Chapter 7. Reviewing the Case Studies

7.1 Summarising Case Study Results or: How to use the Zoom

Being a hobby photographer, as, for example, the author of this study, the functioning of a zoom lens can be fascinating: While the physical distance between the photographer and the subject or scene in question remains the same, by using the zoom, the angle of view can be varied and thus subjects can 'move' closer or more distant. Technically, quite a lot happens during this procedure, either manually or automatically. To get a pin sharp result with a high resolution, the photographer is supposed to focus his camera, to define foreground and background, and, if possible, to adjust the length of exposure to light.

In this study, too, the question is how empirical material, i.e. a huge amount of text data[1], had been "zoomed through" (Vogd 2010: 130) from the researcher's standpoint and how it had been achieved to focus on that what is referred to as 'analytical narrative'. Therefore, this study or, to keep the metaphor above, the present photo, which claims to offer a high resolution, is intended to enable its observers to recognise foreground (i.e. conflict systems) and background (other social subsystems); it is also to be regarded as the outcome of a well-considered exposure to light (i.e. be transparent about the methodology); and, finally, it inspires viewers to make sense of the photo in a broader context, for example within the framework of an exhibition (as e.g. concerning the field of PCS; see chapter 8).

Now, how did the Maidan protests in Ukraine in 2013/2014 escalate? And how did the situation in Mali 2010–2012 escalate? On the one hand, based on the presentation in the case studies, the answers to these questions can be given in a quite simple way: By reading the extensive chapters (5/6) above, readers are offered a chance to learn how, step by step, the conflict has been observed as such and chronologically developed within communication. Or, in short, the readers can track how observers observed an escalating conflict. *That is how* the conflict escalated, at least based on this study's analysis. On the

1 Taking both case studies together, the analysed text data consists of 1.264 documents, each between 50 and 2.000 words. 20 weekly and biweekly newspapers (see chapter 5 on the Maidan protests), each between 15 and 20 pages and thus exceeding 2.000 words, are not included here (see also Appendix A.1.1/Media).

other hand, it is to be assumed that a suchlike answer could appear as all too snippy as measured by the scope and significance of the central research question. At this point, however, this provides the opportunity to recall that how-questions are in stark contrast to why-questions, as set out by the working plan of this study (see chapter 4.4). As how-questions do implicate a strong focus on processes, possible answers to these questions can rather not be given in a condensed way taking the form of 'if A, than B', especially when it comes to the complex social phenomenon of conflict. Against this background, getting involved with the broad representation of the case studies here can definitely be seen as a demanding enterprise. At the same time, this study intends to make its approach plausible and transparent within this very framework and thus deliberately offers a both rich in detail and structured synopsis of conflict communication on the basis of which conflict escalation in the respective cases can be observed and, in a way, witnessed in retrospect.

Table 31: Ways of reading the case studies

Subchapters	Ways of Reading the Case Studies	Content
5.1 / 6.1	↓ ↑	case study introductions; basic information on text data corpus
5.2, 5.3, 5.4 / 6.2, 6.3, 6.4		factual, temporal, and social dimension of conflict communication; formulating interpretation, rich in details
5.5 / 6.5		synopsis, reduced in case study details; reflecting interpretation, focus on identification of escalating moves, identity layers, and legitimisation of violence
5.6 / 6.6		summary, drastically reduced in case study details, essence of second-order perspective analysis

(Own table)

As suggested at the beginning of part II, readers of this study, too, are offered to use 'their zoom' in approaching the present text. The obvious way is to look at each 'pixel' separately and then gradually zoom out to the big picture; this corresponds to read the case studies from beginning to end and thus to track and understand the research process chronologically, as passed through by this author. The other possible way would be 'from the back to the front', i.e. to start with the big picture and then zoom in to the details, either to systematically look at each pixel or to just browse according to personal interests. Both ways of reading the case studies are equally appropriate to provide a transparent

overview and a full understanding of the case studies as plausibility probes of this study's approach.

Having said that, it is theoretically appropriate for this study to look at its results in all modesty. As broad and comprehensive the case studies may appear, they represent just a possible reading among others. Even though this chapter bears the headline "Summarising Case Study results", it does not reproduce the condensed summaries of conflict escalation (see chapters 5.6. and 6.6). Rather, it focuses on those phases and escalating moves during conflict development in both cases that can be seen as key according to the insights gained through the case studies. In other words, the zoom is now used to refocus two particular spots within the results of the case studies.

