

BUILDING CONFLICT PREVENTION CAPACITY

Methods, Experiences, Needs

UNU Workshop Seminar Series Report

By

David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel

Funded with grants from:

**International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa
United Nations University (UNU), Tokyo**

CONTENTS

Foreword

Acknowledgements

Authors

1. Project Introduction

- 1.1. Project Background
- 1.2. Objectives of Seminar Workshops
- 1.3. Locations of Seminar Workshops
- 1.4. Seminar Programme

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations of Conflict Prevention

- 2.1.1. Impetus and Motivation
- 2.1.2. Claims that Conflict Prevention Can't Work or Doesn't Work Well
- 2.1.3. Conceptual, Analytic and Political Problems

3. Applied Conflict Prevention: Operational Challenges and Opportunities

- 3.1. The Purpose of Conflict Prevention
- 3.2. The Utility and Challenges of Applied Conflict Prevention
- 3.3. Making Applied Conflict Prevention Work: Options and Feasibility

4. Workshop Series Reflections

- 4.1. Organization of American States (OAS), Washington, D.C.
- 4.2. United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Washington, D.C.
- 4.3. Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), Ottawa
- 4.4. United Nations Headquarters, New York
- 4.5. The WPF Program on Intrastate Conflict and Conflict Prevention and the Belfer Centre, Harvard University, Cambridge
- 4.6. International Security Forum, Geneva
- 4.7. United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Pristina
- 4.8. Organization for Security And Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Vienna
- 4.9. Organization of African Unity (OAU)
- 4.10. Association Of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Jakarta
- 4.11. United Nations University (UNU), Tokyo

5. Overall Findings

6. Overall Recommendations

FOREWORD

The purpose of the United Nations University's Conflict Prevention Project is to enhance conflict prevention capacities of, and between, regional and international organizations. The project brings together three groups of individuals involved in conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities - a group of scholars from developed countries, a group of scholars from developing countries and a group of scholar-practitioners from regional organizations and the UN. The three groups examine how scholarly discussions on conflict prevention can be translated into policy at subnational, national, regional and global levels. So far, two international workshops have resulted in two book-length manuscripts that are scheduled for publication in 2001: *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?* and *From Rhetoric to Policy: Towards Workable Conflict Prevention at the Regional and Global Levels*.

The present report is based on a seminar workshop series held at the UN and various regional organizations and research institutions throughout November 2000. The aim of this seminar series was to share and discuss the main project findings with scholars and staff at those organizations that have contributed to this project and, by doing so, create a platform for intra-institutional examinations of conflict prevention practices and institutional capacity building and training needs.

For more information about the project's work in progress, please consult the following internet pages:

<http://www.unu.edu/p&g/conflict-prevention.html>
<http://www.carleton.ca/~dcarment/papers/emperor.html>
<http://www.carleton.ca/csds/papers/NPSIA-23.PDF>
<http://www.carleton.ca/cifp>

David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel
Cambridge and Tokyo
February 2001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We express our deep gratitude to the International Development Research Centre (Ottawa) and the United Nations University (Tokyo) for funding this workshop seminar series and the larger conflict prevention project on which these seminars are based. We are furthermore indebted to a number of colleagues and/or project contributors who have spent much time and effort to organize the individual events of this series: Peter Quilter, Tim Docking, Lewis Rasmussen, Julia Bentley, Christopher Cushing, Jacques Fomerand, Ramon Ray, Mary Esther Leung, Robert Rotberg, Sharon Butler, Debbie Weinberg, Patrick Lehmann, John Cockell, Monika Wohlfeld, Njunga Mulikita, Medardo Abad, Chifumi Mizutani and Yoshie Sawada. Special thanks go to Monica Blagescu at UNU, whose able assistance throughout the preparation and implementation of this seminar series was crucial to its success.

AUTHORS

David Carment is currently a Fellow with the World Peace Foundation's Program on Conflict Prevention and Intrastate Conflict at the Belfer Center, Harvard University. He is an Associate Professor of International Affairs and teaches conflict analysis, conflict mediation, international organization, conflict resolution and development at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, Ottawa. He was educated at McMaster University, Carleton University and McGill University, where he received his PhD (Political Science) in 1994. He was a post-doctoral fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University and is a NATO Fellow. His research interests include the international dimensions of ethnic conflict, the role of communication technologies in conflict analysis and resolution, early warning, peacekeeping, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Recent articles focusing on these subjects have appeared in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *International Politics*, *Global Society*, *Third World Quarterly* and *Canadian Foreign Policy*. His most recent books are *Using Force to Prevent Ethnic Violence: An Evaluation of Theory and Evidence* (with Frank Harvey, 2000), *The International Politics of Quebec Secession: State Making and State Breaking in North America* (with Frank Harvey and John Stack, 2000), *Peace in the Midst of Wars: Preventing and Managing International Ethnic Conflicts* (with Patrick James, 1998), and *Wars in the Midst of Peace: The International Politics of Ethnic Conflict* (with Patrick James, 1997). Contact: david_carment@harvard.edu

Albrecht Schnabel is an Academic Programme Officer in the Peace and Governance Programme of the United Nations University, Tokyo, Japan. His work at UNU focuses on conflict and security studies, with an emphasis on conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding. He was educated at the University of Munich, the University of Nevada-Reno, and Queen's University, Canada, where he received his PhD (Political Studies) in 1995. He was a lecturer at Queen's University (1994), an Assistant Professor at the American University in Bulgaria (1995-96) and the Central European University (1996-98). He served on OSCE election monitoring missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and was a visiting fellow at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg. He is a trainer in Early Warning and Preventive Measures for the UN Staff College in Turin and currently serves as President of the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres. His teaching and research focus on international organizations, ethnic conflict, refugee policy, peacekeeping, conflict prevention and management, and humanitarian intervention. He has contributed articles on these topics to numerous journals and edited volumes. Recent books include *The Southeast European Challenge: Ethnic Conflict and the International Response* (with Hans-Georg Ehrhart, 1999), *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Collective Action, and International Citizenship* (with Ramesh Thakur, 2000) and *Southeast European Security: Threats, Responses, Challenges* (forthcoming in 2001). Contact: schnabel@hq.unu.edu

1. PROJECT INTRODUCTION

1.1. Project Background

Our collaboration began in early 1998, as a proposal for a two-panel mini-workshop on conflict prevention for the 1999 International Studies Association meeting in Washington, DC, USA. The project has subsequently developed into a multi-year project with two book-length volumes and various dissemination activities.

The first stage of the project features a conceptual and practical evaluation of the limits and opportunities of conflict prevention. The resulting book offers conceptual analyses, cases studies from around the world, and examinations of various methodologies to conduct early warning and capacity building within the UN System. The contributors are mainly academics, joined by several analysts from different UN organizations. The volume is entitled “Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?” and is currently under review for publication by United Nations University Press.

The second stage of the project draws on conflict prevention activities at all major regional organizations and various UN agencies and programmes. It offers the results of a frank dialogue on the record and needs of enhancing and mainstreaming conflict prevention within and, most importantly, between organizations.

We are now exploring a third stage of this project. The third stage envisions full-fledged workshops and training seminars at major regional organizations and non-governmental organization, organized in collaboration with those organizations for their staff and members of the local/regional academic community, civil society, media and educational institutions. This seminar series served in part as a feasibility study to examine the need and support for third-stage workshops and seminars in the various regions studied and addressed by this project.

1.2. Objectives of Seminar Workshops

The objectives of this seminar series are threefold. **First**, the seminar series constituted an effort to link the three stages of this project - its conceptual, practical and capacity building components - in order to examine more thoroughly the theory and application of conflict prevention. **Second**, we considered it necessary to report back to those organizations that have been involved in our projects through the contributions of their staff. We wanted to go beyond the limited number of participants from the UN and regional organizations and offer them an opportunity to present and share the project findings with their colleagues and other interested parties. **Third**, we wanted to generate discussions and dialogue on conflict prevention at each organization, with an emphasis on “self-discovery,” i.e. the sharing of activities that are conflict prevention-relevant among and between units and individual staff members. **Finally**, we wanted to explore the need and interest at each organization to pursue capacity building, training and mainstreaming.

1.3. Locations of Seminar Workshops

From 9-29 November 2000, we organized and held seminars at the following institutions:

- the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington DC, USA;
- the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), also in Washington DC, USA;
- the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) in Ottawa, Canada;
- the United Nations Secretariat in New York, USA;
- the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, Cambridge, USA;
- the International Security Forum Conference in Geneva, Switzerland;
- the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Pristina;
- the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Vienna, Austria;
- the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;
- the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Jakarta, Indonesia; and
- the United Nations University (UNU) in Tokyo, Japan.

