

**Structure****3.1 Introduction****Aims and Objectives****3.2 Focusing on Conflict Dynamics****3.3 Focusing on Basic Needs****3.4 Focusing on Rational Calculations****3.5 Identifying Key Elements in Conflict Analysis****3.6 Summary****3.7 Terminal Questions****Suggested Readings**

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**3.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The concept of ‘Conflict’ continues to be an elusive one in spite of efforts by peace-researchers and social scientists to clarify it. The common preoccupation with the phenomena of conflict necessitates theoretical work on basic concepts of analysis so that different perspectives and different observations can be brought together. Much work still remains to be done; but an increasing number of insights have been gained in modes of conflict analysis races, though little has been achieved in the field of conflict resolution.

The different modes of analysis are brought together under three headings. There are approaches which emphasize (1) conflict dynamics, (2) needs-based conflict origins, and (3) rational, strategic calculations. These constitute distinct forms of analysis. However, they do intersect and many writers use them interchangeably.

**Aims and Objectives**

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Understand and examine the various methods of Conflict Analysis
- Identify the key elements in conflict Analysis

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## 3.2 FOCUSING ON CONFLICT DYNAMICS

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Most of the analysis in this section has already been discussed in Unit 1. Nevertheless, it is important to rewind some of them for understanding the conflict dynamics. The classic understanding of conflict sees it as a dynamic phenomenon; one actor is reacting to what another actor is doing, which leads to further action. Quickly, the stakes in the conflict escalate. One sequence of events follows another, and it is difficult to decipher which party is more responsible for what happens. In popular understanding it is expressed as ‘it takes two to conflict’. There are many observations which evoke this theme, notably the prevalence of mirror images, that parties and issues are seeing the conflict in the same way, only reversing the picture. There are also dynamics pushing the actors in conflicts into two camps (polarisation), creating commanding leadership (centralisation), and forming institutions with particular responsibilities and little insight (secrecy and protection). The conflict takes on a life of its own, engulfing the actors and, seemingly irresistibly, pushing them into an ever-increasing conflict. The idea of conflict as a social phenomenon moving by itself is powerful. It is invoked when parties say that they have no alternatives. The dynamics of the conflict have removed all other possible actions, and are said to give a party no choice but to continue to react at increasing levels of threat and violence.

For the analysis of such dynamics some tools have been developed. Game theory has already been discussed. Such an analysis was developed in the 1960s for the polarized East-West conflict, suggesting credible de-escalating steps that could lead to positive responses. The idea was that if one actor begins to act on its own, the other(s) may follow, and thus the dynamics change direction. Some of these ideas were used for the US-Soviet relations in early period of détente.

The dynamic approach to conflict analysis points to the significance of establishing dialogue between the parties. Here, a conference format is important and requires that the parties can participate, with practical go-betweens and add issues which may unlock positions. Confidence-building measures are important not only in the military field but also in social, cultural, economic and other areas. Conferences and confidence-building

are mostly multilateral, and the role of mediators, facilitators and third parties take a particular role in such settings.

Conflict resolution mechanism refers to the creation of independent procedures in which the parties can have confidence. These are formal or informal arrangements to which they can agree to hand over their conflict, whose solution they can accept and which can define the termination of a conflict (Coser 1967; Galtung 1965; Schelling 1960). Such mechanisms exist in internal affairs, for instance, courts, democratic procedures, and elections called to solve a parliamentary stalemate. They are to be found in history as duels, oracles and ordeals. They are scarce in international relations, where court systems are weak and political fora easily become arenas of dispute, rather than frameworks for handling conflicts. In internal affairs, the possibilities of appeal are important, creating opportunities to review what has been done on lower levels. As part of a future conflict resolution mechanism this can also be a useful device in the international system.

Finally, parties with non-violent methods are potentially efficient in changing the dynamics. This gives a role to peace movements but also to other groups and non-governmental organization (NGOs) that work for conciliation and understanding across divides. Such pursue the goals with peaceful means, not with violence. They constitute an alternative approach for a community wishing to achieve change, but not convinced that violence is an appropriate action.

Nevertheless, this perspective is weak in its understanding of why conflicts start. Do conflicts really begin with conflict attitudes? Or, are they result of previous behaviour and pre-existing incompatibilities? Can there be a more complex background? These are critical challenges to conflict theory and require alternative approaches.

