

### 2.1 The Concept of Conflict

A strong statement is that conflicts *are* solvable. This is not necessarily an idealistic or optimistic position. As this book will show, it is a realistic proposition. Most actors in conflicts will find themselves in need of negotiations at one time or another. Even if a conflict results in war and destruction, there may have been other options and alternative paths for the conflict. There are frequent statements on the inevitability of conflict, violence and war. Indeed, finding solutions may often be difficult. This difficulty not only arises out of political constraints but can also be due to a lack of insight or imagination. There are also views that violence and war are desirable or even necessary. Unbearable conditions or impossible threats may make such opinions understandable. Too often, however, the results of war negate the very hope for a better future that may initially have motivated the war. Few wars follow the paths anticipated by the actors. Short wars may avoid such pitfalls, but who is to guarantee that a war will be short? Many wars have started from this premise, however. Afterwards, it will be asked: were all avenues used to find a peaceful solution prior to the initiation of war? Only after this can be convincingly proven do the arguments of inevitability and desirability approach validity. Thus, the determined search for a solution is not only a moral question, it is also a rational one. This is the sole way in which a free society will be prepared to accept the strains of war. Indeed, if conflicts are exposed to such early challenges, solutions may actually be found, even in unexpected situations. Thus, conflicts are solvable and there are many and varied experiences of such solutions.

If conflicts *are* solvable, is it also true that conflicts – sooner or later – *will* be solved? Clearly, once a conflict has developed into a war, the options are fewer. At that moment, the primary actors will pursue victory rather than a joint solution. The victory of one side over the other is, then, a possible outcome, even to the point of the other's capitulation, dissolution and disappearance as an actor. The record shows that this is what happens in some conflicts, but by no means all. Conflicts will come to an end at some point. Whether that ending is a solution, a victory or a stalemate has to be scrutinized. To this should be added the question of whether or not the conflict is likely to be armed and violent again.

Victory is the outcome preferred by most actors in a war. If achieved, it may solve parts of an issue, but often not the entire problem at hand. The victory of the allied countries over Nazi Germany is a case in point. After the failure of the agreement reached in Munich in 1938, it was no longer possible for the Western powers to consider negotiations with Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. The end of the Second World War meant the implementation of the demand for unconditional surrender and the elimination of the Nazis as an actor. This was as clear-cut a victory as can be. It did not, however, mean the end of Germany. The issue of Germany's position in the international system still had to be settled. Conflict among the victors arose over this question. It became one of the core issues in the Cold War. A solution developed as new leaders emerged in West Germany. They were democratically inclined, conscientiously building on pre-1933 democratic traditions and new ideas from the Western powers. A reintegration of Germany into the international system took place, ultimately even allowing for its reunification in 1990, but only 45 years after the end of the Second World War. Also, it was only possible with a new Germany, willing to admit its responsibility for the past and able to accommodate to the present. If the Second World War had been a question solely of Germany's role in the international system, there was a route through peaceful dialogue and development. A solution within a democratic framework among democratic countries was found. It could have been found before the Nazis took power. For any country, in other words, there are always alternatives to a war strategy for achieving goals. Regimes, however, may deliberately narrow their options and construct situations where the choice becomes defeat or victory. Nazi Germany chose such a path.

Conflict precedes conflict resolution. There is already considerable analysis of the origin and the pursuit of conflict. Machiavelli and Clausewitz are important writers in one Western tradition of conflict analysis. Adam Smith and Karl Marx offered competition and class analysis as other tools for understanding. In classical Chinese discourse, Sun Tzu is a central writer, as is Kautilya in India or Ibn Khaldun in the Arab world. Military strategic thinking has become universally shared and there is often, among military officers, a surprising degree of common understanding across battle lines. Also, the analysis of societal contradiction has such cross-cultural traits, Smith and Marx being influential in different quarters across the globe. The same, however, is not true of conflict resolution thinking. It is a novel topic. It is less developed and less coherent. Thus, it is important to introduce the ideas of modern thinkers. It is also necessary to relate them to trends in social science thinking.

'Conflict' has many meanings in everyday life. To some it refers to *behaviour* or *action*. There is conflict when a trade union goes on strike or an employer locks out its employees. It is also conflict when two states are at war with one another and where battlefield events determine their relations. The actions constitute the conflict. If this were all, however, it would mean that a conflict would end once this behaviour ended. Few would agree to this. A cease-fire is not the end of a conflict. Even verbal statements, non-violent actions, the mobilization of petitions, demonstrations, boycotts and sanctions may only indicate

that there is an interlude in the conflict. Actions may resume at some later stage. There may still be dissatisfaction. Obviously, conflict is more than the behaviour of the parties alone.

A closer look indicates that the parties in an industrial dispute will not cease their actions until there is some movement on the issues that sparked the dispute. The word 'issue' here refers to the incompatible positions taken by the parties that motivate their actions. This, then, is a deeper understanding of what a conflict is. It is a severe disagreement between at least two sides, where their demands cannot be met by the same resources at the same time. This is an *incompatibility*. Positions are incompatible. There is some form of scarcity. If there is an abundance of resources, the demands from the various sides may easily be met. The incompatibility can be solved. If there are limited resources, however, problems will arise. The easy solutions are no longer available and more ingenious ways have to be found. How this can be done will be discussed later. For the time being, it is sufficient to note that when the parties adjust their demands so that there is no longer scarcity, the conflict disappears. The incompatible demands have been handled. Incompatibility appears to be a key to the existence of conflict. If there are no actions, although it is possible for an outsider to point to incompatibilities, there is only a latent conflict. Manifest conflict requires both action and incompatibility.