In these seminar workshops we addressed (and engaged) scholars, UN staff at Headquarters and in the field, military personnel, staff at regional organizations and NGOs.

1.4. Seminar Programme

Most hosts requested a compact, yet comprehensive programme. We thus offered a choice between one or two panel seminars. The first panel began with an introduction by a representative of the host organization. This was followed by a project introduction offered by Albrecht Schnabel. David Carment followed up with a presentation on the conceptual background, limits and opportunities of conflict prevention. This was followed by a presentation by Albrecht Schnabel, who emphasized the operational background, limits and opportunities of conflict prevention. These two presentations were supplemented with presentations by regional participants who offered insights based on their own organizations' record, capacity and needs for training in conflict prevention. Finally, we encouraged a discussion (in some cases in the form of a roundtable) on capacity building and training. In some cases this was followed by a second panel featuring several additional project contributors and local participants.

The general discussions, open to all seminar participants, focused in each case on training, capacity building, mainstreaming, efforts to integrate conflict prevention-sensitive thinking into daily work, and on specific questions that arose from the preceding discussions. Prior to the seminar workshops, between 30 and 100 packages (depending on the number of expected attendees) of project materials were mailed to each workshop location. These materials included contributing chapters and summaries of the project volumes.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CONFLICT PREVENTION

The first presentation is divided into two main sections. The first part discusses the impetus and motivation for the project and the key criticisms that have been levelled at conflict prevention as a theory and a policy. The second part evaluates the main impediments that must be overcome if conflict is to be successfully implemented at the local, regional and global levels.

2.1. Impetus and Motivation

Our research program takes its impetus from a variety of sources including the *Carnegie Commission's Report on Preventing Deadly Conflict*, a variety of policy papers produced by IDRC, the Conflict Prevention Network, the Swedish, Dutch and British Foreign Ministries and most recently the *Brahimi Report* (which itself is informed by the UN Secretary-General's *Millennium Report*.) Although the *Brahimi Report* is largely concerned with UN-led peace support operations and post conflict peacebuilding, it does provide some insights on broader conceptions of conflict prevention especially in light of the desire to render the UN a more effective and forward looking organization through enhanced intelligence gathering and preventive diplomacy.

The *Brahimi Report* is concerned with conflict prevention in three ways. First the authors call for more coherence and coordination between relevant actors – including those engaged in development as well as conflict management. This is an important contribution to understanding conflict prevention because it suggests that both the economic as well as the more important and perhaps better understood security dimensions of conflict prevention need to be addressed. In this vein International Financial Institutions (IMF, IBRD) are now involved in developing effective conflict prevention strategies. The corporate sector is also addressing the issue either in consultation with regional organizations (such as Shell's collaborative efforts with the EU) or governments (such as Talisman's consultation with the Canadian government regarding the former's involvement in the Sudanese conflict).

Second, the report calls for the translation of esoteric academic models and frameworks into meaningful policy. Methodologies of risk assessment need to be practicable and accessible to policy makers. In light of this concern, several UN agencies, NGOs and regional organizations (such as the EU FEWER, DPKO/IPA, UNDP, OSCE and the OAU to name a few) are now developing the means by which they can identify the relevant tools and techniques for useful conflict management and conflict prevention. Some of this work is provided by think tanks, academic organizations and the private sector working closely in consultation with local NGOs in zones of conflict, while other work is being designed in-house for specific organizational needs by conflict prevention experts such as Michael Lund and Luc Reyhler. As a result of these and other efforts the momentum towards mainstreaming conflict prevention is gaining speed. Mainstreaming consists of:

Combining policy-specific knowledge with conflict prevention expertise with the help of social, economic, political and security

instruments. Mainstreaming is thus about establishing an in-house “culture of prevention” and providing appropriate means and procedures to effectively follow a “mainstream” policy, i.e. conflict prevention. As opposed to a “sidelined” subject, the mainstreamed issue is systematically incorporated in and becomes an integral and equal part of all essential areas of engagement.¹

Third, the Brahimi Report calls for increased support for fact finding and mediation – areas traditionally associated with the activities of the Secretary-General’s Good Offices under the rubric of preventive diplomacy. To quote:

(a) The Panel endorses the recommendations of the Secretary-General with respect to conflict prevention contained in the Millennium Report and in his remarks before the Security Council’s second open meeting on conflict prevention in July 2000, in particular his appeal to “all who are engaged in conflict prevention and development — the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, Governments and civil society organizations - [to] address these challenges in a more integrated fashion;”

(b) The Panel supports the Secretary-General’s more frequent use of fact-finding missions to areas of tension, and stresses Member States’ obligations, under Article 2(5) of the Charter, to give “every assistance” to such activities of the United Nations.

In sum the Brahimi Report provides relevant insights on conflict prevention by suggesting that coherence, integration and coordination among all actors need to be carried out at both the analytical stage (information gathering, risk assessments, evaluation and impact assessment) and at the implementation stage (engaging local, regional and international actors). Notwithstanding these important claims, the Report provides obvious and important continuity with previous efforts at enhancing UN effectiveness, most notably Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s *An Agenda for Peace* and *An Agenda for Development*, which laid down much of the conceptual groundwork in linking conflict prevention to broader concerns such as enhancing human security and development. However the Report does not provide guidance on which arms of the UN are best placed to act preventively and what tools and strategies they should deploy. As a recent report from the International Peacekeeping Academy notes:

Naturally a whole host of organizations may play useful roles based on differential expertise, comparative advantage and perceived legitimacy. While international and regional organizations may have the benefit of perceived neutrality and greater resources, they also have the shortcomings of large bureaucracies. Competition for turf and standard operating procedures may hinder the development of more finely tuned strategies involving multiple UN agencies or the UN, regional organizations and members states. Further while there is significant variance in the efficacy of regional organizations – European bodies such as the OSCE and EU may have a better track record than say, the OAU or ASEAN in preventive efforts – this does

¹ This definition is provided by Martina Huber of the Conflict Prevention Network, 10 January, 2001.

not mean that they collaborate well with the UN, given standard problems of bureaucratic politics and coordination.²

2.2. Claims that Conflict Prevention Can't Work or Doesn't Work Well

Despite a stated desire (at the highest levels of the UN, at G8 meetings and within all regional organizations included in this study) to improve the quality and quantity of conflict prevention, the idea is not without its critics. The pressure to anticipate and respond to conflict has increased. The international community's track record, in this regard, is not good. The following developments over the last decade demonstrate this point:³

- The failure to prevent the relapse of "successful" consolidation processes (Cambodia, Angola);
- The failure to prevent the slow collapse of states in Central and West Africa – despite clear understanding of when and where such events would occur and the availability of forecasts for predicting and explaining their causes and manifestations (Congo, Guinea);
- The failure to anticipate the moral hazards that are generated by efforts to ameliorate the symptoms of conflict, such as refugee flows, ethnic cleansing and clan warfare (Rwanda, Somalia);
- The failure to understand how biased interventions can accelerate conflict between combatants (Kosovo, Sierra Leone);
- The failure of policy makers to understand how weak responses to warring factions can generate even greater conflict, and increase the likelihood of conflict (Rwanda, Bosnia);

² On the one hand there is the assumption that the UN is not well suited to go it alone. On the other hand, states are not well suited to go it alone either. Leaders of states must secure support of domestic constituencies and conflict prevention must be sold to the public. These take time and furnish no guarantee of success. It is far preferable for partnerships between NGOs, regional organizations, the UN and states to be developed and enhanced. Jentleson has shown that political will is not insurmountable – political constraints do have a degree of political malleability depending on who plays the lead role. For example NGOs offer several advantages that neither states nor the UN possess. NGOs tend to be non-hierarchical, they have a direct line of communication from the field, they tend to be non-bureaucratic and they do not need to water down their analysis to get things done. See "From Promise to Practice: Strengthening UN Capacities for the Prevention of Violent Conflict" Experts Meeting on Methodology, 3, International Peace Academy, November 2000.

³ For these and other examples, see Michael Lund, "Creeping institutionalization of the culture of Prevention?" in *Preventing Violent Conflict: The Search for Political Will, Strategies and Effective Tools*, The Report of the Krusenberg Seminar, 19-20 June 2000, p. 23.

