Conflict Prevention:
Toward More Effective Multilateral Strategies

Christoph Mikulaschek and Paul Romita, *rapporteurs*

INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE

CONTENTS

Executive Summary

Ten years ago the United Nations Secretary-General reasoned that "the time has come to intensify our efforts to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention."[1] In 2005, heads of state and government at the United Nations World Summit "solemnly renew[ed] [their] commitment to promote a culture of prevention of armed conflict."[2] To what extent have the United Nations (UN) and the international community more broadly, turned their aspiration for a culture of prevention into a reality? How well do multilateral instruments for conflict prevention perform today? What challenges exist in tapping into their full potential, and how can these challenges be addressed?

These questions were discussed at the International Peace Institute's (IPI) sixteenth New York Seminar between May 4 and 6, 2011. For this seminar, IPI brought together representatives of fifty-seven states and international organizations, as well as independent experts and academics, on the grounds of the US Military Academy at West Point, New York. The goal of the meeting was to engage diplomats, UN officials, and independent experts in an informal and stimulating discussion on ways to enhance the effectiveness of multilateral conflict-prevention strategies. The seminar featured an address by Ambassador Vijay Nambiar, the *chef de cabinet* of the UN Secretary-General.

This meeting report presents a synthesis of the discussions at the seminar and summarizes key recommendations made by participants at the meeting.[3] It finds:

- Multilateral conflict prevention has undergone significant change in recent years.
- Capabilities, working methods, and the normative framework for multilateral conflict prevention have evolved considerably in response to greater receptiveness by many states facing conflict risks and increasing preparedness by third parties to engage in preventive diplomacy and structural prevention.
- This trend has been accompanied by a proliferation of the number of third states, international organizations and nongovernmental organizations undertaking preventive action.
- Achieving coordination and coherence among these numerous third parties in their pursuit of preventive goals constitutes a critical challenge.

Following an overview of the concept and politics of multilateral conflict prevention, the report identifies timely and accurate early warning and assessment as a precondition for successful early action, and analyzes recent developments, shortcomings, and potential paths for two sets of tools for multilateral conflict prevention, namely preventive diplomacy and structural prevention. It then addresses coherence and coordination in contemporary conflict-prevention efforts. Finally, an annex presents three case studies of recent and ongoing efforts to prevent conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Kyrgyzstan. This report does not aim to provide an exhaustive survey of multilateral conflict-prevention efforts around the world. It focuses on conflict prevention at the UN, but also explores the evolving role of other actors in this field, including individual states, regional organizations, and nonstate actors.

---

1 United Nations Secretary-General, *Prevention of Armed Conflict*, UN Doc. A/55/985–S/2001/574, June 7, 2001, para. 169.
2 UN General Assembly Resolution 60/1 (October 24, 2005), *2005 World Summit Outcome*, UN Doc. A/RES/60/1, para. 74.
3 In accordance with the Chatham House rule under which the seminar was conducted, no identification is provided of the speakers who presented particular ideas.

Introduction: Multilateral Conflict Prevention

Conflict prevention has been among the core functions of the UN since its inception. Article 1(1) of the UN Charter states that the first purpose of the UN is to "maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace."

The theory and practice of multilateral conflict prevention has gradually evolved in response to evolving conflict trends and changing geopolitical constellations. During the Cold War, the main goal of conflict prevention by the UN was to "keep newly arising conflicts outside the sphere of bloc differences."[4] The removal of the shackles of the Cold War led to a significant increase in multilateral efforts to mitigate the risk of future conflict, avoid the escalation of ongoing conflict, and forestall relapse into conflict during the volatile period after mass violence. Gradually, a broader and more coherent conflict-prevention agenda emerged. The 1997 report of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict[5] and the UN Secretary-General's report on conflict prevention of 2001[6] describe two distinct modes of conflict prevention: operational prevention, which refers to relatively short-term efforts to forestall incipient or escalating violence, and structural prevention, which refers to measures to address the root causes of conflict. This dichotomy is called into question by contemporary preventive action that increasingly seeks to create synergies between short-term political engagement (such as official negotiation and mediation efforts)

and more long-term efforts to strengthen national, local, and regional conflict-prevention capacities. This follows the realization that success in confronting acute crises (operational prevention) typically requires sustained engagement with the conflicting parties, and that efforts to address the root causes of conflict (structural prevention) should be designed to have an observable positive impact already in the medium term. In recent years, the concept of systemic prevention was coined as the third component of a comprehensive prevention agenda. It refers to measures to address global risk factors, which stem from transnational actions that adversely affect conflict risks in multiple world regions.[7]

IPI's sixteenth New York Seminar took place against the backdrop of renewed interest in multilateral conflict prevention among UN entities and member states, regional and subregional organizations, and civil society over the past few years. In 2009, the UN General Assembly significantly enhanced the resources available to the Department of Political Affairs, which serves as a focal point for conflict prevention across the UN system. In July 2010, under Nigeria's presidency, the UN Security Council held a thematic debate on preventive diplomacy. Subsequently, it has also begun to hold regular conflict-prevention briefings with the Department of Political Affairs. In July 2011, the government of Turkey, supported by IPI, hosted a retreat for the Security Council in Istanbul on preventive diplomacy and mediation.[8] During Lebanon's presidency of the Security Council in September, the council held a meeting that addressed conflict prevention, mediation, and the peaceful settlement of conflicts. The council discussed a new report of the Secretary-General, titled *Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results*, at ministerial level, and issued a presidential statement on this issue.[9] In February of this year, the

---

4   United Nations Secretary-General, *Annual Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization, 16 June 1959-15 June 1960*, Addendum 1, UN Doc. A/4390/Add.1, cited in Brian Urquhart, *Hammarskjold* (New York: Knopf, 1972), p. 256. In this report, UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold observed that "preventive action [in newly arising conflict] must in the first place aim at filling the vacuum so that it will not provoke action from any of the major parties, the initiative for which might be taken for preventive purposes but might in turn lead to counter-action from the other side."

5   Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1997).

6   United Nations Secretary-General, *Prevention of Armed Conflict*.

7   United Nations Secretary-General, *Progress Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict*, UN Doc. A/60/891, July 18, 2006. Systemic prevention includes, for instance, global initiatives to reduce the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, to stem the spread of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and to tackle environmental degradation; action against HIV/AIDS and against narcotics cultivation, trafficking, and addiction; and international efforts to regulate trade in natural resources that often fuel conflict.

8   Arthur Boutellis, Edward C. Luck, and Christoph Mikulaschek, "Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation," New York: International Peace Institute, July 2011.

9   United Nations, *Statement by the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/PRST/2011/18, September 22, 2011; United Nations Secretary-General, *Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results*, UN Doc. S/2011/552, August 26, 2011.

Peacebuilding Commission placed Guinea on its agenda and thus expanded the scope of preventive efforts beyond postconflict environments to include, for the first time, a country that did not recently experience armed conflict. The African Union (AU) and the African regional economic communities are playing an increasingly significant role in conflict prevention in Africa, particularly through the Continental Early Warning System, the Panel of the Wise, and subregional mechanisms. In other regions, intergovernmental organizations as diverse as the Pacific Islands Forum and the European Union increasingly develop means for settling disputes before they lead to the outbreak of hostilities.

These developments occur with good reason. The human toll of armed conflict in the past two decades, particularly in Africa and Asia, has been enormous. Moreover, resource constraints continue to be a major challenge for multilateral peace operations, particularly at a time when the world faces a prolonged economic and financial crisis and the cost of UN peacekeeping amounts to $8 billion per year. There is broad consensus that conflict prevention can help avoid the loss of lives and the destruction of livelihoods and prosperity, and that it is less cost intensive and less intrusive than multilateral peacemaking and peacekeeping during and after armed conflict.

Some seminar participants observed that traditional obstacles to effective multilateral conflict prevention are becoming increasingly surmountable. Over the past decade, the practice of multilateral conflict prevention has been affected by political evolutions that have led to normative and institutional innovations. First, the vital importance of prevention to the maintenance of international peace and security, which is one of the core tasks of the UN, is increasingly accepted by all states.[10] Second, there is a trend among states that face conflict risks toward greater acceptance of preventive diplomacy. This development is somewhat uneven across regions, with most governments in Africa and Europe at the forefront of accepting a greater role for multilateral preven-

tive diplomacy.

At the normative level, the vision of a culture of prevention formulated by the UN Secretary-General and its subsequent endorsement by the General Assembly, as well as the move from a stance of non-interference in internal affairs to the doctrine of non-indifference during the transition from the Organization for African Unity to the African Union, has created new entry points for preventive diplomacy. The adoption of the responsibility to protect by the General Assembly and its growing acceptance across different regions has also improved the normative background against which conflict prevention is conducted. This normative evolution has coincided with changes in the institutional setting for multilateral conflict prevention, which was improved through a significant increase in and recalibration of the capabilities for the pursuit of early warning, facilitation, good offices, and root-cause prevention.

Early Warning and Assessment

Preventive diplomacy holds the best promise of success when it is conducted at an early stage in a dispute, before an incipient crisis has turned into a violent struggle—when issues are less complicated, parties fewer, positions less hardened, relationships less damaged, and emotions more contained.[11] Sound, timely decision making on conflict prevention requires early warning of situations that have the potential to escalate into armed conflict. Early warning comprises accurate and timely reports on impending crises and balanced assessments of the available information on these situations.

The UN Charter authorizes the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter that, in his opinion, may threaten international peace and security.[12] Since the late 1940s, the Secretary-General has argued that he has the authority to conduct inquiries and investigation of situations of concern in order to determine whether they threaten the peace.[13] Over

---

10 See, for example, United Nations Secretary-General, *Prevention of Armed Conflict*; UN General Assembly Resolution 57/337 (July 18, 2003), UN Doc. 1/RES/57/337; UN Security Council Resolution 1625 (September 14, 2005), UN Doc. S/RES/1625; UN General Assembly, *2005 World Summit Outcome*, para. 74.

11 United Nations Secretary-General, *Enhancing Mediation and Its Support Activities*, UN Doc. S/2009/189, April 8, 2009, para. 10.

12 *Charter of the United Nations* (1945), Article 99; A. Walter Dorn, "Early and Late Warning by the UN Secretary-General of Threats to the Peace: Article 99 Revisited," in *Conflict Prevention from Rhetoric to Reality*, edited by Albrecht Schnabel and David Carment (New York: Lexington Books, 2004).