This is still not enough to get an initial understanding of the concept of conflict. We need to include the actors as well. Many would say that trade unions are created by employees to deal with an existing incompatibility from a stronger position, which may result in conflict. This is why they have a membership. Members expect to be protected even to the point where a manifest conflict becomes a distinct possibility. This means that there is a tension built into the relationship between the employer and the employees. 'Conflict' does exist, even if no actions are taken or demands formulated. Conflict is internal to the system. Similar descriptions also can be found for the interstate system. It is argued that sovereign states are inevitably locked into conflict with one another. States are continuously preparing to defend themselves from possible attack in order to protect their own survival. Such preparations only confirm to others that there are real dangers, thus they do the same. These are the dynamics of the well-known security dilemma (Herz, 1950; Waltz, 1959, 1979). This perspective suggests that the existence of one state is a danger to any other state. As long as there is unpredictability in the system, there will be fear and, thus, conflict. For our purposes, it means that *actors* or *parties* are fundamental to the existence of conflict. If the actors are formed and they make the analysis that what they need for survival conflicts with the needs of others, then there is conflict built into the system. The history of the actors, the actors' understanding of their own role and their resources are important elements in conflict analysis. From this we can conclude that conflict consists of three components:

- incompatibility
- action
- actors.

Combining them, we arrive at a complete definition of a conflict as:

a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources.

This definition brings together essential elements from a number of commonly used definitions. It includes the actors or 'parties' in the definition, which, as we have just seen, is basic. In many definitions the actor is left as a separate item, but, as the preceding arguments have made clear, this element is integral to the analysis and the definition.

The word 'strive' in the defining sentence requires a comment. It is a vague term, but the point is that, when the parties are acting, they are doing something (however minimal) to acquire the resources. 'Strive' may even include warfare. It covers a wide range of activities.

An additional phrase needs a comment. It is said that the parties are striving to acquire the resources 'at the same moment in time'. This is sometimes overlooked in definitions and may, again, be self-evident. If one actor is satisfied with having its demands met a year from now, other actors may be able to meet their goals today. There is no conflict today. Perhaps the first actor will worry about the future – 'Will there be anything left?' – but, if the party believes it has guaranteed that there will, the incompatibility is gone. It is clearly a different matter when the demands of each party for resources arise at the same moment in time. It is conventional wisdom that only one person can be prime minister at a time and that only one country can have formal jurisdiction over a particular piece of territory at a time. These resources are regarded as indivisible, for the time being. If this is what the parties believe, then this is their reality. In real life, there are solutions even to such problems – for instance, the creation of posts as first and second prime minister (as in Cambodia in the 1990s) or finding forms of shared rule of a territory. Such solutions emerge only if the parties perceive an incompatibility to be divisible. Time, as we notice every day, is scarce but still has this quality of divisibility – something that our calendars make clear. Schedules may dissolve incompatibilities.

The notion of an 'available set of scarce resources' should not be taken to include only economic matters. The term 'resources' covers all kinds of positions that are of interest to an actor. To be a prime minister, control a particular piece of territory, be able to propagate a particular idea in the media – all these things can be covered by the notion of 'available resources'. This definition demands that something is desired which is scarce, be it positions of power, attractive land or access to the airwaves. Such resources can sometimes be estimated in terms of money, square metres or other measures, but often they are intangible. For instance, demands for recognition, acceptance of responsibility for destructive actions or psychological retribution exemplify intangible values. Though intangible, they are still highly important. They may involve admissions that have implications for an actor's standing nationally or internationally, but only indirectly relate to material resources. Thus, there are incompatibilities relating to matters of justice, moral norms and guilt.

Hopefully, with the 'conflict' concept clarified, we can move on to the most difficult of all conflicts: wars. They are different from all other conflicts in that they are irreversible actions. Wars involve the taking of territory, eviction of inhabitants, deaths of soldiers and civilians, destruction of property, resources and the environment, as well as the disruption of people's mental, physical, economic and cultural development. War is among the most destructive phenomena that one human group can inflict on another. In the same category of extreme conflict we can also locate systematic repression, sexual and domestic violence, totalitarianism and genocide. These are actions initiated by human beings. They are matters that can be ended and remedied by humans, but not undone. They become strong and conscious elements in the histories of peoples, groups and individuals. Let us first look more closely at the exact meaning of war and then proceed to study recent trends in armed conflict and war.

## 2.2 Identifying Armed Conflict

### Three projects

A commonly asked question is: have conflict and war become more frequent and are they more destructive today than they used to be? It is a question about quantity, where it is assumed that conflicts are easily comparable. The question is asked to reach an understanding of where the world is headed, as a whole, for a particular region or for a particular phenomenon (for instance, arms production). It is often a question about the future, not only about history. At the same time, there are those who resent having 'their' conflict compared to other situations. Each conflict is unique and has its own characteristics. There are qualities that make them different. The question of frequency makes little sense to those who are parties in conflict. Why should they worry about that, it is bad enough with one conflict, they would say.

Both perspectives are valid. The projects that exist within the peace research community all aim to understand why conflicts occur or how they can be terminated. Their answers to the question of frequency of wars are actually by-products of other ambitions. The question is important nevertheless and contributes to the development of deeper answers. If there are general patterns recurring over a large number of different conflicts, it suggests something that can possibly explain why wars begin. By implication, it may yield ideas for improving the situation. Certain factors can be singled out for closer analysis. Questions of frequency interest the media and the public for other reasons. Today, it is frequently asked if there is a difference between the post-Cold War years and the Cold War period, or before/after September 11, 2001. Changes in the international system or in domestic policies associated with the ending of the Cold War may explain our present predicament. There are many other candidates for possible causation, however, and the impact of each may be difficult to disentangle from the others. In the analysis, many factors are mentioned, such as bipolarity, the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons, changed roles

of international organizations, democratization, the spread of free market mechanisms, changes in media access, concern for human rights, growth of non-governmental organizations and so on. Comparisons across time can illustrate a number of effects, but do not necessarily prove them. To be scientific evidence, cases and periods have to be selected with rigour and there have to be many observations. For the purpose of this book, it is important to have a general idea of the frequency and severity of armed conflicts in the world. It helps to set the topics of conflict resolution in perspective. Thus, let us review some ongoing efforts.

