# Chapter 1. Introduction: A Sneak Peek at the Subject Matter

> "That each by observation might satisfy his mind." (John Godfrey Saxe, 1872, in The Blind Men and the Elephant)

> "Behind every analysis of violent conflict is a set of assumptions. Assumptions about what moves human action and how to study it, and about the interests, needs, instincts, structures, and choices that explain why and how people resort to violence." (Demmers 2012: 1).

Ménaka, Gao region, northern Mali, mid-January 2012. An armed conflict between the Malian central government on the one hand and a newly founded alliance of different ethnic groups based in northern Mali including the Tuareg as a driving force on the other hand breaks out.[1] Although having a wide range of military equipment at its disposal, the Malian army, abruptly entangled in a guerrilla war, is later forced to withdraw from strategic cities in the course of the attacks.

Bamako, the capital, southern Mali, March 2012. Low and mid-level soldiers, frustrated with the poor handling of the so-called 'rebellion' in the north, overthrow the democratically elected president and his government. Ironically, however, during the troubles of this coup d'état the Malian army is expelled from the northern regions and northern Mali is declared an independent state named 'Azawad'. In the meantime, the anti-government forces led by the *Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA)

1 The first paragraphs of the present introduction summarise a number of widely shared observations in media, science and politics concerning the situation in Mali in 2011/2012 (see e.g. Hainzl 2013; Heyl and Leininger 2012; Cline 2013; Heyl and Leininger 2013; Lacher 2013; Klute and Lecocq 2013; Pabst 2013; Ruf 2013; Schreiber 2013; Thurston and Lebovich 2013; Wiedemann 2014). These analyses largely rely on a broad range of media reports (for considerations on the role of mass media within the methodological approach presented here see Chapter 3/4; for the case study on "Mali's crisis 2010–2012" see chapter 6).

have enlarged their alliance by several Islamist groups.[2] Though, this larger alliance proves to be a fragile and unequal one: local and foreign Islamist militants increasingly dominate the agenda and marginalise the more secular MNLA more or less by force.

A few months later, after intensive mediation efforts led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the military junta returns power to a civilian administration. However, in the aftermath of a near-collapse of the army and Malian democratic institutions, the country experiences a de facto division and a massive and long-term international military intervention.[3]

By the end of 2010, a year before the armed conflict broke out, nobody expected such a dramatic chronology of events. At that time, the Republic of Mali was regularly cited, both by local and international observers, as an outstanding example of a peacefully developing democracy in West Africa.[4] So, how could the Malian landscape change in such a drastic way? And how did the process of conflict intensification gather momentum? As a matter of course, there are various analytical accounts on Mali's crisis in 2010–2012 from different disciplines with elaborated explanatory approaches based on specific theoretical perspectives and rich empirical data. Lecocq et al. (2013) made it their scientific business to compile those topics and factors that have been referred to as the most relevant ones in miscellaneous conflict analyses:

2 In particular *Ansar al-Dine* ("Defenders of Faith"; Mali-based Tuareg Islamists), the *Mouvement pour l'Unicité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest* (MUJAO; Movement for the Unity and Jihad in West Africa) and *Al-Qaïda au Maghreb Islamique* (AQMI; al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb).

3 In January 2013, the anti-government-alliance was rapidly advancing to the south of Mali. In the light of this massive offensive, the Malian government asked France for military support. Right after the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 2085 Malian and French units, and later ECOWAS troops, started an operation to fight the insurgents back and to recapture northern Mali. By and large, the mission was successful, notably concerning strategic towns. In July 2013, the *United Nations Multinational Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali* (MINUSMA) took over responsibility from the *African-led International Support Mission in Mali* (AFISMA) established before, under UN Security Council resolution 2100. At that time, Mali's transitional government, with support of MINUSMA, organised presidential elections that international and local poll observers described as peaceful, transparent, and credible. In 2015, the Algiers peace agreement was signed, bringing the conflict parties back into a political process. However, its implementation remains weak (see UCDP 2018c). In 2021, still, 18.343 UN-peacekeepers are in the field trying to fulfil their mandate of gradually stabilising the country (see UN 2021).

