



Creating Conditions for Peace: What Role for the UN and Regional Actors?

*Report of the conference held by the
International Peace Academy
in association with Wilton Park.*

1-3 July 2002
Wilton Park, England

Rapporteur:

Dr. David Carment, Associate Professor,
Norman Paterson School of
International Affairs, Carleton
University, Ottawa

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Executive Summary

- Long-term conflict prevention requires structural transformation and development aid; it takes years for results to become apparent. Positive change can be achieved through partnerships and linkages that emphasize clear, comprehensive strategic plans for high-risk regions and priority areas of concern within them.
- Effective conflict prevention requires coordination and coherence among a myriad of actors including the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Although protocols and formal institutional mechanisms have been developed to enhance these linkages, conflict prevention is unlikely to be effective unless it has the support of the people and groups directly affected by conflict. Non-governmental organizations perform a crucial role in conflict prevention by providing independent analysis and by supporting civil society for sustained response strategies.
- Countries and regions beset by conflict are ultimately responsible for developing effective conflict prevention policies. This view is best captured in the initiative for the New Partnership for African Development and recent efforts by the Economic Community of West African States in which the affected nations have taken responsibility for strengthening their organizations, developing priorities, arranging an agreed partnership with donor countries, and monitoring their own performance.
- Many regional and subregional organizations do not yet have the capacity for effective conflict prevention. To achieve this capacity, their growth must be steady and measured. Donor country initiatives should focus on developing internal capacity through training in conflict risk assessment and conflict prevention methodologies.
- The weakness of regional organizations in South and South-East Asia, and their absence in Central Asia, is troubling. The violent, protracted and regional context of conflicts in some of the countries in these regions suggests that, in the short-term, outside involvement will continue to be necessary to prop up weak governments, address refugee-related problems and deal with other symptoms of structural instability. In the long-term, country and regional strategies must be developed as part of a coordinated action plan.

I. Conflict Prevention at the United Nations and beyond

The International Peace Academy (IPA)-Wilton Park Conference on Creating Conditions for Peace: What Role for the UN and Regional Actors? held on 1-3 July 2002, brought together some 65 participants, including practitioners from the United Nations (UN) and several regional and subregional organizations, government policy-makers, academics, and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Participants addressed the role of the UN and regional and subregional actors in the operationalization of conflict prevention and sought to build on the policy-oriented research and consultations that IPA has been developing to aid the strengthening of UN capacities in conflict prevention. This research aims to identify opportunities to expand the scope of prevention initiatives to include the role of regional and subregional organizations as preventive actors both alone and in tandem with the UN.

UN initiatives

For the past decade, conflict prevention has been high on the agenda of the United Nations. Secretaries-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan repeatedly noted the centrality of conflict prevention in today's security environment. The Security Council has held several open debates on conflict prevention. The UN has tried to instill a culture of prevention within the organization, and to develop relationships with and among regional organizations, states and non-state players. It has reached out to the NGO community, the G8, the private sector, international financial institutions, the academic community and regional organizations, and it has embarked on an ambitious project to train its own staff in early warning and preventive measures through its Staff College in Turin, Italy. While a number of interdepartmental mechanisms exist in the UN system to focus on conflict prevention, there is need for an interface to allow for frequent exchanges between the UN and other institutions.

Several mechanisms for UN information-sharing and strategic planning could be better used to link UN headquarters with the field. Field level mechanisms, focusing specifically on the activities of the UN Country Team under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator, could be better



(l-r) Ms. Isabelle Jaques, Dr. Stefan Amer, H.E. Ms. Anna Lindh, and Dr. David M. Malone

utilized. Their activities include: dealing with environmental security threats; preventing human rights violations; and providing support for uprooted populations. Action is coordinated through the UN Country Team's thematic groups, which provide working forums for mid-level UN officers. These groups are highly operative and flexible and can include actors from outside the UN System, including civil society. Strategic planning and programming instruments include the Common Country Assessment (CCA), the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), and the Strategic Framework. All these instruments are geared towards improving the international community's efforts to stabilize societies and prevent conflict, although in practice their effectiveness remains questionable.

