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## **UNIT 6                      OBJECTIVES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

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### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Wars produce the worst violations of human rights worldwide and are the greatest impediments to human development. Most of the more than 50 major armed conflicts since the Cold War have been internal clashes over religion, national or ethnic identity, and/or access to natural resources or wealth. Conflict management works to mitigate such conflicts and build sustainable peace. Conflict management refers to peace, and looks for alternative channels for dialogue and negotiation. Conflict management helps warring parties when traditional dispute management methods fail, filling the space between official diplomacy and unofficial grassroots peace efforts. Some recent wars have been the bloodiest, most devastating of modern times: 4 million people killed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2 million killed in Sudan, and genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 2009, 14 major armed conflicts were active in 13 locations around the world. Over the past decade, the global number of active major armed conflicts has declined overall, but the decline has been very uneven, with major drops in 2005 and 2007, and an increase in 2009. The end of the Cold War brought a new momentum to the study of conflict management. One of the main reasons for this was the proliferation of violent conflicts in regions such as Eastern Europe. The level of domestic ethnic conflicts, as well as of ethnic conflicts between communities and neighbouring states, attracted much interest among researchers.

Conflict management has become a necessity of the modern international system. Conflicts are monitored, controlled, and prevented from growing into destructive proportions. Conflict control has become both a diplomatic task and a branch of military strategy. This attitude may take even more radical form if developments such as terrorism, extremism, and illegal trade in drugs and arms are not brought under firm legal control. The international community has made significant efforts to find solutions to

conflicts from the past era associated with ideological struggle or national self-determination. It must now find ways to deal with new conflicts as they appear. These have been adjusted in diplomatic practice and have become a part of the international political sphere. They may be roughly labeled as "conflict management," which includes the following:

- Conflict resolution, which looks for models and mechanisms for solving existing conflicts;
- Conflict control, which aims at controlling the state of conflicts, above all the level of violence; and
- Conflict prevention, which stresses the avoidance of conflicts in the future.

This idea of conflict management is strongly supported by practical results from the previous times in international relations, including the following:

The end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, their mutual efforts in strategic arms reductions, joint activities in settling some regional conflicts, and confidence-building in Europe; the end of colonisation, success in the resolution of wars of national liberation, and the accomplishments of nation-building efforts; the end of the North-South confrontation between the rich nations of the West and the poorer developing nations of the South, and the evolution of the World Trade Organisation, one of the strongest elements of the current international system; the end of the oil crisis of 1974, which followed a major conflict of interests between oil consumers and the producers/exporters of oil, and the development of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), a reliable vehicle for conflict resolution through market regulation. These accomplishments have proved the validity of conflict management as a realistic goal for policy makers.

### **Aims and Objectives**

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand

- Conflict management as a discipline diverged from power-based conflict theory
- Conflict Management as a dynamic, interdisciplinary field, evolving as a response to problems in international relations.
- Conflict management as a mechanism concerned with deciding on the distribution of values and resources.
- Conflict management that enables a transformation from conflict to lasting peace by addressing root causes and effects of conflict.

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## **6.2 METHODS**

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The full range of methods and instruments that constitute conflict management is quite wide. It varies from coercive measures, through legal processes to third party intervention and multilateral conferences. For analytical purposes, it is important to divide these methods to (a) unilateral methods (e.g. one-party threats), (b) bilateral methods (e.g. bargaining and negotiation, deterrence), and (c) multilateral methods (e.g.

third party intervention). We can identify five strategies of conflict management: conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peace-building and state-building.

Each conflict management strategy addresses specific problems that occur during the conflict process:

- Conflict Prevention: politicisation, militarisation, escalation;
- Peacemaking: perceived incompatibility of interests;
- Peacekeeping: violent behaviour/military activity;
- Peace building: negative attitudes/socio-economic structure; and
- State building: collapsed states and weak or non-existing civil and political institutions.