Armed conflict patterns are mapped continuously by several projects. First, this book uses the work of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, based at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, in Sweden. Data are published by the department in the annual publication *States in Armed Conflict*. Information is also available through the yearbooks of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), for major armed conflicts; the *Journal of Peace Research (JPR)*, from the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO), Oslo, for all armed conflicts, backdated to 1946; the *Human Security Report*, from the University of British Columbia; and, most fully, by accessing the Uppsala Conflict Database (at [www.pcr.uu.se/database/index.php](http://www.pcr.uu.se/database/index.php)).

Second, there is the project on wars and armed conflict by the Causes of War program at the University of Hamburg (AKUF, from its name in German), mapping the global record of local wars since 1945. This is also published in annual reports and books (Gantzel and Schwinghammer, 2000).

The third enduring project is Correlates of War (known as COW), originating at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, carrying information on wars since 1816. This information is normally available via databases, but sometimes also in printed publications. It has found wide usage in research projects and the findings have been systematized (Geller and Singer, 1998; Vasquez, 2000). There are additional important projects that aim to highlight the present dilemmas of war and violence. Among these is the Minorities at Risk project at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, focusing on a subset of conflicts: those involving ethnic minorities around the world. It contains data on minority groups that have been involved in some form of conflict since 1945. From this has also developed a biannual report on peace and conflict (Gurr, 1993, 2000a; Marshall, 1999; Marshall and Gurr, 2005).

Crisis behaviour between states can also be used to discuss questions of frequency (Brecher, 1993). A number of researchers have their own systematic collections of conflict-related information that are reported in international journals (Bercovitch, 1996; Carment, 1993; Carment and James, 1995; Gibler, 1999a, 1999b; Goldstein, 1992; Holsti, 1991; Levy, 1983; Licklider, 1995; Luard, 1986; Morton and Starr, 2001; Tillema, 1989). For an update, see the conflict project directory by Kristine Eck at the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2005, available online at: [www.pcr.uu.se/publications/UCDP-pub/UCDP-paper1.pdf](http://www.pcr.uu.se/publications/UCDP-pub/UCDP-paper1.pdf)). The annual *Human Security Report* makes use of the sources mentioned above and others.

The first three projects stand out, however, as the most consistent at specifically addressing armed conflicts in all categories, whether between or within

states. They also contain additional information that is useful for theorizing on the war phenomenon. Two are orientated towards understanding the causes of conflict, as can be surmised from their names (the Hamburg and Michigan projects). One deals specifically with conflict resolution (the Uppsala project). What, then, do they tell us about trends in armed conflict and war?

The question is simple but requires an understanding of key definitions before an answer can be given. The definitions of conflict and war guide the types of information any project will collect. Potentially, conflict data projects can show different global tendencies, depending on what categories of conflict they focus. The comparability, in other words, can be limited. Furthermore, there are several criteria that have to be met for a conflict dataset to be reliable. First, it must have a definition that is sufficiently general to go beyond what is important to only a particular period in history. The definitions in these projects meet these criteria: they do not vary with time or with the phenomena studied. The projects may still be relevant for other concerns as well. For instance, although ethnic conflict is not used as a category in these three projects, it is possible to retrieve information from them that is relevant to the study of ethnic conflict. They have, for instance, separate categories of internal war. In this way, the projects cover a wider range of conflict than does, for instance, the Minorities at Risk project.

Second, there has to be a definition that captures conflict between as well as within states. It means that it has to tap the general issue of violence, cutting across particular legal categories. This allows for an understanding of war beyond the category of interstate events. Clearly, data on interstate conflicts are more easily compiled. What two states do to one another that might lead to war is of interest to the surrounding community as well. Thus, such disputes will receive more attention than other issues. Conflicts inside a state, however, are not as likely to immediately affect neighbours, thus tending to make the international recording of such conflicts more sporadic. A full study might require intimate knowledge of all countries in the world. Thus, it still has to be the ambition to include *all* conflicts. This is a third criterion that is necessary if changes in armed conflict over time are to be discussed meaningfully.

Fourth, the definitions have to be precise, so as to guide data collection (operationalization) and delimit a particular conflict in time and space (beginning, ending) from other conflicts.

Finally, the data must be open to scrutiny by other researchers.

### The Michigan and Hamburg projects

The Michigan project is the oldest of the projects described above and serves as a reference point for many projects. It was initiated in the middle of the 1960s by J. David Singer and Melvin Small and is still maintained, something that is an achievement in itself. It has now turned into an inter-university cooperation programme and is physically located in Pennsylvania State University. Since 2005, Paul Diehl, of the University of Illinois, Urbana, has been the Director. It contains data on wars since 1816 and its record is constantly updated.

Basic to COW is the delineation of an international system consisting of states. Thus, wars are conflicts between states where at least two are members of the international system. In addition, there are extra-systemic conflicts, where only one state is a member. The military hostilities that are included are those that have led to at least 1000 combat fatalities during the course of the conflict. The ambition was to have a definition that captures all significant interstate wars. The civil war definition was developed later and is comparable, but not identical. It has a minimum of two parties, where one is a government, but the 1000 battle fatalities criterion is calculated per year and does include civilian casualties. It is more likely that, on the one hand, smaller interstate wars are entering into the statistics than civil wars. On the other hand, the categories of fatalities may mean that more casualties are reported for civil wars. The net effect of these differences is not simple to determine. From 1816 to 1997 it has identified 79 interstate wars, 108 extra-state wars and 213 civil wars (see COW's website at: [www.correlatesofwar.org](http://www.correlatesofwar.org)). It has identified a total of 400 wars for the period – an average of more than 2 wars of some kind starting somewhere in the world every year. War, in other words, is shown to be a pervasive and global phenomenon.

The Hamburg project was initiated by Istvan Kende in Budapest. It was later modified and developed at the University of Hamburg, due to the efforts of Klaus Jürgen Gantzel. Its results are different. Its definition does not require that a party be a member of the international system for a conflict to be included. The AKUF project, however, has the criterion that a state should be the actor on one side in a conflict. The actors should have, at a minimum, central command and practical control over the fighting. It is also stipulated that there has to be a measure of continuity in battle. There is no requirement for a particular number of deaths, which is an important consideration in the Michigan project (and in the Uppsala project as well, as we shall see). The Hamburg project, in fact, regards this criterion as a questionable indicator for practical, theoretical and ethical reasons. For instance, it is argued that information on deaths is unreliable and that there is no reason to include only those who have died from battle, but not those who have suffered from other consequences of the war (Gantzel and Meyer-Stamer, 1986: 4–5; Jung et al., 1996: 52). Instead, the 'continuity' in the struggle is decisive for inclusion of a particular conflict. This criterion, of course, results in a problem of judging continuity in a reliable way.

