



Gershon H. Gordon Faculty of Social Sciences
Tel Aviv University

Protracted Conflicts and their Roots: An Attempt at an Interdisciplinary Modern Conflict Typology

Academic Advisors:

Prof. Itai Sened, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, TAU

Prof. Udi Sommer, Department of Political Science, TAU

Petr Pesov

17.05.2023

Macro-level goal

Create a typology for comparing and understanding conflicts, according to the processes behind causing military escalations.

Conflicts: the social-political-military triad through narratives, emotions and structural causes, particularly within the roots.

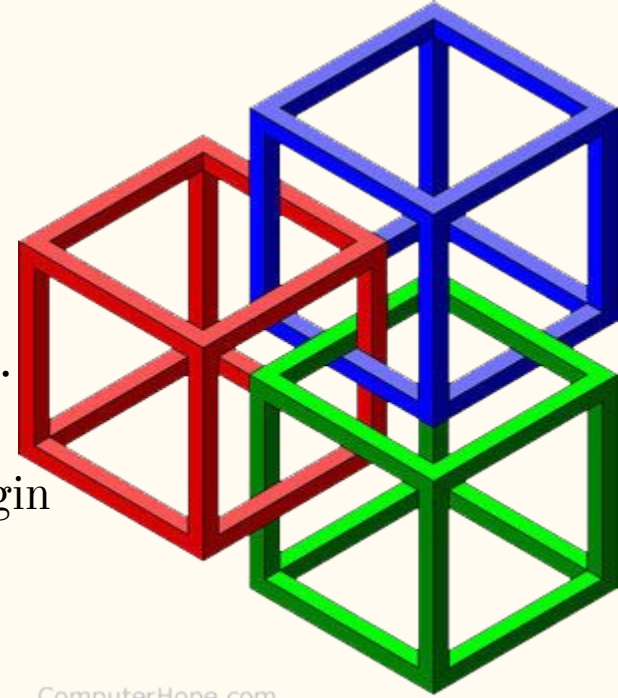
A conflict is viewed as a process: from roots to escalations.

Comparative analysis of conflicts and possible solutions will become easier



Previous frameworks

- Cycles based on internal, system and inter adversary relations. (Kriesberg & Dayton, 2017)
- Aggressor-defender model, spiral model, structural change model. (Pruitt, Rubin & Kim, 2003)
- Ethos of conflict, past interactions, collective emotions. (Bar-Tal, 2007)
- A pattern of transformation: evolution & return to origin (Coleman et al., 2007)
- Contextual elements: power balance, arms race and polarity. (Siverson & Miller 1993)



The gap

- Models: single or dual-disciplinary
- Interdisciplinarity: conflicts are affected by an extensive amount of both internal and exogenous factors
- The escalation model would focus on all disciplines will help understand conflicts better and later group them.