13 Bertrand Ramcharan, *Preventive Diplomacy at the UN* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 20-22.

the past twenty years, access to timely information and reliable assessments has greatly improved for practitioners of conflict prevention. Today, a variety of UN departments and agencies, regional organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and some individual states continuously assess risks of armed conflict around the globe.

Acting within their respective mandates, seven UN bodies currently maintain early-warning systems related to armed conflict and mass atrocities: the Department of Political Affairs, the UN Development Programme, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.[14] Unfortunately, there is insufficient information sharing between these different units.[15] In the late 1980s and in the early 2000s, two initiatives sought to consolidate early warning at the UN through the establishment of a single early-warning office in charge of information gathering and analysis related to international peace and security.[16] However, both attempts ultimately did not succeed due to considerable resistance from a number of member states.[17]

Early-warning assessments presented to decision makers need to take into account political, military, economic, social, and legal factors determining a country's underlying susceptibility to descent into armed conflict, potential triggers of mass violence, as well as institutional coping mechanisms in the at-risk country, such as credible judicial mechanisms, participatory government, nonstate conflict-resolution fora, and an active civil society.[18] One of the greatest challenges to assessing the risk of future conflict is the difficulty of predicting its timing. This observation is illustrated by the failure of many of the most seasoned experts on the Arab

World to foresee the uprisings, revolutions, and civil conflicts of the 2011 Arab Spring. The time span between the articulation of a grievance and its translation into armed violence greatly varies across time and space, both between and within countries.

Early-warning providers are confronted with a basic dilemma. On the one hand, an opportunity for preventive diplomacy is missed when no warning is provided by the time armed conflict is about to break out. On the other hand, erroneously alerting actors of the need to address a putative conflict risk also has negative repercussions. It erodes trust in the early-warning system and breeds resentment of undue interference in the internal affairs of states that successfully resolve crises even without third-party intervention.

Translating early warning into timely preventive action constitutes an additional major challenge. The following two sections address two specific types of preventive action: preventive diplomacy and root-cause prevention.

Preventive Diplomacy

The 1992 *Agenda for Peace* defines preventive diplomacy as "action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur."[19] The first objective of preventive diplomacy is to facilitate cooperative problem solving among the parties through the pursuit of mediation, facilitation, or good offices. Second, preventive diplomacy can seek to alter the disputing factions' incentive structure. Conditional incentives, threats of sanctions and of the use of force, and public diplomacy all change the parties' calculations of the benefits of seeking confrontation or cooperation with the other side. Third, preventive diplomacy may include actions that seek to strengthen

---

14 Micah Zenko and Rebecca Friedman, "UN Early Warning for Preventing Conflict," *International Peacekeeping* 18, No. 1 (2011).

15 See United Nations Secretary-General, *Early Warning, Assessment and the Responsibility to Protect*, UN Doc. A/64/864, July 14, 2010, para. 10.

16 In 1987, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar established the Office for Research and the Collection of Information. See, United Nations, *The Office for Research and the Collection of Information*, UN Doc. ST/SGB/SB/223, March 1, 1987. In 2000, the "Brahimi report" recommended that the Executive Committee on Peace and Security establish an Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat. See, United Nations, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, UN Doc. A/55/305-S/2000/809, August 21, 2000, paras. 65-75.

17 The Office for Research and the Collection of Information was dissolved in 1992, when some of its functions were taken over by the new Department of Political Affairs. The creation of the Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat was twice proposed by the Secretary-General, but never approved by the General Assembly.

18 Christoph Mikulaschek, "The UN Security Council and the Responsibility to Protect: Policy, Process, and Practice," *Favorita Papers* 1 (2010): 32.

19 United Nations Secretary-General, *An Agenda for Peace. Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-Keeping*, UN Doc. A/47/277–S/24111, June 17, 1992, paras. 20, 23.

moderates and manage spoilers within each side's leadership, through assistance, threats, and sanctions. Fourth, by imposing arms embargoes and targeted sanctions, and by employing preventive peacekeeping, third-parties can also restrict the parties' capacity and willingness to wage war.

Preventive diplomacy has traditionally been a central component of conflict prevention. Article 33 of the UN Charter lists mediation, conciliation, enquiry, and resort to regional agencies and arrangements alongside negotiation, arbitration, and judicial settlement as means by which the parties shall peacefully settle their dispute if its continuation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.

AN EVOLVING DIVISION OF LABOR

In recent years, the practice of multilateral preventive diplomacy has evolved significantly. The emergence of new actors who regularly pursue mediation and preventive diplomacy, as well as adjustments to existing capabilities and operating procedures, has altered the roles of different multilateral institutions and decision-making fora in this field.

The United Nations Security Council

The UN Charter provides the Security Council with a broad mandate for conducting preventive diplomacy. Under Article 34, the council may investigate any dispute or any situation that might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute. At any stage in such a dispute, it may recommend terms of settlement or conflict-resolution fora to the parties concerned.[20] One way for the Security Council to engage in preventive diplomacy is to convey signals about its collective will to the parties—formally or informally. The council may do so by adding a situation to its agenda, adopting a resolution, issuing a presidential statement, conducting an interactive dialogue with an at-risk state, or undertaking a mission to the conflict theater. The council can also establish commissions of inquiry or panels of experts to investigate a situation more closely. The council may request

that the Secretary-General conducts preventive diplomacy or appoints a special envoy or representative. Moreover, it can assign good-offices tasks to peace operations or special political missions. If a dispute has deteriorated to the point where it constitutes a threat to international peace and security, the Security Council may impose targeted sanctions under Chapter VII of the Charter in order to prevent a further escalation of the situation.

The question of whether a specific dispute should be added to the Security Council's agenda is often highly controversial among council members, the parties to the dispute, interested third states, and other states that are concerned about the kind of precedent such an action might set. Sometimes, discreet preventive action may be less contentious and more likely to enjoy the backing of all Security Council members. For instance, Security Council missions provide opportunities for discreet preventive diplomacy since they allow council members to have confidential conversations with governmental and nongovernmental actors in the dispute theater and its region. While on mission, the Security Council can convey threats, offer positive incentives, and signal its commitment to preventing an escalation of the dispute.[21]

The Security Council's Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa provides another potential tool for engaging in discreet operational prevention. In contrast to the original proposal by the Secretary-General in 1999 to establish a subsidiary organ to discuss prevention cases on a more continuing basis, the working group has so far focused on thematic rather than country-specific issues.[22]

Since November 2010, a new type of briefing to the Security Council by the UN Department of Political Affairs has provided a forum for informal consultations in the council on emerging security issues. Since then, monthly "horizon scanning" briefings have allowed for proactive discussions on specific country situations on and off the council's formal agenda as well as on thematic issues such as

---

20 *Charter of the United Nations*, Articles 36 and 37.

21 For instance, during its mission to West Africa in 2004, the council visited Guinea, which was not on its formal agenda, to discuss how instability in neighboring Sierra Leone had affected the Guinean province of Guinea-Forestière, and how the UN could work with the Guinean government to prevent conflict from spreading across the border. Christoph Mikulaschek, "The UN Security Council and the Responsibility to Protect."

22 International Peace Institute, "Conflict Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect," *IPI Blue Paper* No. 7, Task Forces on Strengthening Multilateral Security Capacity, New York, 2009, p. 35.

that of election-related conflicts in Africa.[23] The Department of Political Affairs has to keep the briefings as factual as possible in order to respect the Security Council's prerogative to determine whether a situation constitutes a threat to international peace and security, and to nurture council members' trust in the balanced nature of these briefings. At this point, it is still too early to tell whether this innovation in the council's working methods can help council members to get to grips with emerging security issues. Regular horizon-scanning briefings should continue, as long as they benefit the timely use of preventive diplomacy by the Security Council.

The United Nations Secretary-General

By his own account, the UN Secretary-General has increased his use of good offices and mediation as instruments for conflict prevention in recent years.[24] The Secretary-General can get involved in preventive diplomacy in three ways. First, an intergovernmental organ, primarily the Security Council or the General Assembly, may give him a mandate for using his good offices in a specific crisis. Second, the parties themselves can ask him to provide good offices. Third, the Secretary-General can act on his own initiative on the basis of his authority under Article 99 of the UN Charter, which states that "[t]he Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security." The third option is the most politically delicate one for the Secretary-General, and it involves a difficult judgment call. Should the Secretary-General only intervene when success is relatively likely, or should he also offer his good offices when hostilities are imminent and the prospects for successful conflict prevention are dim? Arguably, it is in the latter situations that the Secretary-General's ability to directly speak to heads of state and ask other world leaders to intervene will be most urgently needed. At the same time, frequent failures of preventive

diplomacy will weaken the Secretary-General's authority, and by introducing sensible proposals for dispute resolution at the wrong moment, he risks discrediting them. In taking this difficult decision, the Secretary-General should apply judgment and principle. He should not be expected to offer good offices under all circumstances.

When the Secretary-General engages in preventive diplomacy on his own initiative, he has to win the confidence of the Security Council and of interested third states not represented on the council. When he succeeds in gaining the trust of these states, he may have considerable latitude. The Secretary-General's relationship with the Security Council will be most constructive when the Security Council understands that the Secretary-General is more than just the Secretariat's chief administrative officer, and when the Secretary-General keeps in mind that, within the United Nations, the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the Security Council. When Security Council members are deeply divided on how to avert an escalating crisis, the resulting deadlock provides the Secretary-General with opportunities for taking initiatives in the absence of strictly circumscribed mandates. At the same time, his preventive efforts risk meeting stiff opposition from parties to the conflict and third states that view his strategy, or his mere involvement in preventive diplomacy, as contrary to their interests.

As early as in the 1960s, then UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld envisaged a ring of special representatives in different parts of the world at risk of conflict.[25] In recent years, his vision has gradually turned into a reality. At present, the UN and regional organizations maintain several dozen good-offices missions in or in proximity to countries faced with significant risks of conflict.[26] These missions have not only increased in number, many of them also perform more complex mandates than in the past.[27] The UN established

---

23 See, Security Council Report, "Conflict Prevention Briefings," New York, January 2011.

24 United Nations Secretary-General, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1625 (2005) on Conflict Prevention, Particularly in Africa*, UN Doc. S/2008/18, January 14, 2008, para. 5.

25 Ramcharan, *Preventive Diplomacy at the UN*, p. 31.

26 For UN and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) missions, see Richard Gowan, ed., *2010 Review of Political Missions* (New York: Center on International Cooperation, 2010).