4 In 1992, after several years of armed conflict, the Malian government and the Tuareg signed a peace agreement, the 'Pacte National'. In this agreement, apart from the obligation to lay down arms, the Tuareg were guaranteed a fair share of natural resources, more autonomy rights in a federal system to be reformed, and the abolition of ethnic and political discrimination. Although the efforts of rapprochement between the different Tuareg factions and the Malian government continued, the Tuareg's political, economic, and social integration in the Malian state remained low (see Cline 2013: 618–621). From 2006 to 2009, again smaller insurgencies of the Tuareg emerged, partly as 'side effect' of the armed conflict between the Tuareg and the government in neighbouring Niger. However, the main players in multi-ethnic Mali succeeded in keeping the situation largely peaceful, although there were sporadic violent incidences (Wing 2013; UCDP 2018c).

- the formation of a new political movement in November 2010 ("Mouvement National de l'Azawad") claiming true political representation and economic opportunities for the population in the north;
- the return of ex-soliders and alleged mercenaries, mostly Tuareg, with military experience and weapons from Libya beginning with the gradual collapse of the Gadhafi regime in March 2011;
- the gradual appropriation of the Sahel, particularly the northern parts of Mali, as a safe haven for global terrorist networks;
- the emergence of local Islamist state-building aspirations beginning in mid-2011 with the formation of MUJAO and Ansar al-Dine;
- the creeping decline of the fragile Malian multi-party system and its president-centred institutions;
- a growing number of both criminal and terrorist attacks on uranium mines of international companies in the Sahel;
- a growing number of kidnappings of Western tourists in northern Mali and Niger;
- the far-reaching regional influence on conflict prevention and management exercised by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and thus the increasing attention of the international community;
- the growing importance of northern Mali for transnational crime, especially human and arms trafficking and illegal drug trade.

Obviously, explanations that solely consider, for example, the underrepresentation of the population in the north, especially of the Tuareg, in the Malian political system and therefore interpret the conflict as an issue of domestic insurgence would fall short (see, e.g., Klute and Lecocq 2013). Likewise, interpreting the violent conflict against the background of geostrategic economic interests only, with regard to the France-backed company Areva for instance, which mainly holds the mining rights for uranium and other rare earths in northern Mali where the security situation was rapidely deteriorating in 2011 due to increasing cross-border activities in the Sahelian zone, would not be satisfactory either (see, e.g., Kohl 2013). According to the authors of the above-cited meta-study, "no single scholar can claim full understanding of all these domains" (Lecocq et al. 2013: 344). Indeed, on the one hand, it can be disillusioning to learn that there are multiple and occasionally contradicting explanations of the Malian case according to the conditions set up at the beginning of the analysis. On the other hand, empirical examples like the Malian case urge scientific observers to be sensitive to and to analytically deal with the often-inconsistent multi-layered nature of social conflict.

## Conflicts do not speak – only we do!

As the sneak peek at the Malian crisis illustrates, conflicts do not speak *for themselves* – it is the journalists, policymakers, activists, analysts, and scientists who speak *about* conflicts when observing and taking advantage of all sorts of abstraction and, as a conse-

quence thereof, reproducing their own maybe even competing conflict narratives.[5] Following this, conflicts represent social phenomena that cannot be approached as self-explanatory and material facts. Once becoming aware of and dealing with a social conflict, all kinds of observers, whether they like (and know) it or not, necessarily rely on forms of symbolic representations:

> "As a field of knowledge, Conflict Studies is situated in and shaped by highly political and messy practices of categorizing and coding. It is therefore not only important to engage in systematic research on individual cases of violent conflict, but also to study the ways conflicts are labelled and coded and to think through the consequences of these representations." (Demmers 2012: 2)

Against this backdrop, the present study demonstrates a reflexive approach to conflict analysis that takes the multifaceted nature of social conflict into account and enables observers to focus on aspects from different conflict-related domains at once. For this purpose, it draws on a fundamental systems theoretical understanding of 'the social' according to which communication constitutes the basic unit of all social entities, including conflicts:

> "Conflicts are highly integrated social systems, they tend to draw the host system into conflict to the extent that all attention and all resources are claimed for the conflict." (Luhmann 1995: 390)

Conflict research more or less centres on a common *gretchenfrage*: How do conflicts escalate? To further elaborate on this fundamental question, this contribution adopts a process perspective on conflict conceptualised as a

> "capturing social system, i.e. an evolving discursive space where contradicting communication from various social subsystems gets structurally coupled and stabilised" (own working definition; see also Bösch 2017).

