

Globally Induced Conflicts and Their Ramifications

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Conflict is a common issue that pervades our daily life, regardless of our country of origin and its location. Although not all conflicts are bad¹, violent conflicts cause extensive damage to a country's development in its economic growth, social structure, and creative energies. Stunting people's creative energies is the most damaging, as society starts to stagnate. However, there is a need to segregate local, regional and global conflicts in spite of the assertions made by some scholars that local or regional conflicts are an integral part of global policies (politics) and actions. A frequently used term is "lost development decade"², which signifies an irreparable loss faced by a country or a group of countries due to a prolonged conflict.

Whether a conflict first emerges as a local conflict and transforms into an international conflict, or a conflict emerges as a result of power struggle, over a scarce natural resource, the impact needs to be felt by many nations concurrently to qualify it as a globally-induced conflict. Whatever the reason, the existence of a conflict which could potentially turn violent in a nation, can neither be ignored nor taken lightly. Peace and stability becomes the ultimate casualty of a violent conflict. If such a conflict is left unattended, it not only attracts the attention of neighboring countries, but also the international community. Global issues are becoming more important, as seen by the interplay of globalization coupled with astronomical advance of information and communication technologies. With enormous exercise of power and infinite reach, it is not difficult to gauge the impact of any conflict induced at the global level.

Major global issues that seriously impact peace and prosperity in today's world are: danger of nuclear weapons, economic interconnections, environmental issues, world trade system, managing international debt, and politics of oil (Segal, 1991). Additionally, other non-traditional security threats of serious concern to the global community are: international terrorism, illegal drug trade, and epidemics, and other such issues. These non-traditional security threats also merit full attention and timely action.

Former Chairman of Interaction Council Helmut Schmidt³ in early 1990s had made an informed assessment of global affairs in the post-cold war era on the following lines:

- National interest would move center stage with the disintegration of political units into smaller parts, further complicating and undercutting sovereignty of a larger entity by the quest of minorities for self determination;
- Mass migrations across sovereign borders leading to new types of conflict;
- Conflicts between ideologies, others originating from hunger, poverty or impoverished economic conditions;
- Nexus between population, development and the environment
- Growing disparities between the North and the South

Schmidt did not stop at just outlining the possible causes of conflict at the global level in the post old ar period, but also offered some suggestions that conflict required "effective intutions, mechanisms and instruments" to deal with the forthcoming challenges. He held the view that "leadership" would be most critical for a new global order. Judging by the conflicts of varied nature in the contemporary world, except those emerging from politically motivated actions of big powers, one must appreciate the wisdom found in the statement of Helmut Schmidt.

The global community had rejoiced when the Cold-War that ensued immediately after the end of Second World War in 1945, also ended with the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. The people of the developing countries were thrilled with the high hope of receiving the 'peace dividend'(Gupta et al., 2002) that the industrialized countries had promised. The resources spent in securing arms and ammunitions, as well as military build-up, was supposed to have been directed to development. Also, developing nations were supposed to receive most of resources from the peace dividend The dream of receiving the 'peace dividend' remains a mere dream even after twenty five years of post cold-war period. Several new conflicts culminating in full scale war in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as fierce battles in Sudan, Libya and Syria seem to have absorbed all available resources that were freed after the end of the cold-war. As a result, poor people in the developed and developing world have been negatively affected by these new conflicts. Besides, a significant chunk of resources is also applied in fighting deadly diseases such as Ebola, SARS, and other epidemics. It is needless to state that this account does not cover the 'silent crisis' experienced by most developing countries on a continual basis. United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) describes 'Silent Crisis' as hunger, malnutrition, and deaths from preventable diseases in developing countries, mostly in Asia and Africa.

The ever widening gulf between the rich and the poor nations is due to a variety of reasons such as exclusive control on international monetary and financial architecture through the Bretton Woods Institutions, agricultural subsidies, and suppressed price of commodities. With the emergence of new issues such as climate change requiring all nations to follow environment friendly technologies; wide spread terrorism necessitating additional security measures in supply-chain system, the cost of doing business in all developing countries have increased manifold. In addition, the newly emerging labor issues involving higher wages to labor force for so-called maintenance of dignified living standard where the rest of the population is living in less than two dollars a day, is making doing business virtually out of reach of most poor developing countries. Obviously, the lack of economic growth and development would cause more conflicts in most developing countries. Viewed from this standpoint the experts' contention of continued bad global policies causing local/national conflicts is not far off.

For a better understanding of globally induced conflicts, it would neither be sufficient to be aware of local/national conditions nor seek solutions within the conflict area. Conflict resolution experts always stress on a good understanding of the root causes of the problem in a conflict area. However, a good solution can be found only with excellent knowledge of regional and international forces at play. In general, study of following issues would help:

One can start with the acknowledgement of the nature of conflicts besetting a country or a region such as, "Is it ideological, based on religion, social structure or system of governance?" Or, could it be a result of lack of understanding or acceptance of human rights issues subject to the prevailing culture of a country? Or, does it have to do with migration and refugees causing conflicts between neighboring countries, and even far away countries as seen in the current migration taking place in Germany, Africa and the Middle East, especially Syria?. Then, there would be other types of conflicts arising from climate related issues including desertification, shrinking forests, growing greenhouse effect, acid rain and the like requiring collective efforts of all stakeholders, the developed and the developing countries. However, there is a general understanding between the industrialized and the developing countries, reached in international conferences, that global impact of climate change would have to be tackled with the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility"⁴. The direct and visible effects of food scarcity and famine, drug trade, plagues such as HIV Aids, viral hepatitis and SARS are relatively manageable threats compared to conflicts arising from ideological or human rights issues. Exceptions to these manageable threats are genocide and other cruel and inhuman punishments afflicted

on citizens by a state without legal sanction. Such threats must be remedied at all costs.

