

The Origin of Conflicts

(Presented at International Inter-religious Federation for World Peace 'IIFWP' Conference)

April 8, 2006, Edinburgh, Scotland

By Denboba K. Natie

I. Introduction

Conflict, as its name denotes, is complex and confusing. It is multi-dimensional and difficult to understand as it entails different meaning for different people with varying interpretations. Given the vastness of the subject, this presentation may invite partial satisfaction although I believe that, it stimulates the participant and by doing so, to help them to bring their immense experiences and expertise from all walks of lives. Thus, I shall briefly address some of the core issues that are believed to be the origins of conflicts based on information I grasped, and from points of personal experiences. Above all, ongoing global debates give one great understanding about the nature and magnitude of conflicts in today's sophisticatedly globalised world. My presentation, therefore, will focus mostly on stimulating discussions and instigating thoughts among the participants by creating debates in this subject that helps us to produce some thing concrete for our global peace initiatives.

II. Definition

Before I briefly look into the Origin of the Conflict with some practical examples, it will be worthwhile to see how conflict is defined. It's defined as "Serious Disagreement, Argument, Differences of Opinions and Wishes between 'A' and 'B'; and it can be defined as to be very different or in opposition, 'with' A and B", (Advanced Oxford English Dictionary, 1995). According to different sources' definitions, 'Conflict is a state of opposition, disagreement, or incompatibility between two or more people; two different ethnic groups or countries; which most of the times characterised by physical violence with subsequent deaths and destruction. Others define a conflict as 'an open clash between two opposing groups or individuals; an opposition between two simultaneous, but incompatible feelings; a state of opposition between persons or ideas or interests' and others.

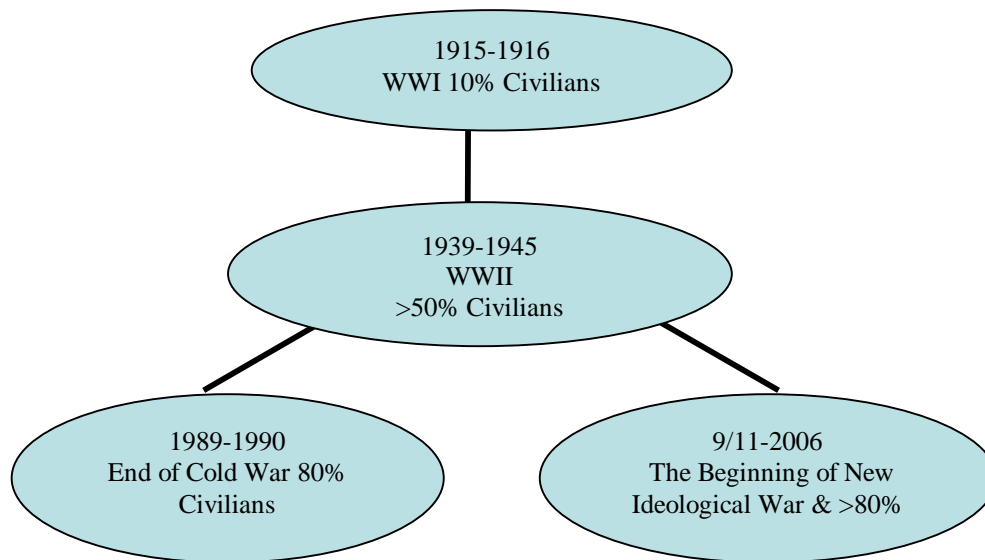
III. An Overview of the Origins of Conflict

The above definitions give one an insight why and how conflicts occur. It clearly shows that there must be two incompatible and conflicting feelings or ideas in its subjects for the conflict to occur. When such incompatible ideas reach to irreconcilable stage, the so called conflict takes its shape. Primarily minor conflicts take parts that always erupt to major ones if left unresolved. The underlying causes of major conflicts are minor conflicts that emanate from one person, groups, society or country for variety of reasons. Any conflict in any part of the globe can explain that there are unmet needs that causes discontents. Ones' desire to galvanise power and prestige by using

conflicts as a strategy is also another way of igniting conflicts. The following countries are where conflicts took and are taking place in various forms and intensities for variety of reasons.

From Northern Ireland, the Basque Country, Cyprus, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Turkey, Chechnya, Azerbaijan from Europe; Israel-Palestinians lingering conflicts, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and other tensions that might erupt at any time in the middle east; Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka and others in South Asia; Burma, Tibet, Chinese Xingjian, Fiji, the southern Philippines, Various islands of Indonesia, in south and far east; Bolivia, Peru, Mexico, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and others in Latin American, and endless conflicts in African nation such as; The Sudan, Somalia, Senegal, Uganda, Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and in other many nations, conflicts are parts of daily lives, (M. Mann, 2005).