- The failure to understand how values promoting conflict reduction mechanisms such as democracy and human rights can lead to actions that might actually promote the risk of state failure (Bosnia, East Timor/Indonesia).⁴

Those who criticize conflict prevention focus on its conceptual as well as its political limitations. These criticisms can be summarized in the following ways. The first kind of criticism focuses on the factors associated with conflict escalation. Risk assessments are premised largely on imperfect information. Because the range of factors associated with conflicts vary according to the type being evaluated, it is extremely difficult to forecast specific events with perfect reliability. Any predictions of future behaviour are associated with probabilities of outcome and naturally predictions become more difficult the further they are from occurrence. This occurs for two reasons. The first is due to what is often called the “signal to noise ratio” referring to the difficulty of isolating causes - usually associated with underlying structural factors - from concurrent and unrelated events. This ratio increases as the distance between cause and effect increases, making advanced early warning difficult.

Second, the closer to an event one moves the more likely that other factors – not just underlying structural causes – but relational, psychological and dynamic patterns of interaction often associated with accelerators and triggering events - determine conflict escalation. This means that analysis must tend to not only an appreciation of underlying structural factors but human behaviour as well, including individual, intergroup and intragroup dynamics. It also means that analysis must have a clear sense of stakeholder interests and an understanding of factors that generate peace and not just conflict.⁵

This complexity renders sound analysis difficult but not impossible.⁶ Analysts must establish a time frame appropriate to the issue at hand. Anticipating conflict is like peeling an onion in which each layer reveals progressively longer time lines: long term fundamental dynamics relating to structural causes and consequences, mid-term behavioural patterns, and current events such as humanitarian crises and ethnic cleansing. For example, warning must come years in advance to respond strategically to structural problems (development, institution building, establishing infrastructure) but only a year or two or less when escalation is imminent and when the tasks are to engage in preventive diplomacy, dialogue, and mediation.⁷

On the one hand, where conflicts are well understood in both form and content and the causes are proximate and escalation is likely, the main problem will not be one of

⁴ Robert H. Dorff, “Democratization and Failed States: The Challenge of Ungovernability,” *Parameters*, Summer 1996, pp. 17-31.

⁵ See the FEWER <www.fewer.org> and CIFP <www.carleton.ca/cifp> websites for a variety of perspectives on how these problems are addressed.

⁶ See David Carment and Karen Garner, “Conflict Prevention and Early Warning: Problems, Pitfalls and Avenues for Success,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*, Winter, 1999.

⁷ Mary O. McCarthy, "Potential Humanitarian Crises: The Warning Process and Roles for Intelligence," in S. Schmeidl and H. Adelman, eds., *Synergy in Early Warning Conference Proceedings*, 15-18 March 1997, Toronto, Canada, pp. 15-16.

analysis but rather response. On the other hand, where conflicts are latent and only remotely suggestive of potential escalation, careful monitoring will be essential. It is a truism to suggest that in the latter cases, where conflict is nothing more than a probability, it will often be difficult to generate an effective response. This is because if those capable of generating responses cannot be convinced of its necessity they may prefer to sit and wait or do nothing.

Therefore, it is obvious that conflict prevention activities – especially those focusing on long term structural transformations - should have a built in evaluative process or impact assessment capability that will, in effect, ensure self monitoring and provide policy guidance on what to do. Equally, it may on occasion be important to hand off many of the responsibilities for response to those who are themselves stakeholders in the process. Such approaches might include capacity building - by which it is meant providing the means to address root causes through blueprints and resources - for local stakeholders through such activities often associated with preventive development, support for human rights and democratization.

A second criticism that has been levelled at conflict prevention is the claim that the presence of a third party or “managing agent” intent on influencing outcomes can have both a negative as well as positive impact on the process.⁸ There is of course some truth to this claim of moral hazard – few efforts of proactive intervention are neutral activities. Biased efforts that favour one side over another – whether through resource allocation, military assistance or simply through words (threatening or otherwise) have unintended consequences and it is important to understand the conditions under which third parties influence outcomes such that they themselves become party to the conflict.⁹ Under the worst of conditions the third party may become a target rather than an intermediary. Of course Mary Anderson’s suggestion that outside actors should first strive to “do no harm” are important words to consider under any conditions of conflict management, but doubly so when the risks of proactive involvement include the potential loss of lives and not just resources.

Secondarily, triangulation begs the question of who should be actively engaged in the first place. Under ideal conditions preventive activities would be locally owned and enacted upon. But not every situation is one calling for long term structural transformation. Preventive activities engage outside actors to the extent that is they that can often provide threats and promises (coercive activity) that can induce rapid de-escalation of tensions in situations where wide-scale violence is already at hand.

A third and final criticism is directed towards conflict prevention as a political activity. Here the claim being made is that the evidence required to demonstrate effectiveness demands a counterfactual – the assumption that had early action NOT

⁸ Food aid directed through non-governmental organizations is often provided to belligerents as well as victims. Emergency health care is given to both combatants and non-combatants alike. See Barber. 1997. "How Humanitarian Aid Feeds War and Conflict." *The Globe and Mail*, 12 July 1997. D9. Dane Rowlands and David Carment, “Moral Hazard and Conflict Intervention” in Murray Wolfson, ed., *The Political Economy of War and Peace*, London: Kluwer Press, 1998.

⁹ See for example the recent reports on the linkage between conflict and development assistance produced by the Department for International Development (DfID, 2001) and the various reports produced by the Clingendael Institute in the Netherlands and CIFP <<http://www.carleton.ca/cifp>>.

been taken conflict would have broken out. Rarely is there direct proof that early efforts have succeeded in preventing anything. This has two implications. First this argument assumes that many conflict prevention efforts are ineffective because of lack of resources to conduct proper analysis and impact assessment. But more importantly, so the argument goes, leaders prefer to engage in activities which are highly visible and provide specific political benefits to them and their followers – given a choice between early and preventive action and humanitarian intervention the latter is politically less risky. In this sense conflict prevention is understood as a highly risky strategy because it requires the allocation of resources towards activities whose impacts may be poorly understood or indeterminate.¹⁰ Such activities, so the critics argue, divert resources away from conventional activities which are inherently less risky and whose processes and impacts are arguably more readily understood and measured.

In large part, these criticisms are premised on an evaluation of late prevention and late warning where violence has already broken out and where there is a narrowing of policy options and response activities to but a few. These are instances usually associated with humanitarian intervention and/or some form of peace enforcement in combination with sanctions, arms control, embargoes and military response. Here the goal is not the prevention of conflict simply understood, but the prevention of conflict that spreads either vertically or horizontally or that leads to large-scale intergroup violence. These are activities in which states are generally involved and remain the primary stake-holders.

Of course failure is more likely when the operational responses themselves are inherently riskier. But if one examines other forms of conflict prevention – specifically those activities focusing on capacity building with special attention being given to structural transformation and long term positive grassroots development, then there is cause for optimism. In other words, conflict prevention's logic remains intact and evidence exists that demonstrates support for its effectiveness across a wide range of activities. Conflict prevention is not just a set of operational responses generated by coalitions of the willing who may act only under a very narrow set of conditions. Indeed evidence has been generated by a number of reputable sources – UNU/WIDER, the Carnegie Commission and the World Bank - clearly indicating that the costs of not acting are relatively high. The logic of conflict prevention is such that states and other actors must weigh the costs of being involved against the risks of conflict escalation without some early involvement. But the evidence is generally clear – the costs of early action are far outweighed by the consequences of war and violent conflict.

Thus, there is a need to differentiate between long-term and short-term prevention. Any activity that advances human security, alleviates poverty and the environment, increases respect for human rights, or fosters good and stable governance, contributes in one way or another to long-term stabilization and the prevention of breakdown and violence. There has been progress in that direction. At the very minimum, activity in an economically and political fragile society should not further destabilize society. The World Bank and the IMF, for example, show much commitment towards assuring

¹⁰ For a policy-relevant rejoinder to this criticism see the recent work of the Swedish Foreign Ministry on mainstreaming conflict prevention.

that their structural adjustment programmes no longer contribute to the disintegration of the political and economic bases of people's very existence. There is greater recognition that key roles in dispute management have to be played by local actors – including women, elders, young people. While efforts need to be made to prevent destabilization through external involvement, local capacities for peace need to be fostered, nourished and brought into the political, economic and social processes of popular participation in decision making in local and national governance. While NGOs appear as natural partners in this process, caution should be exercised about the inherently competitive and often unaccountable nature of many NGOs.

In the face of minimal resources for conflict prevention activities, preventive measures need to be targeted, and they need to be applied by a coordinated group of actors, each working within their respective comparative advantage. Any such efforts need to be scrutinized for their effectiveness by lessons learned exercises. Only through an evaluation can it be shown that a preventive measure was effective. While long-term conflict prevention, particularly systemic prevention, faces a time lag of approximately 20-40 years before results are easily visible, the momentum of positive change has to be maintained, particularly if preventive measures did not succeed to prevent the outbreak of violence.