These criteria mean that AKUF covers a broader set of cases than COW. The project has data on all wars since 1945. For the period up to 1997, the project reported 201 wars (see AKUF's website at: [www.sozialwiss.uni-hamburg.de/publish/lpw/Akuf](http://www.sozialwiss.uni-hamburg.de/publish/lpw/Akuf)). On average, this gives a result of almost four new wars per year.

The effects of the definitions can be seen more clearly by comparing the years where the projects overlap. For the same period, COW reports 23 interstate wars, 17 extra-state wars and 104 civil wars – a total of 144 wars. The average is close to three new wars per year. The two projects clearly overlap, but still AKUF reports more activity. It could mean that the projects do not include the

same major conflicts, although this should not have such a strong impact, as the number is limited. More likely is that many armed conflicts are below the threshold of 1000 battle-related deaths. Thus, a considerable number of conflicts are not covered in the COW project, although the difference might then have been expected to be even larger.

In its studies of a separate category of conflicts – militarized interstate disputes – COW has accumulated information that corrects for this effect. This category, which is also of great theoretical significance, covers relations between states. It includes more confined events, such as military interventions, limited wars and threats of war. Together with the war data, this gives a more comprehensive picture for relations between states. If these data are added to the previous figures, the difference between COW and AKUF might be reduced. There is no record, however, in the COW project of militarized disputes *within* states.

For both projects, internal or civil conflicts make up a large percentage of all events recorded. To develop a definition that parallels militarized interstate disputes for intrastate conditions is a cumbersome task. A very large number of episodes would have to be scrutinized for possible inclusion. It would, needless to say, be difficult to make a global comparison as unbiased information is harder to obtain the more limited the episodes are. For instance, threats to use force in internal affairs may involve military as well as police forces. Such threats can also be issued by opposition groups with limited credibility and representativity. Thus, drawing the lines of inclusion will require additional distinctions. It is, however, possible to do by, for instance, relying on data on human rights violations or other indicators of repression.

Both AKUF and COW are oriented towards searching for the origins of violent conflict. The difference in approach is partly a reflection of distinct theoretical concerns. COW focuses on understanding interstate conflict, and particularly aims at questioning or modifying so-called realist thinking. This means that it is designed to understand factors such as balance of power, military capabilities, interdependence and other variables of importance for the working of the international system. There is, deliberately, no coherent theoretical perspective guiding the project. Instead, there is a conscious methodological approach. Reality, as expressed in the data, will speak for itself. It shows how the world actually functions: correlations are important, hence the name of the project. This is an empirical approach, where theory development will build on what have proven to be repeated and verified ways in which states really behave. Theoretical assumptions that are common in realist thinking are tested against observable patterns of conduct. An advantage with this open position is that it also makes COW data useful for other purposes. The concepts and their operationalization are explicit and simple, constructed to reflect world developments in close to 200 years. COW's information has therefore been used for very different investigations. For instance, there is research on whether or not arms races lead to war (this can be studied by using the militarized disputes and comparing them with the war data and the original work done by Michael Wallace in 1979). The data are also used to analyse this hypothesis in relation to peace with democratic states, resulting in the much-debated

democratic peace proposition (many articles have been devoted to this puzzle, the early phases of which were crystallized in work by Bruce Russett in 1993, 2001).

The Hamburg project starts from a fairly coherent theoretical approach. It relates the onset of war to the development of capitalist societies and sees conflict as a result of the new forms of production, monetarization of the economy and the resulting dissolution of traditional forms of social integration. The large number of conflicts in the Third World fits with this relationship. As the project reports that there has been an increasing frequency of conflicts since 1945, researchers also conclude that 'the contradictions in world society are increasing'. In an interesting twist, relevant here, the authors point out that even a phenomenon such as 'ethnic' conflict is a result of processes in 'which all social mechanisms that previously allowed us to live together are destroyed' (Jung et al., 1996: 52–61). In other words, conflict resolution instruments are being eliminated and this makes armed conflict more frequent. The issue of such social breakdown has lately captured considerable attention, with the term 'state failure' as a central concept (Esty et al., 1998; Zartman, 1995b, 2000; more on this in Section 6.5).

This perspective points to the difference between the two projects. The Correlates of War project starts from the notion of a system that consists of a larger number of independent states. It is a system that does not have central institutions and lacks means to maintain or enforce decisions for all. Thus, it is a picture of an uncoordinated world that is the point of departure. In this world states maintain some predictability in their actions. When war breaks out, it is not the result of an international society breaking down, as there is no assumption of such a society in the first place. The problem is found in the strategies for survival used by different states. War is a result of failed choices, but also the conditions, which make it difficult for states to pursue other options. In some writings inspired by the project, the importance of norms comes forth as an important conclusion, based on the experiences that peace nevertheless exists in the system (Vasquez, 2000). An implication may eventually be the need to construct an organized international order.

The Hamburg project, on the contrary, starts from an understanding of an international system that is fairly integrated, almost having a purpose of its own, which is to promote a market economy and democracy. It is a highly hierarchical world, centred on the strongest actors in the system – the Western countries. These actors are also influenced by the strength of the system. They are all capitalist, market-orientated and expansive, furthering a system of asymmetrical linkages. This international system penetrates into all parts of the world, creating instability and pushing aside traditional forms of social relations. There is an asymmetry between stronger actors that benefit from this development and weaker actors that risk becoming marginalized. The project has a critical attitude to the basis of the existing international system. In this way, the disagreement on whether or not fatalities should be used as a criterion has a deeper meaning. The Hamburg project could argue as follows: if one side is vastly superior, it can win an armed conflict within a short period of time

and, thus, the casualties will be limited. It is still a military operation for purposes that might be the same as those found in more protracted and devastating conflicts. From the point of view of causes of war, in other words, the magnitude may not be so significant. For the Michigan project, with its elaborate measurements of battle-related deaths per month, for instance, very large confrontations are the most interesting. The destruction in itself makes them more important. They suggest inadequacies in balance of power thinking and deterrence strategies. Such realist theories are developed exactly to prevent major disasters. If these still occur, the project can show this and take a critical attitude to this particular aspect of the international system and its interpreters.