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### **3.3 FOCUSING ON BASIC NEEDS**

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A **Classical** writer in social conflict theory Lewis A. Coser argued in 1965 that the conflicts as well as the violent actions stem from not being accepted in society, a matter of dignity, political access and power. The riots were not random burning and looting, but

struck against those who had treated members of another ethnic community in a condescending way. Coser points to a remedy: access to the political system. He writes that 'only where there exist open channels of political communication through which all groups can articulate their demands, are the chances high that the political exercise of violence can be successfully minimized' (1967, p.106). This means that violent conflict can be terminated by satisfying needs for access. This, furthermore, has to be maintained over time. The solution is likely to be found in building new institutions, whether formal or informal.

In his work on 'protracted social conflict' twenty years later, Edward Azar outlined ideas for explaining the duration of conflicts and the repeated failure of conflict resolution. He was concerned, for instance, with the civil war in Lebanon which, by the time of writing, had raged for more than a decade. This and other protracted conflicts dealt with such needs as security, identity, recognition and participation, factors which are identical to those that Coser singled out (Azar and Burton, 1986, p.29). These contributions by Coser and Azar result in a different approach to conflict resolution. If the basis of a conflict is the denial of particular needs, then the resolution process must identify those needs and include ways of answering them. Negotiations have a tendency to give advantages to elite, and if agreements 'do not touch upon the underlying issues in the conflict (agreements) do not last'. Instead, Azar finds, conflict resolution requires decentralized structures and ways in which psychological, economic and relational needs can be satisfied (Azar and Burton, 1986, pp.30-39).

This thinking is part of a materialist theoretical tradition and constitutes a significant element in class analysis. But Marxist theorists seldom have come to an understanding of conflict resolution. On the contrary, much Marxist thinking is based on the idea of continuous conflict, ending only with the defeat of the oppressive system, at this time, Capitalism. Negotiation and compromise were not part of the political formula, or of the academic study. Only in the reformist, Social Democratic version was conflict within Capitalism manageable. When Soviet leaders argued in the late 1950s that peaceful

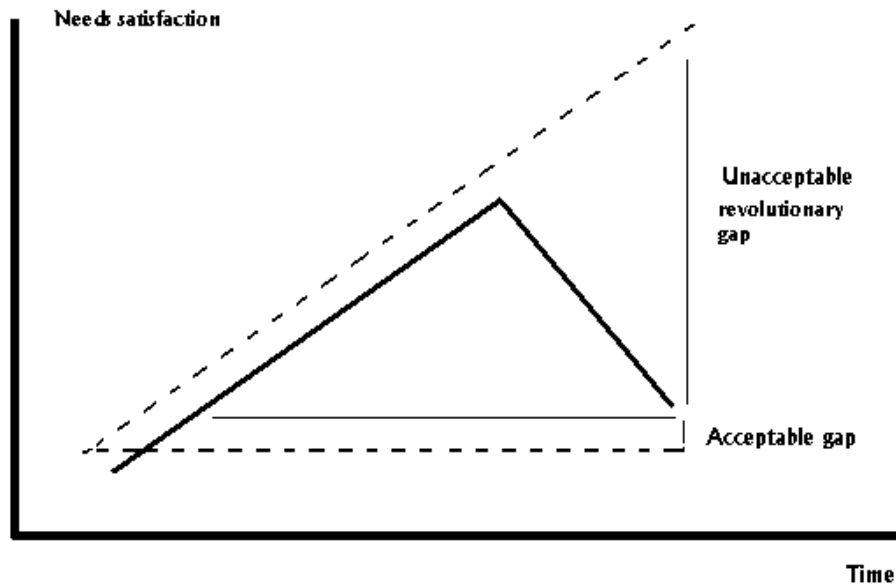
coexistence with Capitalism was possible, it resulted in a rupture with more orthodox Communism, for instance, the People's Republic of China under Mao Tse-tung.

Another root of the idea of conflict stemming from frustration is the approach of analyzing revolution as emerging from unsatisfied needs. Theories of deprivation have been given thoughtful consideration in a number of works and been exposed to empirical tests (Davies, 1971; Gurr, 1970). The results are mixed. In his elaborate treatment of relative deprivation, Ted R. Gurr found support for 'relative deprivation' as a systematic way for conflicts to become violent. In his later work on ethnic groups, Gurr reports factors that were associated with escalation into violent conflict, most notably the negative effects of the removal of autonomy for a particular group. It often becomes an important reason for the group to revolt (Gurr, 1993). The observation is linked to Coser's reflections on dignity and political access. The removal of channels of influence may spark violence. Thus, the creation of such channels can be important in terminating violence and making non-armed conflict a constructive part of the political process.

