

# The Definition of Conflict

## Analyzing the pattern





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Conflict Resolution: Definition of Conflict  
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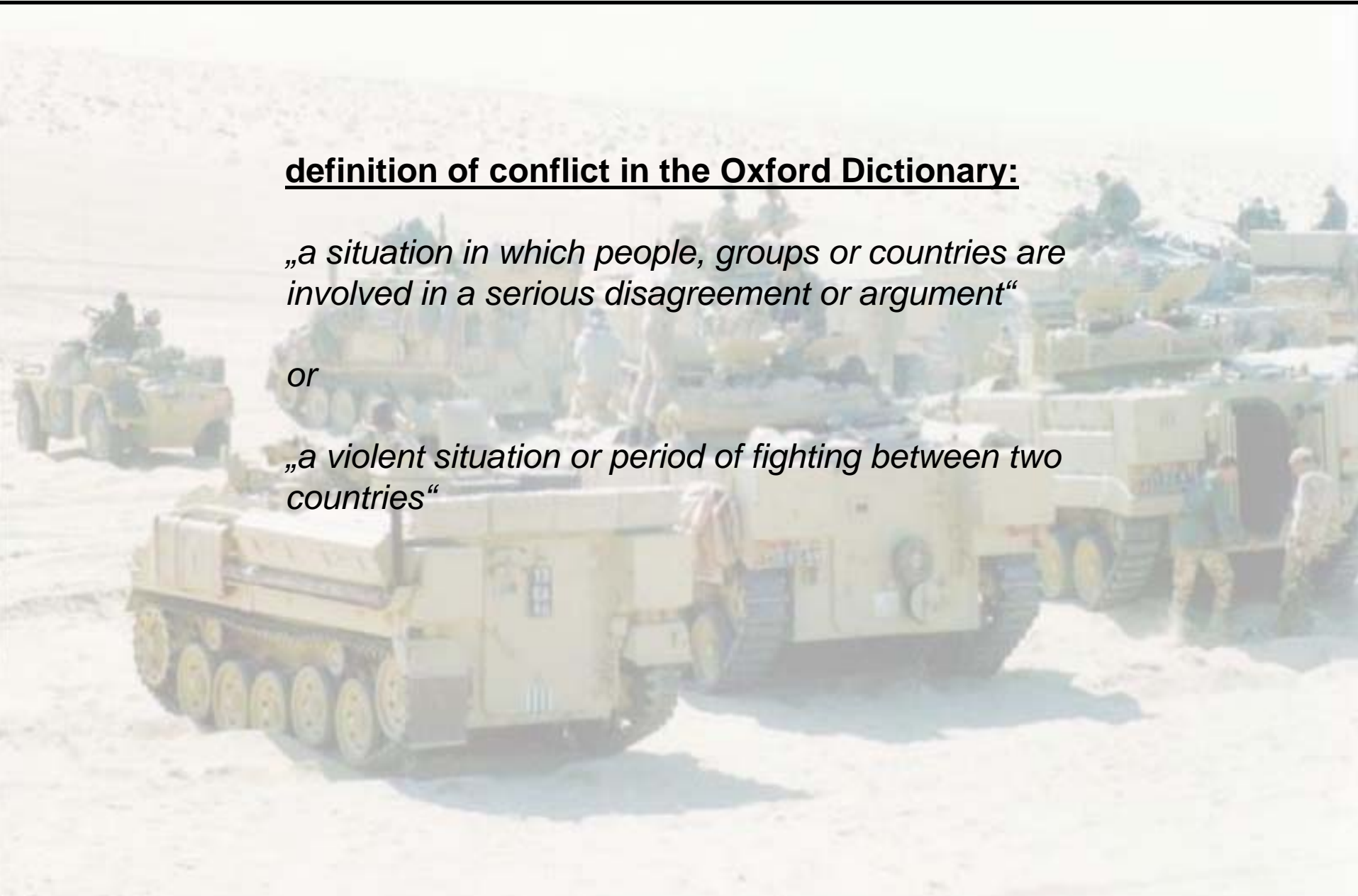


**definition of conflict in the Oxford Dictionary:**

*„a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument“*

*or*

*„a violent situation or period of fighting between two countries“*







Stockholm International Peace Research Group:

**„A ‘major armed conflict’ is defined as the use of armed force between the military forces of two or more governments, or of one government and at least one organized armed group, resulting in the battle-related deaths of at least 1000 people in any single calendar year and in which the incompatibility concerns control of government and/or territory.”**