The two projects contrast on an important point of departure, their epistemology. This affects their definitions for data collection and interpretation of the resulting data. Thus, both projects are needed and valuable. Together they highlight different sides of the contemporary global system.

### 2.3 Trends in Armed Conflicts

#### The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) uses the concept of 'armed conflict' and focuses on conflict resolution. Like AKUF, it reports annually on ongoing conflicts and has much current information. Its definitions and understandings of conflict put it somewhere between the Michigan and Hamburg projects. It treats all conflicts in an identical way, as does the Hamburg project, so, whether they take place between or within states, the same definition applies to both situations. It means that the distinction between an international system and an intrastate system is not of primary importance. Instead, what counts is the use of violence. The conflicts included are those that have at least one state or government as a party. This is also the case for the other two projects. It covers conflicts from a threshold level of 25 battle-related deaths in a conflict in a year. This is an easily identifiable criterion and requires less evaluation by the researchers than, for instance, the continuity criterion used in the Hamburg project. It also means that there is a way to discuss intensity in conflict, as is done in the Michigan project. There are two thresholds (25 and 1000 battle-related deaths, respectively), resulting in three categories of intensity:

- minor armed conflicts – conflicts with more than 25 deaths but fewer than 1000 for the year and for the duration of the conflict
- intermediate armed conflicts – conflicts with more than 25 deaths and fewer than 1000 for a year, but more than 1000 for the duration of the conflict
- wars – conflicts with more than 1000 battle-related deaths in one year.

The casualties are significant in a study of conflict resolution. The more destruction, the more difficult will be peacemaking, reconstruction and the creation of a new post-war relationship. These distinctions are also relevant from a conflict

prevention perspective. It is a common belief that it is in the early phases of a conflict that it can be brought to an end most successfully. Thus, conflicts with lower levels of casualties may reflect preventive efforts, not just superiority. It becomes important to understand which conflicts remain on a low level and which ones do not. The criteria make this possible.

The Uppsala project adds an element that is found in neither COW nor AKUF, and it has been introduced for theoretical as well as practical reasons. It requires that the conflict should have an issue, an incompatibility. This is derived from the theoretical considerations that guide this book. In the definition of conflict given in Section 2.1, this is an important element and as a consequence, it is reflected in how the data are collected. The two other projects are satisfied once they have identified the actors and the actions. Still, there is an implicit understanding that only political violence is included. The Uppsala project handles this openly by requiring that there should be an explicit issue of contention, defined in political terms. In this way, a clear line is drawn between political and non-political violence.

The project includes as armed conflicts only those events that concern control over government or territory. These are in turn defined as two exclusive categories. Control over government means that the issue is who should rule a particular state and demands for change include the change of rulers. The incumbents are not likely to abide by such a demand easily. Thus, an incompatibility exists. This means that interventions from abroad to remove a leadership in a country are recorded as armed conflicts (for instance, the USA intervening in Panama in 1989 or in Iraq in 2003), as are rebellions against a government by internal forces (for instance, the uprising against the Mobutu regime in Zaire in 1997 or against the successor Kabila regime a year later).

Control over territory means that demands by one state for territory in another state, even the occupation of another state, are included, as are rebellions inside a state to achieve autonomy, independence or the joining of a particular territory to the neighbouring state. This has an international dimension (for instance, Iraq's claim on Kuwait, occupying the country in 1990 and being forced out in 1991) as well as an intrastate one (Kosovo Albanians aspiring to leave the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1997–98 expressed also in violent form).

There are theoretical reasons for bringing incompatibility into the conflict definition. Conflict theory suggests that parties act for particular purposes. Thus, initially they need to be taken at face value. In other analyses such purposes are regarded as secondary. The Correlates of War project is focused on armed behaviour, the war. It aims to understand what triggers this particular type of behaviour. The project's design focuses on structural conditions as potential explanations, such as balance of power and other elements in the international system. It does not include the parties' own perception of why the conflict is there. Thus, COW reduces the complexity of the situation to certain important variables. The same is true of the Hamburg project and its perspective is equally structural (notably, capitalism or globalization) as are those of COW (the international system). However, if the focus is shifted to conflict resolution, as is the case with the Uppsala project, the parties' intentions become

more important. Conflict exists, the parties will say, because there are particular grievances and, thus, the conflict cannot end until such grievances are resolved, ended or at least attended to. With its categories, the Uppsala project attempts to capture some such basic grievances. This approach receives interesting support from other studies, pointing to the importance of territory, for instance, by Holsti (1991) and Vasquez (1993, 1995). The Uppsala project aims to connect its data to the development of conflict theory – in particular, theories of conflict resolution.

There is also a practical consideration, alluded to in the Hamburg project (Jung et al., 1996: 51), that a line has to be drawn between political violence and sheer banditry, mutinies and other forms of collective violence. There are cases where drug dealers clearly are behind the assassination of presidential candidates. Colombia had such an experience in the 1990s. However, the purpose is seldom for the assassin and his or her bosses to take control of the government. The aim is, rather, to prevent actors from taking power if they might affect the government's policy on drug trade (changes in laws, operations and effectiveness of the policy). This type of violence is different, as it reflects criminal concerns. Such matters require police strategies, not peace research. There are delicate borderlines to observe, however. It is known that regular armed services, grey-zone paramilitary groups, as well as many so-called liberation movements sustain themselves by means of the drug trade or other smuggling operations. There are also warlords who draw a thin line between politics and commerce.

