



DEFINING CONFLICT AND RELATED TERMS

Dr. Susanne Schmeier

IHE Delft Institute for Water Education



Deltares



Excerpts from slides prepared for Water, Peace and Security tailor-made capacity development activities in Iraq. Please attribute authors when using materials.

Why define conflict (and its various forms)?

- There are many different situations in which we speak about water conflicts
 - Competition at the household level (e.g. cleaning vs cooking)
 - Competition between people in a community (e.g. over a shared well)
 - Competition between sectors/economic groups (e.g. farmers, herders, fishermen, industry)
 - Disagreements between provinces (e.g. over water sharing)
 - Disagreements between regional and central governments (e.g. water distribution, investments)
 - Protests and demonstrations linked to water (e.g. against insufficient services, lack of supply)
 - Disagreements between neighboring states (e.g. over water allocation from shared river)
 -
- It is important to be specific and understand the differences between these situations
- This provides the basis for developing effective responses for conflict prevention or mitigation

Conflict

- Conflict can mean many different things
 - Disagreement
 - Competition
 - Protest
 - Delegitimization
 - Violence
 - War
 - ...
- Generally, we can say that conflict is a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals

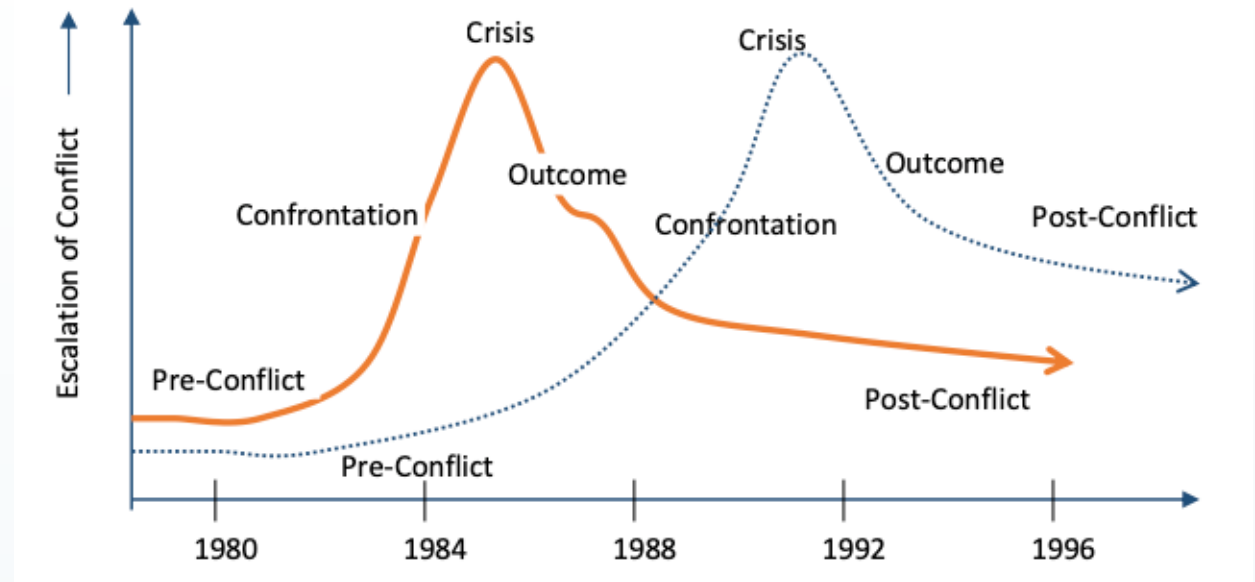
Conflict does not necessarily mean violence

- Conflict = a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals
- Violence = is the use of force; typically occurs when an individual or a group is avoidably prevented from reaching their full potential
- Conflicts are inevitable and when resolved well can often lead to an improved situation

	Compatible goals	Incompatible goals
Compatible behavior		Latent conflict
Incompatible behavior	Surface conflict	Open conflict (possibly with violence)

How to understand a conflict?

- When trying to understand a water-related conflict, some key questions have to be asked
 - Who (which water user)?
 - What for (type of use)?
 - When (time of use)?
 - How much (water quantity)?
 - What quality (water quality)?