Spot I: Foundation stones of mutually exclusive conflict identities

Turning to the Maidan protests in Ukraine (2013/2014), the 'story' that is told in the case studies presents conflict escalation as a succession of six escalating moves; this is structured according to four phases referring to five turning point events (see table in chapter 5.6). From the perspective of this retrospect here, escalating move C in phase II has a particular importance for conflict development since the formation of mutually exclusive conflict identities gets a veritable boost during this phase (see chapter 5.5.2; for details see chapter 5.4). The text corpus shows several clues that underpin the normative shift of the conflict discourse towards an increasing simplification and a focus on two adversarial positions, all subsumed under the header of pro- vs. anti-government, such as:

post-Soviet elite vs. civil society opposition
Russophiles vs. Europhiles,
agents of the east vs. agents of the west,
Russian-speaking vs. Ukrainian-speaking,
older vs. younger generation,
rural vs. urban population

On the one hand, this development builds on communication already identified along the axis (economic) integration vs. (political) emancipation in phase I (see escalating move A; see chapter 5.5.1). On the other hand, however, this development is part of a new cluster of communication in which two ideas of how political power in this very moment of history should be exercised confront each other: Ukraine as a country being either architect of its fortune or at the mercy of global powers. Within this conglomerate of encountering contradictions, "Maidan", which had been observed as the both positive and negative embodiment of a new form of political negotiation and decision-making in Ukraine, now gets disempowered and dealt with as a great power matter basically being shaped from beyond the country. In this perspective, both the European/EU influence and the Rus-

sian influence on the Maidan protests are mutually observed as a certain dispossession of that what is projected on Maidan as a burning glass of political negotiation.[2]

In sum, as put on analytical record earlier (see chapter 5.5.2; for details see chapter 5.2/phase II), the brief spot on this part of the conflict discourse gives an impression of how newly articulated contradictions in political communication produce the observation of a 'point of no return' and also shows how polarisation becomes more intense in a scenario that is increasingly perceived as a 'the-winner-takes-it-all' situation. In this context, for the first time in the investigation period, the use of force against things and people, be it in terms of protest means or reactions to the same, are more and more qualified as, against the background of a unique historical momentum, acceptable or even necessary. Taking up this thread, subsequent escalating moves in the following phases (see increasing elimination of diversity/D; entrenching conflict identities/F) show how the normative shift in phase II continues to shape structures of expectation in the conflict discourse (as to conflict identities and the perception of violence).

Spot II: Merging communication – contradicting values

Turning to the case study on Mali (2010/2012), conflict development is presented as a succession of three escalating moves; this is structured according to four phases referring to five turning point events (see table in chapter 6.6). Here, too, in retrospect, escalating move B in phase II can be seen as a particular spot of conflict escalation. The analysis of this phase reveals a cluster of communication in which religious, political and legal aspects of communication get structurally coupled, i.e. debated, connected, contradicted: references to values of Islam (especially concord and community), ethnic and cultural affiliations (concerning tribal rules and norms of population in the north), and considerations about rights and obligations (humanitarian law/human rights, national sovereignty and rule of law) are observed under the common header of loyalty and solidarity as expression of political power. Thereby, as characterisations like "faithful citizen" and "democratic tribe member" suggest, discursive guidelines begin to step forward in the form of binding and enduring obligations or, in other words, changing structures of expectation. This becomes particularly obvious if one looks at references to "helping hands" towards Libyan returnees: aid and support, be it from the government or ethnic groups, seems to be based on a principle of reciprocity including the idea that solidarity and political loyalty go hand in hand (see chapter 6.5.2; for details 6.4/phase II).

Now, the normative shift of the discourse at this point can be described as follows: As solidarity appears as a key normative concept brought into the discursive field from different sides, it becomes obvious that solidarity is increasingly understood as a value with conditions attached. More precisely, the idea of solidarity as a human value as such, for example in form of charity and unconditioned solidarity towards Libyan returnees fades out of the discourse; also, solidarity in form of an unconditioned development policy in northern Mali, independent from an actual approval or rejection of the government, gets

2 In this context, the opening of negotiations about a new economic partnership with Russia on December 11, 2013, becomes a much-cited reference in the conflict discourse.

called into question. Rather, solidarity gets increasingly addressed as a value that is not absolute but in real action dependent on religion, citizenship, and kinship.