In a globalizing world, no one nation can claim that it will conduct business in its own fashion without giving any regard to other nations or international institutions . Since today's world runs on interdependence, close connectivity and cooperation between nations is crucial. The sole superpower has pronounced that democratic governance is essential to foster peace and stability in all parts of the world. Attempts to stunt democratic system will be taken as an affront to the US's security (and subject to action, if necessary). The Bush Doctrine lists four main points: Preemption, Military Primacy, New Multilateralism, and the Spread of Democracy for National Security Strategy (The Bush Doctrine, Constitutional Rights Foundation).

Cyber crimes are being increasingly recognized as another big threat to the maintenance of global peace and security. Illicit cyberactivities not only destabilize normal political order through the hacking and manipulation of sensitive defense information, but also could derail the established monetary system and other related economic activities. Misuse of today's powerful social media can cause untold misery and sufferings in targeted countries.

In addition, it might be necessary to take a deeper look into unchecked freedom exercised by the media, as well as the private sector in the name of open market and liberalization of economic policies. Most developing countries have very little or no regulatory mechanisms that are able to challenge, and if necessary, stop unethical media from functioning and unscrupulous business from operating. This unchecked privatization is playing havoc on the life of unsuspecting and simple citizens who are paying higher prices for basic commodities, but receive sub-standard goods in return. The problems with medical care providers such as bad hospitals and unethical pharmacists is the exorbitant costs for simple treatment, as well as lives being lost because of high cost of healthcare. The less said the better for hospitals which are hospitals in name only. Everyday conflicts thus are embedded in the societies of developing countries. It is a case of a conflict induced by the local authority owing to its negligence or indifference to the health of people.

It seems quite difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of conflict, whether homegrown or externally induced. The reason for such a situation is not beyond comprehension. Technology induced advancement in information and communication technologies, which has resulted in a huge leap in the past twenty five years, especially after the end of post cold-war, has removed physical barriers and brought people together

as introduced in the concept of 'global village'⁵. "Think globally and act locally" has become a catchword of present generation. The pace of globalization is unstoppable and technological marvels are keeping pace with it. Since these twin revolutions have affected the modern world in a very powerful way, the world community needs to address these twin revolutions for upcoming opportunities and threats. Conflict, whether a part of human nature or caused by unacceptable conditions such as poverty, lack of employment, flouted rule of law, disregard to human rights, cannot be allowed to exist for long. Rather than blaming each other for the causes of conflict, appropriate and timely action must be taken to resolve them. Obviously, depending on the nature and scope of a conflict, several types of solutions need to be worked out since "one size does not fit all". A combination of direct and indirect actors to be involved in conflict resolution. Often times, a collective effort would be required, such as in the case of climate change. The African experts seem to hold the view that the resolution to Africa's conflicts must necessarily be homegrown and home funded. For Asia, it could be homegrown but donors funded if the countries in question are unable to fund it. However, obviously locals, know the situation better and can devise solutions that can be lasting. That is what everybody is looking for-- a sustainable peace. Only with sustainable peace can a country progress towards economic development and prosperity for its citizens.

Endnotes:

1. Conflict is viewed by many as something to be feared and avoided-even, and perhaps especially, in educational settings. However, if dealt with openly, honestly, and forthrightly, school conflict can provide students, parents, teachers, administrators, and communities with opportunities for communication, growth, and positive change (Ernest W. Walker, 1999, *The Journal of negro Education*)
2. "Lost Development Decade" is primarily understood as a decade (1997-2006) assigned to eradication of poverty by the UN but as the Decade is came to an end, U.N. stakeholders, analysts, and representatives of civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) see the outcome as inadequate. The U.N. anti-poverty campaign was initiated following decisions made at the World Summit on Social Development held in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1995, where world leaders agreed to lay out national action plans in cooperation with the international community to fight poverty, unemployment and social exclusion (Lisa Sonderlindh). Besides, the Latin American Debt crisis of early 1980s, Japan's asset price bubble of the 1990s, and even the US economy, despite its healthy growth for most part of 70 years, got stagnated in the first decade of the Millennium, are known as "lost decade" although the cause may not be necessarily related to conflicts.
3. Helmut Schmidt, Chancellor of FRG, during 1974-1982. Interaction Council established in 1983 as an independent international organization with a view to mobilize experience,

energy, and international contacts-develop recommendation & practical solutions for political, economic and social problems.

4. The principle of 'common but differentiated responsibility' evolved from the notion of the 'common heritage of mankind' and is a manifestation of general principles of equity in international law. The principle recognizes historical differences in the contributions of developed and developing States to global environmental problems, and differences in their respective economic and technical capacity to tackle these problems. Despite their common responsibilities, important differences exist between the stated responsibilities of developed and developing countries. The Rio Declaration states: "In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command." Similar language exists in the Framework Convention on Climate Change; parties should act to protect the climate system "on the basis of equality and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities." (Extracted from World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002, Johannesburg)
5. Global village is a term closely associated with Canadian-born Marshall McLuhan, popularized in his books *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962) and *Understanding Media* (1964). McLuhan described how the globe has been contracted into a village by electric technology and the instantaneous movement of information from every quarter to every point at the same time. (Extracted from Wikipedia, 10.2015)

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