need for compassion which ameliorates the instinct of raw aggression and warfare in Hobbes' perception. Similarly, Karl Marx can be seen to have built upon Rousseau's contingency theory in postulating class conflict. Karl Marx argued that the organization of work separated humans from their true nature. Tidwell (2003) observed that one of the striking contributions of Karl Marx has been his analysis of the role of economic and social organization and their collective effect on human behaviour. John Maynard Keynes argued that based on social problems like hunger, unemployment and disease all of which human can react to differently including violent reactions. Sigmund Freud also led amongst the scholars who have expatiated this hypothesis. It is premised on the argument that aggression is the consequence of frustration and the frustration precipitates aggression which may sometimes be misplaced or misdirected. In this context, aggression is not taken as innate but its potential is presented as latent in all humans.

This is in contradistinction to the inherency theory because its occurrence depends on factors outside the human body. Webb (1986:172) explained that: "(violent) conflict may occur through a scarcity of and competition for resources, or through maldistribution of ample resources but it may not be a necessary condition of human societies that these conditions pertain." This implies that violent conflict may not

occur in all countries or communities where there is scarcity and maldistribution of resources. This is why it is also known as the *grievance* or *frustration-aggression* theory.

Gorman (2011) pointed out that the expression of aggression requires certain cues; anger and weapons. Apart from frustration, other precipitants of aggression are vengeance and pain. It can also be instrumental. Ted Gurr introduced the theory of *relative deprivation* in his work titled *Why Men Revolt* published in 1970. The thrust of his argument centred on the causality of violence by rising expectations not being met which creates *want-get* disparity. Gorman (2011) explains that increasing expectations is accompanied by a sense of comparison by individuals and groups of compare themselves with others around them and use that as a basis for measuring how well off they are. The outcome of their comparison often determines whether they will react and how they will react.

Bangura (1973) also put forward three sources of aggression. These are: familial environments, (sub)cultural contexts and symbolic modelling. The thrust of Bangura's argument is that social learning starts from the family from where develop models of right or wrong behaviour. Based on this, it can be asserted that violent families will raise violent children. Subcultures also serve as sources of aggression learning. Bangura (1970:97) claimed that: "The highest rates of aggressive behaviour are found in environments where aggressive models abound and where aggressiveness is regarded as highly valued attribute." The third source in Bangura's thinking is the symbolic source. The television leads amongst the symbolic sources of modelling for aggressive behaviour. This is particularly true to a large extent amongst the youths in the society. In summary, the contingency theory holds that conflict and violence are determined by factors that are exogenous to the human body. The basic assumptions of the contingency theory as captured by Webb (1986) quoted in Tidwell (2003:55) are that:

Individuals are basically pacific; under special conditions the pacific impulses may be diverted; the major problem for conflict theory is to explain the frequency of violence; when special conditions arise, other human dispositions may be activated; collective violence is affected rather than coolly calculated; the tendency for violence may be affected by cultural learning...minor factors affecting the use of violence are coercive balance between forces and other factors facilitating the successful use of violence.

Interactionist theories

The interactionist theory of conflict combines elements of both the contingent and inherency schools. In the opinion of Tidwell (2003), the peculiarity of the interactionist theory of conflict can be best appreciated with an illustration that examines height. For example, a lanky person is so in relative to others based on two influences. One of these is genetics and the other is social factor which ties with the availability of high-protein foodstuffs. Drawing analogy from the increasing heights of Japanese, Tidwell (2003: 56) explained that:

Citizens of Japan are now increasing in average height, owing to change in diet. It was not that the Japanese are genetically short, but rather that

their diet inhibited the full expression of their genes for height. So, the height of the Japanese (everybody else for that matter) is governed by the interplay between genetic makeup and social environment.

The above shows the conflation of the inherency and contingency theories in the interactionist theory. Burton (1990) argued that human needs are both biological and social therefore, in analysing how human beings strive to meet these needs it will be important to consider both biological (inherency) and social (contingent) variables. The interplay between the two is illustrated by Burton (1990: 36): "from the perspective of conflict studies, the important observation is that these needs will be pursued by all means available. In ontological terms, the individual is conditioned by biology or by a primordial influence to pursue them." This underscores the fact that even needs that are endogenous have to be met exogenously in an affirmation of the social context of human existence. The main assumptions of the interactionist school are that:

Individuals are often pacific, but violence is as such is not aberrant; conflict is one, but not the only response, to unmet needs; human behaviour varies enormously, with impulses that are often not clear; collective violence may be either reactionary or coolly calculated; the tendency to violence may be affected by cultural learning, tempered by inherent impulses.

The interactionists can therefore, be seen as providing room for the explanations of violent conflicts in a way that accommodates both the inherency and contingency.

Conclusion

This work represents a modest attempt to acquaint readers with the basics or fundamentals of conflict studies as a genre of academic discipline. It presents the evolution of the concept and the contributions of leading scholars on the subject. The chapter engages the main theoretical standpoints, discourses and management concepts all aimed at stimulating the reader's interest into further reading. This is particularly useful for the social scientists whose main concern and quest is the comprehension of understanding the motivations and rationale for human actions and the implications of choices made and choices not.

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Chapter 5

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