With this, conflict development takes a formative turn. Since there are different frames of reference of what is to be considered the basis of social coexistence (in a country of society), descriptions of the situation as one of growing insecurity increase. Based on that, the use of violence gets addressed as a legitimate means not only to create physical security but also to underline the validity of the respective religious, ethnic, legal or political criteria of coexistence (as outlined by the observations of "discriminated and illtreated Libyan returnees" or "an increasingly militarised north"). The following escalating move C in phase III links up to this observation when the struggle for "the noble cause of democracy" gets connected to the legitimate use of force (see chapter 6.5.3).

As the two spots suggest, the zoom can be used to focus specific moments of conflict escalation and to highlight points that turn out to be giving a certain direction or to be particularly important for potential comparisons with other case studies. Also, as indicated, escalating moves do not represent analytical snapshots independent of each other; they are connected and build on one another.

7.2 Reflecting Methodology

As already outlined in the working plan of this study, 'taking communication seriously' has been an important motto while performing the case studies. Following the basic idea that the discursive construction of conflict happens within communication, the processing of the text data was effected by means of a multi-step analysis drawing on elements of DM and GT. In doing so, the case study chapters portray a myriad of particular analytical elements or, in other words, pixels that are gradually assembled to an overall picture of conflict escalation. In the style of a 'formulating interpretation', the case studies, in their first sections (see chapters 5.2/5.3/5.4 and 6.2/6.3/6.4), provide an accurate representation of the factual, temporal and social structure of conflict escalation dispensing with abstract and theorising language.[3] Based on a 'reflecting interpretation' of these structures and the modes of observation behind (by identifying poles of contradiction, identity layers), the synopsis chapters (5.5/6.5) present conflict development as a succession of escalation moves (resp. structural couplings and normative shifts).

Now, keeping the methodology stated within the broader theoretical foundations of this work in mind, the following sections deal with experiences, impressions and problems that were collected while working with the empirical material during the implementation of the case studies. In the following, these points are represented in terms of questions and answers that came up during the research process, be it on issues the author asked himself or issues raised by others being in touch with this work: *chapter 7's seven questions and answers*.

3 As introduced earlier in chapter 4.3, formulating interpretation and reflecting interpretation are important steps within DM (see Bohnsack 2014: 225–228; Vogd 2010: 121–131).

(1) What was the biggest challenge when implementing this empirical approach?

As already outlined at various times during part I, the approach developed in this contribution does not intend to postulate 'what actually happened' in a defined investigation period in terms of conflict escalation; it does not explain why concrete persons performed concrete actions in concrete places and thus may have contributed to conflict escalation in any way. Rather, it investigates a multitude of documented readings understood as discursive representations of what happened. Therefore, while implementing analytical tasks and working steps (reading, coding, comparing, combining, reflecting, reframing etc.), it is a permanent and big challenge to free oneself from more or less subtle essentialist claims. The analysed text corpus itself is a permanent source of irritation[4], especially when it comes to first-hand documents like the following from the case study on Ukraine that virtually encourage their readers to take it at face value (quotations taken from chapter 5.2/phase I):

> "At 4 a.m. this morning the troops of riot police, Berkut, violently dispersed the peaceful Euromaidan at Independence Square." (MMIC 30.11.2013b)

> "According to eyewitnesses interviewed by Amnesty International, Berkut officers first told the demonstrators to disperse because the demonstration was 'illegal', then started to beat those that remained." (AI 30.11.2013)

Against this background, one should consequently remind oneself that all parts of a diverse text corpus that a researcher approaches represent an extract of a potentially "endless field of relational references" (Nonhoff 2011: 101) which gets linked to on and on since an observation necessarily refers to a prior observation. Taking communication in the Ukrainian case study as an example, there are several observations of the situation referring to "revolution" articulated against different factual, temporal, and social backgrounds (catchphrases taken from chapter 5.5.2/5.5.3):

> "Revolution: illegal seizure of power" (GovUkr 3.12.2013f)

> "Project EuroMaidan: A real revolution" (UkrN 9.12.2013)

> "Head over heels revolution: radical democracy" (GovUkr 11.12.2013a)

> Civilising breakthrough from Eurasia to Europe" (UkrN 12.12.2013)

> "Ukraine's revolution of dignity" (MMIC 27.12.2013c)

> "Identity revolution" (MMIC 1.01.2014)

4 A second source of irritation due to essentialist claims about 'what actually happened' in conflict comes from other analytical work, for example when looking at "conflict timelines" (see e.g. Thurston and Lebovich 2013). See also question (4) below.