2.3. Conceptual, Analytic and Political Problems

Contrary to the claim that conflict prevention is primarily a state-based activity, our research clearly indicates that if effective conflict prevention is to be implemented it will need to be done so most importantly at the local level by a range of local actors, many of whom are themselves stakeholders in the conflict. Examples can be drawn from the activities of the Forum for Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER), which combines local networks, information gathering and analysis from think tanks, NGO and academic analysis.

Nevertheless the term conflict prevention is often confused with preventive diplomacy and is perceived as a state-based policy, a kind of political realism premised on political incentives and sanctions to prevent belligerents from engaging in undesirable behaviour. Indeed, much of what has been written on conflict prevention is theoretically underspecified (e.g. questions about who is doing what to whom and why and/or assume that conflict is something to be avoided, managed or prevented.) Our first volume attempts to provide a clearer specification of the tools and techniques that are required (other work underway includes research by UNDP, Conflict Prevention Network, the Clingendael Institute, SIPRI and IPA).¹¹

We know that conflict properly channelled can be constructive and transformative. It can be a positive constructive process under certain conditions. The goal is not to prevent conflict *per se* but to prevent destructive and potentially violent conflict at any stage of conflict (latent, pre and post-phases). Therefore conflict prevention properly understood does carry a social engineering dimension to it. Its operative characteristics are, according to Lund, “governmental and nongovernmental actions,

¹¹ For a precise and exhaustive list of conflict prevention terms, see Alex Schmid, *Thesaurus and Glossary of Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Terms*, Synthesis, 1998.

policies, and institutions that are taken deliberately to keep particular states or organized groups within them from threatening or using organized violence, armed force, or related forms of coercion such as repression as the means to settle interstate or national political disputes, especially in situations where the existing means cannot peacefully manage the destabilizing effects of economic, social, political, and international change.’¹²

Conceptual clarity also requires that we specify who the relevant stakeholders are in any situation. Who are the owners in the process and who is to be actively engaged in it? Our discussions with representatives from regional organizations indicate that all of the following have a role to play:

- the corporate sector (see for example Shell)
- NGO community (see for example ACCORD)
- Eminent persons groups (ICG or equivalent)
- Academics (evidence drawn from volume one)
- IGOs (IGAD for example)
- States (DAC Community)

A secondary hurdle that needs to be overcome is the analytical gap that exists between academics and practitioners. On the one hand, the key questions are how to render academic analyses accessible to the practitioner; and how to ensure the end-user is equipped with the best available skills to ensure valid and reliable results. The solution that has been raised by all of the regional organizations is the need to train local staff with meaningful analytical skills in the field monitoring of indicators and early warning. Risk assessment models must be tailored to meet the needs of the practitioners.

On the other hand, the practitioners must clearly articulate what they need. This dialogue entails first, and obviously, common understandings on the linkage between cause and effect (there is a need to know what to look for and what specifically should be warned about – refugee flows, state failure, human rights violations all stem from a variety of different sources, and hence require somewhat different explanations, strategies and responses.)¹³

But secondarily it is important that regional organizations and NGOs obtain an

¹² Michael S. Lund, “Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy,” in Chester A Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall, eds., *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, Washington DC: USIP Press, 1996, pp. 384-85.

¹³ Such an approach might focus on for example: a. political, economic, social cultural, institutional factors associated with conflict; i. Structural – background factors – inherent economic inequities, systematic political exclusion, demographic change for example; ii. Triggers – that lead to rapid and often spontaneous outbreaks of violence; iii. Accelerators - events outside the parameters of the model – that rapidly increase the level of significance of the most volatile of the general conditions; b. Evaluating peace initiatives – i. identifying stakeholders – potential mediators, who could implement peace, what are their capacities? ii. evaluation of tools and opportunities; iii. developing response options and time based strategies; a. development of phasing actions for response; b. making responses sustainable – through an evaluation of the consequences, alliance configurations of groups and the likelihood of conflict reemergence. This approach is also reflected in the Early Warning and Preventive measures course offered by the UN Staff College (more below).

understanding of how an individual fits within an institution and how he/she can best use the array of political instruments available to them to be better analysts and to provide for better and more effective response. Such an approach requires that organizations have a better sense of their own institutional needs and capabilities - far more than they do now. And it is important that the link between early warning and preventive measures be a direct function of the proximity of the analyst to senior decision-makers. As Tapio Kanninen has argued, “[e]arly warning is linked to possible immediate action by an actor who is close to one giving the early warning, e.g. belonging to the same organization.” This, he asserts, calls for early warning to be “practice-oriented, dynamic, and geared to the possibilities of the actor to intervene purposefully.”¹⁴

Early warning and thorough information gathering are key issues in identifying the most critical root causes of violent conflict. Engaged monitoring by field staff needs to be supplemented by thorough analysis by desk staff. For example, the political economy of conflict – both within the region as well as outside the region – needs to receive more attention. In an environment in which too many local and external parties benefit from violent conflict, those antagonists need to be targeted by the local and international communities. Under such conditions information gathering is delicate and difficult. Information sharing is both a technical and a political matter.

In sum, self-reflection based on a thorough needs assessment of the policy making communities is a fundamental requirement before embarking on any meaningful training program. The solution is to train local staff, desk officers and perhaps even the corporate sector with meaningful analytical skills and field monitoring of indicators. Risk assessment models must be tailored to meet the needs of the practitioners and practitioners must clearly articulate what they need.¹⁵

3. APPLIED CONFLICT PREVENTION: OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

3.1. The Purpose of Conflict Prevention

The main purpose of conflict prevention - and also one of the key tasks of the UN - is to avoid the eruption of violent conflict in the very first place. Conflicts, which are, of course, part and parcel of human and group interactions, need to be (under certain conditions) channelled peacefully. Relevant institutions and processes need to be in place. After violence has stopped one must avoid its return (second generation conflict prevention). The overarching objective is to prevent violence, destabilization, and war.

¹⁴ Tapio Kanninen, “The Future of Early Warning and Preventive Action in the United Nations,” Occasional Paper No. 5, Ralph Bunche Institute on the United Nations, New York: CUNY, May 1991, p. 2. See for example the comparative studies on NGO effectiveness in R. Rotberg, ed., *Vengeance and Vigilance*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1996.

¹⁵ For a detailed analysis of how the EU is mainstreaming conflict prevention see: Lund, M. “Improving Conflict Prevention by Learning from Experience: Context, Issues, Approaches and Findings” CPN Annual Conference 1999.

This project focuses on the first stage of conflict prevention; the emphasis is on preventing disputes and conflicts from initial escalation to violence. How can that be achieved? It is first necessary to address the underlying root causes of violent conflict. Preventive emergency diplomacy needs to be conducted where violent explosions are imminent. Conflicting parties need to be convinced that avoidance of conflict is in their best interest. Carrots and sticks (incentives and punishment) need to be applied to encourage commitment to nonviolent dispute resolution and to solidify and strengthen peace.

3.2. The Utility and Challenge of Applied Conflict Prevention

Conflict prevention is an important economic and political activity. It can reduce the extraordinarily high human, political, social and economic cost of violent conflict; it can preserve stability and peace where it does exist; it can advance human, regional and international security and thus secure the foundation for prosperous development and trade.

These are honourable goals. But a number of key challenges make this a difficult task. The prevention of violent conflict is much cheaper than managing and resolving violence once it has broken out. But preventive measures cost money and resources that could be spent on more visible emergencies. It is not easy to convince donors of the great value of prevention: In the face of limited resources, creativity is thus called for to utilize and build on current work, practices, and programmes. Moreover, there is a high initial investment in time and effort to design imaginative ways to understanding potential conflict causes and to match them with appropriate preventive measures.¹⁶ The latter need to be provided by the UN, regional organizations, states and civil society actors – and each actor should be willing to let others take the lead in situations where they might be better placed to do so. Two important tasks can help ensure successful mainstreaming of preventive thinking:

Acknowledge Success – There is a need to ensure appropriate credit for success (if we can prove success), and to recognize and learn from failure. The media can have a prominent role in this regard.

Recognize Limitations - Active and applied conflict prevention can easily be perceived as a serious threat to a state's sovereignty - and so political resistance is unavoidable. In part because of states' unwillingness to allow outsiders to "meddle in their affairs," there has been much rhetoric and advocacy and sadly little specific action in early prevention of violent conflict. Thorough training and capacity building are required to enhance preventive thinking. This does not just happen by itself or over night, but can only be the result of deliberate action and commitment.