Upsala Conflict Data Programm:

**„An armed conflict is defined ... as a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both, where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. Of these two parties, at least one has to be the government of a state.“**



Four points to approximate the conflict as a term:

- The conflict shall be considered as a social fact, which should not be confused with its form
- No limiting evaluation is allowed by definition in order not to predetermine the analysis of the conflict
- No reduction of the contextual characteristics
- Cause and effect should not be compounded or interchanged



Two approaches to determine the conflict categories:

-Objectivist approach: looks for the origin of conflict in the social and political structure of society; goals at stake can be compatible

-Subjectivist approach: focuses on the perceived incompatibility of goals and differences



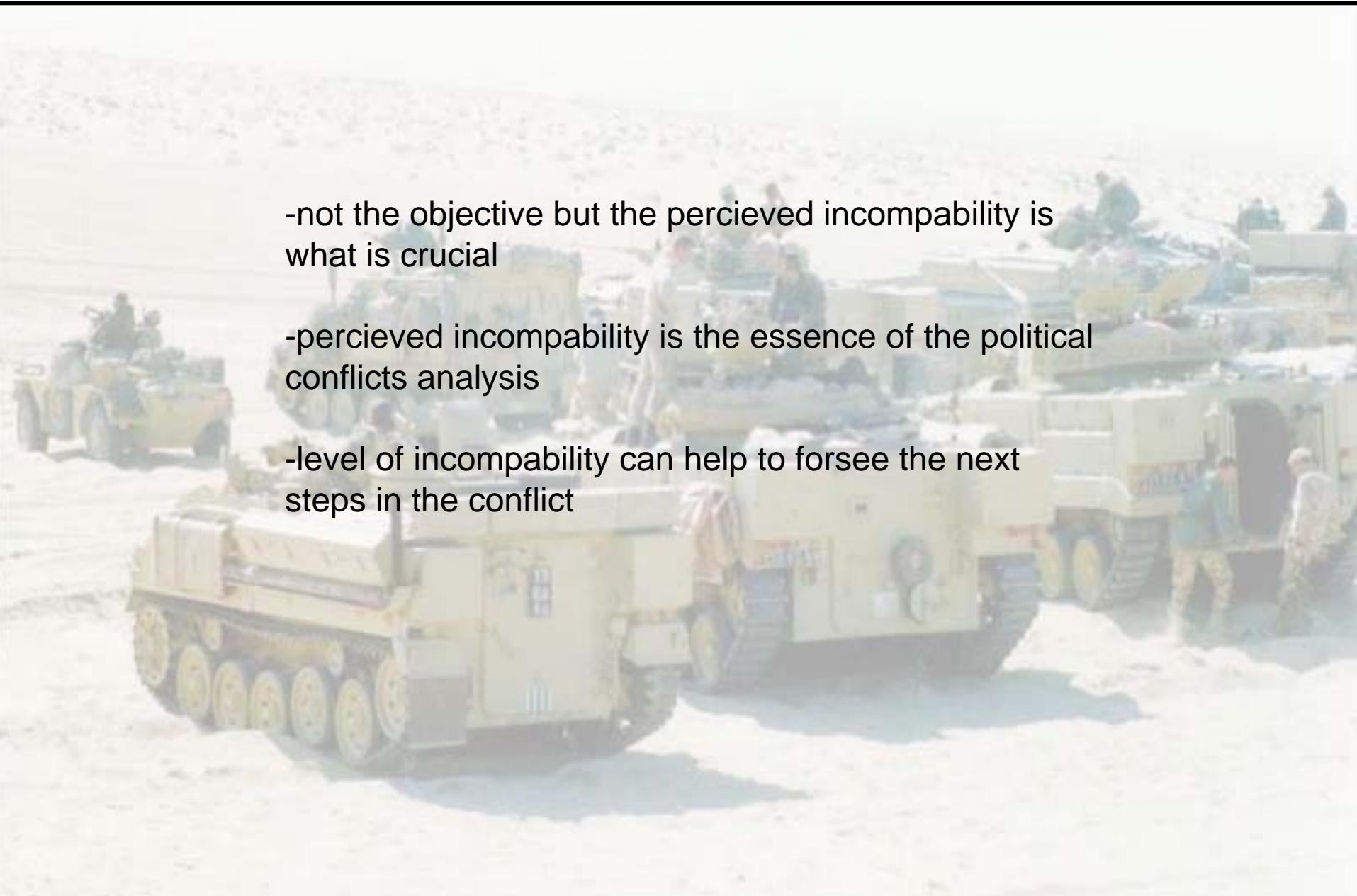




-not the objective but the perceived incompatibility is what is crucial

-percieved incompatibility is the essence of the political conflicts analysis

-level of incompatibility can help to foresee the next steps in the conflict





Four level conflict typology:

- Conflict episodes: isolated incompatibility articulation to a certain issue
- Issue conflicts: persistent incompatibility over a contested issue
- Identity conflicts: explicit disagreements; enemies moves are taken on the basis of hostile motives
- Power conflicts: communication of disaccord is no longer separation but subordination and/or extinction of the „other“





Definitions of the conflict intensity:

1. Nonviolent

Intensity group: low

Level of intensity: 1; latent conflict; positional difference on definable values of national meaning is considered to be a latent conflict if respective demands are articulated by one of the parties and perceived by the other as such.

Level 2; manifest conflict; includes the use of measures that are located in the preliminary stage to violent force



## 2. Violent

Intensity group: medium

Level 3; crisis; tense situation in which at least one of the parties uses violent force in sporadic incidents.

Intensity group: high

Level 4; severe crisis; considered to be a severe crisis if violent force is repeatedly used in an organized way.

Level 5; war; type of violent conflict in which violent force is used with a certain continuity in an organized and systematic way. The conflict parties exercise extensive measures, depending on the situation.



Three Levels of violent conflict:

- 1. minor armed conflict: at least 25 battle-deaths per year, fewer than 1000 battle-deaths during the course of the conflict
- 2. intermidiate armed conflict: at least 25 battle-deaths per year, total of 1000 deaths, but less than 1000 deaths in a given year
- 3. war: at least 1000 battle-deaths per year







Defining war:

“... a conflict among political groups, especially sovereign states, carried on by armed forces of considerable magnitude and for a considerable period of time.”

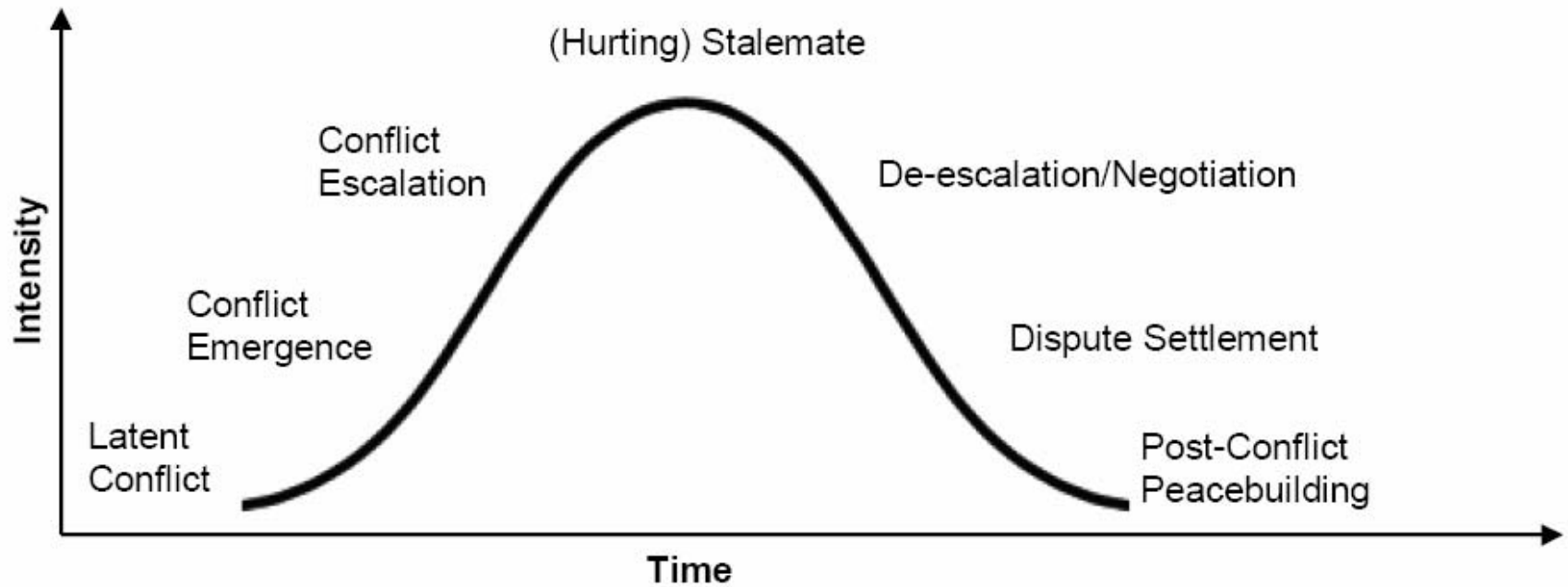
– Quincy Wright

“... occurrence of purposive and lethal violence among two or more social groups pursuing conflicting political goals that results in fatalities, with at least one belligerent group organized under the command of authoritative leadership.” – Claudio Cioffi-Revilla