Hence, it was an important guiding principle to constantly put this case study approach and its proceeding into perspective: first and foremost, it is characterised by the openness of its methodology concerning the nature of empirical material; it corresponds to an approximation procedure; it is neither a matter of covering a maximum possible number of 'events', 'facts' or data nor of reaching representativity in any other respect.

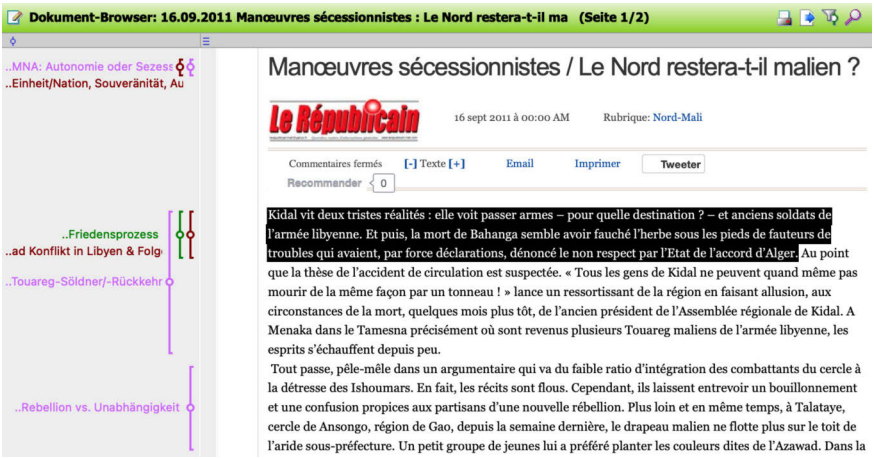
Yet, the implementation of this approach required a great amount of discipline, especially during stages of formulating interpretation, in order to get potential "problems of induction" (Vogd 2010: 122) under control (i.e. a tendency of researchers to carry or project inferences they wish to see into the material). For this reason, while zooming through text data, 'methodical self-control' included, for example, waiving the attribution of rational and goal-oriented motives; bracketing of contextual knowledge about the cases external to the text corpus; and, within the context of outlining the factual, temporal and social dimension of communication in different degrees of detail and abstraction, giving priority to the "inherent structuredness of the texts" (Vogd 2010: 130) in order to avoid hasty abstraction and theorising (e.g. by introducing analytical classifications at an early stage).

(2) How could this huge amount of text data be processed?

Indeed, MAXQDA had become an indispensable programme to manage text data, both in the sense of a structured filing of documents and concerning its tools for systematically coding texts (see details on coding procedure in chapter 4.4). However, major analytical steps (large parts of reflecting interpretation, including the identification of poles of contradiction, identity layers and escalating moves) were done in a 'hybrid' combination of MAXQDA and 'paper and pencil'. In any case, treating this huge amount of text data would not have been possible without the support of MAXQDA.

Here are some concrete experiences and questions that came up during the application: First, it should be noted that MAXQDA (at least the version used in this study due to pragmatic reasons, see chapter 4.4) was not primarily designed for sequential analyses which is why there were no supportive tools in this respect available. Therefore, already during text data gathering, it is vital to use filenames for each document that show its exact date of publication to make chronological ordering within the system easier. To be able to work with aggregated data in convenient temporal units, weekly and monthly folders, "sets", were created (see Appendix A.2.1/A.2.3). Second, while reading and coding the text during the phase of initial coding, there was intense reflection about how much of a relevant passage in the text should be coded. Key considerations in this regard included the question of how much context information a code would need to be adequately processed in the following stages. It was a useful experience to learn early that a short code (of a few words), which seems to be fully self-explanatory in the moment of coding, can appear meaningless when coming back to it later at a different stage of analysis. In this context, third, reflections were also about multi codings, i.e. the attribution of different codes to the very same passage in a text document (see snapshot in figure 12: the passage highlighted in black was coded with three different codes during the stage of initial coding).