These theorists refer to concepts such as frustration and deprivation. What they provide is an analysis of social frustration. Basic needs are not met in a particular society; instead they are out of reach for a group, which thus becomes frustrated. The conflict originates in or feeds on this frustration. It comes close to classical studies on frustration as resulting in aggression, and aggression as stemming from frustration (Dollard et al. 1939), which has given rise to considerable debate and revision. For instance, it has been asked if aggression is the only way to direct frustration, and whether there are other possible explanations for frustration and conflict behaviour (Fry and Bjorkqvist, 1997, pp.26-32). Coser restricts the argument to the denial of dignity and access, not necessarily to other frustrated objectives.

The sequence is captured in James C. Davis' figure on revolution, drawn in figure 1. It shows pointedly how a gap emerges and when the difference between expectations and frustration becomes obvious. As the **Figure 1** is

**Figure 1**



constructed, expectations are always higher than what is accomplished. A certain difference is, therefore, manageable. The achievements are seen as the lower line in the figure. When the gap becomes too large, however, it is likely to be unacceptable. This may happen, for instance, if the economy ceases to grow after a period of sustained growth. The actual achievement becomes considerably lower than was expected and thus discontent rises. This leads to a revolution of rising expectations, it has been argued. Interestingly, **Davis** finds in his study that this pattern fits with the economic performance of several countries before a revolution breaks out. This does not settle the issue, however. For instance, a question is whether or not the same experience has occurred in a number of other countries, but without revolution. Frustration, as described by Davies, may be theoretically interesting, but does it hold up empirically? Gurr's initial study did not result in strong correlations (1970), but his work focusing on what we may call political frustration suggests intriguing relationship (1993).

The model in Figure 1 is confined to internal, or intrastate, situations. Revolutions are directed at the leaders in the same society. How can frustration result in international conflict? John W. Burton, who has written extensively on conflict resolution, suggests there is a 'spillover' effect. Conflicts, 'especially at the international level', he says, 'are a spillover of some internal institutional or personal problem'. These are ways in which leaders 'divert attention' (Burton, 1996, p.41). Thus, internal conflict may arise from a group's reaction to discrimination, and the resulting disturbances are diverted by the government into international conflict. This is a popular theory. Theoretically there are, however, a number of other ways in which frustration can be **diverted covered (???)**, for instance, in the Roman slogan of 'Bread and Circus' meaning that basic economic necessities were met and that spectacular shows were arranged to give the populations interests other than politics.

As we saw in the conflict dynamic perspective, ending of conflict is not necessarily part of the approach; conflicts are transformed, not eliminated. Similarly, we may ask, is it at all possible to meet all the needs that humans and human groups may have? If not, then conflict resolution becomes but a way of managing conflict, possibly channeling it, but not ending it. Alternatively, we may ask if there are some needs that are possible to meet, and if so, are these the ones which are important to handle in order to reduce the amount of violent conflict in the world? The researchers using this approach still owe us answers to such questions.

There are distinct conflict resolution techniques that follow from this, no matter what the origins of the conflict. One is the problem-solving workshop, which, according to Burton, was first used in the middle of the 1960s for the Confrontation Crisis and involved representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore (Azar and Burton, 1986, pp.46-47; Burton, 1987). The three governments nominated participants and the workshop was held in London College at the Centre for the Analysis of conflict. The meeting lasted for ten days, and was controlled by a group of scholars. With this, a tradition of workshops was initiated. There is now a broad array of different approaches (Broome 1997; Doob 1970; Fisher 1983; Kelman and Cohen, 1976). Increasingly there is also learning, for

instance, of cultural difference in problem-solving approaches (Strohschneider and Guss, 1999). The original purpose of the workshop was to go beyond the parties' stated positions and reach the underlying needs (Rouhana, 1995). Theoretically, such an analysis should not necessarily assume that all parties are equally responsible for a conflict. In practice, the workshops have included the opposing sides, trying to make them understand each other's needs. Thus, the approach becomes quite symmetric (Rouhana, 1995). If one side were defined as the more aggressive, as the causal analysis may suggest, workshops would actually be designed to work with only one side.