Conflict escalation can thus be thought of as a cascade of communicative events. Hence, to approach the process of conflict escalation, it is worth to have a systematic look at the evolution of communication. At various times, conflict communication, understood as a vague field of relational references, tells different stories about how 'the conflict' is actually perceived by diverse observers. Indeed, the composition of a conflict, which means its issues, parties, positions, actions, environment etc., or, in other words, the difference between the inside and outside of a conflict system might continuously change in the course of conflict escalation, but – and that is one of the principal arguments of this contribution – it can be empirically studied via its discursive representations over time.

5 As pointedly reframed in the cross heading, this insight refers to an often-cited dictum from Rorty that serves as an epistemological motto for the present work: "The world does not speak. Only we do." (Rorty 1989: 6)

## An empirical approach: case studies on Ukraine and Mali

Within the framework of the research project presented here, analysing conflict escalation means dealing with discursive processes. When focussing on organised collective violence, i.e. armed conflict and war, these processes can be regarded as communicative prologues to violence whereby strategies of legitimating violence play a key role (see Messmer 2003: 266–272).[6] To empirically illustrate the analytical framework and thus to probe its plausibility, the present work comprises two case studies: the first case study deals with the public protest on Maidan square in Kiev from November 2013 to February 2014 (chapter 5); the second case study addresses the antecedent of the armed conflict in Mali from November 2010 to January 2012 (chapter 6).[7] Based on the idea of conflict as a social system stated above, the case studies' agenda entails reconstructing discursive clusters that emerged around a common conflict reference, i.e. mapping conflict-related linguistic communication. Concerning the analysis of the Malian case, for example, this requires having a close look at the 'story' that lies in between the following statements (italics added):

> "Today, we are declaring the birth of the National Movement of Azawad (MNA) which is a political organisation of Azawad that defends and approves *a peaceful policy in order to achieve legitimate goals*." (Founding Statement, MNA 1.11.2010)

> "President Amadou Toumani Touré straightforwardly reveals his preference for a violent confrontation to the detriment of political dialogue. […] solely the president and the local militia under his control bear the heavy responsibility of triggering a violent upheaval in Azawad. […] Now, the people of Azawad will claim the *right to self-defence in reaction to this military invasion*." (Press Release, MNLA 12.01.2012)

Now, how did those statements emerge from the discursive space that represents the Malian conflict system? How did MNA's/MNLA's perception of violence as a legitimate means of political action change over time? As these examples of case-specific research questions suggest, one of the main objectives of the systematic reconstruction that has been conducted within the framework of the case studies was to identify turning points or key discursive marks in the process of conflict development.

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6 Even though violence is not considered to be an essential element of conflict escalation per se, understanding the legitimisation of violence, or even more in-depth, asking for what is named as 'violence' in specific discourses is a pivotal research interest in conflict studies (see e.g. Jabri 1996).

7 In Part I, the theoretical and methodological framework of this study will be developed step-by-step with the help of cursory examples from both case studies throughout. A more detailed argumentation regarding case selection will be given in chapter 4.2. For now, it can be stated that both Ukraine and Mali represent rather tricky cases in the light of more traditional analytical settings in conflict studies. Nota bene: The case studies have been conducted separately, as plausibility probes; the present research design does therefore not involve engaging in any form of systematic comparative case studies.

## World Society in Peace and Conflict Studies

In an overall view, however, this study is not only designed to contribute to case study research on armed conflict and war but also to contribute to theoretical and methodological developments in the broader context of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS). In this regard, one of the main challenges is to advance those theories in social sciences that are based on the nation state as a key conceptual element, especially when it comes to its still structuring impact on the perception of conflicts.[8] In this contribution, the concept of social conflict goes towards transcending some of the disciplinary orthodoxies that often narrow conflict research to certain levels of analysis or specific ideas about structures and actors.[9] More precisely, the idea of social conflict presented here is part of an impartial and broad systems-theoretical perspective that considers conflicts as being inherently embedded in a world societal communicative framework. With this, it draws on recent developments at the intersection of constructivist International Relations (IR) and Luhmannian systems theory and thus sees itself as further exploring the 'IR-sociology-nexus'.[10]