Conflict Prevention is an approach that seeks to resolve disputes before violence breaks out; Peacemaking transforms the conflict from violent to spoken, and further, toward the definition of a common peaceful solution; Peacekeeping missions are often required to halt violence and preserve peace once it is obtained. Peacemaking spans activities from the inception of conflict management to the process of agreement and its subsequent implementation. It includes Mediation, Facilitation and Agreement Support. Mediation and Facilitation refer to direct support to a conflict management process (both high-level political negotiation and community-based processes) through the provision of mediators and/or facilitation (e.g., venues, back-up). Agreement Support is designed to capture a range of activities that may arise in the context of supporting the implementation of peace agreements. It is widely recognised that this part of the spectrum of peace making is critical, particularly in light of the fact that over 40% of all peace agreements relapse into conflict within five years. If successful, those missions can strengthen the opportunity for post-conflict peace-building, which should function to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing the root causes of conflict and creating a stable and durable peace.

Peace building reflects the evolution of policy thinking within the international community from the concept of peacekeeping to a more comprehensive approach. It encompasses a range of activities concerned with building a sustainable and lasting peace, particularly focusing on gaps in post-conflict governance. These include security sector reform; institutionalising the rule of law; supporting disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; promoting reconciliation; managing transitional justice; and building institutional capacity. Finally, state-building is the process of reconstructing weak or collapsed infrastructure and institutions of a society - political, economic and civil - in order for civil society and politics to begin to function normally.

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## **6.3 DIFFERENT APPROACHES**

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### **6.3.1 CONVENTIONAL APPROACH**

Conflict management has been conventionally associated with conflict containment. According to Hugh Miall, conflict management theorists “see violent conflicts as an ineradicable consequence of differences of values and interests within and between

communities.” These theorists regard “resolving such conflicts as unrealistic: the best that can be done is to manage and contain them, and occasionally to reach a historic compromise in which violence may be laid aside and normal politics resumed.” This definition assumes that conflicts are irresolvable and that handling is limited to containing them and ending the violence. However, other theorists believe that it is possible to eliminate conflicts. Therefore, they see conflict management as a stage in the handling of conflicts, which could be followed by later stages. For instance, John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary have divided what they call “ethnic conflict regulations” into two main sections: conflict management and conflict termination. This distinction is based on the idea that the former is concerned with the handling of the consequences of differences between adversaries, whereas the latter is concerned with terminating them.

Strategies of conflict management are largely rooted in realist approaches to international relations. They ignore entirely the psychological dynamics characteristic of confliction relationships. Strategies of deterrence and other forms of coercion may be counterproductive when they encourage targets to reframe the relationship and make resisting foreign pressure their primary goal. Sophisticated strategies of conflict management must avoid this pitfall and find ways of enhancing, not denigrating, the self-esteem of others. In this event, Ned Lebow illustrated these points with historical examples and suggested a more nuanced framework for managing and reducing interstate conflict. Deterrence was another method of managing the Cold War conflict. Again, conflict and dispute were allowed to continue, but open, large-scale confrontation was avoided. Deterrence is based on controlling the behaviour of other actors by the use of threats.

### **6.3.2 NORMATIVE POLITICAL THEORY**

Normative political theory saw conflict as a competitive struggle to be won by one side. In contrast, needs-based conflict management theorists developed a cooperative approach to conflict management, focusing on fundamental human needs to encourage ‘win-win solutions’. Nonviolence, cooperation and the belief in the essential goodness of humanity are basic principles of this approach to conflict management.

### **6.3.3 COSER AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

Lewis Coser identified positive aspects of conflict. Coser felt the need to correct the balance of analysis, which tended to focus on the “dysfunction” of conflict rather than the potential positive aspects of conflict. Coser provisionally defined conflict as “a struggle over claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise or eliminate their rivals”. Later he defined conflict as a “clash of values and interests”.