27 The mandates of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) are particularly complex. See UN Security Council Resolution 1974 (March 22, 2011), UN Doc. S/RES/1974; UN Security Council Resolution 1770 (August 10, 2007), UN Doc. S/RES/1770.

three political missions with subregional mandates in West Africa, Central Asia, and most recently in Central Africa. These regional offices are staffed with pre-deployed high-level envoys and political officers supporting them. Their location in the region allows them to "keep their ears to the ground." Since they are at a greater distance from the conflict theater than missions directly deployed to the location of the crisis, preventive diplomacy conducted from regional offices is typically perceived as less intrusive than similar efforts pursued in the at-risk country. When facilitation and good offices are made available from a regional office, the UN country team and its resident coordinator can refrain from conducting preventive diplomacy, which often risks jeopardizing the good relations with national actors they require for their humanitarian, developmental, and other work.[28]

At UN headquarters, the General Assembly approved a significant increase in the capabilities of the Department of Political Affairs in 2009.[29] A year earlier, the Department of Political Affairs had established a Mediation Support Unit to provide operational support to mediators and envoys in the field, to strengthen the capacity of regional and subregional organizations, and to serve as a repository of best practices and lessons learned on mediation and preventive action. The unit's activities also include maintaining rosters of mediators and improving the training for envoys and mediation experts on their team. In 2008, the Standby Team of Mediation Experts at the Mediation Support Unit became operational as a six-person roster of thematic experts who can provide advice to UN and non-UN mediators in the field. While team members deployed seventy-seven times to almost thirty countries between 2008 and October 2010 to support mediation efforts, they have rarely been called upon for preventive action, with a few notable exceptions, including a conflict-analysis mission to Kyrgyzstan.[30] A recent evaluation of the standby team has found that it could also "add value and contribute to early fact finding,

conflict analysis and facilitation at an early stage in order to prevent crises from breaking out."[31]

Regional Organizations

Regional organizations in many parts of the world are increasingly active in the pursuit of preventive diplomacy. One recent study even concluded that since the 1990s the majority of conflict-prevention initiatives have been launched at the regional level.[32] Today, regional organizations tasked with engaging in preventive diplomacy include the African Union, African subregional organizations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of American States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Pacific Islands Forum, and others. Consequently, observers have noted that there is a growing expectation that regional organizations should offer good offices and facilitation to their members, and that states should submit deteriorating disputes to regional as well as international institutions.

The increase in capabilities for early action at the UN described above was mirrored by the creation and enhancement of similar capacities in many regions. The African Union, for instance, is operationalizing the African Peace and Security Architecture and a Continental Early Warning System. It has also formed the Panel of the Wise, whose work focuses on conflict prevention.

Regional organizations are frequently better positioned than their international counterparts for the early detection of simmering crises, since they tend to have networks of contacts in each member state. Through frequent interactions with their members, regional organizations develop an intricate knowledge of the historical background of disputes in their region and build trust in regional capitals. Preventive diplomacy by regional organizations is often more acceptable to national sensitivities than similar efforts carried out by the UN. In addition, regional organizations frequently have a comparative advantage in shaping compre-

---

28 Theresa Whitfield, "Political Missions, Mediation and Good Offices," in Gowan, *2010 Review of Political Missions*, pp. 31-32.

29 It created forty-nine new posts for staff devoted to mediation, good offices, and conflict prevention. UN General Assembly Resolution 63/261 (March 5, 2009), *Strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs*, UN Doc. A/RES/63/261.

30 Oliver Wils and Antje Herrberg, "Evaluation of the Mediation Support Unit Standby Team of Mediation Experts: Final Report," Oslo: Norwegian Refugee Council, January 2011, pp. 14, 16.

31 Ibid., p. 16.

32 Alex Bellamy, "Conflict Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect," *Global Governance* 14, No. 2 (2008): 147.

hensive regional approaches to transnational dimensions of conflicts.[33]

Not all regional organizations are created equal, and in some regions, such as Northeast Asia, they are lacking. In Africa and other parts of the world, the capabilities for implementing ambitious conflict-prevention mandates among regional and subregional organizations are only slowly materializing. Sometimes, conflict parties that want to avoid or delay peaceful dispute settlement seek to exploit regional organizations' institutional weaknesses by insisting on regional, rather than international, leadership in preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. When a dispute involves the perceived vital interests of great powers from outside the region, or when the members of a regional organization are deeply divided on how to address the crisis, the UN typically has a comparative advantage over regional organizations in conducting preventive diplomacy.

The UN Secretariat displays increasing eagerness to collaborate with regional organizations in the pursuit of preventive diplomacy. The Secretary-General convened meetings with the chief officers of regional organizations, who also briefed the Security Council last year. Annual meetings between the Security Council and the African Union's Peace and Security Council constitute a forum for dialogue between these bodies, and the African Union's peace and security commissioner briefs the Security Council several times per year.

Most seminar participants agreed that the first third-party effort to address a deteriorating crisis should ideally come from the affected region. When the Security Council subsequently takes action to maintain international peace and security, regional organizations and their members should push for unbiased and timely preventive action by the UN. In accordance with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, regional organizations often take the lead in contemporary preventive diplomacy. Increasingly, the UN provides mediation support to regional organizations rather than being at the helm of these initiatives itself. Sometimes, the question of leadership in preventive diplomacy is deeply controversial. For instance, many members of the African Union felt that the organization was marginalized in the multilateral response to the conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire and Libya in 2010 and 2011.

States and Nongovernmental Actors

Individual states have traditionally played a critical role in preventive diplomacy and remain vitally important in this endeavor. In recent years Brazil, Qatar, Turkey, and other states have joined Norway, Switzerland, and the United States in the group of countries that frequently engage in preventive diplomacy and mediation.

Over the past two decades, the number and capacity of nongovernmental institutions that conduct preventive diplomacy and mediation has greatly increased as well.[34] Governments confronted with a deteriorating dispute tend to regard preventive diplomacy conducted by nonstate mediation organizations as a lesser interference in their internal affairs than similar actions pursued by an international organization or third state. Nongovernmental entities face fewer political and bureaucratic constraints than most international organizations and states in quickly deploying experts to the field. Therefore, they have also become increasingly active in providing expert support to states and international organizations engaged in preventive diplomacy. In some situations, they have been instrumental in familiarizing nonstate armed groups with the conduct of negotiations. Local, national, and international nongovernmental institutions also increasingly play a critical role in early warning and advocacy to raise awareness of impending crises.

OBSTACLES TO TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE ACTION

Preventive diplomacy faces several perennial challenges, including the conflict parties' resentment of outsiders' interference, third parties' lack of will to invest political capital in facilitation and early mediation, and financial and operational constraints.

---

33 For instance, the Economic Community of West African States has launched a small arms program to address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as a destabilizing factor in member states at risk of armed conflict.

34 See, for example, Crisis Management Initiative, "The Private Diplomacy Survey 2008: Mapping of 14 Private Diplomacy Actors in Europe and America," Helsinki: Crisis Management Initiative, 2008.

Consent of Conflicting Parties

The consent of the parties to a dispute is a prerequisite for preventive diplomacy, which cannot succeed unless the factions understand the risks associated with crisis escalation and attempt cooperative problem solving. Governments faced with the likely outbreak of hostilities are frequently in denial of the crisis.[35] They tend to admit having a problem only when it is too late for them to manage the dispute by offering concessions. Governments typically fear that third-party facilitators' discussions with both sides will bestow legitimacy upon opposition groups by treating them as parties, rather than granting the government a monopoly on legitimate representation, and by redefining certain events as acts of war rather than crimes.[36] Thus, governments are concerned that preventive diplomacy levels the playing field in which the government and the opposition conduct their contest over political power. Finally, governments often fear that preventive diplomacy by the UN will inevitably lead to more intrusive forms of multilateral conflict management, such as the imposition of sanctions or the establishment of a peace operation.

The UN increasingly builds on the parties' greater preparedness to accommodate development assistance rather than political engagement by pursuing joint programs between the Department of Political Affairs and the UN Development Programme, which combine political process facilitation and help to address the root causes of grievances. Moreover, the establishment of permanent regional offices in Central and West Africa and in Central Asia has helped the Department of Political Affairs to nurture the trust of regional actors through routine interaction.

Political Will and Consensus Among Potential Sponsors

Observers and activists frequently bemoan the "lack of political will" of UN intergovernmental organs and their regional counterparts to sponsor and support timely conflict-prevention efforts. In part, this can be explained by the difficulty of mobilizing attention and political capital for a response to a situation that has not yet escalated. At times, it follows from an "excess of political wills,"[37] meaning that third states capable of engaging in preventive diplomacy also pursue other policy objectives, such as the maintenance of political and trade relationships with at-risk states. These other national foreign-policy goals often trump the pursuit of conflict prevention. In international and regional organizations, a lack of consensus among great powers and other interested states on a strategy for early response to a deteriorating crisis can be a third reason for the absence of political will to pursue preventive diplomacy. International organizations' inaction may result from some states' suspicions that multilateral preventive diplomacy in a given crisis will pursue the hidden agendas of great powers.

International norms and principles such as the responsibility to protect, which establish objective criteria for preventive engagement by international organizations and other third parties, may provide a rallying point for civil society organizations, which can help generate political will for preventive diplomacy. When these norms and principles are impartially applied, they may also help nurture consensus among states on the timely pursuit of preventive diplomacy by international organizations.

Financial and Bureaucratic Constraints

The significant increase in the capabilities of the Department of Political Affairs in 2009 has reversed the trend of under-resourcing preventive diplomacy at the UN. However, special political missions continue to be funded through the regular biennial budget, in contrast to UN peace operations. This funding mechanism hampers the ability of the UN Secretariat to react swiftly to new crises through preventive diplomacy.[38] So far, the Secretariat has mitigated the problem by seeking extra-budgetary voluntary contributions, which are

---

35 Francis Deng, "Idealism and Realism – Negotiating Sovereignty in Divided Nations," *Development Dialogue* 55 (March 2011): 95.

36 Barnett Rubin and Bruce Jones, "Prevention of Violent Conflict: Tasks and Challenges for the United Nations," *Global Governance* 13 (2007): 396.