However, the problem-solving workshops cannot, by themselves, lead to the solutions. It is more likely that they set an agenda and thus, inform the parties on the needs of the other side. They will be able to act on a more complete understanding of each other's preferences. Still, needs may not be met in a society, due to a lack of resources or the way scarce resources are managed. Thus, equitable economic policies become central, as a way of preventing future conflicts as well as handling acute crises within a society. Although this is easily said, there may be unexpected effects. It may, for instance, result in serious conflict with other actors that can lead to fears and frustrations of others. There are also arguments against economic equality. Discrepancies are said to be the way in which economics develop. Certain differences in income and wealth are important as they give incentives to work hard (Olson, 1971). However, with the same logic, too large and growing differences would create a revolutionary potential and that is, of course, the starting point for Marxist analysis. It is expressed in the figure above. It is reasonable to assume that a society, in order to sustain itself, needs to distribute economic resources relatively equitably to all citizens. This may be equally true whether the economy as a whole is growing or declining.

This, then, relates to conflict inside one society. Does it also translate into an international community, where a few countries are very wealthy and many are very poor? Certainly, resentment exists, and forms of terrorism build on this fact. The logic of the argument would not halt at the border of states. It does not require spillover arguments either, as frustration emerges once the differences and injustices are seen. In



today's world they are apparent. But, a sceptic could ask, is this manageable through a problem-solving workshop? Also, is a global policy for a fair economy feasible?

A final point: aggression has victims and perpetrators. When needs and grievances are seen by actors to coincide with ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural or historical lines, they add elements which make a situation even more explosive. In many riots, it is not the distant leaders who feel the direct impact of rage, but those who are closest to the mobs, be they shop owners, weak, poor, women or children. They have to face the destruction, in Indonesia in 1998 (targeting property of the Chinese population, but also the Suharto family). Other examples are Kosovo 1999 (first targeting Albanians, then Serbs, Romas) and East Timor (first pro-independence groups, later leaving pro-Indonesia groups in fear). The aggressive group, the perpetrators, needs a closer analysis, not only the societal relationship. One may ask: why did this group think that atrocities against another group would improve their lot? Were there alternative thoughts? Are there outside incentives for pursuing these actions? Who is actually participating in actions? There are many and legitimate questions asked about this form of mobilisation of popular energy and why it takes a particular direction. Such questions, furthermore, lead to ideas about the possibility of non-aggressive reactions for more constructive uses of accumulated energy. In most revolutionary situations, there are groups that share the sentiments of the militants, but find other courses of action to be more effective. Internal debates on the appropriate course of action within a particular group are important. The outside world can impact on this debate in ways which may favour conflict resolution.

### **Limitations**

With the needs-based approach it is the difficulty of meeting an individual party's need that is the origin of the conflict and the key to its solution. The analysis aims at locating unmet needs. It may then be more important to work with one particular actor than another, although different sides are represented. In an asymmetric situation it is a matter of conveying to the dominant group the perspective of the dominated, but also to clarify to the dominated constraints on the dominating side. In the conflict dynamics approach it is basic that the actors are treated in a similar, symmetric fashion, as all have some responsibility for the conflict and, thus, also for the solution of the conflict. The two

perspectives contrast with each other, but they do not necessarily exclude each other. Let us see if this is also true for the third perspective on conflict resolution.

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### **3.4 FOCUSING ON RATIONAL CALCULATIONS**

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Actors' incompatibilities and actions as stemming from the circumstances are the ones in which actors find themselves. The actors individually or as a system of actors have to handle conditions that drive them apart. The third perspective assumes that actors have their own rationality, form their own judgments, make decisions, pursue strategies and, thus, initiate the chain of events that lead to war. The reversal of this, that is, ending wars and reaching agreements, has to be seen in the same light. There is a need for actors to make calculations that can terminate a conflict, but at the same time ending war is not the actor's only interest. A good presentation of this thinking is found in the publications of I. William Zartman, but many have worked in similar directions (Fisher and Ury, 1981; Stedman 1991).