Key Elements & Fields

Narratives

Conflict Escalations

Roots of Conflict

Elite-level decision making

Social Identity

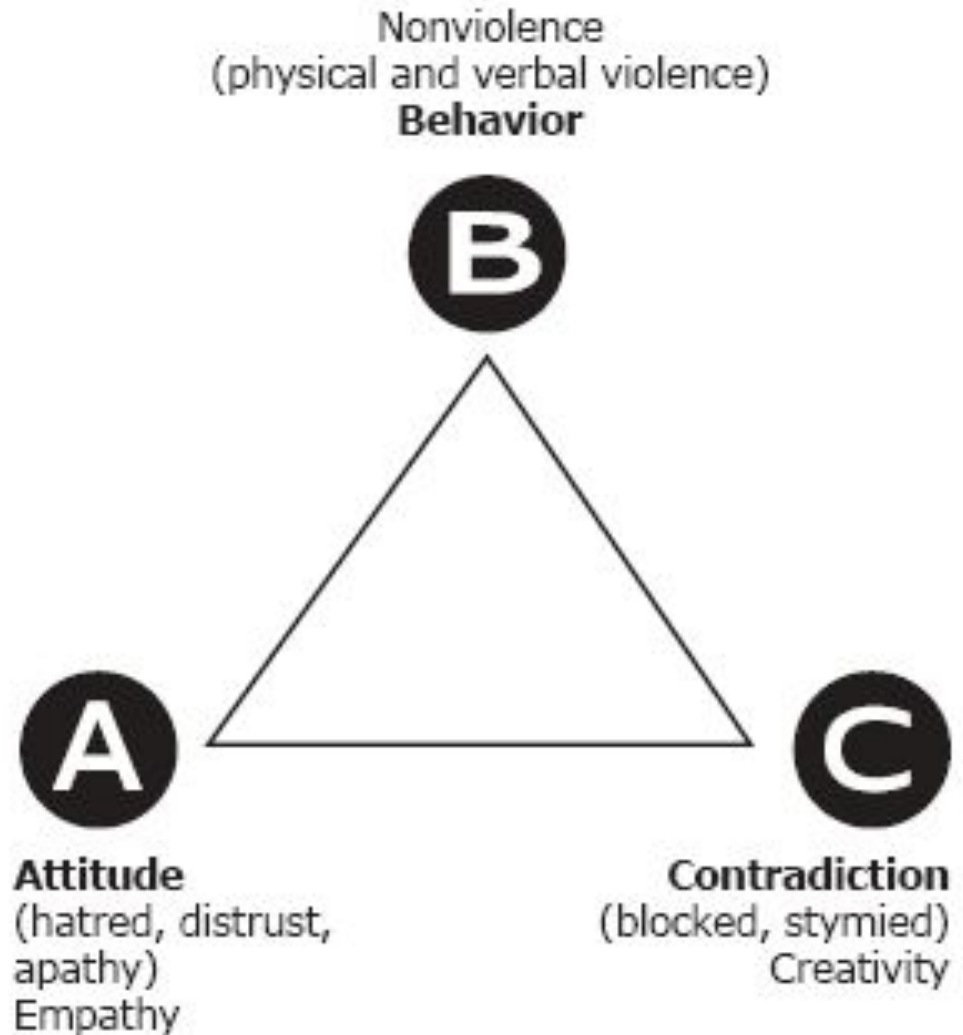
Social Psychology, Social Anthropology, International Relations, Political Science, Military Studies

