

# Conflict: Definition

Peace and conflict research assume that

- a) conflicts are the expression of opposing interests
- b) that they are characteristic for modern societies
- c) that they are endemic in modern societies

*„A conflict exists when two people wish to carry out acts which are mutually inconsistent. They may both want to do the same thing, such as eat the same apple, or they may want to do different things where the different things are mutually incompatible, such as when they both want to stay together but one wants to go to the cinema and the other to stay at home. A conflict is resolved when some mutually compatible set of actions is worked out. The definition of conflict can be extended from individuals to groups (such as states or nations), and more than two parties can be involved in the conflict. The principles remain the same.“(M.Nicholson: Rationality and the Analysis of International Conflict. 1992:11)*

Contrary to earlier expectations, the

⇒ analysis

⇒ prevention

⇒ management, or

⇒ resolution

of conflicts does not aim at the elimination of conflict, and even less at the elimination of opposing interests. Its aim is the search for such forms of conflict behaviour which allow a non-violent handling of interest oppositions in an orderly, pre-arranged process, the course and result of which will be accepted by all parties involved

- be it out of well-understood, rationally calculated self-interest
- be it out of respect for the „shadow of the future“, i.e. the expectation of a retaliatory action of the other side if one disappoints its expectations (the principle of every deterrence strategy).