37 Michael Lund, "Conflict Prevention: Theory in Pursuit of Policy and Practice," in *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, edited by Jacob Bercovitch et al. (London: Sage, 2009), p. 296. For a case study discussing this problem in the context of preventive diplomacy in Kenya during the 1990s and early 2000s, see Stephen Brown, "Quiet Diplomacy and Recurring 'Ethnic Clashes' in Kenya," in *From Promise to Practice: Strengthening UN Capacities for the Prevention of Violent Conflict*, edited by Chandra Lekha Sriram and Karin Wermester (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003), pp. 84-86.

38 For a description of the negative implications of this funding mechanism on mediation in Nepal, see Ian Martin, "All Peace Operations Are Political: A Case for Designer Missions and the Next UN Reform," in Gowan, *2010 Review of Political Missions*, pp. 5-6.

less forthcoming in times of fiscal austerity and economic malaise across many regions. The Trust Fund for Preventive Action is the only source of "surge funding" for UN preventive diplomacy, but approval of disbursements from the fund takes considerable time to comply with internal regulations on the management of trust funds.[39]

Even in the absence of financial constraints, turf battles within international organizations can hamper the prospects of success for preventive diplomacy. Development agencies, humanitarian actors, and political officers who work on the mitigation of a deteriorating crisis on a daily basis may resent the arrival of a new actor for focused crisis diplomacy, since the latter's engagement can reduce their own authority and may signal that their own preventive efforts have failed. These actors may also fear that conflict parties' potential resentment of a third party's preventive diplomacy will adversely affect their own relationship with the government and the opposition, thus making it harder for them to deliver on their own mandate in the short term.

Concrete Costs for Uncertain Benefits

Last but not least, the lack of political will and funding for multilateral preventive diplomacy may in part stem from the difficulty of proving that any preventive diplomacy effort was causal in averting a conflict, which arguably may not have broken out even in the absence of third-party engagement. Missions carrying out good offices are often tasked to "advise," "assist," "encourage," or "support" national actors, and thus their achievements may be intangible. While success may be difficult to prove and intangible, cases of preventive diplomacy's failure, such as in Georgia in 2008 and Kyrgyzstan in 2010, are well documented. The relatively modest cost of conducting preventive diplomacy and the massive human toll of not successfully preventing armed conflict should make it easier to accept the dilemma that the benefits of prevention are uncertain and realized in the future, while the costs are quantifiable in the present.

Structural Prevention

Even before greed and grievances translate into disputes, national, regional, and international actors can engage in root-cause prevention to predict and forestall future conflicts. Root-cause or structural prevention addresses factors that can raise the risk of the outbreak of armed conflict in the medium or long term. Today's practitioners of structural prevention not only seek to mitigate risk factors, they also aim to transform the institutional environment in the at-risk society to build local and national resources for peaceful dispute resolution. Since the vast majority of today's armed conflicts take place within one country rather than between states, this section focuses on the structural prevention of civil conflict.[40]

ROOT CAUSES OF CONTEMPORARY ARMED CONFLICT

The 2001 report of the UN Secretary-General on conflict prevention identifies four structural factors associated with conflict risks: inequity (disparities among identity groups), inequality (policies and practices that institutionalize discrimination), injustice (lack of rule of law, effective and fair law enforcement and administration of justice, and equitable representation in government), and insecurity (lack of human security and accountable and transparent security-sector governance).[41] However, none of these root causes invariably leads to armed conflict. Rather, these factors generally provide a fertile setting for accumulating grievances, gathering combatants, and launching armed confrontation.

One of the most robust findings in the economic research on civil conflict is that low national per capita income is associated with higher conflict risk.[42] Alleviating the plight of the "bottom billion" would make a major contribution to the structural prevention of armed conflict. However, not every increase in the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) improves prospects for peace. Economic growth can widen disparities when its benefits are

---

39 Rubin and Jones, "Prevention of Violent Conflict," p. 405.

40 Of all seventy-one armed conflicts between 2000 and 2010, only four were interstate armed conflicts. No extrastate conflicts were recorded during that period. See, Uppsala Conflict Data Program and Peace Research Institute Oslo, *Armed Conflict Dataset* v.4, 2011.

41 United Nations Secretary-General, *Prevention of Armed Conflict*, para. 100.

42 James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, No. 1 (2003); Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, No. 4 (2004).

concentrated in the hands of some identity groups while others are marginalized. When a country's economy significantly depends on natural-resource exploitation, it is vulnerable to armed conflict, since physical control of mines and wells can make it possible to finance a rebellion and incites rent-seeking behavior by armed groups.

High unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is also associated with a high risk of conflict, even though econometric research has failed to find statistically significant correlations.[43] The problem of political instability linked to unemployment can be particularly acute in countries with a "youth bulge," a population comprised of a large number of youth compared to other age groups.[44]

Horizontal inequality, which occurs when different regional, ethnic, or religious identity groups have unequal access to political, economic, and social resources, also constitutes a risk factor that can lead to political violence.[45] The social, economic, cultural, and political status of indigenous peoples in many countries in the Americas provides an example of long-standing and persistent horizontal discrimination. Today, it constitutes an increasingly salient problem, particularly since many of the unexploited natural resources in the Western Hemisphere are located in areas claimed by marginalized indigenous communities.

Economic shocks, such as food- and energy-price shocks, can trigger armed conflicts in states whose consumers or exporters are unable to absorb sudden losses resulting from fluctuations of the price of critical commodities. In fragile, low-income countries, average households spend 57 percent of their expenditure on food, making food security and relative food-price stability critical preconditions for maintaining broader stability and peace.[46]

These and other risk factors are most likely to lead to armed conflicts in states with weak institutions for mediating and controlling violence.[47]

Weak government institutions are characterized by a low degree of institutional capacity, accountability, and/or inclusiveness. They may be the legacy of long-standing horizontal inequality involving discrimination in political participation and access to public services, or of an elite pact ending an earlier conflict by dividing government rents among small leadership groups. To a limited extent, civil society can step into the void left by weak government institutions to help prevent armed-conflict risk factors from translating into actual political violence.

ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES

One seminar participant described structural prevention as a reform program for states at risk of armed conflict. It encompasses a wide range of policies addressing the various risk factors outlined above.

Building Legitimate National Institutions

In line with the observation that effective and legitimate institutions make a society more resilient to conflict risks, institution building is often an important component of structural prevention. By building democratic, inclusive processes a polity can ensure that disagreements do not escalate into political violence and conflict.[49] Strengthening the rule of law, improving security and justice-sector governance, and promoting participatory and inclusive decision making through electoral assistance are now among the core goals of multilateral conflict-prevention efforts before and after conflict. In postconflict countries, rebuilding a functioning and equitable state is often a generational task that requires long-term engagement by donors. Holding elections should not be seen as an exit strategy for international supporters of institution-building processes.

The population will only regard their government institutions as legitimate if they have some capacity to deliver basic public services. The absence of functioning education, health, security, and justice sectors, or grossly inequitable access to their

---

43 World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development* (Washington, DC, 2011), pp. 78-79.

44 United Nations Secretary-General, *Prevention of Armed Conflict*, para. 124.

45 Frances Stewart, ed., *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict. Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

46 Henk-Jan Brinkman and Cullen S. Hendrix, *Food Insecurity and Conflict: Applying the WDR Framework* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2010).

47 World Bank, *World Development Report 2011*, pp. 84-89.

48 United Nations Secretary-General, *Report on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1625 (2005)*, para. 37.

49 United Nations Secretary-General, *Progress Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict*, para. 26; see also UN General Assembly Resolution 57/337.

services, can create insecurity and inequity, which are among the root causes of armed conflict. Fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals has been identified as the "indispensible foundation of prevention."[49] International donors play a critical role in supporting the provision of basic public services in low-income countries. Whether they provide aid through national institutions or outside of them will impact on public perceptions of the quality of national public bureaucracies. Observers have noted that in Afghanistan, for instance, the disbursement of aid through nongovernmental organizations has weakened the legitimacy of the government. When aid finances public-service delivery through community-driven development, it can secure political benefits in addition to the social or economic benefit offered. Community-driven development is an "approach that empowers local communities, including local governments, by giving direct control to the community over planning decisions and investment resources through a process that emphasizes participatory planning and accountability."[50] It can help generate good governance from the grassroots and strengthen bonds between the government and its citizens. In divided societies, community-driven development can strengthen social cohesion between identity groups.

The pursuit of equalizing policies addressing horizontal inequality in the economic, social, and political sphere can contribute to the goal of root-cause prevention. In Liberia, for instance, a battery of tools has been used to this effect. A lack of data on disparities often hampers the effectiveness of such preventive efforts. Seminar participants suggested that this gap in in-country analytic capabilities should be addressed through dedicated efforts by international donors.

The regulation and enforcement of bans on illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources at the national, regional, and international levels can mitigate the conflict risks associated with the presence of exploitable natural resources in low-

income countries. The Governance and Economic Assistance Management Program (GEMAP) developed by the Government of Liberia and the International Contact Group on Liberia constitute examples of programs that seek to improve good governance in the management of natural resource exploitation and thus mitigate destructive incentives to prey on the country's resource wealth.[51]

Delivering Conflict-Sensitive Aid

Development aid can lead to sustainable prosperity, but at times it also generates or fuels political tensions in the recipient state. Therefore, donors and recipients should monitor how development policies, programs, and projects in low-income countries at risk of armed conflict impact on equality, justice, and security. Development aid can never be assumed to be neutral vis-à-vis conflict risks, particularly in low-income countries where it may dwarf other sources of government revenue. Through its impact on national economic and social policies, such as the allocation of budgets and public-sector employment, aid can mitigate or augment conflict risks. However, adverse side effects on political tensions were too often overlooked in development planning in the past. For instance, the irrigation of Sri Lanka's largest river flowing north-east through a sparsely populated dry zone in the east and the resettlement of 30,000 families from the country's densely populated south and west to the east increased the sense of Tamil marginalization in their own "homeland" and contributed to the deterioration of the civil conflict.[52] Many aid groups that were active in Rwanda in the 1980s and 1990s had very favorable views of the country's economic perform-ance since they used development indicators that did not capture the way it exacerbated the divide along ethnic lines.[53]

Today, the UN, international financial institu-tions, bilateral donors, and nongovernmental aid providers are becoming increasingly sensitive to the impact of development aid on conflict risks.

50 World Bank, *Community-Driven Development in the Context of Conflict-Affected Countries: Challenges and Opportunities* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2006), p. 6.

51 Renata Dwan and Laura Bailey, "Liberia's Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme (GEMAP): A Joint Review by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations' Peacekeeping Best Practices Section and the World Bank's Fragile States Group," New York: United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, May 2006.