“... participation of states with at least 1,000 troops in battle-related activity with at least 1,000 battle-related deaths.” – J. D. Singer & Melvin Small



Life cycle of a conflict:



Quelle: Brahm (2003).



Basical composition:

- Tension
- Escalation
- De-Escalation
- Settlement







Three Issues of Conflict:

1. Minority, ethnic and government-power conflicts
  - Not necessarily related to one another
  - Can have domestic (minority-government) or interstate (state – minority – state) dimensions
  - Minority and ethnic disputes remain to be observed as one of the main causes of intrastate conflict
  - Main goal of the parties is on one side to retain and on the other side to capture power over government



## Three Issues of Conflict:

### 2. Resources

- Inequities in the distribution, use, needs, desires, consequences in resource management are the main sources
- Four important conditions for being the object of military or political action
  - degree of scarcity
  - extent of sharing-level
  - relative power of the groups
  - ease of access to alternate resources



Three Issues of Conflict:

3. Territory and Border Conflict

- Territorial expansion, incorporation of ethnic frontiers, secession
- Implicitly or explicitly tied to resources or ethnic or religious minorities
- Becoming less frequent due to high economical, political and human costs
- Nowadays mostly border conflicts





Four forms of dealing with conflict

1. settlement
2. resolution
3. transformation
4. prevention





## 1. Conflict Settlement:

- Concept covers all strategies that aim a definite end of the direct violence, without necessarily dealing with the basic causes
- Many works consider the phenomena of conflict as a deficit within a certain political system, as a result of a struggle for scarce resources or power (zero-sum game)
- Can be broken, depending on the involved parties interests and the stage of escalation
- Large part focuses on the third-party activities (transformation of the zero-sum game, end of the conflict, political agreement)
- Incorporates peaceful measures: negotiations, mediation, facilitation (long-term), coercive measures (short-term)



## 2. Conflict Resolution:

- points out strategies to exit the conflict's destroying dynamic, achieving satisfying solutions for all parties involved
- Successful conflict resolution occurs by providing each side's needs, and adequately addressing their interests so that they are each satisfied with the outcome
- Differentiation between interests which are negotiable/ changeable and needs which are a quasi natural is necessary
- Intends not to end the conflict as such, but to transform it into nonviolent conflict (round tables, discussion groups, etc.)
- Improvement of communication between the conflict parties is very important





### 3. Conflict transformation

- Every solution is more or less temporary (old interest incompatibilities can become virulent again, new ones can appear)
- Certain transformations capacity must be present among the conflict parties involved (to show mutual respect and understanding)
- Three conceptual deficits (termed as gaps) of the traditional conflict transformation after J. P. Lederach:
  - interdependence gap
  - justice gap
  - process structure gap



Interdependence gap:

-Distinction between three (upper-, middle-, lower-) society levels (pyramid model)

-Upper level: Respective civilian and military elite

middle level: business elite, administration, churches, media

lower level: local leaders, women, organizations, smaller NGOs

-the gap: no vertical peace building can be achieved



Justice gap:

- Conflict settlement approaches too often only concentrate to eliminate forms of direct violence, not structural violence
- Direct violence only possible if structural or cultural violence exists
- settlement has to influence the roots not just scratch the surface

Process-structure gap:

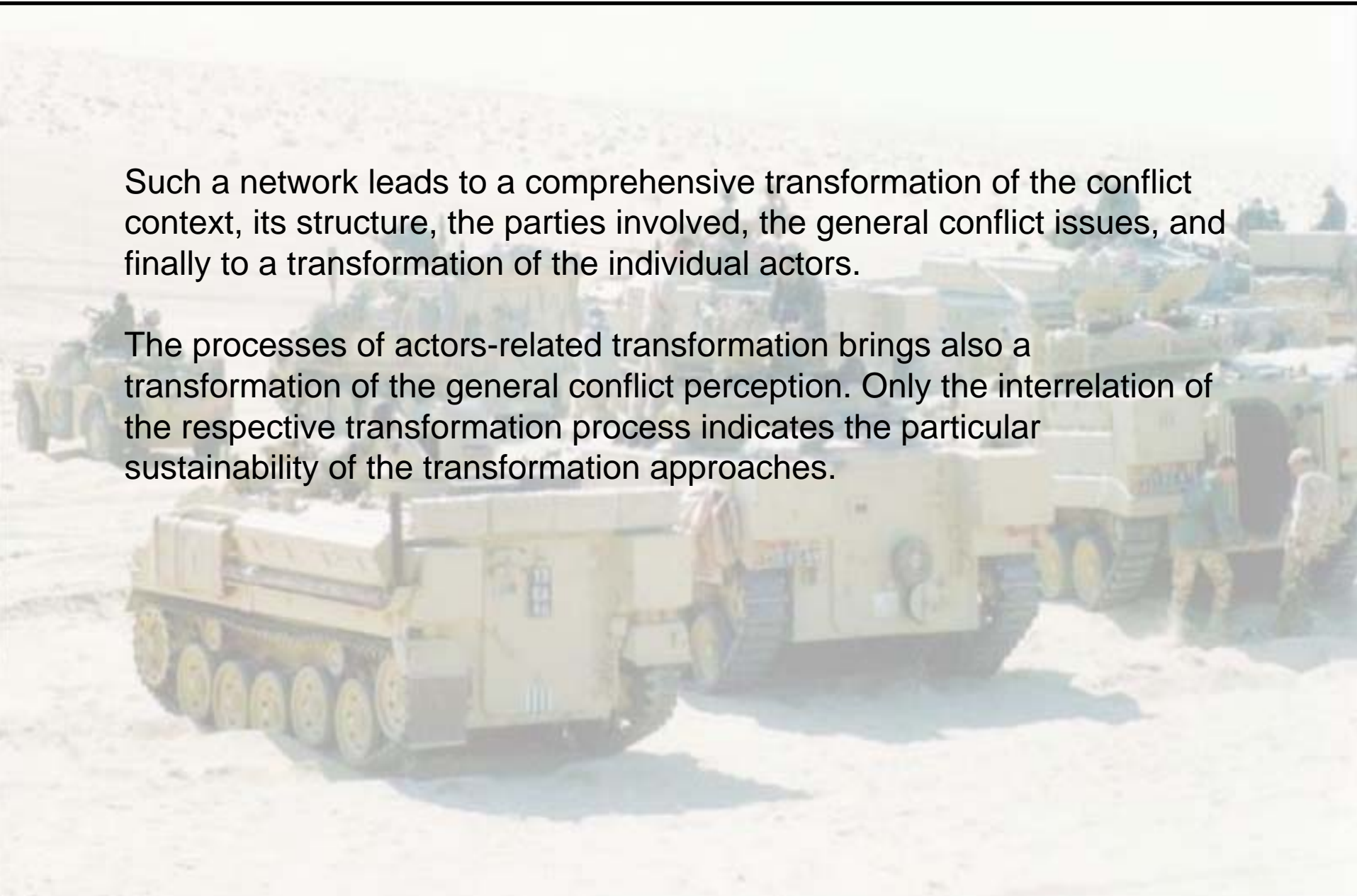
- Peace is neither process nor structure, though both dimensions have to be considered
- During conflict dealing the process definition prevails, but the structural definition has to be added in which a network of social and political actors is promoted to keep what was achieved





Such a network leads to a comprehensive transformation of the conflict context, its structure, the parties involved, the general conflict issues, and finally to a transformation of the individual actors.

The processes of actors-related transformation brings also a transformation of the general conflict perception. Only the interrelation of the respective transformation process indicates the particular sustainability of the transformation approaches.





## 4. Conflict Prevention

-Many different preventive measures, depending on the level of intensity of the conflict

-Six structural principles to prevent conflict: de-privatization of aggression, control over the state violence-monopoly, establishment of the rule of law, social justice, democratic participation of citizens, and constructive conflict culture

-structural and operational prevention:

structural prevention: measures that are to prevent emergence of a crisis situation,

operational prevention: measures that are applicable to immediate crisis



-To analyze a conflict we discussed 5 main categories  
Definition, Category, Dynamics, Issues and Management

-As conflicts are understood as an omnipresent part of  
human society, it's no about the question of elimination but  
understatement, regulation and settlement

-How it is to be done depends on the kind of conflict, on its  
issues, its level of intensity and its stage

-Conflict dealing is never completed, its a permanent process



*thanks for listening!*