### **6.3.4 GALTUNG AND PEACE RESEARCH**

Johan Galtung founded the *Journal of Peace Research* in 1964. Galtung, for the purposes of identifying steps to peace, introduced a broader notion of violence which encompasses

those “avoidable insults to basic human needs”. These basic needs included security and identity. Galtung goes on to categorise violence into two forms: direct violence and structural violence. The former includes the everyday notion of violence, whereby an individual or group suffers physical or emotional pain as the result of direct action. Structural violence is caused by the institutions and structures of society which result in inequality or “oppression” among individuals.

### **6.3.5 JOHN BURTON AND HUMAN NEEDS THEORY**

John Burton established the Centre for the Analysis of Conflict, University of London in 1966. His theory operates on the premise that a pre-condition for the management of conflict is that fundamental human needs be met. Burton adopted eight fundamental needs. Those adopted needs included control, security, justice, stimulation, response, meaning, rationality and esteem/recognition. Burton’s additional need was ‘role-defense,’ the need to defend one’s role. Burton called these “ontological needs” as he regarded them as a consequence of human nature, which were universal and would be pursued regardless of the consequence. The principle-based approach aims to resolve conflict by deferring judgment to a moral principle. Such an approach advocates the need for interest-based negotiations in contrast to those based on a ‘position’. For example Fisher would suggest that an interest would include issues like security, esteem and pleasures, whereas positions would define how one achieved those interests.

### **6.3.6 REALIST PERSPECTIVE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

The ‘power-based’, ‘force-based’ or ‘coercive’ approach to international conflict management is what is called realism. Power-based conflict management includes both violent and nonviolent forms of coercion—war and diplomacy. Traditional diplomacy is often described as “war by other methods,” and as such a win/lose situation. Negotiators advance their own ‘position’ and the process is decided by the most powerful party. John Burton argues that realism ends with “coercive settlement” and not management. Realist theory argues that international security is best achieved through the action of Great Powers which can create regional power balances in unstable regions across the globe, by force or by “geostrategic mediation” (‘diplomacy’).

### **6.3.7 PERSPECTIVES OF DEUTSCH AND PETER WALLENSTEIN**

Deutsch claims that states involved in a negative interdependence, as states in an enduring conflict undoubtedly are, tend to use coercion to manage their conflicts. States in repeated conflicts develop a power orientation and use increasingly more coercive methods of dealing with their conflict with each successive flare up. Neither the attitudes, nor the conflict management behaviour of enduring states are presumed to change much. Enduring conflicts appear to take a life of their own. A conflict punctuated by instances of militarised hostility and cooperation attracts a more varied range of conflict management strategies than other conflicts. Peter Wallenstein emphasizes the containment function of conflict management method and theory: Conflict management typically focuses on the armed aspects of conflict: bringing the fighting to an end,

limiting the spread of the conflict and, thus, containing it. Conflict management is more ambitious, as it expects the parties to face jointly their incompatibility and find a way to live with or dissolve it.

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#### **6.4 UNITED NATIONS AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

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In addition, United Nations development cooperation should aim to strengthen society's capacity for coping, managing and resolving tensions before violent conflict erupts. This includes providing assistance in strengthening governance in areas undergoing development that will help to address unstable situations, the judiciary, traditional conflict management mechanisms, the cultivation of political will and leadership for peaceful management of disputes, the development of conflict management skills and practices, consensus-building and public policy dialogue, and the promotion of participatory and inclusive decision-making on central economic, social and political issues. All development policies, programmes and projects need to be looked at through a conflict prevention lens so that socio-economic inequities and inequalities do not give rise to violent conflict. The conflict prevention lens approach needs to be incorporated into the common country assessment/UNDAF process. At the request of Governments, the UNDP portfolio for governance and rule of law activities in countries prone to conflict now comprise more than half of UNDP programmes and activities, with an annual budget exceeding US\$ 1.2 billion. In addition, a number of UNDP programmes support regional cooperation on cross-border issues (e.g., in the Tumen River Basin in East Asia) that have a clear conflict prevention impact. In post-conflict situations, UNDP area development programmes (e.g., Cambodia and Guatemala), small arms (e.g., Mali, El Salvador, Albania) and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes (e.g., Mozambique, Guatemala) are aimed at preventing the reoccurrence of armed conflict.