The idea that wars rise from a rational calculation is, of course, not novel. It is part of an established realist and neorealist thinking about the origins of wars. The new twist is to see the ending of wars in such terms. Paul Pillar did pioneering work (1983) in this field. The ideas of Zartman have brought the approach further, without leading to the construction of formal models and illustrative diagrams. Zartman outlined such ideas before the end of the Cold War, and continues to adhere to them (Zartman 1989a; Zartman and Berman 1982; Zartman and Rasmussen 1997). The literature of the type presented in *Getting to Yes* (Fisher and Ury, 1981) rests less on explicit calculation, but still applies a rationalist perspective. The purpose is to understand the real interests of the parties, and thus look beyond their stated positions. Roger Fisher and William Ury introduced a set of notions which were primarily geared to negotiations in general, although the authors were clearly thinking of their utility for armed conflicts and war. In later work, Charles W. Kegley and Gregory A. Raymond state that such calculations have to include moral arguments, to provide a basis for justice in ending war and increase the chances of durable settlements (Kegley and Raymond, 1999). The rational approach,

which focuses on the ending of war, appears fruitful and politically relevant. Its main assertions need a closer inspection.

The parties, which may be states, groups or movements, initiate war to win them, it is assumed. This means that the parties, or at least the initiator, make internal calculations showing that the benefits outweigh the losses when escalating a conflict to a violent confrontation. Such calculations may look different for the opposing sides, but in principle the variables and their values are the same. One side makes a calculation for starting the violence, the other for defending itself against the attack. As time passes and nobody wins, the initial calculations are affected and have to be revised. The potential benefits from victory are reduced as the costs increase. At the same time the fact that so much time, energy, resources and human life has been invested-destroyed –makes it difficult not to continue, until the final moment of victory is reached. Otherwise the investment would be lost and the suffering meaningless. The parties, in Zartman's analysis, look towards the future. If that does not include a reasonably early chance of victory, but instead suggests a continued stalemate, perhaps even a catastrophe for the fighting sides, then there are elements of a 'ripe moment' for resolution. In Zartman's words, the conflict offers nothing but a 'flat, unpleasant terrain stretching into the future' (Zartman, 1989, p.268).

If the parties find this stalemate to be painful, what Zartman calls a 'hurting stalemate', it may lead them to strategic rethinking. There may be a chance for peace. Not necessarily, however. If none of the sides is comfortable with the present and can see no way forward to win the dispute-perhaps only fearing more destruction, without breakthrough-this is likely to be a moment requiring a change of action. At this point the parties might agree on a ceasefire, to reduce the pain, have a chance of recuperation, even getting an opportunity for buying new weapons. It could be time for a pause, perhaps calculated on what is needed before a new offensive. It is a limited strategic rethinking, where the goals are maintained. A cease-fire, in other words, many slow down the move towards a settlement, and instead prolong the fighting. This is an important dilemma in conflict termination. Many have strong opinions on this, but there is little empirical study on the

conflict resolution merits of cease-fires. However, the hurting stalemate can also be turned into an 'enticing opportunity', as Zartman has termed it. It can be used for a move forward to settlement, not simply freezing the present situation, the status quo. Here enters another of Zartman's concepts, the need for 'finding the formula'. There must be a way out for the parties, the weaker as well as the stronger. This line of argument gives an important role to outside powers. They can point out that there is a stalemate, and a danger of catastrophe in the near future, 'precipice' in Zartman's words, and they can suggest alternatives for settling the conflict (Zartman, 1989).

The calculations that go into the decision making of the warring parties are, by necessity, complex. Let us attempt to project the situation for two sides at different times in a conflict. In the first stage, the dominant side, A, expects to be able to prevail by defeating the other side, B, and keep control over the resources in dispute, be it governmental power, territory, or something else. Actor B at this time expects considerable sacrifice, as B knows it is challenging a dominant actor, threatening to change the status quo, to achieve an improved standing in the long run. Thus, the expectations are different. Side A may be less psychologically prepared to manage a sustained battle than is B, for whom this has been a plan for a longer period of time. In terms of casualties, for instance, B may be prepared to accept more pain than A. At a certain moment in time, however, the equations change. The war has become longer than planned. A has had to invest more and all of A's other policies are affected. The gains from the conflict are decreasing, the costs are mounting. For B, the expectation of victory in a reasonably short period of time was not fulfilled. The status quo, the challenger learns, is more entrenched than expected. Victory and associated gains are postponed into the future. The balance between benefits and costs of war may not break even. This is one of the appropriate moments for ending the war, a ripe moment. Neither side is winning within the time framework it had expected nor with the resources it had, at its disposal. The prognoses are gloomy for both sides. A stalemate exists in the minds of the leaders. If it is reflected on the battlefield, in the form of trenches and unbreakable defensive lines, there is a stalemate in the war, and it might be the right opportunity for interjecting ideas of conflict resolution. It may come

right after one side has tried and failed to break the military stalemate with an offensive, for instance.