3.3. Making Applied Conflict Prevention Work: Options and Feasibility

The following thoughts summarize two sets of options for applied conflict prevention.

¹⁶ See the work of the Swedish and Dutch Foreign Ministries in this regard.

While the first option presents an ideal case in an ideal international environment, the second option presents a more realistic case under current circumstances. The feasibility of both options are discussed.

The Ideal Case - States address human security and human development needs at the roots. This will produce freedom from fear and freedom from want. A new international consensus emerges on early humanitarian intervention in failing or failed states; and on who is authorized, when and how, to intervene in a preventive fashion. The UN, regional organizations and civil society actors pressure failed states into compliance to provide what is needed for their people. Domestic and foreign policies are rooted in and driven by human security considerations.

Critical root causes of conflict are detected, their interaction is understood, preventive measures are identified and taken, and potential violent conflicts are prevented. Conflict prevention is considered to be a wise investment in human rights and human security. Member States of regional organizations and the UN are committed to providing the necessary funds. The UN and regional organizations (and their Member States) shift their primary attention from conflict management to conflict prevention. Moreover, most importantly, pro-action replaces re-action in the work of the UN, regional organizations and national and local actors.

Feasibility of Option One - This option is not very feasible. This is not how the international system works. Humanitarian intervention will be, if at all, recognized in only the most severe cases of gross violations of human rights (such as systematic genocide), and then in all likelihood only on an *ad hoc* basis. Respect for state sovereignty will continue to limit the international community's willingness and legitimacy to intervene proactively in so-called "failed states."

Preventive action will be massively opposed by those states who experience, tolerate or commit human rights and human security violations. It will also be opposed by those states who fear the abuse of UN-authorized interventions in states' internal affairs. Resources may be forthcoming once conflict has broken out and the consequences are visible and can be felt, but not before. Of course, effective and committed proaction is not an altogether utopian goal, but it is a long-term project with little hope for short-term implications.

Current Realities - Option two is closer to current realities. There is a need to recognize the obstacles in operationalizing effective, systematic and coordinated conflict prevention. Mainstreaming means working with - and within - existing instruments and mechanisms and incorporating conflict prevention strategies that match the needs of a particular organization. A conscious effort is made to examine critically current work and activities through preventive lenses. Preventive thinking is incorporated into existing structures, institutions, processes – into the daily work of states, nonstate actors and intergovernmental organizations.

Development is defined as "preventive development," humanitarian action as "preventive humanitarian action," peacebuilding as "preventive peacebuilding," and

disarmament as “preventive disarmament” – all are targeted towards the most crucial underlying root causes of potential violent conflict. While we are faced with a plethora of challenges in each of the above areas of activity, it is necessary to identify critical root causes that, in all likelihood, will (individually or in combination) escalate into armed conflict – if not directly met with appropriate and effective preventive measures. Of course, simply adding “preventive” to one’s activity does not do the trick. The emphasis should be on using these activities to target very specific root causes that may lead to violent conflict.

How can this be achieved? In practical terms it means making one’s daily work relevant to the prevention of violent conflict.¹⁷ First, there is a need to assess the political, economic and social situation of a country or region. Second, there is a need to determine potential conflict causes. Third, there is a need to identify underlying root causes. The fourth step is the identification of suitable and feasible preventive measures; and fifth, there is a need to utilize existing mechanisms of one’s programme, unit or department, or others within one’s organization. Of course, in order to utilize existing capacities for conflict prevention there is a need to be aware of organizational limitations. Only then can we avoid unnecessary overlap and duplication and assure that each organization and unit works within its own comparative advantage. For example, hierarchy and seniority thinking is still an outdated, but major, stumbling block for the UN and many regional organizations and their efforts to introduce new ideas and practices that will allow for the flexibility necessary to meet ever new challenges that do not neatly fit into preconceived and experienced categories of human and state action.¹⁸ Rhetoric, wishful thinking and nice intentions are of little help if they do not correspond to action, or at least the willingness to support action. They may even be counterproductive as expectations are raised that cannot be met. It is of very little help to talk about conflict prevention only because it is fashionable and opportune to do so.

We will likely not experience revolutionary change. But piece-meal change, small steps, in coordination with partners within and outside the system, with some support from member states and those at the top of each organization, will infuse a conflict prevention mode into organizations over time. The process will likely be erratic with many set-backs. Within the UN System, for instance, during the past several years many initially highly motivated junior-level international civil servants have resigned from their UN posts partly due to frustration and disillusionment. Nevertheless, what they have accomplished during their uphill battle within the organization to make a real difference brings us closer to a more prevention-sensitive international environment

Feasibility of Option Two - The suggestions put forward as part of option two are feasible. Policies, activities and programmes can be made conflict prevention

¹⁷ The preceding discussion is consistent with current activities within the EU, while the following method is the foundation of the UN Staff College’s course on Early Warning and Preventive Measures, an activity that is described in more detail in chapters in both volumes emanating from this project.

¹⁸ Thus, the self-discovery effect of workshop seminars such as the present one cannot be overstated. Of course, some of us can do more, some less; some of us have more direct insights, some less; some have more clout and influence, some have less. This depends in large part on the type of job one has, if field or Headquarters based, and how high one is up in the food chain within the organization.

sensitive. Many existing activities can consciously target root causes a part of their normal work. Existing mechanisms in an organization's headquarters or within national governments can continue to support coordination on targeted projects. Existing channels within organizations for field-HQ relations can target coordination on conflict prevention. Preventive thinking and action can clearly be mainstreamed.

It is crucial that headquarters and field staff at all levels take pride in tuning their work into conflict prevention - the detection and alleviation of breakdowns of social, economic and political stability. Senior level staff need to be on board and assist and support their operational staff. Support staff need to be given proper credit for their work. This has to be a system-wide effort across all levels of seniority and posts. Visible and invisible credit needs to be shared and made public. While conflict prevention may be a thankless task, it is nevertheless a rewarding task. There needs to be positive feedback and encouragement for those thinking in preventive terms.

If we talk of a "culture of prevention," we mean that the prevailing view within a nonstate or interstate organization, or a Government, is that stabilizing peace, alleviating poverty, improving environmental protection, supporting the development and stabilization of good governance, or assisting the displaced and vulnerable members of society are crucial elements in *preventing* potential instability and conflict. Yet, identifying and targeting specific *critical root causes* with great potential for conflict escalation is the key task of all those interested in applied conflict prevention.

The following specific steps should be taken: Organizations have to organize and encourage participation in capacity building workshops and courses, awareness raising seminars and conferences on early warning and prevention of violent conflict. These events need to be attended by representatives throughout an organization - and staff need to be allowed and encouraged to present and share their own activities to and with their colleagues and others engaged in similar work. Internal dialogue and coordination is rare within intergovernmental organizations. However, if they are ever to be in a position to collaborate effectively with each other, staff certainly need to begin first by facilitating intra-organizational collaboration and coordination. In an ideal case an organization would establish a conflict prevention center or unit whose task it would be to facilitate conflict prevention activities within an organization and between partner organizations. Such centers exist within the framework of the OAU, the OSCE and the EU (with varying degrees of operational ability) and the Brahimi Report has suggested similar arrangements for the UN (a Peacebuilding Unit and an Information Gathering Unit).

4. WORKSHOP SERIES REFLECTIONS

4.1. ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS), WASHINGTON, D.C.

Participants/Contacts - Assistant to the Secretary General, Representatives of the UPD and Human Rights Divisions and others – together approximately 15 persons.

Discussion - OAS participants demonstrated a general lack of understanding of how structural conflict prevention could be effectively implemented within their institution. The discussion centered primarily on two issues:

First, the question arose whether conflict prevention, understood operationally as well as structurally, should be given preference as a functional approach over recognized and arguably more successful efforts such as democratization and human rights promotion. It was suggested that high profile activities within the organization, such as human rights, would always prove more successful in obtaining the necessary support (in funding and in recognition by member states and staff) than would conflict prevention. It was pointed out that conflict prevention is compatible with the frameworks of both the promotion of human rights and democracy and therefore mainstreaming should be pursued.