According to numerous literatures, there are 4 significant historical eras in the world in terms of political and socio-economic turmoil that had happened and are happening to date within and between countries leading to major conflicts and great losses of lives. In particular, such conflicts became more pervasive since the past millennium, 1880s, that paved a way for subsequent WWI that claimed significant numbers of lives. The following diagram illustrates these periods of times by their chronological orders:-



Duri

During these historical junctures of the 20th and 21st century, the death tolls due to conflicts amounted somewhere 70million. During the said periods of global upheavals, various forms of discontents that lingered to date to further the sufferings of human races in most parts of the world where religious and ethnic tensions played their respective roles become ongoing phenomenon. The Palestinians and Israel endless conflicts makes sensible examples for post WWII's endless rows. Hundreds and thousands of civilians have lost and are losing their precious lives. Civilians death accounted 10% in the WWI, whereas over the half casualties were civilians during WWII. Shockingly, the figure of civilians' casualties due to various conflicts rocketed to more than 80% since the end of cold war of two antagonistic ideologies of the west and east blocks, 1990s.

During these all global catastrophes, the nature and origins of Conflicts are both multidimensional and complicated. All conflicts have got their own origins; be it justifiable or an unjustifiable. Basically, no conflicts can be justified. All conflicts inflict great harms of various magnitudes on mans' psycho-emotional, politico-cultural and spiritual lives and further cause an incalculable damage to the nature. That is why we practically see on daily bases while a conflict replicates

another form of conflict that ends up causing major regional and global instability. This presentation is solely an attempt of addressing the most prominent ones.

Philosophically, Conflict is more and a common aspect of social lives; be it in a traditional society or the opposite. It can be seen as an inevitable part of life. In today's troubled world, the amount of lives lost just within this minute, while I'm standing in front of you, due to ongoing conflicts will be beyond comprehension. The depth, magnitude and intensity of sufferings that innocent civilians in most parts of the world are receiving simply because of man's cruelty to fellow human being for own desire will be difficult to imagine. Therefore, conflict is a continuous process since the beginning of structured social life did take its shape.

The underlying causes of conflicts differ significantly as does its intent and outcomes. However, most available literatures suggest that, the intent of conflict is always deliberate and premeditated action by the perpetrator. And the conflict is always goal oriented. When any interests and needs are attached, the occurrence of conflict within and between countries becomes reality. With contradicting and incompatible ideological, socio-economic and politico-cultural paradigm with need-oriented derive; the perpetrators instigate conflicts that bring about loss of lives and recurrent conflicts, masking their anticipated goals. Therefore, the origin of conflicts will be both an unpredictable and at times inevitable phenomenon. The issues surrounding any kinds of conflicts remain power and prestige attached; (B. E. Schmidt, et al 2001; C. Allen, 2006; J. Black 2004; M. Mann, 2005; P Kennedy et al 2000; S. Power 2003).

III.1. Religious perspective on the Origin of Conflicts

I am not dealing with religious perspectives of conflicts in depth. However, I shall briefly address with serious care, given the sensitivity of the subject so that we can be able to think about the growing discontents from two bigger global religious camps, Islam and Christianity. The overall goal of this medium is to eradicate such differences and bring about harmony and fraternity to stand shoulder to shoulder for the world peace by bridging the gaps of disparities.

An inception of the religious conflicts between the two major religions believed to be originated during the pre-historic era. While both religions were in different forms and shapes without transforming themselves to the kinds of today's' religious camps, there were scant evidences about significant conflicts occurred. However, according to the Holy Bible and Koran, the recorded time of some conflicts was, when Ishmael, the eldest son of Abraham whose mother was 'Hagar' the servant of the family, was bore him Ishmael before the birth of promised son 'Isaac'. After the birth of the promised son, Isaac, however, Hagar was obliged by Sarah Abraham's wife, to abandon the house with her child and went away where she doesn't know the way forward. Ishmael grown-up in another part of the world and the disparity believed to have started ever since, (Genesis Chapter 16 and 17; Holy Bible, New International Version, 1984).

After the birth of Jesus Christ, Christianity becomes reality. Subsequently, 400 years after Christ, Islam religion emerged in a new form and shape led by Prophet Mohammed's God led vision. Since then, the level of discontents for variety of reasons in both sides remained. The depth and magnitude of conflicts that occur due to religion varies according to their geo-political, Socio-cultural determinants and attached interpretations. In some parts of the globe, religious strife takes

greater parts in conflicts, where as in other parts the issue of religious row doesn't draw significant attention. Nevertheless, there are numerous literatures that emphasis how religion plays important role both, in the process of conflict resolution and conflict initiation. Thus, the role of IIFWP will be crucial to disprove those misconceptions and miss-understandings. The IIFWP strives to demonstrate that these are entirely wrong perceptions and ideologies that need to be reversed to bring about lasting peace and fraternity.