Figure 12: Snapshot multiple coding



(Own figure/MAXQDA 11)

Beyond the question of how reasonable a multi coding might be with respect to its content, this is also a matter of 'internal multiplication of the text corpus': a triple multi coding means that one and the same text snippet gets processed in three different subsequent analytical contexts later on. Fourth and finally, working with MAXQDA does not only offer useful management tool to neatly organise huge text data and to enable a good coordination of analytical steps; it does also provide the conditions for 'translate' the codings into an analytical narrative to obtain a high level of transparency (as documented in the chapter on dimension of communication in conflict: 5.2/5.3/5.4 and 6.2/6.3/6.4).

(3) How did the selection of concrete text data sources take place?

To answer this question adequately, a few preliminary remarks have to be made: First, recalling that this study's methodology observes itself as a approximation procedure, concepts related to a quantitative logic of causality, such as validity and reliability of data played no part. Second, all text data being part of the text corpuses and thus representing text-based linguistic communication within the context of a conflict system had already been produced (i.e. they do not represent products of own research activities resulting, for example, from any kind of 'participatory observation') and then made available as "protocols in the form of texts" (Roos 2010: 101). Third, following the remarks on case selection earlier (see chapter 4.2), in text data collection, too, there is an ineluctable moment of contingency since a potentially endless amount of text data gets reduced to a necessarily limited text corpus.

Now, in the present case study design, text data selection is to be understood as part of the exploration of the conflict discourse. The collection of texts and the compilation of the text corpus thus started with a few text pieces including references to 'the conflict'. By asking questions (Which further communicative addressees are labelled? Which events are referred to as important? Which further sources are mentioned?) and following fur-

ther hints from within the texts, it was thus possible to literally go back and forth within the conflict discourse while the text corpus got gradually thicker and more structured (see details in chapter 4.3). As it can be illustrated by referring to the following statements, the press release of the Ukrainian government, more precisely, its reference to "opposition politicians" guided the process of text gathering towards other statements attributed to the political opposition parties in Ukraine in the first place. However, after having considered further documents, it became obvious that "political opposition" essentially refers to other statements (apart from traditional Ukrainian parties) seen as politically influential and attributed to 'civil society'.

> "It is pointedly that the participants of EuroMaidan are trying to distance themselves from politicians. We've seen as people literally physically 'bypass' opposition politicians, leave them aside from their declaration of will. […] Unfortunately, some opposition politicians do not leave attempts to convert the peaceful demonstration of will into crew-to-crew clashes." (Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, GovUkr 27.11.2013a)

> "Euromaidan, ultimately a people's convention in its form and essence, […] had done its best to keep distance from politicians of all colors." (MMIC 30.11.2013)

To keep an eye on the growing text corpus, the visualisation with the help of the "conflict observation map" and its discursive working levels (see chapter 4.3) was an important structuring tool. Following this, in each case study introduction (see chapters 5.1/6.1), the composition of the analysed text corpus is outlined in detail.

At this point, however, an imminent danger should be mentioned arising from the context of data gathering: there might be a 'snowball effect' when, during criss-cross searching within the conflict discourse, coming across particular sources estimated as important (such as a specific press release issued by the Ukrainian government), which are part of a larger stock of data (e.g. an electronical archive including *all* press releases and, beyond that, other potentially important texts, such as speeches, reports etc. published during the investigation period). In this situation, the challenge is to deal with such a 'self-multiplying' stock of data, i.e. conduct a time-consuming skim-reading and selection process. To put it differently, collecting text data from sources requires special caution in order not to get tangled up by one's own systematics but to continuously reflect on an appropriate balance between the amount of text data and its management.

(4) At various points in the case study chapters, there are references to analytical works that are not part of the text corpus. Why?