To strengthen these instruments, cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organizations has been enhanced through the development of 13 modalities.¹ The modalities, which were originally agreed upon at the Third High Level Meeting between the UN and regional and subregional organizations in July 1998, include: promoting the flow of information between the UN, regional and subregional organizations; developing common indicators for early warning; and building links with civil society groups. Progress in implementation has been uneven, with some modalities receiving more attention than others.

Conflict prevention may have won the rhetorical battle, as evidenced by various reports released in recent years. The Report of the UN Secretary-General on the

¹ "Review of the Development of the Modalities for Cooperation Between the United Nations and Regional Organizations in the Field of Conflict Prevention," UN non-paper, (6 February 2001).

Prevention of Armed Conflict,² the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty,³ and the Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations,⁴ give conflict prevention a prominent place within the conflict management spectrum. However, the question remains: is conflict prevention more rhetoric than reality? In fact, most UN member states, apart from a number of key European countries, have not gone far enough in embedding conflict prevention in their foreign policy practices. Similarly, most regional and subregional organizations have been slow in "mainstreaming" conflict prevention.

Effective conflict prevention demands long-term political commitment and a fundamental change of attitude among governments, and within the UN system, regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions, the private sector and NGOs. It requires strategies to create enabling conditions for a stable and more predictable international environment, and comprehensive and balanced aid and development assistance programs to alleviate the pressures that trigger violent conflict. Conflict prevention includes: the development of international legal systems, dispute resolution mechanisms, and co-operative arrangements at the regional level; reconciling multicultural realities with the principle of national self-determination; the pursuit of stable, democratic societies; addressing uneven economic development; and coping with fundamental changes brought about by the outbreak of violent conflict.⁵

Regional and subregional organizations

There is an urgent need to strengthen regional organizations and linkages between them and the UN. Regional and subregional organizations may offer several advantages in pursuit of these goals, including familiarity with the history of the locale and parties to an impending conflict. These organizations often have much at stake and are therefore more willing to get involved. By their very proximity to a conflict, regional and subregional organizations are almost inevitably involved because their members must deal with refugee-

related problems and other direct consequences of instability. States that hesitate to refer a local dispute to the UN - for fear that it will no longer be under their control - may be more willing to see the matter addressed at a regional or subregional level by organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).⁶ On some occasions, multilateral conflict prevention initiatives, developed through regional and sub-regional organizations, can offset the potentially deleterious effects that major powers can have on the management and resolution of complex intrastate conflicts.

II. Responding to conflict: challenges

Analytical challenges

Notwithstanding the importance of developing regional response strategies, at least two kinds of challenges block the development and implementation of effective conflict prevention.

First, there is the analytical challenge of identifying the independent effects of specific causal mechanisms that give rise to conflict. There are often contending and



(l-r) Mr. Gareth Evans, Ms. Isobelle Jaques, Dr. David M. Malone, and H.E. Mr. Rolf Ekeus

² *Prevention of Armed Conflict. Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/55-985-S/2001/574 (7 June 2001).

³ International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (December 2001), available at www.iciss.org.

⁴ *Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations*, UN Doc. A-55-305-S/2000/809 (21 August 2000).

⁵ David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel eds., *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2002).

⁶ Chandra Lekha Sriram, Albrecht Schnabel, John Packer, and Augustine Toure, *Sharing Best Practices on Conflict Prevention: The UN, Regional and Subregional Organizations, National and Local Actors* (IPA policy report, New York, April 2002); Sara J. Lodge, *Sharing Best Practices on Conflict Prevention: The UN, Regional and Subregional Organizations, National and Local Actors* (IPA workshop report, Alexandria, Egypt, April 2002).

conflicting interpretations of the causes of conflict – inequality, insecurity, private incentives and perceptions can each contribute to conflict. A strong element of international neglect, both political and economic, can also be an important contributing factor. Key underpinnings of post-Cold War conflicts are: recidivism; the loss of direct super-power patronage; and the exploitation of domestic natural resources for personal gain. In particular, the “greed versus grievance” argument has grown in importance, and become more nuanced over time.⁷ For example, conflicts can be generated by the absolute scarcity of resources, abundant but unevenly distributed resources, or quick access to lucrative resources. Dependence on a single commodity can lead to economic stagnation and regional conflagration in which smuggling, black markets and illicit trade flows are encouraged. Compounding elements include the widespread availability of unemployed youths and collusion between rebel groups for personal gain. Both elements can prolong conflict through the creation of conflict entrepreneurs, dependents and exploiters.