Considering the above cited accounts on the Malian conflict, for example, a good argument can be made that the conflict emerged from a network of social, economic, political, and other relations on different transnational levels at once. The perception of its conflict parties, issues and forms is thus constituted within multiple cross-border relationships. In this sense, the Malian conflict can be understood as *a conflict in world society*. Seen from this angle, the present study offers a perspective on conflicts understood as specific discursive arenas developing in world society. Hence, conflict escalation is linked to communication from functionally differentiated social realms that overlap and, at the same time, produce inducements for contradiction. Or, to put it another way,

> "[T]he major rift zone at which conflicts crystallize lies at the fault lines of world society's functional differentiation." (Albert 2010: 57)

8 For debates on the many implicit and explicit links between conflict theory and the 'statist' concepts of sovereignty, the monopoly on violence, security, democracy, or, in other words, for debates on the hidden 'methodological nationalism' in social sciences see Jabri (1996), Albert (2003), Bonacker and Weller (2006), Chernilo (2011), and (although the key word is not used literally) Lakitsch (2014).

9 In this context, critiques of the debates about new wars and failed states have been enlightening. Thus, many conflict analyses not only absolutise "limited statehood" as a cause of conflict (see Bonacker and Weller 2006: 20–24) but also reproduce a colonial discourse of western knowledge production that opposes the self (i.e., functioning European nation states) to others (i.e. non-Western proto- or pseudo nation states) in need of help suffering from failing (see Chojnacki and Namberger 2014: 188–190; see also Gulowski and Weller 2017: 400–404).

10 As far as this study is concerned, a systems theory of world society is considered to be the focal point of the rapprochement between both disciplines. Further reflections on this are given in chapter 3. For a comprehensive overview on this field of research see particularly Albert et al. (2013), Stetter (2013), Albert (2016), and Albert and Mahlert (2017).

However, identifying, understanding, and comparing modes of conflict escalation that grow out of discursive arenas in world society necessarily remains an empirical endeavour.

## A constructivist empirical approach

At first glance, the present work adopts a quite common social constructivist perspective on conflicts: As phenomena of the social world, they are produced in a processual framework of discursive constructions of reality (see Weller 2005a). Therefore, a conflict essentially consists of an incompatibility of subject positions (e.g., identities, interests, values) that is observed and articulated (see Diez et al. 2006: 565). So far, so good. In addition to that, this contribution strikes an advancing path since it argues in favour of an empirical research programme that is inspired by a systems theoretical understanding of communication and observation. In an effort to bring Luhmann to conflict studies, it intends to benefit from the rich theoretical debates on Luhmann's oeuvre and develop an empirical approach in order to systematically analyse conflict systems on the basis of text data.

How did the situations in Mali (2011/2012) and Ukraine (2013/2014) escalate into serious conflicts? How exactly could contradictions in these cases turn into conflicts that brought about organised collective violence? To advance towards answers to these questions, this work draws on a Luhmannian reading of constructivism: *operative* constructivism.

> "Constructivism describes an observation of observation that concentrates on how the observed observer observes. This constructivist turn makes possible a qualitative change, a radical transformation, in the style of recursive observation, since by this means one can also observe what and how an observed observer *is unable* to observe. In this case one is interested in his blind spot, that is, the means by which things become visible or invisible." (Luhmann 2002: 140)

Given this epistemological grounding, the approach presented here differs from others in conflict analysis: In a nutshell, it does not primarily ask for *what* is observed but for *how* observers observe. In other words, this work is interested in scrutinising modes of observation behind observations.[11] Indeed, it poses a methodological challenge to carry out this undertaking since it implies the reconstruction of the inherent distinctions that underpin each and every observation. This can be exemplarily illustrated on the basis of the following text passage taken from the case study on the Maidan protests in Kiev in 2013/2014[12]:

11 As it is explained in detail in Chapter 3 and 4, these kinds of analyses deal with processes of social (conflict) constructions and are thus conceptualised as observations of ways of observing or, in other words, as "second-order observations" (Luhmann 2002: 128–152; see also Weller 2005b: 316–321).