However, the same calculations can pull the equation in a different direction. It may be argued that one side, be it A or B, has now used so much of its resources that the effect of making a 'final' offensive is only a marginal additional cost, and the gains from such an offensive could be so much greater. Some of the losses could be regained. Failed negotiations, Zartman observes, means that at least one party 'saw the cost of concessions as being greater than the cost of continuing conflict (Zartman, 1995a; p.33). The calculations become increasingly geared to marginal utilities. With a particular, measured, military or political move, A might be able to strengthen its position, so that A will not have to make this particular concession. In a negotiation, in other words, a party may have alternative actions that rest outside the realm of the talks. The term used by Fisher and Ury for this is BATNA, the 'best alternative to negotiated agreement'. In the same way, there might be a 'best alternative' to continued warfare, of course. There are always choices. Each of them carries different costs and benefits. At a certain point, however, terminating the war becomes rational to the warring parties, and an agreed ending can be reached.

The rational calculations are difficult to see from the outside. At a certain moment in time, it may be possible to argue rationally for a continuation of war as well as a search for peace. This makes it difficult at a particular time to determine, with some certainty, that there is a ripe moment. In fact, two different calculations can confront each other inside the parties. The rational model may appear parsimonious and simple; in fact, it may be less operational. However, this approach attempts to specify something that goes further than we have seen in either the dynamic or the needs-based approaches. It tries to specify when a conflict can be brought to an agreed ending. Neither dynamic approaches nor needs-based analysis can readily point to shifts in the conflict that would signify when and how it can be ended or transformed. The rational calculations are also closer to the practical policy-makers, who are themselves as capable of forming policies and

moulding the future. In the previous approaches such actors are more likely to be regarded as objects of circumstance rather than subjects of will and power.

The policy prescriptions that follow from the rational approach are many. More than the other two approaches, the outside world has an active role, particularly when we are concerned with conflicts in smaller countries. It seems legitimate to influence the parties in the direction of conflict management and resolution. Outsiders may be influencing the calculation rather than the dynamics or the needs. The calculus for conflict and conflict resolution can be affected, for instance, by rewards and punishment. Assistance to one or both sides may be a credible promise made by the outside world. This can be done on condition that the primary parties end the war. It is likely that reconstruction programmes interest the fighting sides. There can also be sanctions for not going into negotiations or for not compromising. This can come in the form of reductions in aid, loss of preferential treatment in trade, a ban on investments, etc. These are measures contributing to the economic constraints for parties already burdened by the war effort. Such steps are generally seen to be legitimate for achieving conflict resolution. Their effects on the parties may be counter-productive, however, and the success record of explicit uses of sanctions is not impressive.

Even more controversial is whether rewards and punishment can or should be administered by military means, in the form of direct military attacks on one party, aiming at tipping the military balance in favour of the other. NATO's bombing in Bosnia in 1995 and in Yugoslavia during the Kosovo crisis in 1999 is in this category. Did they achieve what had been planned? What is the balance of pain inflicted and pain relieved, for instance? Such actions raise legal issues and ethical questions, not only instrumental ones. Also, the decisions to use military arsenals are not taken lightly by the outsiders. They are likely to be available only for some few conflicts, of particular interest to particular outsiders.

The fact that the outside world can have a strong impact on conflicts involving smaller countries raises an increasingly important question: who are the parties that should settle

a particular conflict? In line with the dynamic perspective, as many actors as possible should be involved. There is a preference for a broad agenda and liberal rules of invitation. In the needs-based approach, the opposite is favoured. The workshops should be held far from the scene, have little media access, and concentrate on a limited number of parties, who act as representatives, not as individuals. For an approach building on rational calculations, however, the answer is simply that those who count should be in. There is, in Zartman's writing, a repeated observation that not all parties need to be involved in a peace deal. It may be desirable to have as many as possible included, but it is not always necessary. Another calculation can be made: which parties are needed to make an agreement durable? Some parties may create difficulties, and their interests may be better left for later. In the dynamic approach, the incorporation of as many actors as possible is important. It is not only seen to be more democratic, it is said also to be more fruitful, as there are more issues and there is a larger potential for trade-offs. The outcomes, too, will be more innovative.