In addition to economic factors, weak post-colonial governance is a contributing factor, particularly in conflicts over territory and identity. High levels of domestic instability limit a state’s ability to act authoritatively within the international community, to act nationally with any legitimacy, and to deliver effective socio-economic policies for development. The recent collapse of states in Central and West Africa has arguably contributed to a resurgence of all levels of conflict in sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, beyond new conflicts, old ones may endure, such as those previously underestimated in the former Soviet Union in some instances continue today, and may be far more serious than previously believed. These conflicts have had serious ramifications for sustainable governance in weak and unstable countries in Central Asia and the Crimea.

Elections and democratization have both significant merits and serious risks. Structural solutions have been of some utility in preventing conflicts over territory and identity. For example, federalist approaches regulate conflict by scattering power territorially. Decentralization and group autonomy approaches assign to

different groups the right to decide on domestic issues of concern to them. A core issue relating to the merits of the organization, timing and frequency of elections in societies emerging from conflicts is the promotion and sustainability of a democratic culture. Democracy cannot simply be imported but has to be linked to local cultures. Political parties have a major role to play in seeking to be nationally and programmatically based. Democratization can be conflict enhancing under certain conditions. Elections are often seen as a preventive mechanism that can reduce the potential for renewed conflict. However, a process of peaceful political development is sometimes more important than holding elections especially when states have little or no experience in, or history of, democracy. Power sharing failures abound, as illustrated by experiences in Fiji, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Political parties are often seen as the key to prevention, but they can become weak, narrow, and personalized.

Many internal conflicts have such significant regional dimensions that they demand regional solutions. For example, the transnational character, geographic location and demographic distribution of ethnic groups, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, and in Central Asia and the Caucasus, mean that many conflicts have the potential to “spillover” - either through refugee flows or direct state-to-state confrontation. While the analytic challenges of identifying the underpinning causes of, and appropriate responses to, specific conflicts are great, it is apparent that key sources of imminent violence are: large-scale human rights abuses; the previous history of conflict; the absence of democratic space; levels of economic development; and the regional context.

To confront the analytical challenges identified, preventive actors need to determine how their existing institutional mechanisms and the associated “toolbox” of responses can be developed to produce effective, long-lasting and mutually reinforcing changes. To meet this objective, methodologies of risk assessment need to be practicable, standardized and accessible to policy-makers. Several UN agencies, NGOs and regional organizations have already developed in-house tools and techniques for practical conflict prevention. Some of this work is initiated by think tanks, academic institutions and the private sector, acting in close consultation with

⁷ Anne-Marie Gardner, “Diagnosing Conflict: What Do We Know?” in Fen Hampson and David M. Malone, eds., *From Reaction to Conflict Prevention: Opportunities for the UN System* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002); and Mats Berdal and David M. Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000).

local NGOs in zones of conflict. Other approaches are designed in-house by conflict prevention secretariats, as in the case in the European Union (EU). However, of the regional organizations examined in the meeting, only the OSCE and EU have developed significant risk assessment tools.

The organizational challenge

Even with adequate warning and sound analysis, regional organizations are still likely to be hesitant to engage in prevention strategies because they lack the necessary resources and/or consensus to fulfill their commitments. Military backing and political support from major powers is needed in order to achieve a quick termination to an escalating conflict. Long-term post-conflict commitments are also necessary to ensure that conflict does not re-emerge. It is not enough to stop the violence - refugees must be protected and returned, political control must be reinstated and economic development pursued. Preventive initiatives at the early stages of a conflict demand close coordination of military, diplomatic and non-governmental assets, while the post-conflict phase involves even more complex operations that engage global and regional organizations and cut across civilian and military divides. Considerable resources are required to foster a culture of prevention over the long-term. Broad multifunctional operations have played an important role in promoting long-standing peace and development in Cambodia and, more recently, in East Timor and Afghanistan. Civilian and military tools must be used together and be mutually reinforcing.