A new generation of development projects is specifically focused on conflict prevention. For example, several UNDP-led projects in Romania, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Yugoslavia and Ukraine aim to create and strengthen early warning, conflict analysis and management capacities within government and civil society at the national and regional levels. The UNDP project entitled "Preventive development in the south of Kyrgyzstan" is another pilot project which seeks to enhance government capacities to undertake preventive measures as part of the process of nation-building, and identifies the importance of a regional approach to successfully effect preventive development. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)-led Horn of Africa Task Force strongly recommends the creation of capacity in the region for early warning, conflict prevention and management, under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and OAU, as part of its Regional Food Security Programme. The UNDP project entitled "Capacity-building for the OAU mechanism for conflict prevention, and management" is another example that addresses the issue from a regional perspective. The UNDP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs are also collaborating with over 10 African conflict management institutions and practitioners to develop training material in four areas: conflict analysis and early response development, skills development for conflict

transformation, conflict-sensitive approaches to development and national capacity-building in conflict management.

In recent years, there has been increased cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, which have openly acknowledged that conflict seriously affects their development goals, and that understanding and working to prevent conflict should be considered a part of their mandates. This new approach has manifested itself in the establishment of a post-conflict unit in the World Bank and the new Operational Policy on Development Cooperation and Conflict adopted by the World Bank in January of this year. The World Bank's economic research on civil war is another area which has yielded important operational recommendations, which if implemented could reduce the risks of conflict.

As each organisation increases its activities in the post-conflict peace-building, which is an aspect of conflict prevention, the relationship has deepened. Examples of such cooperation can be found in East Timor and Haiti, among other places. However, contacts between the respective headquarters in this field have been limited and are only beginning to develop. Such contacts, especially at the working level, can assist both organisations in increasing their understanding of the situations they are both monitoring. Within their mandates and as appropriate, each organisation should participate in the prevention structures of the other organisations. The World Bank's acceptance of the United Nations offer to participate in the Executive Committee on Peace and preventing the internal displacement of civilians can play an important and at times pivotal role in the prevention of conflict. Unemployed and disaffected men and youth who are internally displaced, in particular those in internally displaced persons camps, are very vulnerable to recruitments (often forcible) by belligerents. By ensuring that civilians are able to remain at home and continue with their livelihoods and education, we can reduce the risk that they would become pawns in military action, thereby contributing to further conflict. Advocacy for the protection of civilians should be directed not only at the belligerents but also at members of the international community to take appropriate preventive action.

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## **6.5 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN CULTURAL CONTEXT**

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In Western cultural contexts, such as Canada and the United States, successful conflict management usually involves fostering communication among disputants, problem solving, and drafting agreements that meet their underlying needs. In these situations, conflict resolvers often talk about finding the win-win solution, or mutually satisfying scenario, for everyone involved.

In many non-Western cultural contexts, such as Afghanistan, Vietnam, and China, it is also important to find "win-win" solutions; however, getting there can be very different. In these contexts, direct communication between disputants that explicitly addresses the issues at stake in the conflict can be perceived as very rude, making the conflict worse and delaying management. Rather, it can make sense to involve religious, tribal or community leaders, communicate difficult truths indirectly through a third party, and make suggestions through stories. Intercultural conflicts are often the most difficult to



resolve because the expectations of the disputants can be very different, and there is much occasion for misunderstanding.