The UCDP has expanded considerably and now operates an Internet-based database, available free of charge, for all conflicts since 1989 ([www.ucdp.uu.se](http://www.ucdp.uu.se)). It also cooperates with other institutions. With the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), the definitions have been applied back to 1946—a dataset that is also available on the Internet. With the Liu Centre of the University of British Columbia, additional aspects are studied, such as conflicts between non-state actors and one-sided violence against unorganized populations (such as genocide and ethnic cleansing). In this volume, however, the focus is on the armed conflicts.

### Patterns of armed conflict

The number of armed conflicts for the period 1989–2004 with the Uppsala definition is 119. For the 16-year period, this means that the average number of new conflicts per year is more than 7 – a much higher figure than reported in the two other projects. Applying the UCDP definitions for the period since 1946, a closer comparison with the other projects is possible. For the period 1946–97, COW reports 144 wars, AKUF 201 and Uppsala 218. Figure 2.1 shows the trends in armed conflict for the entire period of 1946–2005 using the UCDP definitions.

Given the discussion on wars, the bottom area of the graph in Figure 2.1 is most interesting to follow. The trends are not linear. During the Cold War period, there was a constant increase in overall conflict frequency. The number of about 20 ongoing wars also parallels what is reported by the Correlates of

War for these years. By the middle of the 1990s, the total numbers as well as the numbers of wars declined somewhat. Several wars were brought to a halt or settled by peace agreements. However, by the late 1990s, the number of severe conflicts was again higher, only to be brought down in the first years of the new millennium.

This pattern is even more pronounced if we look at different regions. Europe – which, for a large part of the Cold War, saw little manifest armed conflict – was the first region to experience a sharp rise in conflicts. These were associated with the break-up of the Soviet and Yugoslav unions. The numbers went from two armed conflicts in 1989 to ten by 1993; by 1997 they were down to zero, only to see two conflicts in 1998 (Northern Ireland and Kosovo) and three in 1999 (Kosovo, Dagestan and Chechnya). Minor conflicts have since then been recorded in Macedonia and Georgia, but Chechnya remained the only war in Europe. It meant conflicts rebounded by the end of this period in the volatile regions (Balkans, Caucasus). For the coming years, the Balkans and the Caucasus stand out as the areas most in need of conflict resolution arrangements and political solutions.

For Africa, there is another pattern. By the middle of the 1990s, this continent appeared to be a chief beneficiary of the end of the Cold War. Wars that had been sustained by the Cold War, as well as by South African polarization, were on the verge of ending. This could be observed for the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa. West Africa and the Sudan seemed to be the only conflict areas left. From 14 wars in 1989 and 17 in 1990 and 1991, the numbers were down to 9 in 1995, only to be back to 14 again by 1998. New wars were experienced on the Horn of Africa (Eritrea v. Ethiopia) and, most challenging, in Central Africa, connecting conflicts over a vast, highly populated and resource-rich region. Conflicts in this area became increasingly difficult to disentangle. A regional conflict complex was created, initially centred on the Hutu–Tutsi conflict, which, by way of refugee flows, guerrilla movements and interventions, came to engulf a number of states.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, regionally related wars took place in Western Africa. The high hopes for Africa were dashed and the optimistic slogan of 'African Renaissance' was challenged. There were, however, also concerted efforts to deal with the violence and, by 2004, they began to pay off.

In comparison to the dramatic developments in Europe and Africa, other regions show a surprisingly permanent pattern of conflict. The Gulf War of 1990–91 saw a continuation in the US-led intervention in Iraq in 2003 and has resulted in a seemingly protracted war. The tensions in South Asia between India and Pakistan gradually increased, adding a nuclear dimension, but, by 2004, a peace process had been mounted, making that year the first without an armed conflict between these countries. In the same vein, the conflict in Sri Lanka reached a stage of negotiation. The Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s was influential in the fall of the old regime in Indonesia and stimulated efforts to settle the conflict around East Timor. The Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December, 2004 also set in motion efforts to find an agreement for the age-old conflict around Aceh. There continued to be tensions between China and Taiwan, as well as on the Korean peninsula. South America has seen a reduction

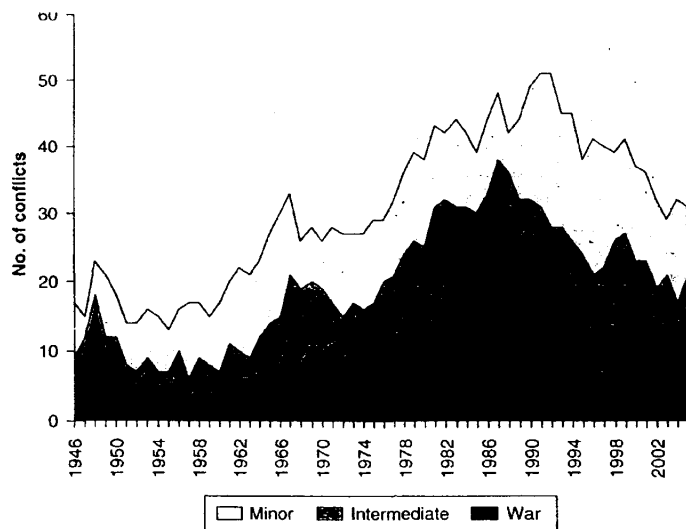


Figure 2.1 Armed conflicts 1946–2005 by conflict intensity

of conflicts compared to the 1980s when there were full-scale civil wars going on in Central America and Peru. These have now either been settled or are at a low intensity level. Colombia remains the major exception. However, the September 11 attack on the US mainland in 2001 changed the US government's perception of its security and unleashed an unprecedented war on terrorism, with global repercussions.