12 This statement appeared as part of an article that was published online within the framework of a "volunteer community resource" set up by Ukrainian civil society activists declaring themselves as

> "Euromaidan: Citizens of Ukraine stand up and try to make their voice heard in Europe which does not end at the eastern border of the EU. They fight for their European future in a united Europe." (UkrN 24.11.2013)

In late November 2013, after the Ukrainian government announced that the plan to sign the Association Agreement (AA) with the European Union (EU) would be suspended, a broad protest movement, referred to early on as "Euromaidan", immediately evolved from Ukrainian civil society (see, e.g., KyivPost 29.11.2013). In this context, as the present study focuses on modes of observation within the scope of a conflict's overall discursive representations, it goes beyond simply stating that the Ukrainian protesters declared to be pro-European and chose one of the central squares in Kiev, 'Maidan' square, as their special place of assembly. Rather, on the basis of the analysed text data, the present approach aims at unveiling the distinctions (i.e. concepts, categories, images etc.) behind the buzzwords (hereafter exemplarily in italics): As the above-cited statement suggests, Ukrainians, here referred to as *citizens* (as hypothetically opposed to 'oppositionists', 'activists', or 'protesters'), articulated their contradiction towards a government decision and thus documented the idea of sovereign citizens determining the fate of their country (as opposed to the political elite's understanding of, once elected, top-down politics). In this sense, Ukrainian citizens not only claimed political and civil rights but also declared to be able and willing to *fight* for their future in non-parliamentary and unconventional ways, e.g., by launching mass protests on *Maidan*, Kiev's history-charged "Independence Square" (as opposed to institutional ways of policymaking in parliament and government). Furthermore, given the direct address towards *Europe* (i.e. its governments and populations), the matter in question was not only presented as an issue of international politics (as opposed to exclusive domestic matters) but also as a vital issue within the context of a common European identity. Therefore, Ukraine is constituted as a very own normative part of Europe that longs for fulfilling its 'European mission' while the political borders and alliances at that time still did not mirror, to complete the metaphor, its 'true destiny'.[13]

As this cursory example prompts, the reconstruction of modes of observation represents a fine-grained work, which requires a close examination of communication.[14]

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government opponents. It was then immediately republished by "Ukraine-Nachrichten" (UkrN), an Internet platform providing German translations of much-quoted news and agency reports as well as social media posts and blog commentaries dealing with Ukrainian politics (for more details on volunteer community resources and other text data sources concerning the case study on Ukraine see chapter 5).

13 Of course, these insights could not be gained only based on the text snippet cited above; they were confirmed within the complex framework of a systematic sequential analysis of the whole text corpus. Nevertheless, on the basis of this short section one can get an impression of how the identification of distinctions behind the spoken/written word are tackled in the present study. For a detailed account on the case study procedure see chapter 4.

14 In anticipation of chapter 4, it can be announced here that this study draws on an elaborated concept of reconstruction. Following Franke and Roos (2013: 11–23), reconstruction, broadly speaking, refers to an interpretive scientific procedure that aims at identifying intersubjectively shared (linguistic, symbolic) meanings in communication. In this sense, researchers who pursue a reconstructive logic systematically read and 'understand' empirical data by continuously (re-) formulating

Nevertheless, the present approach was developed to enable readers to understand how modes of observation develop and interact in the process of a conflict system's discursive constitution over time. As mentioned above, this also includes recognising what and how an observed observer is unable to observe ('blind spots'). Concerning the Ukrainian case study, for example, it is striking that both the Ukrainian government and civil society actors cling to a dichotomising either-or thinking: As the analysed communication suggests, there is an implicit imperative to either opt for being part of the European/Western block or to favour an orientation to the east. This distinction turned out to be a crucial one that virtually shows up in the totality of communication. In a way, this recalls a kind of Cold War thinking, which was stuck in a binary coding of world politics and, by and large, did not imply the possibility of finding "third ways" (see, e.g., Lebow and Gross Stein 1994).

## Assembling the big picture

In summary, the present study has a tripartite agenda: First, inspired by the theoretical rapprochement and exchange in the context of the IR-sociology-nexus, it develops a systems theoretical framework to analyse processes of conflict escalation and to reconstruct conflicts as phenomena developing in a world societal framework. Second, to probe the plausibility of the approach, this contribution analyses two processes of conflict escalation prior to violent conflict within the framework of two systematic case studies (Ukraine 2013–2014; Mali 2010–2012). Third, on the basis of the case study insights, the present work gives impulses to further promote systems theoretical research in PCS and conflict analysis in general.