During the period of text data collection and, later on, during the first steps of the analysis it cannot be entirely avoided to come in touch with this kind of works since the pieces from the text corpus themselves may frequently include cross-references to scientific literature. However, the 'integrity' of the analytical approach here, which aims at exclusively working on the basis of a defined text corpus, has never been compromised. Instead, this kind of additional information is meant as a support for readers who are invited to consider this information in order to navigate through a demanding text more easily. In this

sense, for example, bringing in information about the common Berber background of Tuareg in the region (from Shoup 2011: 53–58) and looking at a map representing a "simplified spatial distribution of ethnic groups in Mali", which was both not part of the text corpus and thus did not count for the analysis, can be helpful in order to get along with the terminology and logic of the analytical narrative based on the text corpus alone (see chapter 6.4/phase I and Appendix A.3.2).

(5) "Conflicts are exclusively produced within and thus by communication" – what would be a translation of this in an everyday language?

To answer this question, an everyday anecdote may be helpful. It is about a situation in a café observed by this author: A customer, an elderly man, sitting at the next table unmistakeably said to the pastry chef, a young woman who waited on him: "Your service is really bad because I had to wait far too long. On top of this, the piece of plum cake I just had was miserable. I can tell you, I consider myself an amateur baker but I could have made it much better!" After he said those words in a patronising way, the waiter friendly apologised, told the man about other customers' positive feedback, brought the bill, and said goodbye.

Now, following an everyday understanding, one could have observed an incompatibility of positions here, be it framed as a disagreement of interests, values, or identities. But could one have observed a conflict here as well?

Indeed, this author turned this situation over and over in his mind thinking about whether it would have been appropriate to articulate his view of this conversation by telling the elderly man that the feedback to the pastry chef could be seen as not only unfriendly but as highly demeaning. Yet, maybe the other customers were not shocked by content and tone of the feedback; maybe the pastry chef herself took note of the feedback as an outlier commentary but does not think twice about it; maybe there was a journalist present as customer who will integrate this experience in his article about patriarchal behaviour among the retired generation; and maybe a PhD student randomly present cites this anecdote in his dissertation in order to illustrate the potential production of a conflict system in communication…

As this example illustrates, an incompatibility of subject positions only then becomes 'meaningful' when observed and articulated as such. Only if contradictions give reason to subsequent communication of nonacceptance (i.e. a chain of connected 'nos'), a social process begins to stabilise in the form of a 'structure of negative expectations'. In this sense, conflicts are produced within and by communication. This can even happen when the initiating contradiction was not observed as a conflict within this communication itself. Hence, confronting the elderly man would have triggered the articulation of (self-)observations that again would have brought about further communication of contradictions.[5] Against this background, this study could only look at the Maidan protests (2013/2014) and to Mali's crisis (2010/2012) as escalating conflicts because there was both

5 Within the framework of reflexive conflict analysis, a suchlike 'production' of conflict by observations 'from afar' represents an important aspect to consider in the context of interventions (see e.g. Weller 2017: 177; see also chapter 8.2).

a chain of contradictions observed by 'immediate' observers and a multitude of other articulated observations in any form referring to the conflict (journalists, scientists, experts in international law etc.) which altogether produce the conflict.

As outlined earlier in introduction to this study, conflicts cannot speak for themselves, and they cannot be approached as self-explanatory and material facts to which researchers could have an unfiltered access of any kind whatsoever. Therefore, freely adapted from Rorty (1989: 6), once again one of the major catchphrases of this study:

"Conflicts do not speak. Only we do."

(6) Which role do 'actors' play in this study?

If it's communication that holds the world together (see chapter 3.1), or, in other words, if communication constitutes the building block of 'the social', actors can certainly not be defined by drawing on individual human beings with static features and various social structures developing around them. Indeed, in many works within the field of conflict analysis and beyond as well as in an everyday understanding, many variants of supra-individual social entities and institutions, such as governments, political parties, companies, transnational opposition parties, civil society organizations or ethnic groups may be referred to as 'actors'. From the perspective of the present study, however, the aforementioned correspond to, in principle, constantly changing projection surfaces in the discourse (see Schrape 2017) or, put another way, discursive addresses. In the communication of (self-)observations, these discursive addresses are attributed features which 'animate' their identities. This is especially true for conflict discourses. Based on the analysis of the text corpus in the case study on Mali, table 32 shows how the attribution of features was observed in phase II from August 2011 to October 2011 (for reasons of comparison phase I, November 2010 to August 2011; table 32 was taken over from chapter 6.5.2).