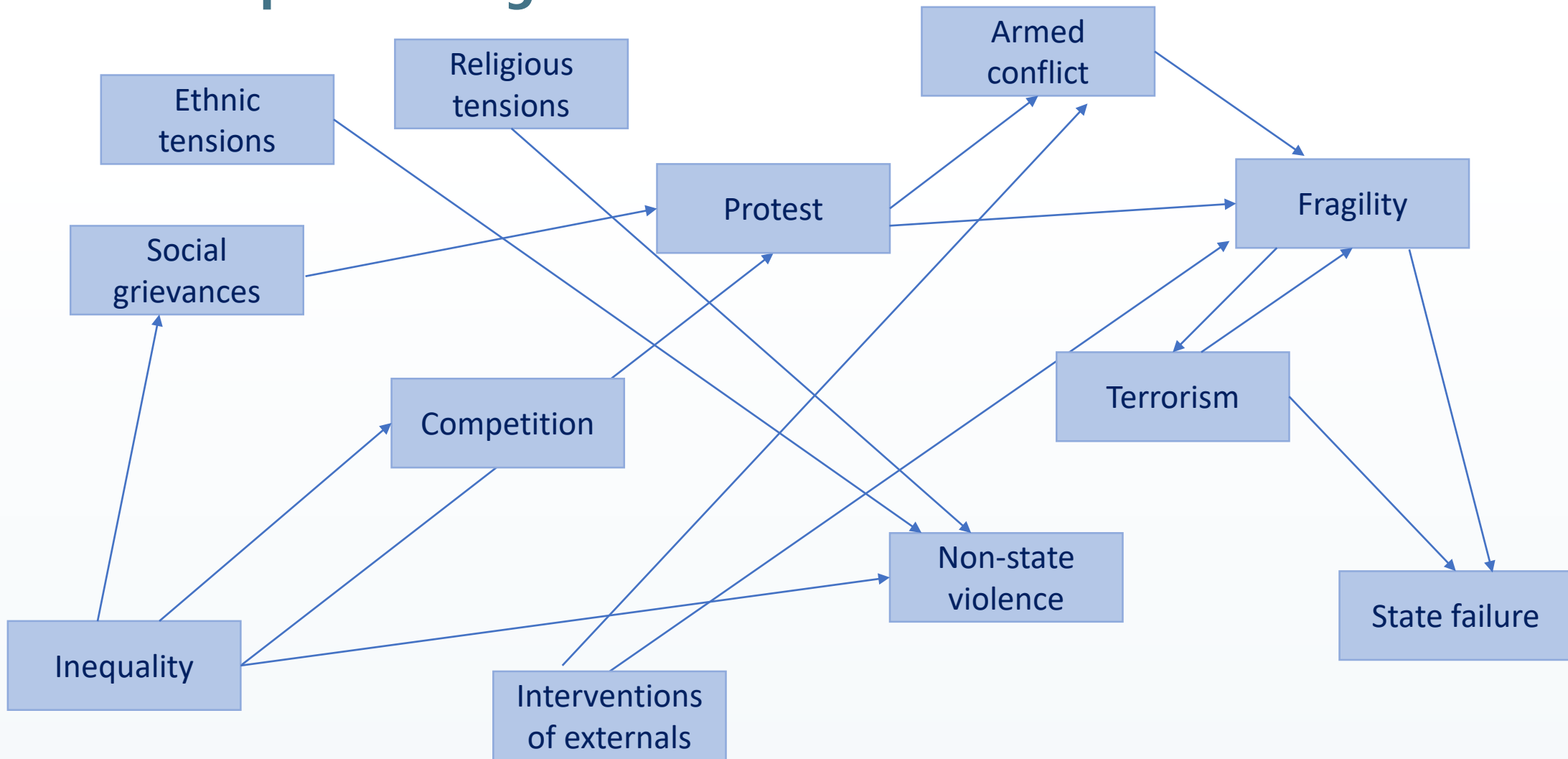
Other important terms

- Instability
- Fragility
- Migration and displacement

Fragility

- Different understandings and definitions
 - A state is fragile if state structures lack the capacity (or the political will) to provide basic functions for security, services provisions, etc.
 - A state is fragile if state institutions are compromised in their functioning due to social instability, non-state actors' interferences
 - A state is fragile if it cannot fulfil basic functions of statehood, including the monopoly of the use of force

A complex setting...



The other side of the coin

- Peace
- Cooperation
- Integration

Conflict and cooperation across different levels

- Events relating to water occur at different levels
 - Personal
 - Local
 - Sub-national
 - National
 - International
- Recognizing what conflict is occurring and amongst who is an important first step to:
 - Get everyone on the same page when describing conflict
 - Identify parties who should be involved in the facilitation
 - Get everyone on the same page when describing conflict
 - Communicating issues in a way that is clear and comfortable for all parties