### **Limitations**

From a rational calculation perspective, larger meetings and intensive dialogue can appear as a waste of resources and time. The urgency of solving a conflict, using the ripe moment, may be lost. In the rational calculation perspective, timing is very important. Opportunities should be seized, particularly in a situation where a war is ongoing. This requires swift action, often by a few, determined actors. The dynamic and needs-based approaches see conflict resolution as a process and, thus, do not advocate rapid action and political manoeuvring. Ripe moments may come and go. This is not the way conflicts will ever be solved, they would argue.

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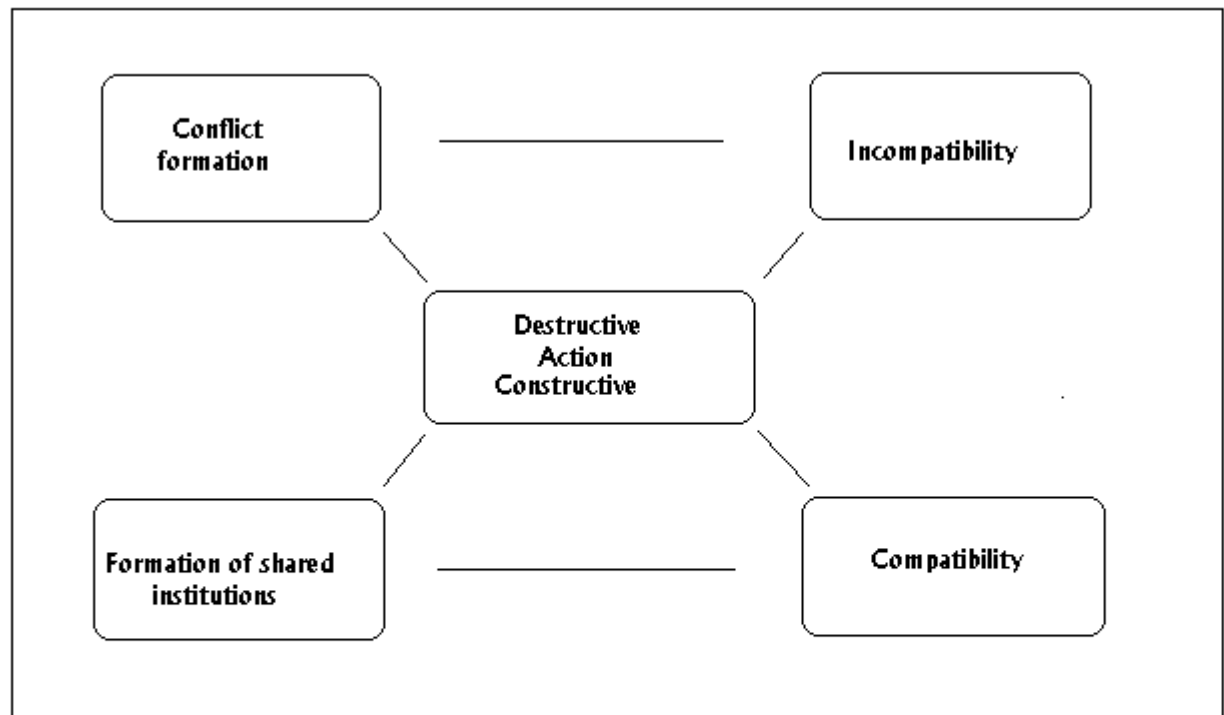
## **3.5 IDENTIFYING KEY ELEMENTS IN CONFLICT ANALYSIS**

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Living with or dissolving the incompatibility is a central element in the conflict analysis. This is learned from the dynamic approach to conflict for instance, in differentiating between position and interests and getting into the calculations of the parties. The focus on the needs of parties brings with it a close look at the parties themselves, their needs perceptions and the history behind the conflict. These are elements which also are important for an analysis of rational calculations. There is a relationship between conflict

behaviour and changing positions, as indicated in terms such as action-reaction, but so are carefully, rationally calibrated moves. In all, the three approaches have many shared features. They are, as a consequence, all useful. They illustrate different elements in the conflict process and how it can be turned into a peace process. **Figure 2** describes this and suggests a shared framework for the analysis.

**Figure 2**



**(Recheck on the diagram. Arrows are not delineated ???)**

The dynamics of conflict are illustrated by the arrow in Figure.2. There are no convincing arguments for assuming that a conflict always starts in one corner. It is more fruitful to assume that connections exist and are more fluid. The different boxed require



some closer description. First, in the box on conflict formation is located the creation of parties, which we have stipulated to be an integral part of conflict analysis. Some parties are formed deliberately to make conflicts; other may be there for other purposes. When a party is formed, it begins by making itself known, developing its identity and giving itself a role in the conflict to which it adheres. The history, recruitment and financing of a party are important to understand, as well as its internal decision-making. If there are needs in the society on which its actions purport to be based, then, of course, those needs have to be focused. To this also belongs whether a party really represents the needs of a larger share of the population.