A related organizational challenge is to make more effective use of NGOs and civil society. There needs to be greater recognition of the key role played by local actors, including women, elders and young people, in dispute management initiatives such as Track II diplomacy. There is also a need to foster and nourish local capacities for peace-building. That said, it is important to recognize that external involvement has the potential to be destabilizing.

Mobilization of political will continues to be one of the greatest organizational challenges to the development of more comprehensive strategies linking the UN and regional efforts. Political will is particularly difficult to mobilize when violence has already broken out. At this point the available policy options and response activities

narrow to a few operational and interventionist responses. These are instances usually associated with humanitarian intervention and/or some form of peace enforcement, in combination with sanctions, arms control initiatives, embargoes and military responses. Responses involving the use of force are themselves risky strategies and the chance of failure is high because violence increases the complexity of the problem. For these reasons, long-term structural prevention, which offers a broader range of possible responses, is to be preferred.

On some occasions, institutional mandates, as in the case of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the former Organization of African Unity (now the African Union), limit opportunities for operational prevention because these initiatives are viewed as being contrary to state sovereignty. An organization may also be ineffective for practical reasons, as noted below. In either case, other forms of conflict prevention – specifically those activities focusing on structural transformation, capacity building and long-term grassroots development are to be encouraged. The United Nations Development Programme has become deeply involved in these areas.

The problem of mobilizing political will is not insurmountable. Regional organizations need to become more involved at the earliest stages of conflict, by influencing and using leverage with governmental actors in order to address rising tension before it becomes violent. The involvement of regional and subregional organizations will be limited, however, by the lack of consent and cooperation from local parties, which may make invasive preventive activities difficult.

While important analytical and organizational challenges remain, the benefits of long-term structural prevention are obvious. Studies generated by a number of reputable sources including the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, the United Nations University/World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER), and the World Bank indicate that the costs of not acting early and ignoring the root causes of conflict are relatively high. States and organizations must always weigh the costs of early involvement against the cost and risks of conflict escalation without such action. The costs of early action are far outweighed by the consequences of war and violent conflict.

III. Regional organizations

Several regional and subregional organizations and actors have made conflict prevention part of their core mandates. These include the OSCE, the AU, ECOWAS, the OAS and the EU. In addition, the World Bank, the Commonwealth and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have begun to “mainstream” conflict prevention. These organizations are of course quite different - they have different mandates, cover different regions and issues of concern, and have differing resources. However, they do have some commonalities. At a minimum, effective regional organizations can limit the scope and intensity of conflict and in some cases set in motion the resolution of conflicts through concerted efforts at sustained dialogue, fact-finding and mediation.

Asia and Africa

A key challenge is the difficult task of strengthening extremely weak regional organizations. The relative deficiency of extensive and meaningful prevention in Asia and Africa compared with other regions of the world (the Balkans, South America and Eastern Europe) is notable. For example, ethnic minority issues do not fall under the purview of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and are treated primarily as bilateral issues between the countries affected. Although ASEAN has developed a variety of fora for addressing disputes arising between states, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the South China Sea Security Dialogue (in which some ASEAN states participate), there continues to be a strong reluctance on the part of most member states to develop a coherent ASEAN policy on matters related to intrastate conflict and on regional conflicts involving non-ASEAN states. East Timor is an example of reluctant ASEAN involvement, which occurred only at the later stages after other regional powers became involved. Only recently have ASEAN member states accepted greater intrusiveness, for example signing a sweeping antiterrorism treaty with the US that is intended to plug domestic security holes. This acceptance of outside involvement by ASEAN member states may reflect a slow evolutionary change in their attitudes. Certainly the inclusion of Myanmar in ASEAN – a failed state with a host of political and economic problems - provides a clear opportunity for ASEAN leaders to demonstrate their willingness to act and achieve results, even if it means doing it “their own way”.



(l-r) Sir Lopo do Nascimento, Mr. Lansana Kouyate, and Rear Admiral Rolf Hauter

Conflict prevention in sub-Saharan African countries is more problematic due to the overwhelming difficulties faced by these nations. Ironically this is a region where there are a myriad of regional and subregional organizations which all need the sustained and long-term commitment of resources that most African states do not enjoy and cannot provide. There is a marked unevenness in the performance of African subregional organizations in promoting effective conflict prevention, with ECOWAS being the most robust actor. Others, for example the Southern African Development Community (SADC), have been able to undertake some important initiatives, including a protocol on trafficking in small arms. However, they have been weak in other areas, such as the creation of interstate information-sharing protocols that would assist police in identifying and apprehending smuggling rings and black marketeers.