Second, it was suggested that conflict prevention as a comprehensive policy approach would unlikely take root across all the activities of the OAS. Rather it was suggested that conflict prevention should and could be effectively managed through the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy. In this vein it was suggested by some participants that the OAS already has an admirable record in this area. For example, the OAS has a number of conflict prevention tools at its disposal – that range from diplomatic to military issues including treaties, arms control and mechanisms that reduce interstate threats. A second framework is imbedded in GA Res. 1080 that provides the Secretary-General with preventive diplomatic measures including the suspension of state efforts in times of emergencies, good offices and mediation. In meetings with representatives of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy it was recommended that a training program be implemented that meets the needs of the OAS. Training would focus on conflict prevention for NGOs working in consultation with the UPD as well as UPD staff. The training program would need to secure the necessary funding possibly from member states or perhaps through the University of Peace located in Costa Rica.

Recommendations

- Informational exchange and a needs assessment of individual subunits within and among regional organizations is very important;
- There is a need to enlist the active support and participation of local populations in the actual design of OAS programs;
- The OAS should consider the establishment of permanent or semi-permanent institutions that focus on conflict prevention within the UPD or across units;

- In addition to training, the OAS should undertake locally-conducted research with indigenous NGOs so that cultural dimensions of conflict prevention, in particular, could be better understood.

4.2. UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE (USIP), WASHINGTON, D.C.

Participants/Contacts - Approximately 15 regular and visiting academic staff representatives from USIP, as well as a local NGO were in attendance. Among those present was a former chief of the UN Preventive Deployment (UNPREDEP) in Macedonia.

Discussion - The rich discussion focused very quickly on the nature and purpose of a training and capacity building programme in conflict prevention. Why is this necessary? Who is targeted? Is this a long-term endeavour or an accumulative process? It was pointed out that few missions by the UN or regional organizations have yielded useful “lessons learned” studies. As one participant put it, UNPREDEP was a laboratory that did not use its results. Much experience within intergovernmental organizations is never carried forward to future missions, as those with the experience leave the organization with the end of a mission and are not debriefed properly. This represents a tremendous waste of experience that should at least be recorded in the form of proper lessons-learned studies, which could then be used to train new staff.

The focus on training should be on skill and knowledge enhancement. While long-term commitment to an organization’s capacity building needs is desirable, it is not realistic unless one has the necessary long-term resource and personnel contribution to offer continuing training activities.

Where that is not the case – and this includes the UNU Project whose funding is short term and project-based - the emphasis should be on intra-organizational workshops at the UN and regional organizations, with participation encouraged and available to NGOs, media and educational institutions. These workshops need to emphasize awareness raising, self-discovery, and network building. Although ongoing training activities are preferable, single-event workshops can make a lasting difference, particularly if they are linked to (and inform) already existing training programmes within organizations.

Recommendations

- Academics at universities and research institutions have a crucial role to play in enhancing conflict prevention and conflict management skills within the UN and regional organizations;
- Academics need to collaborate in raising the funds that are necessary for such activities, as intergovernmental organizations usually do not place great priority on training and capacity building, an approach congruent with their preference for reactive rather than the more effective - but seemingly less urgent - proactive approaches to the prevention of instability and violent conflict.

4.3. DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE (DFAIT), OTTAWA

Participants/Contacts - In all, approximately 30 representatives from DFAIT were in attendance including those from functional as well as regional desks. The event was sponsored by the Peacebuilding Division within DFAIT. The seminar included two additional presentations – one on the role of international financial institutions in conflict prevention by Dane Rowlands, and the other on conflict prevention in Africa by Rasheed Draman.

Discussion – Consistent with the Department’s preference for issue specific responses to deep rooted problems, the discussion focused primarily on symptoms of conflict and response strategies rather than the issue of how to render conflict prevention operationally relevant. The discussion focused primarily on improving the effectiveness of existing measures in key areas involving state failure, open warfare and illicit trade. For example, improving the effectiveness of sanctions was identified as an important component of operational prevention. An evaluation of their effectiveness requires specification of the conditions under which they work. An assessment of viability entails comparative study of both success and failure.

The political economy of war was also a central issue and concern for DFAIT in two ways: First, with respect to how the diamond mining industry influences conflict processes in Africa. The recently passed UN General Assembly Resolution sponsored by Canada attempts to address this problem through a monitoring process that controls the flow of diamonds from supply to demand. Second, through an evaluation of the role of IFI’s, specifically how their programmes (such as structural adjustment) influence conflict dynamics positively and negatively. There was little consensus on how this might be achieved, but it was noted that the World Bank and IMF are doing important work in this area. It was also noted that IDRC’s role in promoting North-South dialogue on peace and conflict processes was instrumental. It was suggested that conflict prevention training programmes for FSOs would be useful as a way of sensitizing Canadian diplomats to problems abroad.

In sum, Canada’s approach to conflict prevention is best understood as part of its broader policies on peacebuilding. This framing can serve as a conceptual and operational brake on mainstreaming effective conflict prevention across agencies because conflict prevention is still perceived as a post-conflict reconstruction strategy. A more meaningful public dialogue within Canada on conflict prevention might be helpful in this regard. Canada’s federal government departments such as Finance, DFAIT, DND and CIDA need to work together to render conflict prevention operationally more meaningful. The recent work (including public debate, research and publications) on conflict prevention mainstreaming by the British, Swedish and Dutch Foreign Ministries would prove useful in this regard.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that AGP and IDRC receive copies of this project’s reports and their representatives be approached to discuss follow-up measures to be taken regarding potential funding for conflict prevention training programmes.

4.4. UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

Participants/Contacts – The two-panel event was attended by more than 100 participants, including UN Headquarters staff, representatives from numerous member state delegations, NGOs and the local academic community. Carment's and Schnabel's presentations were followed by others from several project contributors and experts on conflict prevention from the UN's Department of Political Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Strategic Planning Office of the Secretary-General's office.

Discussion – The discussion focused on a number of issues that are central to the UN's ability to conduct conflict prevention properly. As conflict *per se* is not damaging to human and social relations, the violent articulation of disagreements and competition in the absence of structures that allow for peaceful management of differences creates much bloodshed and suffering. It is one of the UN's most important tasks to assure that long-term systemic transformation creates structures and processes through which individuals and groups can constructively channel their differences and competing interests. To what degree has the UN been successful in fostering such systemic change?

For the past few years, conflict prevention has been very high on the agenda of the United Nations. Both Secretaries-General Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan have repeatedly noted the centrality of conflict prevention in today's security environment. The Security Council has held debates on conflict prevention on two occasions. The UN tries to instill a culture of prevention within its own organization, but also among other state and nonstate players. It has reached out to the NGO community, the private sector, the academic community and regional organizations, and it has embarked on an ambitious project to train its own staff in early warning and prevention through its own Staff College in Turin, Italy. Over 500 field and Headquarters based staff have benefited from this training course. There are a number of working interdepartmental mechanisms within the UN System that focus on conflict prevention. However, as was pointed out, a chronic lack of resources prevents follow-up activities that could ensure long-term impact of education and capacity building on preventive activities.

Recent proposals within the Brahimi Report to establish an Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat (EISAS) within the Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS) are attempts to create an exchange of analysis between the UN and external experts – but this also remains a sticky issue for member states who would see their sovereignty violated by the work of an information gathering unit within the UN.

Within or outside EISAS, there is clearly a need for an interface to allow for frequent exchanges of analysis between the UN and external experts. Many academics are not able to relate their work to policy makers effectively and thus further contribute to the already problematic knowledge gap. Nevertheless, there are many scholars who do pursue - and work in institutions that support - applied policy research, and who know how to transfer this knowledge to staff and policy makers at local, government and intergovernmental levels. Those scholars need to be taken on board.

A major constraint on the UN's ability to react to new challenges and introduce innovative processes, mechanisms and structures is its "stove-pipe" bureaucracy. This obscures attempts to pursue a holistic approach to conflict prevention within the organization. Departments such as DESA deal with conflict prevention, but are not part of the larger dialogue. Long-term prevention is not done, as there is no time to engage in proactive activities. A culture of reaction is still prevailing. As an example one speaker noted that a handful of staff at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations are supposed to support tens of thousands of peacekeepers on the ground. It was noted that there is a huge discrepancy between operational needs on the ground and institutional back-up at Headquarters. Of course, many of these issues have been addressed by the recent *Brahimi Report*, and member states' responses to the *Report* will tell much about the international community's willingness (or lack thereof) to empower the UN's capacities in security provision (before and after conflicts have broken out.)

Recommendations

- The discussion clearly underlined the appropriateness of UN staff training in conflict prevention, and the important role played in this effort by the UN Staff College. This process should be strengthened;
- Training in conflict prevention needs to reach beyond the UN and embrace regional organizations, member states and non-state actors;
- This function should evolve from this project;
- This project should also collaborate with ongoing efforts to create standing expert groups on conflict prevention, and it needs to ensure that its findings are properly distributed within the UN System.