52 Vincent Fruchart, Per Egil Wam, and William Webster, "Effective Poverty-Reduction Strategies in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries: Lessons and Suggestions," Washington, DC: World Bank, September 2009, p. 5.

53 Peter Uvin, *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1998).

However, a recent survey of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) for thirty-two African countries affected by conflict found that no systematic attention was given to analyses of economic and social causes or consequences of armed conflict.[54] In part, this may be due to the fact that other objectives of national development policy and development aid often trump considerations related to conflict prevention. This problem is epitomized by a lack of coherence within the governments of many donor countries and aid recipients. In Afghanistan, for instance, members of the security community in Kabul took important security decisions with major long-term ramifications for conflict prevention and economic development without sufficient consultation with agencies and programs focusing on poverty reduction and structural prevention. At the UN, the Interagency Framework for Coordination on Preventive Action strives to mainstream sensitivity to conflict risks across the organization by generating awareness of the short- and long-term ramifications of developmental, political, and humanitarian efforts on conflict risks. It brings together officials from twenty-two agencies and departments to pool information and analysis and develop multidisciplinary strategies for conflict prevention.

Root-Cause Prevention in the Aftermath of Armed Conflict

In about half of all countries emerging from civil war renewed hostilities break out within ten years of the termination of the previous conflict.[55] Thus, postconflict countries tend to be particularly in need of preventive action by national, regional, and international actors. Political settlements are often concluded by a small elite, and they may not last if they are not transformed into broader societal compacts that can be adjusted when new grievances arise. Postconflict root-cause prevention needs to restore confidence in security- and justice-sector institutions, which is likely to have been severely undermined during the conflict.

States emerging from armed conflict tend to attract more generous assistance from regional and international actors in their efforts to attain economic development and sustainable peace than countries that have not experienced massive political violence. Postconflict assistance includes multilateral peace operations, which deployed more than 250,000 peacekeepers around the world last year.[56] The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, which was established in 2005, is tasked with bringing together all relevant actors for postconflict peacebuilding to marshal resources, provide strategic advice, and develop best practices.[57]

Systemic Prevention: Addressing the Root Causes of Conflict at the Global Level

Some of the most salient conflict risk factors can most effectively be addressed through global regulation and capacity building. Illegal exploitation of and trafficking in natural resources, flows of illegal narcotics, money laundering, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and environmental degradation and climate change are cross-regional phenomena with a negative impact on conflict risks. Their destabilizing effects can be mitigated by setting and implementing global standards and by building capacity at the local, national, regional, and international levels.[58]

Illegal drug cultivation and trafficking and associated criminal violence challenge the rule of law and generate instability in Central America, Central Asia, and other regions. Since drug trafficking constitutes a mainly demand-driven process, stemming the flow of illegal narcotics requires action by producer and transit states as well as consumer countries. Measures to stem illegal narcotics flows and associated conflict risks include both reducing poverty that drives cultivation in exporting states and concerted efforts to combat addiction in importing countries.[59]

---

54 Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and Robert Picciotto, "Integrating Conflict Prevention in Development Policy and Aid Agendas," Tokyo: Japan International Cooperation Agency and UNDP, March 2008, p. 11.

55 Ibrahim Elbadawi, Håvard Hegre, and Gary Milante, "The Aftermath of Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research* 45, No. 4 (2008): 455; Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Måns Söderbom, "Post-Conflict Risks," *Journal of Peace Research* 45, No. 4 (2008).

56 Jake Sherman, ed., *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2011* (New York: Center on International Cooperation, 2011), p. 4.

57 UN General Assembly Resolution 60/180 (December 20, 2005), UN Doc. A/RES/180; UN Security Council Resolution 1645 (December 20, 2005), UN Doc. S/RES/1645.

58 James Cockayne and Christoph Mikulaschek, "Transnational Security Challenges and the United Nations: Overcoming Sovereign Walls and Institutional Silos," New York: International Peace Academy, 2008.

59 The Hemispheric Drug Strategy adopted by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Organization of American States in 2010 is but one recent example of efforts at systemic prevention of drug-related violence and instability.

Illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources, such as diamonds, timber, and coltan, have been addressed by country-specific measures, which include export sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council on postconflict countries that risk sliding back into conflict. In addition, the Kimberley Process has established a certification scheme for rough diamonds, which covers more than 99 percent of global production.[60] It constitutes a joint effort by governments, the diamond industry, and civil society. More international assistance for low-income participating countries would be necessary to enable all of them to meet the extensive requirements of the certification scheme. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is another initiative aimed at mitigating the adverse side effects that natural resource wealth can have on stability and peace. It commits oil, gas, and mining companies in participating states to disclose payments to governments and obliges the latter to divulge information on these payments as well.

The abundance of small arms and light weapons in low- and medium-income countries makes recourse to violent strategies in political disputes seem more attractive and therefore increases the likelihood of armed conflict. Proliferation in small arms and light weapons can most effectively be stemmed through coordinated action by states where small arms are produced, stockpiled, and traded through arms brokers, as well as countries at the receiving end of the proliferation chain. The 2001 Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects constitutes an effort to prevent the further spread of these weapons. So far, implementation of the program of action has been uneven and slow.[61] The 2012 Review Conference may provide a forum for improving the effectiveness of this tool for systemic prevention.

Coherence and Coordination in Conflict Prevention

Over the past twenty years the number and diversity of actors engaged in conflict prevention has significantly increased. Today, more international and regional organizations, individual states, and nonstate organizations conduct structural and operational prevention than ever before. In most situations of escalating crisis, multiple third parties simultaneously undertake preventive action. In multiparty conflict-prevention initiatives, coordination and leadership among third parties are often missing. In the absence of agreement among third parties on their respective roles, the message delivered to the parties engaged in an escalating dispute is often incoherent, synergies are not exploited, leverage cannot be applied effectively, and thus the prospects of success at prevention are relatively dim.

OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE COORDINATION

The reasons for a lack of coherence and coordination in conflict prevention are numerous. When states and international organizations engage in preventive action, they typically do not merely seek to prevent a conflict but also have distinct—and sometimes conflicting—national and institutional interests related to the outcome of the dispute and the political landscape in the country after the crisis. The objective of some actors may be to attain a comprehensive solution to the crisis. Others may pursue the narrower goal of containing a crisis in order to maintain regional stability, or of freezing a long-standing, simmering dispute. Divergence in the interests and objectives of third parties can easily translate into disputes over leadership and a lack of coordination among them. Competition

---

60   United Nations Secretary-General, *Progress Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict*, para. 16.

61   See the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, *Small Arms Survey 2011: States of Security* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2011), ch. 2; Sarah Parker, "Improving the Effectiveness of the Programme of Action on Small Arms Implementation Challenges and Opportunities," Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, April 2011.

among international and nongovernmental organizations over resources and intergovernmental mandates constitutes another disincentive for cooperation.

Spoilers among the disputing parties often augment rivalry between third parties in order to scuttle crisis-management efforts that threaten their interests. The practice of "forum shopping," which involves playing different actors engaged in crisis diplomacy off each other, is a way to conceal belligerent intentions while buying time to rearm and pursue a military victory. One speaker at the seminar suggested that the outcome of mediation efforts in Madagascar in the aftermath of the March 2009 coup d'état were adversely affected by forum shopping as some local actors exploited the differences in approach of the various envoys from the UN, African Union, the South African Development Community, and the International Organization of the Francophonie.

In the area of structural prevention, "donor hedging" presents another obstacle. Donor governments sometimes hedge their bets with respect to the agencies, funds, and programs whose conflict-prevention work they support in a specific at-risk country. Uncertain of the technical competence of any one of these international organizations to deliver results, donors may fund several of them simultaneously to do similar work. This practice can lead to a proliferation of project-implementing organizations doing overlapping and duplicative work.

INSTRUMENTS FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN THIRD PARTIES

Ideally, actors undertaking preventive diplomacy in the same crisis cooperate and even partition their labor on the basis of their comparative advantages. Some actors with high visibility and prestige can fulfill formal, public tasks while others act as informal facilitators behind the scenes. Envoys of states with good relations with one party to the dispute can leverage their special relationship to convince this party to join negotiations and accept hard compromises instead of escalating the dispute. Nonstate experts in preventive diplomacy are often

most capable of pursuing a track II process that accompanies track I negotiations facilitated by a different actor. In situations where third-states' governments may not want to directly facilitate a dialogue with proscribed nonstate armed groups or terrorist organizations, nongovernmental mediation institutes can facilitate negotiations at the informal request of these governments and in close cooperation with them. Sometimes nongovernmental organizations, such as the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue or the Crisis Management Initiative, offer technical support and expert advice to government officials during preventive diplomacy processes.

The outcome of the matching process between parties and those offering preventive diplomacy depends primarily on the conflict parties' preferences for specific third-party facilitators and the willingness of international stakeholders to back these actors. There is no natural gatekeeper who assigns leadership to any one third party, unless all major interested parties agree on who should lead the process. Third-party actors engaging in simultaneous preventive diplomacy have devised different fora and tools that help them achieve coordination, coherence, and synergies in their concurrent efforts. In different contexts, they have used these instruments with varying success.

Groups of Friends and Contact Groups

"Groups of friends" and "contact groups" are frequently-used mechanisms that can facilitate coordination and enhance the unity of purpose of interested third parties.[62] These groups consist of states informally coalescing around specific thematic, country-specific, or regional issues. They vary by their functions and by their degree of effectiveness. What all of these groups have in common is that they are formed in response to crises, rather than as an attempt to prevent their initial outbreak. Their main objective is to facilitate coordination among the group's members on how to prevent the escalation of a crisis or its relapse into armed conflict. For a variety of reasons it would be difficult for interested third states to form country-specific groups of friends solely for the

62 Teresa Whitfield, *Friends Indeed? The United Nations, Groups of Friends, and the Resolution of Conflict* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2007); Jochen Prantl, "Informal Groups of States and the UN Security Council," *International Organization* 59, No. 3 (2005); Jean Krasno, "The Group of Friends of the Secretary-General: A Useful Leveraging Tool," in *Leveraging for Success in United Nations Peace Operations*, edited by Jean Krasno, Bradd Hayes, and Donald Daniel (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

63 This observation was attributed to Alvaro de Soto by one of the seminar's participants.

pursuit of preventive diplomacy in the absence of a manifest crisis. These include concerns over non-intervention in internal affairs, the reluctance of states to share intelligence with others to alert them of a simmering crisis, and the scarcity of entry points for third-party crisis diplomacy in the earliest stages of a dispute. Thus, groups of friends and contact groups rarely serve as instruments for preventing the initial outbreak of conflict.