Over the last decade, the key players in the management of African conflicts have been external, in particular European states and the UN. The intervention of ECOWAS forces through its military observer group (ECOMOG) to quell the civil war in Liberia constituted a significant shift in African views of conflict prevention. ECOMOG demonstrated that regional organizations can intervene in local conflicts and need not necessarily wait for the international community to intervene on their behalf. However, recognition that regional organizations can act alone is not enough – it must be backed by international support if the regional organization is to respond effectively to a conflict situation. ECOMOG’s success was in part due to the leadership of Nigeria, the only regional power with the capabilities to be effective. Many smaller countries in West Africa with limited resources were unable to participate in the ECOMOG initiative.

ECOWAS' handling of the related refugee problem in Guinea is also illustrative. ECOWAS sought to address three interrelated problems: the destabilizing effect of the flow of refugees into Guinea from neighboring states Liberia and Sierra Leone; the potential deployment of troops into Guinea to deal with increasing instability; and the need for a coordinated effort among various ECOWAS member states as well as the three affected states- Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea - to deal with the emerging humanitarian crisis. The experience in Guinea demonstrates that coordination is crucial to ensure that hegemonic powers do not control the process and the outcome. Physical intervention in a crisis situation may create undue and avoidable friction. As a consequence analysis of the social, economic and military situation must be carried out prior to the intervention. A key question raised by these cases is how to effect a cross-sectoral approach to conflict prevention. ECOWAS' Executive Secretariat has now established an Early Warning System with a Regional Observation and Monitoring Center, and four "zonal bureaus" to monitor and supply information from the region.⁸

The East African Community (EAC) is another subregional organization that is involved in conflict prevention. Originally established to regulate commercial and industrial relations, the EAC has recently taken up the issue of security. In 1993, a provision was made for the establishment of a permanent tripartite commission for co-operation, to co-ordinate economic, social, cultural, security and political issues. The organization's charter contains provisions that specifically empower it to deal with "regional peace and security." Accordingly, members have been urged to commit themselves to conflict prevention as well as to better management and resolution of disputes and conflicts, though the ambiguous and lackluster results of the EAC's handling of the political situation in Zimbabwe do not portend a rosy future for it in this field.

A new approach is embodied by the G8-supported New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), an effort to strengthen regional capacity. NEPAD is novel in that it relies heavily on the good will and trust of local actors to be effective. NEPAD is the result of a shift in the

paradigm of governance towards strengthening civil society and a pledge by African leaders to work within a strategic policy framework and a plan of action in which roles are clearly assigned between African states and their development partners, with ongoing monitoring. Notable among the several initiatives to ensure security of the subregion of West Africa is the adoption of an additional protocol on democracy and good governance to ensure due democratic process and respect for the rule of law. Another is the ECOWAS moratorium on small arms exportation or manufacture by member states. A child protection unit has also been established to guard against the use of children as combatants in conflict. ECOWAS is also planning to transform ECOMOG's standby troops into an effective force for peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.

Within the African Union, the Conflict Management Center is mandated to provide analytical, communication and planning capability, and to maintain a 24-hour watch center to keep track of developments and events that could trigger violence. A key challenge that the former OAU faced was a lack of effectiveness in the management of both interstate and intrastate conflict. This was due in part to the OAU's overall purpose as reflected in its Charter, which provided for non-interference in the internal affairs of states. However, a second and arguably more pressing problem was the OAU's lack of capacity to address internal problems including: lack of infrastructure and of quality personnel; insufficient funding for projects; and a lack of early warning training. Some successes were notable, however; for example, OAU participation in the recent peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia.⁹

It remains to be seen whether the AU will be able to display the necessary political will and leverage to conduct effective conflict prevention. In response to the manifest failure of the OAU to take action in the face of imminent and on-going conflicts, subregional bodies proliferated on the continent. The AU may face the same challenge as those bodies: the mismatch between exaggerated expectations and inadequate institutional capacity and financial resources. Pan-African conflict prevention might be more effectively achieved with the

⁸ Renata Dwan, "Institutionalizing Mainstreaming – A paradox?" Paper presented at the CPN Annual Conference *Mainstreaming Conflict Prevention: Concept and Practice*, 8-9 (The Hague, June 2001).