4.5. THE WPF PROGRAM ON INTRASTATE CONFLICT AND CONFLICT PREVENTION AND THE BELFER CENTRE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY, CAMBRIDGE

Participants/Contacts - Approximately 20 persons were in attendance including International Security Fellows from the Belfer Center, Professors, NGOs and students from Harvard University's Kennedy School.

Discussion - Discussion centered on the utility of structural prevention, the role of spoilers in the peace process and the active engagement of NGOs in conflict. While there was little consensus on these issues it was suggested that universities have an important role to play in training future diplomats, policymakers, NGO workers and scholars. It is at the university level where thorough analysis is taught and exercised, and where young people are exposed to the personal experience of peers hailing from zones of conflict and zones of peace. Moreover, visiting fellowship programmes at academic institutions provide opportunities for professionals working for international organizations, NGOs or the media to reflect on their work, evaluate their and their organization's efforts and thus contribute to much-needed lessons-learned exercises.

Recommendation

- Harvard University is home to both the WPF program and the newly established program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research at Harvard's School of Public Health. It is highly recommended that efforts be made to maintain a working relationship with both of these programs with respect to joint research and capacity building partnerships.

4.6. INTERNATIONAL SECURITY FORUM, GENEVA

Participants/Contacts – The International Security Forum, a tri-annual gathering of approximately 300 academics, policy analysts and policy makers from Eastern and Western Europe, features special sessions during which individual research projects can be presented and discussed. The seminar drew an audience of about 15 individuals, among them academics (including a project contributor), analysts from research institutions and a former Secretary-General of the OSCE.

Discussion – The discussion highlighted both conceptual as well as operational challenges of applied conflict prevention. Most mission staff are hired on a short-term basis, often have mixed training and educational background, and are put into positions of great responsibility. As they are hired on short-term contracts, there is little effort to invest in them through training and skill enhancement. This greatly undermines the work of any mission. Thus, training of mission staff, particularly short-term staff, is underemphasized but crucially important.

The discussion further emphasized the contextual character of conflict prevention measures. If the nature of conflicts is different from case to case, so are preventive measures. While there may be some universal approaches that prevent the violent breakdown of societies, most of those have to be tailored to the specifics of each potential conflict case. As during the meeting at DFAIT, the political economy of conflict and war was identified as a major challenge and opportunity for conflict prevention. Here, root causes lie within societies at risk, but also outside, in the form of safe and wealthy nations who are eager to supply arms to unstable regions of the world, or who purchase natural resources such as diamond and oil whose proceeds are used to finance conflicts and insurgencies. Finally, the discussion centered on the role of the G-8 and the private sector in conflict prevention – highlighted by the important role that it played in ending the NATO war over Kosovo and its evolving position as a potential “rival” to the UN Security Council position in global security affairs. While competition between different international and regional frameworks for security and cooperation should be avoided, collaboration between them needs to be fostered.

Recommendations

- While the project gives adequate attention to case studies of successful and failed conflict prevention and the record of all major regional organizations, it has to ensure that due attention is given to both universal as well as context-specific measures for the prevention of violence;

- Training needs to be grounded in the specific requirements of each regional organization or, in the case of local NGOs, specific local conditions on the ground.

4.7. UNITED NATIONS INTERIM ADMINISTRATION MISSION IN KOSOVO (UNMIK), PRISTINA

Participants/Contacts - Approximately 12 persons were in attendance, representing KFOR, OSCE, UNMIK, NGOs and the ECMM.

Discussion – The discussion centered mainly on three issues: the value of conflict prevention training for UN and OSCE staff (which was widely supported); the relative merits of coercive diplomacy in the prevention of complex intrastate ethnic conflict; and the critical and immediate need for cross-institutional dialogue of those engaged in post-conflict preventive activities. The discussion was frank, open and lengthy - lasting some five hours in total. There was the sentiment, broadly supported, that although UNMIK’s activities in Kosovo have been deemed a success relative to UN efforts in Bosnia, the presence of KFOR was and remains indispensable to the peace process in Kosovo. This sentiment was expressed in particular by non-KFOR representatives. Without a military presence the probability of renewed violence in Kosovo was (and is) very high.

The participants also expressed some pessimism about the long-term prospects for democracy and respect for human rights in the region. Nevertheless, those present who engaged in and were responsible for OSCE human rights training adamantly supported the need for more extensive training of both local and international staff. Much like their counterparts in Vienna, their view was that most staff received only rudimentary conflict analysis and prevention skills. Currently, two international trainers are responsible for the training of approximately 2000 people.

Recommendation

- The OSCE is receptive to suggestions for field staff training and therefore efforts should be made to establish a training programme for the organization’s field staff, separate or (where they exist) in conjunction with existing training programmes.

4.8. ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE), VIENNA

Participants/Contacts – The seminar at the OSCE was attended by approximately 30 individuals, including OSCE staff, representatives of a number of Delegations to the OSCE, local academics and a UNDP representative. The seminar featured two additional presentations – one on the OSCE’s record in conflict prevention and one on training activities within the Organization.

Discussion - Three main issues were discussed: the OSCE’s ability to prevent conflicts; training needs within the OSCE; and the need for inter-organizational cooperation and learning. In contrast to the UN and other regional organizations, the

OSCE features a specific Conflict Prevention Center, which is a part of the Organization's Secretariat in Vienna. Ten years after the end of the Cold War, the OSCE comes relatively close to what one could call a "security community." As one participant pointed out, conflict prevention entails very intrusive diplomacy and proaction that needs to be based on a cooperative approach by an organization with a large, yet diverse, membership. The OSCE attempts to be active in all phases of conflict.

However, there is a great deal of space for improvement in conflict prevention activities. The lessons from the OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) show that early and rapid action can make a difference. The key actors in the OSCE's conflict prevention network are the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the good offices of the Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office. Effective conflict prevention requires the OSCE's "intrusion" in domestic affairs of the participating State in question. Nevertheless, despite notable exceptions such "intrusion" is mostly seen as a constructive contribution to one's problems by an impartial third party. There is a clear understanding that in today's security environment, the domestic and the international have become closely intertwined. OSCE members tend to act as a community and defend community interests even if that means "interfering" in the internal affairs of a participating State.

The OSCE is keenly aware of the importance of training. Its field missions are made up of 70 percent local staff and 30 percent international staff. While there is a heavy focus on training of staff members in concrete day-to-day tasks, little has been done to train staff for the challenges of conflict prevention or peacebuilding in smaller missions. The picture is somewhat better regarding the three large missions. In the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) there is a professional trainer specialized in conflict prevention and conflict management. The trainer from the OSCE Training Section provided conflict analysis and conflict resolution training in several OSCE missions. In addition, external experts have been brought in to offer training courses on conflict resolution and mediation. Clearly, training of both international and local staff, both short-term and long-term appointees, is important. However, lack of funds makes it difficult to offer the number of courses that are needed, especially to seconded and other short term staff whose turn-over is very high. Finally there is strong recognition that the OSCE and other international and regional organizations need to cooperate in order to learn from each other and to share the OSCE's rich experience in both prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding.

Recommendations

- In training courses, greater emphasis needs to be put on conflict prevention. This would best be done through a follow-up course to the induction course offered to all new staff members;
- The UNU project has an important role to play, either in training existing trainers or potential trainers, or by contributing specific modules on conflict prevention to existing training programs.

4.9. ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU)

Contacts – Approximately 25 persons attended the meeting. This included representatives of the OAU's Conflict Management Center, permanent representatives, the Economic Commission on Africa and individuals seconded from the UNDP.

Discussion – The single biggest problem facing the OAU is a lack of effectiveness in the management of both inter and intrastate conflict. This is due in part to the OAU's overall purpose as reflected in the Charter, which provides for the non-interference in state matters. Additionally, it has little to say about how the states of Africa can develop solutions to obvious and pressing problems within states. However a second and arguably more pressing problem is the Organization's clear lack of capacity to carry out meaningful engagement in internal problems ranging from effective analysis to a search for solutions. These problems range from a lack of infrastructure to quality personnel, to funding for projects, to early warning training.

Participant discussion ranged on a number of these problems, but most focused on the causes of such conflicts and the extra-regional dimensions of state problems. It was suggested that outside interference and regionalization were central problems in most cases. Few solutions were offered, and attendees preferred instead to seek to understand causes before discussing policy options. For a variety of reasons it was suggested that the OAU may lack the necessary leverage and political will to conduct effective conflict prevention. Some successes were noted however - such as OAU participation in the recent peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Subsequent meetings with representatives from the Economic Commission on Africa and UNDP seconded analysts indicated that conflict prevention might be more effectively achieved with the engagement of NGO's, sub-regional organizations and inter-governmental organizations now in place, who might act as an effective civil society substitute.