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## **6.6 FACTORS AFFECTING THE COURSE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

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Factors affecting the course of conflict management are numerous. They involve the manner of interdependence, type of actors, and kinds of issues. For the students of International Relations, these factors are best conceptualised as (a) contextual factors, and (b) behavioural factors. Contextual factors that affect international conflict management include the character of the international system, the nature of a conflict, and the internal characteristics of the states involved. The character of the international system affects the expectations of states, and the strategies they may use to break out of a conflict. Features such as polarity of the international system, patterns of alignments, and distribution of power capabilities are all associated with different approaches to conflict. A bipolar international environment, for instance, is likely to be more stable than a multipolar system in responding to conflicts. The termination of intractable conflicts can be explicitly linked to the nature of the international environment in which they occur.

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## **6.7 SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSIONS OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

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Conflict prevention and sustainable and equitable development are mutually reinforcing activities. An investment in national and international efforts for conflict prevention must be seen as a simultaneous investment in sustainable development since the latter can best take place in an environment of sustainable peace. In the ongoing humanitarian crises, advocacy and public information services conducted by the humanitarian community, along with consolidated appeals, are the primary examples of humanitarian action to raise the awareness of a particular conflict and its consequences. Often, humanitarian activities create the only forum for divided groups to meet and to communicate — in itself a useful process for any future reconciliation. Humanitarian agencies have negotiated the creation of humanitarian spaces, routes or zones that have brought about a limited ceasefire to allow humanitarian assistance to reach vulnerable groups.

Active promotion of human rights and support for the enhancement, codification and implementation of human rights is a key feature of Ireland's foreign policy, and an essential element in the maintenance of international peace and security. A commitment to human rights in peacemaking and peace building is embedded in our approach to conflict management. The UNSCR Management 1325 emphasizes the distinct position of women in conflict situations and in peace building. The Management calls for an increase in the participation of women in peacemaking and peace building processes; the provision of special protection to women and girls in armed conflict; and the incorporation of a gender perspective into peacekeeping and peace building processes.

The relationship between climate and conflict is an emerging issue, and one which could have potentially significant consequences. Climate change and conflict may be linked through such issues as access to changing or diminishing water and natural resources,



food security, land tenure and migration. Understanding the relationship between conflict and climate change and advancing the discussion on this are essential to preparing and developing effective relations. The other contextual dimension that affects conflict management is that of the internal characteristics of the actors involved. This refers as to how certain structural properties of states affect their predisposition to engage in coercive or other forms of conflict management. The nature of the polity has attracted the most attention. Democratic states are more inclined to use peaceful methods of conflict management (because of internal norms, liberal experience or electoral constraints), whereas non-democratic states are more likely to utilise coercive methods of management. Another factor here relates to the power capabilities of states. Although, there is not much empirical evidence to suggest a strong relationship, power capabilities can be linked to different conflict management behaviour e.g. a conflict between two equally strong countries may be prolonged because both have the material and human resources to carry on, and the willingness to tolerate high costs. All these contextual factors affect directly the disposition to engage in different forms of conflict management, and how a conflict will terminate.

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## **6.8 ARMS PROLIFERATION AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

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Arms proliferation is not merely a security issue; it is also an issue of human rights and of development. The proliferation of small arms sustains and exacerbates armed conflicts, endangers peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, undermines respect for international humanitarian law, threatens legitimate but weak Governments, and benefits terrorists and the perpetrators of organised crime. Measures to prevent the misuse and illicit transfers of small arms and to address the root causes of the demand for small arms would greatly contribute to the prevention of conflict.

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## **6.9 CRITICISM OF THE CONCEPT OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

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The earlier view of conflict management clearly limits this concept to a certain level of handling conflicts, that is, containment. As a result, scholars have sought other concepts to express broader processes and other dimensions. Efforts to develop alternative and additional concepts embody explicit and implicit criticism of the conventional narrow meaning of conflict management. In fact, the trend involves suggesting new theories and perspectives for studying conflict. The earlier, narrow definition of conflict management reflects a whole theory. Consequently, an alternative concept forms a new theory. However, it has been subject to some criticism, of which the following points are the most important.