⁹ For a detailed and comprehensive analysis of conflict prevention mainstreaming see: Annika Bjorkdahl "Conflict Prevention Mainstreaming – A Comparison of Multilateral Actors," in David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel, eds. *Applied Conflict Prevention: Opportunities and Constraints* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Press, forthcoming 2003).

engagement of NGOs, subregional organizations and inter-governmental organizations, all of which can act as catalysts for effective action.

Europe

Capacities are comparatively strong in a number of European institutions. Like the AU, the OSCE Secretariat has established an Operation Center within its Conflict Prevention Center (CPC). The OSCE Center is fully operational, serving as a means for identifying potential crises. A "communication/situation room" is a permanent part of the CPC and serves as a communication link between the field missions and the Secretariat. Notwithstanding this feature, some felt that there is need for improvement in its conflict prevention activities. Effective conflict prevention requires the OSCE's "intrusion" in the domestic affairs of participating states, which can inhibit early action, even though, as the experience of the OSCE verification mission in Kosovo illustrated, early action can be highly effective. Its monitoring provided information of non-compliance with UN Security Council resolutions, prompting military intervention.

A key actor in the OSCE's conflict prevention network is the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). The HCNM's purpose is to prevent violent conflict between OSCE participating states. The office of the HCNM has developed a set of norms for minority rights' protection, in particular addressing language and education rights. The mandate of the HCNM is quite broad—including a right to become actively involved in any member state, and to consult without limit or constraint. Much of the office's work is not made public, however - confidentiality is important for maintaining a significant degree of impartiality and flexibility in a search for viable options and solutions.

It is recognized that preventive actors need to cooperate in order to learn from each other, and that they might learn much from the OSCE's rich experience in both prevention and post-conflict peace-building. Can the OSCE experience be translated elsewhere? It remains to be seen, particularly for mechanisms with weak or narrow mandates. Support for consultation, fact-finding and mediation – all key components of early involvement – has to be embedded in the mandate of the organization. Even strong regional organizations may have problems, if they are dominated by regional powers.

There remains a need for cross-institutional linkages. The EU and the OSCE have created an extensive and effective partnership, largely because of the broad-based security environment created by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the EU and the OSCE. It is not easily replicated. In addition, a key incentive for some states to prevent conflict has been the potential economic benefits of "joining Europe", specifically the possibility of joining the EU.

The EU has the organizational capability to provide early warning and conflict prevention, through the newly-established advisory bodies of the Military Committee (EUMC), the Committee on Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) and the Joint Civilian and Military Situation Center in the EU Council Secretariat, as well as the European Commission's longer-established and respected Conflict Prevention Unit. While EU policy in the Balkans until 1995 was largely a failure, lessons were learned and applied subsequently in Kosovo and Macedonia. The EU is now taking a further step with the creation of the European Security and Defense Policy and its crisis management capability. The EU actively promotes regional political and economic cooperation by using several instruments including: trade agreements; partnership and cooperation agreements; and the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. The EU also runs the largest humanitarian, development and technical assistance programs in the world. It imposes conditionality on these programs to ensure respect for human rights, minority rights and good governance. It also supports regional cooperation in Africa through its assistance to the AU, EAC and SADC. There are increasing efforts to integrate conflict prevention into EU development instruments and policies.

The Americas

Within the OAS there are considerable efforts to develop and enhance conflict prevention mechanisms. Conflict prevention is compatible with existing OAS core mandates that promote human rights and democracy. The OAS interprets conflict prevention both operationally as well as structurally. For example, the OAS has a number of conflict prevention tools at its disposal ranging from diplomatic to military actions and including treaties, arms control, and mechanisms that reduce interstate threats. A second framework is embedded in OAS Resolution 1080 enabling the OAS Secretary-General to respond to interruptions or suspensions of democracy in member states through, *inter alia*, good offices and mediation.