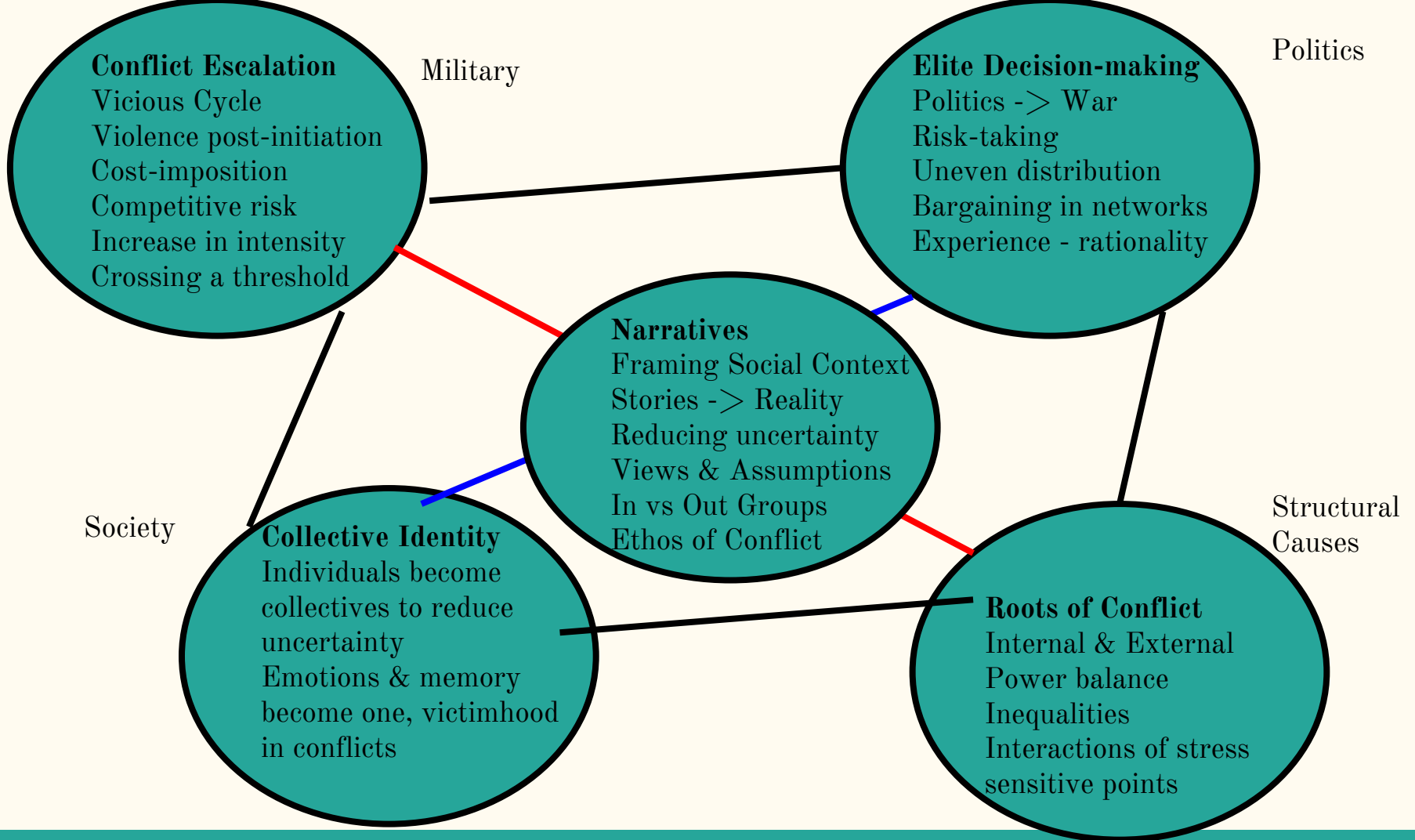


Galtung's ABC model

Need for change in ABC

for conflict transformation





Element interplay goes in both direction

What influences?↓	Escalations	Decisions	Narratives	Structural Causes	Collective identity
Escalations		2 Player game	Provides Formula	Create new roots	Formation of groups
Decisions	War - extension of politics		Create nationalism	False-flags, intensification	Mobilisation
Narratives	Justifying violent behavior	Biases & Judgement		Intensification	Tool for coping
Structural Causes	Provide bases and structural causes	Demand response by electorate	Serve as basis		Binding material
Collective Identity	Collective violence	Electoral desires	Information transfer	Misrepresentation	

Conflict transformation requires manipulation of the five:

1. Address roots (top-down) -> negotiations/mediation, political statements
2. Reconstruct narratives (bottom-up) -> socio-psychological interventions
3. Influence decisions (top-down & bottom-up) -> mass desire for peace, lower stakes, create incentives
4. Prevent escalations (top-down) -> confidence-building, interventions, international pressure
5. Redirect collective behaviour (top-down & bottom-up) -> education