Recommendations

- The OAU should be encouraged to work in partnership with NGOs and IGOs in the areas of conflict prevention training and local capacity building;
- The OAU is developing an in-house and highly technical conflict prevention and early warning capacity involving local software firms. This activity is important but is not a substitute for proper conflict analysis training. Efforts to provide outside guidance in and support for OAU efforts to mainstream conflict prevention should be strengthened;

4.10. ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS (ASEAN), JAKARTA

Participants/Contacts - The seminar was attended by approximately 30 individuals, including ASEAN staff, research staff at the Habibie Center for the Promotion of Democracy and Human Rights (the local host), a number of UN offices in Jakarta, and representatives of the academic and NGO communities. The panel featured

further presentations by political analysts from ASEAN and the Habibie Center. Prior to the seminar, Carment and Schnabel had a one-hour meeting with ASEAN's Secretary-General, Rudolfo C. Severino.

Discussion - The discussion at the Habibie Center focused on early warning and conflict prevention in the context of ASEAN's culture of non-intervention and the Association's limited experience in addressing intrastate conflicts. Non-intervention is a crucial component of ASEAN member states' respect for each other. Moreover, harmony and "intergroup peace," at the expense of early conflict management, is counterproductive to early prevention of potentially violent conflict. Members of ASEAN need to learn to respect each other's constructive criticism and be willing to recognize and address problems at an early stage, in order to prevent conflict escalation.

Some participants argued that it is the state that should be firmly in charge, unchallenged by intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations. According to one participant, the integrity of a country should be maintained at all cost. While human rights protection, democratization and good governance are nice characteristics of a stable society, more existential needs such as access to a minimum of food and water are more important to many people of the region. Another participant considered this to be a dangerous proposition. In his opinion, initial disintegration leads to integration, as it requires the state to confront differing opinions, to respond with tolerance, and to elevate diversity above the supposed sanctity of national unity. It is preferable to maintain peace than to maintain geographical unity. Moreover, the person argued that NGOs play a crucial role in peoples' effort to confront weak and corrupt governments. In the ASEAN region, governments and militaries tend to be too strong, and civil society too weak. For effective conflict prevention and management, regional organizations such as ASEAN should introduce an interlocutor - one for each conflict - who works full-time on maintaining a dialogue between conflicting parties. Only such dialogue can lead to compromise and confidence building over time. Conflict prevention training needs to focus on these interlocutors, government officials and NGOs.

Recommendations

- ASEAN has great potential for attaining greater status in regional security and confidence building. Conflict prevention needs to be an integral part of ASEAN's mission;
- Staff at ASEAN, national governments and NGOs need to speak the same language, and need to be exposed to similar approaches to short-term and long-term conflict prevention strategies. Training of these three target audiences is essential for ASEAN to build effective conflict prevention capacity;
- ASEAN's response to events in Indonesia (Aceh and Irian Jaya) should provide a basic litmus test for evaluating its effectiveness.

4.11. UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY (UNU), TOKYO

Audience/Contacts – The seminar was attended by about 15 individuals, including students of local universities, UNU academic and support staff and representatives from local UNHCR and ILO offices.

Discussion – The seminar offered the project directors an opportunity to reflect on the preceding seminar series and share some of their impressions with a group of informed individuals. Consequently, much of the discussion focused on the conflict prevention approaches of various regional organizations and the UN; the difficulties involved in selling conflict prevention to member state governments and their constituencies; the adequacy of originally economic regional organizations for security management and conflict prevention; and the specific role of the UNU in enhancing conflict prevention capacity at local, regional and global levels.

Recommendations

- Due to its privileged position as a UN Organization - with easy access to the greater UN System and a reputation as neutral third-party actor - the UNU is well placed to engage in lessons learned exercises and capacity building and training activities on the delicate subject of proactive conflict prevention.
- While there is a great need for such activities at all organizations visited throughout this seminar series, very few resources can be brought to the table by the organizations themselves. Thus, funding for such activities have to come from external sources. It was suggested that the project directors search for adequate funding to allow the project to utilize its expertise to return to these organizations and contribute to their ability to meet the challenge of conflict prevention in a more systematic, structured and cooperative fashion.

5. OVERALL FINDINGS

- Visits to regional organizations and the UN reinforce the findings of our earlier report from previous workshops, *with significant new findings* that could only result from a more thorough consultation with larger groups of staff;
- This was *the first time many of these organizations had undertaken outside consultation on a topic that is central to their security activities* – the process of engagement allowed for some much needed self-reflection and critical assessment.
- There is *no substitute for direct consultation* with regional organizational representatives – this allows for frank and open assessment of effectiveness and identification of problem areas;
- The *demand for conflict prevention mainstreaming is universal* – but few organizations understand how and where to implement such programs;
- Each organization would *benefit from the process of mainstreaming conflict prevention with the support of outside organizations and academics*. The activities of the OSCE, the EU and the UN could serve as important templates in this regard;

- A comprehensive - across the board - training programme is likely to be less effective than *one tailored to the individual needs and functioning of each organization* – this entails a needs assessment approach that would be best conducted through on-site consultation;
- Not all participants in these workshops were institutional - many worked for NGOs keen on developing or being part of their own programmes, others were permanent representatives whose governments support such activities;
- *Quality assurance* should be the highest priority. A variety of training manuals already exist (such as those developed by FEWER, CPN and the UN) and these could be the basis for providing high quality training;
- There is a need to distinguish *between different types of analytical skills*. More precisely, risk assessment and general conflict analysis need to be distinguished from early warning and monitoring capabilities;
- There is *a need for discrete and independent workshops* focusing on different skills and targeting different actors. For example workshops involving local NGOs should be separate from those involving regional organizations although plenary meetings might prove useful. Communications would be less inhibiting in this context and the training could be more context specific;
- *Thematic reports* are a useful way of improving the content of a training manual; individuals would be in a position to do self-evaluations based on subject matters with which they are familiar;
- There is a need to address specific constraints such as translation costs as well as the availability of telecommunications that would *facilitate networking*.

6. OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS¹⁹

- The UNU project on conflict prevention should assure the widest possible distribution of its two forthcoming project volumes and their executive summaries;
- If possible, and if funds can be secured, the project directors are encouraged to seek continued collaboration with the UN, OAS, OAU, OSCE and ASEAN and others in developing conflict prevention training programmes or specific modules within existing training courses on related topics;
- Working relationships have to be forged between regional organizations and the UN; between regional organizations and other regional organizations; and between

¹⁹ Readers are encouraged to consult the two working papers in which further recommendations are identified:

<http://www.unu.edu/p&g/conflict-prevention.html>

<http://www.carleton.ca/~dcarment/papers/emperor.html>

<http://www.carleton.ca/csds/papers/NPSIA-23.PDF>

<http://www.carleton.ca/cifp>

organs, departments and institutions of the UN. Where such relationships exist at rudimentary levels, they need to be improved dramatically;

- Conflict prevention has to move closer to the local level; or, at the very least, national and international efforts have to be well tuned to local needs and invest in local capacity building;
- Conflict prevention, at all levels, within governments as well as organizations, has to be sustainable (and has to be sustained) to assure meaningful results;
- Regional organizations and the UN should have at their disposal stand-by expert groups (with theoretical, practical and regional expertise on conflict prevention) for urgent advice on early warning and preventive measures;
- Academics and policymakers alike need to develop successful approaches to sell conflict prevention to decision-makers and opinion-makers;
- Although difficult to measure, efforts need to be undertaken to determine, evaluate and explain successful preventive action;
- Beyond the rhetoric of cooperation between the UN, regional organizations and civil society actors, the relationship(s) between them needs to be understood and pragmatically assessed;
- There is a need ensure appropriate credit for success and to recognize and learn from failure. The media can have a prominent role in this regard;
- Active and applied conflict prevention can easily be perceived as a serious threat to a state's sovereignty - and so political resistance is unavoidable. In part because of the unwillingness to allow outsiders to "meddle in their affairs," there has been much rhetoric and advocacy and sadly little specific action in tackling conflict prevention within the UN and regional organizations. Thorough training, mainstreaming and capacity building are required to enhance preventive thinking. This does not happen by itself or over night, but can only be the result of deliberate action and commitment from memberstate governments.