In several aspects, this approach contrasts with more traditional approaches in conflict studies: Ontologically, it adopts a different perspective on the relevance of actors and structures since it highlights communication as the basic building block of the social. Hence, readers of the present study are offered to become (scientific) observers who are enabled to consider more of a conflict than certain firmly established actors or settings. Since all social phenomena are understood as dynamic networks of communication with variable ends, the analysis of a conflict's discursive performance is not limited, in principle, to specific text data sources but only concentrated on the processing of communication. Epistemologically, against the background of operative constructivism, it deals with social reality construction within communication processes that are shaped by modes of observation working in the background. In other words, it focuses on communications as the ultimate constitutive operations that produce a conflict. Method(olog)ically, in order to implement a systematic mapping of communication on the basis of text data, it provides a reconstructive approach that has been developed following decidedly empirical approaches in social sciences, particularly within the scopes of *grounded theory* and the *documentary method* (see details in chapter 4).

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hypotheses about the shared meaning of the phenomena in question and thus about the the very nature of their research topics (see also Herborth 2011; Vogd 2011).

Broadly speaking, the present approach allows to take elements into account that would not have come into a common analytical view otherwise.

## Outline of the study

The study is divided into three parts. Part I focuses on the theoretical and methodological foundation of the approach presented. In this context, chapter 2 outlines social science perspectives on conflict escalation, which is understood as a concept and thus a research topic in its own right. Initially, it gives a concise overview of the topic's scientific origins that are closely intertwined with the history of sociology, IR and PCS. Following this, the research topic of conflict escalation is opened according to its metatheoretical dimensions (levels of analysis, structure and process). Finally, based on a brief presentation of selected focus areas in application-oriented approaches, it illustrates how conflict escalation can indeed be understood as a distinct concept but, at the same time, as a more or less explicit part of 'neighbouring' concepts (e.g., conflict resolution, conflict transformation). Taken together, chapter 2 unfolds the rootedness of conflict escalation in different social science discourses. Based on these preliminary insights, chapter 3 elaborates on the theoretical foundations of the approach presented in this work. For this purpose, it turns to a few essentials in systems theory, particularly regarding the key concepts of communication and social systems. Following these basic theoretical considerations, it develops a perspective for empirical systems theoretical research within a world societal framework which is located in the context of the interdisciplinary field of PCS. In chapter 4, this perspective gets broken down into an empirical research programme, including a specific systems theoretical method of conflict analysis based on text data. Therefore, chapter 4 exposes the project's case study design and its practical implementation, particularly concerning the processing of texts. Drawing on two method(olog)ical approaches in social sciences (grounded theory, documentary method), the method presented here aims at a reconstruction of escalating conflicts as social systems in their own right.

In Part II, the results of the two case studies are presented in the form of *analytical narratives*. The case studies therefore reveal that the use of force in terms of organised collective violence gradually and creepingly finds its way into the conflict discourse. As the case studies show, too, this process has a world societal dimension insofar as the analysed conflict systems supply themselves with communication that exhibits a world societal outreach and brings emerging offers of meaning and contradictions. Chapter 5 deals with the Maidan protests in Kiev/Ukraine from late November 2013 to February 2014 that developed from a peacefully expressed contestation of a foreign policy decision into a situation where the legitimate use of force is claimed by different sides and degrading the other has become a widespread phenomenon. Chapter 6 addresses the antecedent of the armed conflict in Mali from October 2010 to February 2012. This case study, too, traces the development of a situation that is, at the beginning of the investigation period, observed as a peaceful articulation of a political programme but then successively evolves into a conflict in which the use of force had become a generalised and legitimate means to achieve or defend democracy.

Finally, part III provides a brief synthesis of the present contribution. For this purpose, chapter 7 reviews the case studies by summarising their results and introducing the built-in 'zoom' which enables readers to find their way through the case studies. Readers are also invited to reflect the methodology of the empirical approach by following chapter 7's seven questions and answers. In chapter 8, the major research question of this project – How do conflicts escalate? – gets answered by presenting the insights and experiences of this work within a broader context. Therefore, some implications for the field of Peace and Conflict Studies are outlined. As a last point, readers are offered a critical impulse to take away.