### **6.9.1 Exaggerated Realism**

The conflict management theory assumes that conflicts are irresolvable, or at least very difficult to resolve or rarely resolved. Therefore, only containment and suspension of violence are possible and realistic. This attitude does not satisfy many researchers and such a pessimistic view is considered to be exaggerated.

### **6.9.2 Unrealistic**

On the other hand, there are critics who hold the opposite view, namely, that conflict management theory is unrealistic, because it assumes that conflicts can be contained and suspended. However, in many cases, it appears that “there are frustrations and concerns under the surface”, which can provoke a fresh eruption of conflict at any moment. These scholars think that containing conflict is not possible in the long term, and therefore other strategies are needed to deal with the problem.

### **6.9.3 The Lack of Analysis**

There is a noticeable lack of analysis in works classified as conflict management research, theory and guides. Alan C. Tidwell expresses this view in his discussion of the concept of conflict management, a term that he uses to include conflict management. The literature on conflict management focuses on “how to do it”, with scant attention paid to situational and contextual issues. Yet, a more textured and mature approach to conflict management demands examination of these concepts and situations. The lack of analysis has become largely structural in the theory and practice of conflict management. This situation has been caused mostly by the trend of interpreting conflict management as conflict settlement and containment. The focus is always on action and practical steps, usually in an atmosphere of crisis and urgency. Therefore, very little attention has been given to the analysis of the problem itself and the theoretical framework required to study it, as well as recognising and examining the consequences of the many recommended courses of action and types of settlement suggested by scholars or advisers.

### **6.9.4 The Problem of Integration**

The accusation of a lack of analysis is a severe criticism. Although there are practical examples to support this view, it is important to point out that in other cases there is a problem of separation. This means that an analysis can be made, and mostly on an empirical inductive basis, yet without connecting it to the methods of handling conflict and without a theoretical framework. It is criticised as an agreement between powerful governments, who benefit from the existing balance of power, to prevent the emergence of any new global or regional power as a competitor. Marcelle E. DuPraw notices that “there has been insufficient integration between the body of theory and the intervention decisions practitioners are making in the field.”

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## **6.10 SUMMARY**

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The Cold War era saw situations where the great powers sought to handle conflicts by accepting a certain status quo. In the view of these governments, conflict management meant preventing widespread violence, though not necessarily resolving the conflicts. Moreover, preserving the status quo that serves the interests of certain governments by declaring a concern for peace and non-violent means of solving problems is a common practice in the world of politics. The fact is that the end of the Cold War era also meant the end of many status quo situations, resulting in the eruption of violent ethnic conflict

in the Balkans and elsewhere. This helped to partly weaken the conventional interpretation of conflict management as conflict containment without dealing with the cause of the problems. An important tool of conflict management is to monitor situations around the world that could erupt into conflict to detect the earliest signs of trouble and identify opportunities to divert violence, which might otherwise be overlooked or recognised too late. Parties in dispute sometimes seek a neutral third party to facilitate dialogue in an effort to avert violence. The nature of a conflict or the characteristics of the issues that are its focus, are clearly crucial in determining how it is managed. Certain issues such as beliefs, core values and territorial integrity have a high saliency, and are apt to encourage decision makers to accept higher levels of costs. This makes it much more difficult to manage such conflicts through traditional diplomatic methods. Conflicts over salient issues are likely to be long-lasting and to entail the use of coercive methods as a way of reaching an outcome.

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### 6.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

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1. What do you understand by Conflict Management?
2. Discuss the major objectives of conflict management.
3. What are the major factors which affect the course of conflict management?
4. Find out the grounds on which the concept of conflict management is criticised.
5. What are the social and environmental dimensions of conflict management?
6. Examine the concept of conflict management in cultural context.

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### SUGGESTED READINGS

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