For the world as a whole, the total number of armed conflicts going on is staggering. In spite of great efforts at conflict resolution it appears that, for each conflict solved between the parties, with international efforts, a new one emerges, requiring the same mix of improvisation and standard operating procedures by the international community. This repeated experience of inadequacy fuels the interest in preventive conflict management. Also, it shows the need to search for the underlying causes in order to find remedies that combine conflict prevention with social change and popular participation. From a longer perspective, none of the armed conflicts initiated in the 1990s has been as devastating as some of the older conflicts. The protracted war in Afghanistan, which began in 1978, has claimed more than 1 million lives. The 1980s also witnessed the Iran–Iraq War with 1.2 million deaths. The Vietnam War or, more appropriately, the Second Indochina War, ended in 1975, with possibly 2 million deaths. The Nigerian Civil War in the 1960s was a disaster with 1 million deaths. The Korean War in the 1950s reportedly led to 2 million deaths. The civil war in the 1940s in China, ending with the Communist Party taking control, saw 1 million battle-related deaths (Singer, 1991; Small and Singer, 1982). The war scenarios since the

Cold War are serious enough. Still, it might be suggested that there is a greater ambition to reduce human suffering. There are examples of humanitarian support even in the midst of war – in Bosnia, for instance. Principles of a responsibility to protect exposed populations have gained adherence. Perhaps there is also a willingness from the outside community to act earlier in a serious conflict to prevent it from becoming overly destructive.

## 2.4 Outcomes of Armed Conflict

The concept of conflict resolution was given a preliminary definition in Chapter 1. It will be further refined in Chapter 3. Having delineated armed conflict and war, peacemaking is easier to encircle. It is something engaged in by the warring parties, expressed in the form of an agreement, implemented by first ending the fighting and then followed through in all other respects. The value of agreements has been challenged. It is, however, not easy to end a war and start a process of forging a post-war order without having some shared awareness of what the new arrangement should look like. An agreement expresses such a joint understanding. It may not include everything that needs settlement and it is likely that different interpretations of what has been concluded will develop. Still, an agreement provides a basis for a new relationship. It is not easy to make accords after a war, even when the parties have been allies – as was the case with Britain, the USA, and the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Even before the war ended, the allies had serious disagreements on the post-war world, although they had made agreements (in Yalta in February 1945, for instance). If victors cannot agree among themselves, it is probably even more difficult for enemies to develop a shared document concerning the future of their interaction. A peace agreement, in other words, is a particular result in the course of a process that began before the agreement was signed and continues after the ink has dried.

The Uppsala project is collecting data on peace agreements and the information is available in its database for the period after 1989. It makes possible closer scrutiny of frequencies of different types of war ending. For instance, for the period 1989–2004, with a total of 119 armed conflicts, 90 had actually been terminated by early 2005 – that is three-quarters of the total. This supports the statement in Section 2.1 that conflicts and wars actually do end.

However, a peace agreement may not be the ending of a conflict. Agreements may not be implemented or only implemented by some. This means that conflict may continue. The same is true for victory and other outcomes as well. Thus, the information on peace agreements needs to be complemented by data on conflict terminations – that is, situations where there has been no fighting for a period of time, such as during one year. This will give us a fuller picture of the intricacies of conflict. For instance, such terminations may be due to a victory or a peace agreement, but could also be the result of other arrangements (cease-fires, unilateral withdrawals and so on).

In Table 2.1, it can be seen that peace agreements and other negotiated agreements (cease-fires) are somewhat less frequent an ending to conflict than are



Table 2.1 Outcomes of armed conflicts, 1946-2004 – STATUS BY END OF 2005

Status at the End of Fighting	Total Number of Terminations	Renewed within 10 years		Renewed in the Full Period	
		(Number)	(%)	(Number)	(%)
Victory	119	24	20	50	42
Peace agreement	55	14	25	20	36
Cease-fire agreement	44	13	30	15	34
Other	144	70	49	78	54
Total	362	121	33	163	45

Note: There is a total of 362 terminations in 228 armed conflicts. There are different types of terminations. 'Termination' means that there has been no fighting for at least one year between the parties in a particular conflict.

Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Uppsala/PRIO Conflict Termination Dataset, compiled by Joakim Kreutz (see [www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP)).

victories (added together they total 99 compared with 119). Victory, in fact, only occurs in one-third of all conflicts going on in this period (119 out of 362 – that is, 33 per cent).

Table 2.1 shows that the outcomes vary and that there are no simple explanations for one type of ending. To this we can add that all regions have experienced a mixture of victory, defeat, peace agreements and other outcomes. Terminations with peace agreements are somewhat more frequent in Africa and Europe than in other regions.

If we add the information on the duration of the terminations, we can note that, for the whole period and all regions, fighting is renewed within ten years in a fifth of the victory cases compared to a quarter for those with a peace agreement. For the whole period, the situation is reversed, the victory cases more often having a renewal of fighting than those with a peace agreement. Thus, interestingly enough, terminations via either victory or peace agreement are the most 'effective' means of ending violence but have different time perspectives. Peace agreements that survive the first years may last longer than termination by victory, while victories are more likely to be challenged after a longer period of time than peace agreements. From this it is safe to say that the variety of outcomes often is not what the initiators have normally expected. The preference is for durable victory within a reasonably short period. However, the largest category is actually the one of continued conflicts, as cease-fires and other arrangements tend to break down. Many conflicts are deeply entrenched, have witnessed broken negotiations, failed cease-fire arrangements and abandoned peace agreements. They are probably increasingly difficult to settle. For many initiators, however, it may no longer be possible to accomplish what was originally planned.

One of the most protracted conflicts has been the one in Afghanistan. The war began as an attempt by a Communist Party to reform the feudal society, change the land distribution and give women a stronger standing. After 20 years of war with many special features – Soviet invasion, US support to opposition movements and involvement from a host of neighbouring and Middle

Eastern countries – the Communist Party was eliminated and many of its leaders brutally murdered. The conflict was then pursued along traditional divisions and the dominating group until November 2001 (the Taliban) was unusually Islamic and anti-women. The conflict dynamics have become entirely different from what the originators had anticipated. The rule of the Taliban was effectively ended by December 2001, when a local and international alliance led by the United States escalated the war in order to rout the al-Qaida organization based in the country. Some resistance linked to the Taliban continued, however, and has appeared to grow.