Second, obviously, an analysis of the incompatibility is necessary. What are the conflicting interests, what is the relationship between interests, positions and needs of the actor or of the population it claims to represent? The actors are likely to have an internal priority in terms of issues. Some are more basic than others. It is important for the analyst to have an idea of such hierarchies; third, there are the actions. Conflicts are fuelled by destructive actions, actions aimed at reducing the influence of the other side, and enhancing the influence of its own side. Thus, this box in Figure 2 not only involves actual warfare but also the making of alliances, finding friends, and locating of financiers, as well as preventing the opponent from doing the same. These are seen, by the parties, as integral elements of their struggle. The conflict strategies are important elements in the analysis.

In figure 2 however, a statement of great consequence is made. It is argued, in line with the dynamic approach, that behaviour can be changed, and that such a change is strategic in making a conflict take a different direction. That is described as constructive action. These are actions that aim at bridging the gap to the other side. Included are measures such as confidence-building, but also unilateral actions. The now classical example is the visit by Egypt's President Sadat to Jerusalem in 1977. It was an unexpected action. It was not clear how the Israeli government would receive it. With the support of the US administration, it helped to change the dynamics in the Middle East conflict. Such measures are rare, and risky ways; but many recent wars have contained unilateral and

constructive moves. Thus, the behaviour of the opposing sides is the element in the conflict that the parties themselves watch most closely, they will ask, for instance, if a positive announcement is followed by positive steps. If not, the former is regarded as propaganda and the latter as the reality. The proof of 'good intentions' is 'good actions'.

Once there is a shift in behaviour, the parties in a cease-fire, may build compatibility through traditional peacekeeping; the lower half of Figure 2 comes into operation. A dynamic development may follow and build momentum. The parties may start searching for compatible positions (shared needs or a formula meeting interests of the primary parties) and, when they find them, there will also be attempts to create new structures through which these can be expressed. This can be simple negotiation for a (multilateral conferences) but also transitory forms of government or even entirely new permanent bodies (the European Union (EU) could be regarded as a way of ending the earlier Franco-German conflict, although it is more often described as a measure to prevent a future one). The detection of compatibilities and the formation of new organisations mean that dynamics are created which may generate more constructive action. Thus, Figure 2 describes two processes, a process of conflict formation and escalation in the upper half of the figure, and one of peace-building and shared interests in the lower half.

The utility of figure 2 can be demonstrated with the phenomenon of spoilers and spoiler management introduced by Stedman. It can now be located theoretically. Spoilers are those actors who have no interest in the conflict process shifting from the higher to the lower level in figure 2. If there is a peace agreement, as postulated by Stedman, then a spoiler aims to prevent the dynamics in the lower level from spinning further. This runs counter to interests held by particular groups. Thus, violent action can be used to attempt to shift the conflict back into the higher level. If successful, peace moves are spoiled, for the time being. When a conflict is locked in the upper part of figure 2, most actors are spoilers as long as they all pursue destructive action. Thus, it makes sense, as Stedman does, to link the spoiler phenomenon to a peace agreement or at least a fairly entrenched peace process. In a way, a spoiler is a party still living in the dynamics of the upper level, preferring to be there at least as long as its interests are not met. This illustrates also the

importance for the custodians to make clear that the situation has changed and decisively moved into the lower level of Figure 2. The custodians have to show in action that they are committed to preventing the conflict from sliding back to the dynamics of the upper level.

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### **3.6 SUMMARY**

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The fact that behaviour is the point combining the two dynamics makes clear its dual nature. It may promote one or the other development, but it is also the juncture at which conflict dynamics can change from one loop to the other and back again. It means that conflicts are not unilinear, for instance, moving from frustration to conflict in behaviour, positions and parties, new frustrations and new calculations all affecting the dynamics. It means that conflicts are not simply escalating and de-escalating, or that they are easily predicted and calculated. They are all of these simultaneously and that is the reality with which the analysts have to cope.

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### **3.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

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1. Critically examine the various methods of Conflict Analysis
2. Identify the key elements in Conflict Analysis.

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### **SUGGESTED READINGS**

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