Several factors account for whether a group of friends or contact group will be effective at preventing an escalation of, or relapse into, mass violence. It is important that the "friends" that constitute the group have the political clout and interest to influence events on the ground in the at-risk country; in the words of a well-known UN envoy it is "the friends that matter, not the group of friends."[63] If the perspectives of the states partici-pating in a group on the issue at hand are irreconcil-able, the formation of the group is unlikely to lead to the development of coherent and effective policies. Grossly divergent viewpoints among the states represented in the Group of Friends of Myanmar, for example, have made it difficult for this instru-ment to serve as a forum for the formulation of strategies to provide incentives for the government to alter its domestic policies. The quality of the group's leadership can contribute to the group's success or failure. At the seminar, one participant cited the example of the effective leadership by Ambassador Hans Dahlgren as co-chair of the International Contact Group on Liberia. According to this speaker, he was instrumental in bringing Charles Taylor, the then president of Liberia, and other parties to the negotiating table in 2003 and into a peace process that culminated in the conclu-sion of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Taylor's departure from Liberia.[64] Prior to assuming the role as co-chair of the Contact Group, Ambassador Hans Dahlgren had gained extensive experience on conflict management and crisis prevention in West Africa as special representative of the presidency of the European Union to the Mano River Union countries and as Sweden's permanent representative to the UN in New York.[65]

Pooling Resources and "Double-Hatting" Envoys

In the area of structural prevention, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) provides a valuable forum for achieving policy coherence among donor countries. While pooling resources is not always a guarantee for success, it often holds the promise of enhancing aid effectiveness. Multidonor trust funds can help reduce transaction costs for donor countries and host countries, whose government bureaucracies may have limited absorptive capacity and can be overwhelmed by a plethora of separate aid projects. The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund provides a vehicle for pooling resources. During the first five years of its existence, it supported more than one-hundred projects in fifteen conflict-affected and fragile states.

There is a need for donor governments to share information on parallel prevention efforts more effectively with one another, so as not to duplicate efforts and unnecessarily tax local capacities. If they fail to coordinate their efforts, they risk placing considerable stress on national capacities that are already dealing with a crisis. In Zambia, for example, ten different international processes assessing national governance were conducted concurrently in 2008, in addition to the govern-ment's own annual report, which also analyzed the state of governance in the country.[66]

Increasingly, international organizations respond to the fragmentation of resources and mandates by conducting joint programs. In the field of conflict prevention, the UN Department of Political Affairs and the UN Development Programme have launched a series of joint programs combining elements of structural and operational prevention. The first such joint effort was the process started by Niger's National Forum on Conflict Prevention in Agadez, Niger, in July 2001.[67] Peace and develop-ment advisers, who seek to support the UN's resident coordinator by integrating conflict-prevention into the programming of the entire UN

---

64 See Whitfield, *Friends Indeed?*, pp. 249-250.

65 Ibid.

66 OECD Development Assistance Committee, "Scaling Up: Aid Fragmentation, Aid Allocation, and Aid Predictability: Report of 2008 Survey of Aid Allocation Policies and Indicative Forward Spending Plans," Paris: OECD, 2008, p. 17.

67 Youssef Mahmoud, "National Forum on Conflict Prevention, Agadez, Niger 23-27 July 2001," unpublished paper dated August 28, 2001.

country office, are presently deployed in twenty-one countries.[68] Short of conducting joint programs, an increasing number of international organizations and agencies conduct desk-to-desk dialogue and joint strategic exercises and collaborate on training and conflict risk assessments.

Over the past decade there has been a marked increase in the frequency of hybrid prevention initiatives, which are jointly conducted by two international or regional organizations under the leadership of a single representative who reports to both organizations. For instance, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo served as special envoy of the UN Secretary-General to the Great Lakes region and as representative of both the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. One seminar participant explained that Obasanjo undertook sixty flights in forty-five days to conduct three rounds of shuttle diplomacy with the eight subregional heads of state in order to achieve the eventual rapprochement between them. Another speaker cautioned that the hybrid peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts of the UN and the African Union in Darfur have only shown mixed results to date. The variation in the effectiveness of hybrid initiatives points to the fact that institutional arrangements cannot overcome fundamental substantive differences between the interests of third-party actors.

INSTRUMENTS FOR COORDINATION WITHIN STATES AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Most states and international organizations that engage in conflict prevention in at-risk countries do so through multifaceted initiatives that involve preventive tools at the disposal of a variety of their own departments and agencies. The different bureaucratic units within governments and multilateral institutions often struggle to develop a unified understanding of conflict risks and to devise and implement coherent preventive strategies. It is difficult for developmental, diplomatic, defense, financial, and other agencies or departments within a single government or international organization to coalesce around a shared strategic

vision because they may not share the same bureaucratic interests and cultures. Sometimes intradepartmental and interdepartmental turf wars constitute an additional obstacle to policy coherence and coordination.

In recent years, enhancing internal coordination and coherence has become a major focus of multilateral and bilateral actors working on conflict prevention in fragile and postconflict states.[69] Starting in the early 2000s, several national governments, including Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States, established units designed to foster interdepartmental integration in an effort to enhance the effectiveness of their aid to fragile and postconflict states. So far, such integration units generally have had limited success and are still works in progress. Part of the problem is that, by and large, they were not mandated to devise policy, and their heads were not accorded cabinet positions. Without this authority, the impact of these units on interdepartmental coordination and coherence is likely to remain limited, except in times when they are championed by a powerful government official.

In the context of the UN Secretariat and the various agencies, funds, and programs within the UN system, four different bodies at the headquarters seek to promote coordination and coherence at various decision-making levels and among different groups of stakeholders. The UN Secretary-General's Policy Committee is a cabinet-style decision-making mechanism that provides guidance to the entire UN Secretariat. It provides a forum for the principals, mainly Under-Secretaries-General, to share early warning analyses and discuss potential courses of action for the Secretary-General. The Executive Committee on Peace and Security, which is chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, meets twice a month to discuss pressing national and regional issues.[70] The Interdepartmental Framework for Coordination on Early Warning and Preventive Action is mandated to develop strategies to be implemented in a coordinated manner by the UN as a whole. It encompasses twenty-two agencies and

---

68 Zenko and Friedman, "UN Early Warning," pp. 23-24.

69 See, for example, Stewart Patrick and Kaysie Brown, *Greater Than the Sum of its Parts? Assessing "Whole of Government" Approaches to Fragile States* (New York: International Peace Academy, 2007).

70 United Nations Secretary-General, *Prevention of Armed Conflict*, para. 67.

departments, which meet three to four times a year and twice a month at expert reference group meetings.[71] Finally, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which coordinates the humanitarian efforts of seventeen UN and non-UN entities, maintains an early-warning working group and prepares consensual findings presented in the quarterly Early Warning–Early Action Report. As in many bureaucracies, the process of building consensus among the numerous actors in the UN Secretariat and its agencies, funds, and programs can be time consuming and cumbersome. However, coherence can be brought about relatively swiftly in the face of imminent crisis and in the presence of decisive leadership by the Secretary-General.

A range of mechanisms for cooperation among the field presences of UN agencies, funds, and programs, as well as political and peacekeeping missions, exist at the regional and country levels. The challenges of coordination and coherence have been the impetus behind the development and refinement of the Integrated Mission Planning Process and the UN Development Assistance Framework. These are planning tools that seek to integrate and harmonize the efforts of all UN actors conducting political, developmental, humanitarian, or other work in a specific country.

Conclusion

Over the past few years international and regional organizations and their member states have shown a resurgent interest in multilateral conflict prevention as a tool for avoiding the escalation of political disputes into armed conflict. The increasing preparedness of regional and international actors to address conflict risks before they materialize and the greater willingness of many at-risk states to accept third-party preventive action translated into normative evolutions and growing capabilities for multilateral conflict prevention. Even while the practice of multilateral conflict prevention greatly varies between different world regions, there is a growing expectation for regional organizations to provide good offices and preventive diplomacy during crises in the region. At the United Nations, a range of capabilities for conducting early warning and preventive diplomacy were created both at headquarters and in regions at risk of conflict. The Peacebuilding Commission recently expanded the scope of its preventive efforts beyond postconflict stabilization, and the United Nations Security Council changed its prevention-related working methods by introducing "horizon scanning" briefings and informal interactive dialogues with governments embroiled in escalating crises.

The growing interest in multilateral conflict prevention was accompanied by a proliferation of actors engaged in this field of work. Too often, coherence and coordination are missing both between different third-party actors undertaking preventive action and internally within their ranks. An increasing number of coordination fora have only achieved limited success to date, and the risks of sending mixed messages and duplicating efforts remain whenever multiple third parties simultaneously address a deteriorating crisis.

One way to deal with the challenge of coordinating risk-mitigating efforts by multiple third parties is to combine their political facilitation with aid addressing the root causes of grievances. Third parties could collaborate on programs that integrate aspects of preventive diplomacy and structural prevention. In this way, they could capitalize on conflict parties' greater willingness to accommodate development assistance and use this as an entry point for successfully pursuing political engagement, which can help resolve political crises before they escalate into conflict.

---

71 Zenko and Friedman, "UN Early Warning," p. 24; see also Rubin and Jones, "Prevention of Violent Conflict," p. 402.

Annex: Case Studies in Conflict Prevention

The seminar featured three case studies of states—Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Kyrgyzstan—that have recently experienced armed conflict and represent a wide range of geographical areas. In all three countries, prevention failed, although conflict-mitigation strategies were effective in Kenya. Each country had previously experienced conflict in its recent past, and is still at risk of relapsing into political violence, especially if effective conflict-prevention measures are not taken. Violence in all three cases exposed many of the deep-rooted political and socioeconomic structural challenges that these countries face, ranging from youth unemployment and ethnic discrimination to weak governing capacity and corruption. While some background to the crises in these countries was provided at the seminar, much of the discussion focused on future steps that can be taken to prevent a relapse into violent conflict.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Côte d'Ivoire has experienced great political turmoil since the death of Félix Houphouet-Boigny, its long-serving first president, in 1993. The civil war between 2002 and 2004 led to the division of the country: the government maintained control of the south, and anti-government forces held the north. In March 2007 a new peace agreement was signed by the warring parties, the government and the rebel *Forces Nouvelles*, in Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso. Presidential elections were postponed on several occasions before being held in late 2010.