Concentration

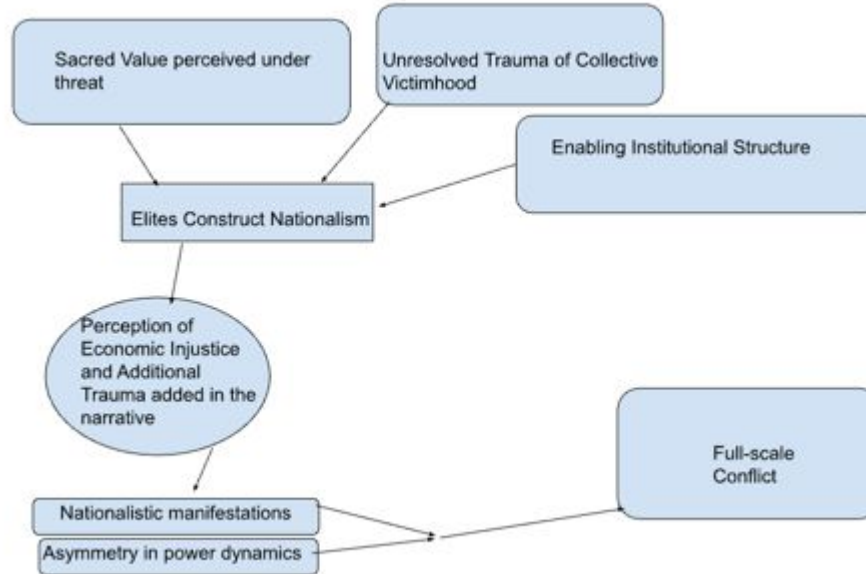
1. Frozen - periodic stems of violence
2. Violent - some aspect of militarization
3. Intergroup - at least two distinct groups involved
4. Intractable - elusive to conflict-resolution processes
5. Territorial



Possible cases: Russia-Ukraine, Israel-Palestine, Nagorno-Karabakh, Kashmir, Georgia, Transnistria, Colombia, Northern Ireland.

RQ: Can protracted conflicts be grouped according to their roots?

Thesis Framework, fitting Nagorno-Karabakh



Methodology

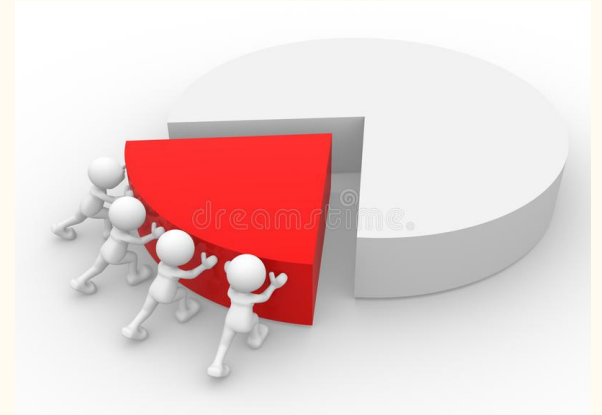
1. Qualitative elite & expert interviews analysis
2. Three-dimensional clustering to build a typology
3. Process tracing to understand which elements were/are most dominant at what stages

Either a monologue or 3 comparative case-studies.



Contribution

1. Theoretical contribution: conflict typology, grouping conflicts according to their causal factors, something that will be novel in the field of conflict resolution.
2. Refined model of conflict escalation from socio-political tensions to war will be suggested with a goal to enable scholars to look at conflict cases as processes in a different manner than what is offered by existing works.
3. Empirical contribution with new data on conflicts from high-level experts and officials.



Important literature:

Sacred Values: Atran, S., & Axelrod, R. (2008). Reframing Sacred Values. *Negotiation Journal*, 24(3), 221–246. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1571-9979.2008.00182.x>

Collective victimhood: Jasini, A., Delvaux, E., & Mesquita, B. (2017). Collective Victimhood and Ingroup Identity Jointly Shape Intergroup Relations, Even in a Non-violent Conflict: The Case of the Belgians. *Psychologica Belgica*, 57(3), 98–114. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/pb.334>

Institutional Structure: Cornell, S. E. (2002). Autonomy as a Source of Conflict: Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective, in *World Politics*, Volume 54, Number 2, pp. 245-276.

Nationalism: Anderson, B. R. O. (1983). *Imagined communities : reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso.

Power asymmetry: Aggestam, K. (2002) Mediating Asymmetrical Conflict, *Mediterranean Politics*, 7:1, 69-91, DOI: [10.1080/713604552](https://doi.org/10.1080/713604552)

Economic cleavages: Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and Nationalism (New Perspectives on the Past)*. New York, US: Cornell University Press.