Victory is difficult to achieve. It does occur, however. The most obvious example is the USA intervening in Panama, capturing the 'strongman' of the leadership, General Noriega, bringing him to trial in Florida, convicting him for drug trade offences and putting him in an American prison for 30 years. The Gulf War was also a victory: Iraqi forces had to withdraw and Kuwait was restored as a sovereign country. In 1997, a rebellion against the incumbent regime in Zaire ended with victory. The war lasted eight months. The new regime faced another rebellion less than nine months later. A peace agreement concluded in July 1999 was ineffective. New negotiations led to an all-inclusive agreement in 2002 and the war ended. The victory by the USA over the regime in Iraq in 2003 seemed swift. The statue of Saddam Hussein was brought down on 9 April 2003 and major combat was declared to be over by 1 May. The continued fighting since, however, illustrates the difficulties in sustaining victory. By the end of 2005, 2180 American troops had been killed in a war that had seemingly been 'won' two and a half years earlier.

The dynamics of victory and defeat are known from history. The large number of peace agreements is a most novel aspect, and part of the experience since the Cold War. A recent review shows that 46 conflicts have seen a total of 139 such agreements and violence remained ended for at least 5 years following 78 of these agreements. Thus, agreements were more often successful than not in reducing violence (Högbladh, 2006). There are additional agreements not covered by this survey. There are accords concerning wars that went on before 1989 (such as Chad v. Libya 1990, Israel v. Jordan 1994, South Africa with Angola and Namibia 1988, implemented in the years thereafter). Also, there are treaties in conflicts that were limited (Central African Republic in 1997, for example). Furthermore, some agreements outlined processes towards a solution (Israel v. Palestine since 1993) where other parties nevertheless pursued a violent ending. There are even cases of a complete settlement concluded between the main parties where other actors took up or continued armed struggle nevertheless (Mindanao in 1996). Of course, there are also agreements that have been functioning for a period of time, but then have been undermined by the parties. This is true for the settlements for Angola in 1991 and 1994, Chechnya in 1996 and Sierra Leone 1996 and again in 1999. The record of successful peacemaking is as varied as can be expected from the difficulties inherent in ending long-lasting wars. Still, the ambition to do so with the help of negotiation and agreement makes the period since the end of the Cold War an interesting object of study. The developments of the post-Cold War period can legitimately be

compared to the very few peace agreements ending wars that were concluded during the entirety of the Cold War. There were cease-fire agreements, no doubt, but very few peace agreements. As we noted already in Chapter 1, some of the cease-fire lines drawn during the Cold War still constitute the main territorial divisions in many conflicts. To the cases mentioned previously we can also add the territorial division between India and Pakistan in Kashmir in 1949 that ended their first war. New wars in the area in 1965 and 1971 led to a return to the previous cease-fire lines. The conflict remains unresolved.

Among the few real peace agreements concluded during the Cold War, the Geneva peace agreement for Indochina in 1954 was effectively undermined within two years. The war between Malaysia and Indonesia, which began in 1963, was concluded through a peace pact in 1966 and the conflict has not resumed. A short war in 1963 between Algeria and Morocco found a mediated agreement the same year. An agreement in 1972 to end the war in the Sudan was shattered in 1983 and war returned. The Camp David agreement between Israel and Egypt in 1979 has stood the test of time. For the 45 years of Cold War, the peace agreements are few – probably not more than ten if we apply the definition introduced here (Licklider, 1995; Mason and Fett, 1996; Stedman, 1991). This is not a particularly striking record for peacemaking. It contrasts with the many arms control agreements made, where one source lists 27 international accords from 1963 to 1991 (Goldstein, 1992). This also makes the large number of peace agreements during the turbulent period since 1989 valuable and worth a close analysis.

Since 1989, peace agreements have been concluded in all regions of the world. Table 2.1 illustrates their contribution to actually terminating violence. This means that peacemaking has taken on a global meaning. Without such peacemaking efforts the number of wars would probably increase significantly. The agreements may have been concluded between parties too exhausted to find resources to win the wars, but sometimes also not capable of concluding agreements on their own. The Dayton Agreement on Bosnia-Herzegovina may fit in this category as the warring parties only accepted the deal under strong international pressure. Thus, we will proceed to the theme of conflict resolution by starting from the peace agreements concluded or implemented since 1989. With this in mind, it is first necessary to turn to a more theoretical discussion on conflict theory and its implications for conflict resolution. This is done in Chapter 3.

## 3

# Approaching Conflict Resolution

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### 3.1 The Evolution of Conflict Analysis

During the Cold War, conflict analysis was developed largely to handle the understanding of the East–West conflict. It used tools such as system analysis and game theory. Game theory could illustrate the dangers inherent in a prisoner's dilemma game, but it could also be used to sharpen strategic thinking. To some, conflict theory could also be used for conflict resolution studies (Kriesberg, 1997). Pertinent questions were how it was possible for three major powers (the USA, Britain and the Soviet Union), which had been united in the greatest war ever fought on this planet, to find themselves in a mortal conflagration only a couple of years later. How could allies become deadly enemies so quickly? There were ready-made answers drawn from 'realist' power calculations, but there were also fears and misunderstandings arising from closed decision-making. The threats of the nuclear confrontation and the global reach of the Cold War made it urgent to understand the dynamics of conflict. The focus was on escalation and polarization, and how to manage and contain the violence built into such processes.

The simultaneous and surprising experience of the integration of the two former enemies Germany and France illustrated the potential of reversing dynamics. This showed that it was possible to move from being enemies to allies, in a relationship that was closer than traditional alliances of convenience. Again this took place in a short period of time. Thus, it was necessary to develop conflict analysis as well as integration studies. Considerable work was done in the 1950s and 1960s.

Soon, the perspectives began to deepen. Conflicts in the global South not only reflected the dynamics of polarization and integration; there were other forces at play as well. The leading power, the United States, saw intense, even armed, internal conflict in the 1960s and 1970s with riots and militant parties. The analysis had to focus on grievances that could drive conflicts. Scholars saw a role in contributing to a process of solving conflicts, in forms that the academics were used to (workshops and seminars). Towards the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s, the experience of settlement of local conflicts, as well as the ending of the Cold War, again strengthened the interest in conflict resolution. September 11, 2001, may have led to a return of strategic analysis – at least in