The proximate cause of the fighting in 2010 and 2011 was a crisis triggered by the refusal of Laurent Gbagbo, the incumbent president, to cede power after losing to Alassane Ouattara, the challenger, in the second round of the elections held on November 28, 2010. The election results were certified by the UN. Repeated high-level mediation efforts by the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) failed to resolve the stalemate. On April 11, 2011, Laurent Gbagbo was taken into custody, ending a standoff that lasted more than four months. Laurent Gbagbo finally surrendered to troops loyal to Alassane Ouattara after the *Forces Nouvelles* advanced to the southern part of the country and the UN and French forces attacked Laurent Gbagbo's heavy weapons and military facilities in response to mortar and artillery fire against the UN headquarters and the Golf Hôtel in Abidjan, where Alassane Ouattara had resided for several months. During the conflict, approximately 3,000 people were killed and more than 500,000 displaced.

Many obstacles lie in the path to sustainable peace in Côte d'Ivoire. Interethnic tensions, which have long destabilized the country, were heightened by the postelection violence. The country must develop an inclusive, national civic identity based on fairness and equality to mitigate the chances of a relapse into conflict. Along these lines, one speaker noted that creating a national army that represents the country's diversity will be "the first brick of national rebuilding." Such a measure would represent a clear break from the past, when ethnic favoritism determined the composition of the armed forces.

Inclusive politics should also form the cornerstone of reconciliation. When President Alassane Ouattara formed his cabinet in late May, he did not include any members of Laurent Gbagbo's party, the Ivoirian Popular Front (FPI). This step could prove an obstacle to progress toward a more peaceful future. An alternative interpretation of this event is that it could generate an opportunity for the FPI to become a genuine opposition party.[72] However, the government must create a political environment in which different parties can compete on a level playing field. It is particularly important for all political forces, including supporters of FPI ideology who renounce violence and hate rhetoric, to be able to organize for the legislative elections scheduled to be held by year's end.[73]

---

72 Eric Agnero, "Ouattara Names Cabinet in Ivory Coast," *CNN*, June 1, 2011, available at
   http://articles.cnn.com/2011-06-01/world/ivory.coast.government_1_laurent-gbagbo-ivory-coast-unity-government?_s=PM:WORLD .
73 International Crisis Group, "A Critical Period for Ensuring Stability in Côte d'Ivoire," *Africa Report* No. 176, August 1, 2011.

Transitional justice is an important element of peacebuilding, and much work remains to be done in this respect in Côte d'Ivoire, after a decade marred by impunity for politically-motivated abuses. Reports of massive human rights violations have been made against forces loyal to both President Alassane Ouattara and former President Laurent Gbagbo. Unfortunately, recent efforts at ensuring accountability have not been encouraging. In particular, it has been reported that justice has not been meted out impartially, focusing primarily on holding Laurent Gbagbo's supporters accountable.[74] A Dialogue, Reconciliation and Truth Commission has been established, but there are concerns that it has yet to be perceived as a neutral body.[75]

Another major component in a strategy for preventing relapse into political violence is an effective and timely disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process. The abundance of small arms and light weapons in Côte d'Ivoire constitutes an urgent concern considering the high youth unemployment rate and the fact that strong tensions from the election-related violence are still smoldering. International actors should play an important role in supporting and encouraging disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. One encouraging sign is that in renewing the mandate of the UN mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the UN Security Council emphasized the role of UNOCI in assisting the government in this process. Effective disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration and security-sector reform in Côte d'Ivoire could help to lower crime rates and restore the rule of law, which would encourage more foreign investment, thus facilitating the country's recovery.[76]

KENYA

Violence erupted in Kenya in the aftermath of the December 2007 presidential election. Over the following months, the conflict claimed roughly 1,300 lives and displaced several hundred thousand people. Armed confrontations started after the Electoral Commission of Kenya declared the incumbent president, Mwai Kibaki of the Party of National Unity (PNU), the victor. The latter quickly took the oath of office, amid allegations of vote rigging by supporters of his opponent, Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Party (ODM). The fact that the ODM had garnered a significant percentage of parliamentary seats increased concerns that vote tampering had occurred in the presidential election. The fighting occurred mainly along tribal lines, largely pitting Kikuyu (the ethnic group Mwai Kibaki's belongs to) against Luo (Odinga's ethnic group) and Kalenjin.

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan spearheaded a mediation process on behalf of the African Union that led to a political agreement between the parties on February 28, 2008. The agreement included a power-sharing arrangement that provided for Mwai Kibaki to remain in power as president and Raila Odinga to assume the newly-created post of prime minister. The cabinet was composed of members of both parties. A new constitution was drafted and approved by referendum in 2010. The next presidential elections are scheduled to be held in 2012.

The mediation effort by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan was successful in finding an early end to political violence.[77] Kofi Annan is an experienced mediator, and was well-respected by the parties. As chair of the African Union's Panel of Eminent African Personalities he assumed strong leadership of the mediation process,[78] while the UN and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre), a Geneva-based nonstate mediation institute, played a well-coordinated supporting role. Thus, the challenges typically associated with multiparty mediation, such as personality conflicts and diverging perspectives on the causes of the violence and the objectives of the mediation, could not be exploited by spoilers in this case.

---

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 For more on security-sector reform, see Arthur Boutellis, "The Security Sector in Côte d'Ivoire: A Source of Conflict and a Key to Peace," New York: International Peace Institute, May 2011.

77 On the mediation by Kofi Annan, see Elisabeth Lindenmayer and Josie Lianna Kaye, "A Choice for Peace? The Story of Forty-One Days of Mediation in Kenya," New York: International Peace Institute, August 2009.

78 Other panelists included Benjamin Mkapa, former president of Tanzania, and Graça Machel-Mandela, former Mozambican Minister of Education and Culture.

79 For a detailed description of the work of Concerned Citizens for Peace during the crisis, see George Wachira with Thomas Arendshorst and Simon M. Charles, "Citizens in Action: Making Peace in the Post-Election Crisis in Kenya – 2008," Nairobi: Nairobi Peace Initiative Africa, January 2010.

80 Ibid., p. 5.

While much media attention focused on the mediation process led by Kofi Annan, the important role that Kenyan civil society played in mitigating conflict during the crisis was less recognized. The efforts of the civil society network Concerned Citizens for Peace (CPP) were particularly notable.[79] CPP was led by an informal governing board, which was composed of a Kenyan diplomat, two professional peacebuilders, and two former generals—all with various ethnic backgrounds and skills sets.[80] Its diverse composition helped to enhance the popular perception of its objectivity. The core team convened daily public meetings, called the "Open Forum," at a hotel in Nairobi. At these gatherings participants shared information, developed conflict-mitigation strategies, and identified ways to implement them.[81] The core team also enlisted the support of the independent media, artists, religious leaders, business associations, and others. Through this vast network of supporters, CPP played a key role in facilitating the implementation of conflict-mitigation measures. It convinced telecommunications executives to send mass text messages promoting peace, which countered incitements of violence by similar means. It also injected peaceful messages into newspapers, organized theatrical performances and musical concerts, and created burial committees in areas of heightened violence, providing coffins and lending money for burials, in order to ease the hardship of the bereft and dampen some of their anger toward the perpetrators of violence.[82]

The election to be held in 2012 will be an important test for Kenya's ability to prevent conflict. Pending legislation would require the winner of the presidential election to receive more than 50 percent of votes cast, as well as more than 25 percent of the vote in twenty-four counties. The passage of this provision would make ethnic chauvinism a less attractive strategy for any candidate. It is likewise important that measures are taken to ensure that the Electoral Management Body exhibit impartiality and competence. Ensuring accountability for past political violence would serve as a deterrent to those actors who consider committing atrocity crimes similar to those perpetrated in the aftermath of the 2007 elections. The conclusion of a code of conduct by political parties, which commits them to responsible conduct prior to the election, might also contribute to the goal of preventing political violence if compliance is monitored. Seminar participants suggested that civil society should press for impartial and professional conduct by the Electoral Management Body, adherence to the code of conduct by political parties before, during, and after the election, and peaceful dialogue in the the press and the public sphere.

In 2003 Kenya operationalized the National Steering Committee (NSC) on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management as a body that is coordinated by the Office of the President and liaises with government agencies and civil society. The committee and the district peace committees under its umbrella were clearly incapable of preventing and de-escalating mass violence in late 2007 and early 2008. The UN and other international actors should continue their ongoing efforts to work with the Kenyan government and local civil society actors to strengthen the district peace committees in the lead up to the 2012 elections.

It was also suggested at the seminar that Kenya will have to work hard to address the structural issues that still put the country at risk of another outbreak of violence. The adoption of the new constitution in 2010 was an important step toward reforming the country's political system. Much progress has also been made in reforming the police since the last election. Nonetheless, youth unemployment, horizontal inequality along ethnic lines, and land ownership disputes are ongoing challenges that have not been adequately addressed.

KYRGYZSTAN

In 2010, Kyrgyzstan suffered from two periods of political violence. The first wave of violence occurred in April; the second and more devastating episode unfolded in June. The immediate triggers of the violence in April 2010 were steep increases in the price of electricity and heating. Protests in Talas, Bishkek, and in other cities between April 5th and April 8th resulted in the deaths of approximately ninety people at the hands of security forces.

---

81 Ibid., pp. 12-25.
82 Lecture by member of Concerned Citizens for Peace, New York, NY, February 20, 2009.

During the uprising in Talas, protestors seized government offices, which were later taken back by the security forces. In Bishek, protesters took over the offices of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who fled with his family to Jalalabad, later resigning and going into exile. In the aftermath of the ousting of President Bakiyev, a provisional government was formed under the leadership of Roza Otunbaeva, a former foreign minister. The transitional leadership included politicians representing a wide range of political parties opposed to the former president. A constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections were planned.

Ahead of the constitutional referendum on June 27, 2010, tensions flared between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the south, which were stoked by political elites and finally erupted into large-scale violence between June 9th and June 16th. Several hundred people were killed, 100,000 to 200,000 people were displaced, and acts of arson claimed hundreds of businesses and homes. In spite of this violence, the government went ahead with the referendum on June 27th, which approved a new constitution. The constitution expanded the size of the parliament and introduced a limit to the number of seats any one party can hold, thus improving the chances for coalition rule. Parliamentary elections were held in October 2010. Five parties hold eighteen to twenty-eight seats in the new parliament, and the new government includes parties that opposed Kurmanbek Bakiyev, including acting President Roza Otunbaeva's Social Democratic Party, as well as the pro-Bakiyev Ata-Zhurt party. Roza Otunbaeva has pledged not to run in the presidential elections scheduled for late 2011.