This study's research and case study design is intended to systematically observe how a conflict was observed over time in a 'discursive cloud' filled with a myriad of speech acts. In doing so, it was not a predominant concern to present how stable specific discursive addresses might have been or not and to work out the involvement of suchlike 'actors' as such in conflict. Rather, it was particularly interested in the production and change of identities in conflict which were understood as conglomerations of persons, roles, programmes, and norms (see Luhmann 1984: 426–436).

Table 32: Conflict identity layers/discursive corridors phase I-II

programmes	II	reforming from within: constitutional reform; adapting and reinforcing PSPSDN; highlighting Islamic values as common ground; receiving Libyan returnees as nationals; pretending fight against terrorism; repressing northern populations by militarisation of development	calling on international community to observe; making PSPSDN more just; upholding tribal above national law; receiving Libyan returnees as Azawadians collaboration with terrorists; potential instigation of a new rebellion
	I	promoting development efforts in Mali, especially in northern regions; strengthening the unitary state; militarising the north; neocolonialism; cultural assimilation	claiming self-determination of population in northern regions; fighting for autonomy of Azawad; questioning the unitary state
roles	II	law-abiding citizens; faithful Muslims; clandestine collaborators of terrorists	activits in the cause of democracy and human rights; open collaborators of terrorists; new and old rebels
	I	loyals to the regime; pro-PSPSDN; supporters of peace process; collaborators of criminals (kidnappers, drug traffickers, bandits, terrorists)	anti-government activists; activists in the cause of freedom; people in need of help and living in insecurity; marginalised and oppressed people potential rebels; collaborators of criminals (kidnappers; drug traffickers; bandits, terrorists)
persons	II	Malian population; international development partners from the West and China; AQMI members	Azawadians; tribe members; international observers; AQMI members
	I	ATT; government members; majority of population in the country; government officials of neighbouring countries and Western countries; representatives of international development organisations; certain parts of Libyan returnees	MNA members; members of former Tuareg rebel units (e.g. Bahanga faction); major parts of Tuareg population in the north; light-skinned population; "all sons and daughters of Azawad"; certain parts of Libyan returnees

norms	II	concord, community, understanding, solidarity as national values with religious connotation	international solidarity among supporters of democracy; solidarity and loyalty with ethnic connotation
	I	unity and political stability; cultural diversity; development and security; progress and peace; heroism and patriotism	democracy, esp. self-determination and rule of law; justice and peace; solidarity and hospitality; importance of kinship; heroism and patriotism; historic responsibility

(Own table)

(7) To what extent can this study be referred to as a 'systems theoretical' work?

To recapitulate from the agenda of this work: it developed an empirical research strategy including a constructivist methodology for the study of conflict escalation which is embedded in a Luhmannian systems theoretical world society perspective; it argues that conflicts can be understood as social systems in their own right; it looks at the process of conflict escalation by analysing communication; and it follows a reconstructive approach informed by grounded theory and the documentary method. From the perspective of this author who observed himself as being 'scientifically socialised' within Political Science and International Relations, this agenda reflects a certain disposition to get involved with the huge body of Luhmannian systems theory. Here it can be stated that is was particularly important to keep a pragmatic relationship in order not to be – and that is a striking analogy to the understanding of conflict within systems theory – engulfed by this complex theoretical maelstrom (see e.g. the 'application' of the concept of structural coupling as a key element of observation during reflecting interpretation; see its introduction in chapter 4.4/"Special observations spots").

Taken as a whole, the present work shares the assessment that "systems theoretical empirical research does not implicate to take Luhmann's entire theory and possible advancements as a basis" (John et al. 2010: 324). Therefore, 'using' particular parts from system theory was primarily guided by an empirical problem which lies in a moment of fascination: Why is it that communication in certain cases of contradiction connects on and on, differentiates and produces discursive addresses and bundles of expectations enabling violence? To answer this question, indeed, the step to implement an empirical research project that integrates elements from systems theory (e.g. focus on communication, social systems, observation, structural coupling) needs to be deliberately risked. As the implementation of the agenda has demonstrated, at least from the perspective of this author, this has paid off, even though the stringency of this undoubtedly monumental theory might be challenged when wandering through the 'lowlands' of empirical data analysis.