III.2. The Origin of Conflict from Socio-Anthropological Perspective

Psychological and Psycho-cultural mechanisms of human being underlying social behaviour in their striving for:-

- Survival; by maximising personal and kin fitness that further causes competition, aggression, strife and violence
- Status, seeking prestige and dominance
- Social capital, societal interaction and reciprocity to be decided by the powerful.
- Reproduction to keep on power or status can cause serious conflicts.

The above facts will show how socio Anthropological perspective play a significant role to orchestrate conflicts.

III.3. Origin of Conflicts from Psycho-Behavioural and Cultural Perspective

Human behaviour and motivation can be fundamental causes of Conflicts. Conflict can also be culturally constructed. In some societies, there are pre-conditions to be met and adhered to. If pre-conditions are not being adhered to, the conflict will be the only answer. By doing so, the powerful proves his powerfulness while the powerless obliges its groups to subservience. Psycho-biological traits and Psycho-Cultural conditions are one of the main determinants in the origin of conflicts.

Psycho-behaviourally, in any human being, there is an aggressive impulse if it is not restrained. The relationship between Psycho-biological traits and conflicts are always intertwined. For instances, one group of peoples are feared for their aggressiveness towards other members of society causing endless conflicts between and within the community. Some groups of society think that they are the only ones created to be powerful; thus don't compromise on this point. Instead, they sacrifice their lives for their prestige and power. Young offenders and gang leaders in economically developed countries also make good examples as does socially excluded members of people's deliberately caused conflicts as a revenge for their being so neglected. The culture also plays a crucial role both in resolving and instigating conflicts.

IV. Origins of Conflict in the past and 21st Century; Conflict Resolution and Management Mechanism (CRMM), Conclusion

Those who inflict conflicts believe that 'war is essential mechanism for preserving a balance and as conflict resolving strategy. Without war, they believe, the balance of power could not operate as functioning institution of an international system or society. War and the balance of power stand together, (J. Black 2004). This proves that why people in Iraqi, Palestine, Afghanistan, Darfur in

Sudan, Chechnya in Soviet Republic, Latin America and south and central Asia and others are receiving sticks of such orchestrated wrath.

As regard to conflict resolution, it can only be achieved by adhering to respect for basic human rights of individuals, groups of peoples and society. Unless people are brought to some level of consensus by addressing root causes of conflicts from peripheral to regional that further lays promising foundations for global peace and stability; its continuity will be inevitable. Respecting ones' country's sovereignty by complying with the rule of law, based on international values will bring about measurable and positive out-comes as does a clear understating of the nature and origins of conflicts to devise a strategy to treat the underlying causes.

Other points to be over-emphasised in this respect are; empowering peoples of given country to make decisions on their issues and letting people to be free society by increasing their awareness about the rule of law and good governance. Encouraging traditionally egalitarian society to incorporate internationally accepted values with that of their own believe and traditions to help them to avoid acts of violence. Finally, it's essential, to treat the underlying causes of the origins of conflicts to sustain and establish harmony and fraternity between and within the country of any regions while discouraging patronising acts and the need for power at the expense of others' sufferings. Finally and essentially, encourage peoples of the world to know God and his love to all human being to abolish conflicts for once and for all from its roots.

V. References

1. B. E. Schmidt, et al (2001), Anthropology of Violence and Conflict,
2. C Brown and K. Ainley, (2005), Understanding International Relations,
3. C. Allen, (2006), God's Terrorists, the Wahhabi Cult and the hidden roots of Modern Jihad
4. C. Koff, (2004), The Bone Woman; among the dead in Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia and Kosovo
5. H. Blix, (2004), Disarming Iraq, the Search for Weapons of Mass Destruction
6. Hodder and Stoughton, (1984) Holy Bible, New International Version
7. J. Black 2004, War and the New Disorder in the 21st Century
8. J. Burke, (2004), AL-Qaeda, the True History of Radical Islam
9. K. Asmal, et al, (2003), 'Nelson Mandela' in His Own Words, 'From Freedom to the Future'
10. L. Melvern, (2004), Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide,
11. M. L. king (1970) Strength to Love
12. M. Mann, (2005), The Dark Side of Democracy; explaining Ethnic Cleansing
13. Oxford Advanced learners Dictionary, (1995) edition
14. P Kennedy et al (2000), From War to Peace,
- 15, R. Cook, (2003) the Point of Departure
16. R. Dallaire, (2003), Shake Hands with the Devil
17. S. Power (2003), A Problem from Hell; America and the Age of Genocide
18. Z. Sardar et al. (2004), American Dream and Global Nightmare, (The End).