Several key factors contributed to the 2010 violence in Kyrgyzstan. Frustration with the corrupt and inept regime of Kurmanbek Bakyiev and a weak economy contributed to the fatal incidents in April.[83] The causes of the June violence were more complex. Economic malaise stoked ethnic tensions at the community level. Through appeals to ethnic nationalism, political leaders channeled discontent in destructive ways.[84] The weak capacity and perception of legitimacy of security-sector institutions also contributed to the escalation of the violence.

At the seminar, several suggestions for conflict-prevention strategies in Kyrgyzstan were made. Well-respected elders and religious figures at the community level could defuse interethnic tensions through mediation.[85] If violence begins to spread, new media and mass text messaging constitute powerful tools for squashing rumors, countering propaganda, and defusing tensions. What was clear from the June 2010 violence is that technology was primarily used for nefarious purposes. Cell phones were used to spread false rumors and recruit rioters during the June turmoil. There is no reason why technology cannot also be employed for positive purposes, especially if it is used within the framework of a well-conceived national conflict-prevention strategy.[86]

State institutions in Kyrgyzstan need to be reformed and strengthened to prevent a future outbreak and escalation of violence. Evidence indicates that politicians and security services were complicit in the June 2010 violence.[87] This suggests the need to develop a more professionalized, impartial security apparatus. Likewise, instruction in human rights and international humanitarian law should be embedded into police and military training courses, as well as in the curriculum of academic institutions. The International Committee of the Red Cross is helping Kyrgyzstan to take a small step in this direction, although much work remains to be done.[88]

83 See International Crisis Group, "Kyrgyzstan: A Hollow Regime Collapses," *Crisis Group Asia Briefing* No. 102, April 27, 2010.

84 Indeed, the seeds of the June violence were planted in May. When ethnic Uzbek politician Kadyrjan Batyrov allegedly led a mob that burned down the Batryrov family home in Teyit, ethnic Kyrgyz looted a university in Jalalabad run by Kadyrjan Batyrov. See International Crisis Group, "The Pogroms in Kyrgyzstan," *Crisis Group Asia Report* No. 193, August 23, 2010.

85 Rafis Abazov, "Kyrgyz Conflict Mediation Infrastructure Must Be Rebuilt," *Central Asia Newswire*, August 9, 2011.

86 Ibid.

87 International Crisis Group, "The Pogroms in Kyrgyzstan."

88 The International Committee of the Red Cross conducted a seminar with high-level military officials on international humanitarian law, advocated for the incorporation of international humanitarian law in the curricula at universities, and helped to train high school instructors to teach human rights. International Committee of the Red Cross, "Newsletter from the Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the Kyrgyz Republic," February 2011, p. 7.

Agenda

Conflict Prevention:
Toward More Effective Multilateral Strategies

Wednesday, May 4, 2011

16:30 – 16:45   **Opening Statement**

Welcoming remarks
Dr. Edward C. Luck, *Senior Vice President for Research and Programs, IPI*

16:45 – 18:15   **Session 1: From Timely Analysis to Preventive Action**

Which tools and institutions for conflict prevention currently exist, and how can they be further improved? To what extent can failures of conflict prevention be ascribed to capacity gaps, and when do they result from a lack of political will to use existing conflict-prevention capabilities? Which strategies can be employed to overcome a lack of will to engage in timely and effective preventive action?

Chair
H.E. Mr. Jarmo Viinanen, *Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations*

Speakers
Ambassador Levent Bilman, *Director of Policy and Mediation Division, United Nations Department of Political Affairs*
Dr. Bertrand G. Ramcharan, *Director of the Guyana Institute of Public Policy, and Fellow, Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies*
Dr. James O. Jonah, *former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs*

18:30 – 20:30   **Featured Address and Dinner**

Introduction of the Speaker
Dr. Edward C. Luck, *Senior Vice President for Research and Programs, IPI*

Featured Speaker
Ambassador Vijay Nambiar, *Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations Secretary-General*

Thursday, May 5, 2011

09:00 – 10:30   **Session 2: Preventive Diplomacy: Which Strategy in the Face of Crisis?**

Which strategies are particularly useful for which crisis and how can instruments be combined and sequenced most effectively, such as the good offices of the Secretary-General and his representatives and envoys, formal pronouncements of intergovernmental organs, bilateral engagements, and efforts by groups of friends? How has the practice of the United Nations in preventive diplomacy evolved in recent years? What are the comparative

advantages and disadvantages of regional and subregional organizations, which have become increasingly active in the conduct of preventive diplomacy in many parts of the world?

Chair
H.E. Ms. Signe Burgstaller, *Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations*

Speakers
Ambassador Abdullah Alsaidi, *Senior Fellow, IPI*
Dr. Stephen Jackson, *Team Leader, Policy Planning Unit, United Nations Department of Political Affairs*
Dr. Abiodun Williams, *Vice President, Center for Conflict Analysis and Prevention, United States Institute of Peace*

10:30 – 11:00   Coffee break

11:00 – 12:30   **Session 3: Structural Prevention: Addressing the Root Causes of Conflict**

In its 1997 report, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict stated that structural prevention deals "with long-term, underlying factors conducive to peace and equitable development (linking security, well-being and justice)." How do the United Nations, regional organizations, and their partners, understand structural prevention in practice? How can we ensure that strategies for the promotion of structural prevention are context-specific and duly focus on the most critical priorities? How do we know whether concrete elements of structural prevention have a positive impact?

Chair
Mr. Peter Gastrow, *Senior Fellow and Director of Programs, IPI*

Speaker
Mr. Alastair J. McKechnie, *Consultant and Former Director, Fragile & Conflict Affected Countries Group, World Bank*
Ms. Gay Rosenblum-Kumar, *Senior Secretary, UN Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action*
Ms. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, *Professor of International Affairs, The New School*

12:30 – 13:45   Lunch

13:45 – 15:15   **Tour of United States Military Academy, West Point, and Group Photo**

15:15 – 16:45   **Session 4: Preventing Mass Atrocities**

What are the commonalities and differences in the root causes and triggers of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity? What are the unique challenges to the prevention of mass atrocities, and what strategies can be devised to address them? What international, regional, and national governmental and civil-society capabilities exist for the prevention of mass atrocities? How can multilateral instruments for conflict prevention and those designed to prevent mass atrocities be utilized in a mutually reinforcing manner? What lessons can be derived from recent experience in that regard?

Chair
Dr. Edward C. Luck, *Senior Vice President for Research and Programs, IPI*

Speakers
H.E. Mr. Saúl Weisleder, *Deputy Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations*
Dr. Francis M. Deng, *Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General for the Prevention of Genocide*
Mr. Udo Janz, *Director, New York Office, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*

16:45 – 17:15   Coffee break

17:15 – 18:45   **Session 5: Coherence and Coordination in Conflict Prevention**

What are the challenges associated with a multiplicity of multilateral and bilateral actors developing and implementing preventive action? How do country-specific conflict-prevention efforts of the United Nations, member states, regional organizations, and civil society relate to one another? What are positive examples of how multilateral, bilateral, national, and local actors have worked together effectively to prevent conflict? What lessons can we learn from these examples? How can challenges to coherence and coordination be addressed more effectively in future conflict-prevention efforts?

Chair
H.E. Ms. Tine Mørch Smith, *Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations*

Speakers
Ms. Teresa Whitfield, *Senior Adviser, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, and Senior Advisor and Fellow, Center on International Cooperation, NYU*
Mr. Stan Nkwain, *Deputy Director, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, United Nations Development Programme*

19:00 – 20:30   Dinner

Friday, May 6, 2011

09:00 – 11:00   **Breakout Groups: Conflict-Prevention Case Studies**

Three breakout groups will consider conflict prevention in different situations where risks of future political violence may be present. Which conflict-prevention strategies have the United Nations, member states, regional organizations, and other external and national actors pursued in each case? Which strategies have been most and least successful, and why? What form could future strategies for preventing conflict take? Discussions in the breakout groups should focus on identifying opportunities and obstacles for multilateral conflict prevention pursued by the United Nations and regional organizations in each situation, but they should also consider potential linkages between multilateral conflict-prevention efforts and activities by national actors, including governments and civil society. They should also consider ways to overcome challenges for effective conflict prevention.

Group 1: Côte d'Ivoire

Group 2: Kenya

Group 3: Kyrgyzstan

11:00 – 11:30   Coffee break

11:30 – 13:00   **Session 6: Plenary Report from Breakout Group Rapporteurs and Discussion**

Speakers and participants will respond to the reports of the breakout group rapporteurs. This will be followed by broader dialogue on the lessons learned from each case study.

Chair
Dr. Walter Kemp, *Director for Europe and Central Asia, IPI*

Speakers
Mr. Peter Gastrow, *Senior Fellow and Director of Programs, IPI* (Kenya)
Dr. Rafis Abazov, *Adjunct Assistant Professor, Harriman Institute, Columbia University* (Kyrgyzstan)
Mr. Rinaldo Depagne, *Senior Analyst for West Africa, International Crisis Group* (Côte d'Ivoire)

13:00 – 14:00   Lunch

Introduction of the Speaker
Mr. Warren Hoge, *Vice President for External Relations, IPI*

Featured Speaker
Dr. Bertrand G. Ramcharan, *Director of the Guyana Institute of Public Policy, and Fellow, Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies*

14:15   **Departure for New York City**

The **INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE (IPI)** is an independent, international not-for-profit think tank with a staff representing more than twenty nationalities, with offices in New York, facing United Nations headquarters, and in Vienna. IPI is dedicated to promoting the prevention and settlement of conflicts between and within states by strengthening international peace and security institutions. To achieve its purpose, IPI employs a mix of policy research, convening, publishing, and outreach.

IPI

INTERNATIONAL
PEACE
INSTITUTE

777 United Nations Plaza New York, NY 10017-3521 USA
TEL +1-212-687-4300   FAX +1-212-983-8246

Freyung 3, 1010 Vienna, Austria
TEL +43-1-533-8881   FAX +43-1-533-8881-11

www.ipinst.org