Central Asia

Central Asia, by comparison, lacks even a weak or moderately developed regional body along the lines of ASEAN or the OAS. Despite Herculean efforts by the OSCE to establish a conflict prevention capability in Central Asia over the past decade, the challenges faced by the region are too difficult to be met by a small peacekeeping presence such as that provided by the OSCE. These problems, all of which are transnational in character and worsening over time, include: drug production and trafficking; conflicts over natural resources (particularly water); terrorism; refugee flows; and poor governance. Compounding factors include long-term environmental degradation and the collapse of Afghanistan. Democratization has been slow or absent and little progress has been made in building market economies. "Preventive" actors with leverage and influence are scarce — and, some believe, those with an interest in the region, for example the US, Russia, and the EU, have shown that they are not likely to focus on issues that are potential causes of conflict (including structural issues such as unemployment, the economy, governance and water). A first step would be to encourage the states of the region to enter into substantive collective dialogue on these issues to determine which areas they and contributing aid organizations should address as priorities.

The Commonwealth

The modern Commonwealth was not envisaged as a conflict prevention mechanism. Over the years however, it has developed "soft" instruments for conflict prevention through quiet diplomacy and emphasis on governance standards, including the provision of technical assistance aimed at strengthening the rule of law, and suspending (or threatening to suspend) Commonwealth membership. A key advantage of the Commonwealth is its mixed membership; it draws on its colonial heritage and comprises a diverse group of developed and developing states. The shared history and traditions of its member states enable quiet diplomacy to be kept "within the family", making it easier to overcome the "sensitivities" of sovereignty. Lacking "muscle" and often resources, the Commonwealth seeks to cooperate with the UN, regional organizations and leaders, international financial institutions and civil society groups. Timing is crucial to the success of Commonwealth action: judging when quiet diplomacy and limited but

targeted technical assistance are required, and when such structural prevention should give way to more robust methods and stronger involvement. By virtue of its diverse membership and its geographic spread, the Commonwealth has initiated quiet diplomacy in a variety of situations and conflicts, across the spectrum of success to failure, including Antigua and Barbuda, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Zanzibar, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Fiji and Sri Lanka.

IV. Developing strategies – creating comprehensive linkages

Two contrasting scenarios for the future of regional organizations in conflict-prone areas of the world may be imagined. The first is rather pessimistic - there is likely to continue to be insufficient funding for regional organizations, resulting in limited capacity to respond effectively to conflict. Governments, meanwhile, at the mercy of economic globalization, may also be weakened. The resultant regional instability will necessitate significant international assistance to failing or failed states. A second, more optimistic, scenario would include the NEPAD initiative and associated ECOWAS renewal, whereby regional states take responsibility for strengthening regional organizations, arrange partnerships with donor countries, and monitor their own performance. Such a (positive) future would require the harmonization of efforts by regional and subregional organizations, donor countries and NGOs.

Harmonization

Harmonization will require the continued development of coordination mechanisms between donors and regional organizations on the one hand, and NGOs and regional organizations on the other, in particular to enable comprehensive information-sharing and analysis to enable regional efforts. Staff of organizations will therefore need to undertake training in both conflict analysis and in the elaboration of preventive responses. The guidelines of the OECD-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) offer helpful standards for prevention through development cooperation.¹⁰ However, a "one-size fits all" approach to standards and training is likely to be less effective than one tailored to the individual needs of each organization. While organizational needs will vary by context, a great deal can be learned from the

¹⁰ OECD, *The DAC Guidelines: Helping Prevent Violent Conflict* (Paris: OECD Publications, 2001).

OSCE, the EU and the UN, which have developed training programs and guidelines in early warning and conflict prevention that could serve as important templates in this regard.

The role of donors

Donor countries will need to increase their support to regional arrangements and efforts in conflict prevention. Both the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, for example, provide support for: enhancing corporate responsibility; strengthening the rule of law; training in conflict prevention; improving international sanctioning and enforcement mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court (ICC); and developing mechanisms that address economic factors that fuel conflict (such as the sale of diamonds through the Kimberley Process). Regional cooperation can be achieved through summits of donor countries and northern regional organizations, such as the EU, and regional and subregional organizations in the developing world, such as the AU, SADC and ECOWAS.

Similarly, G8 countries can support African stability through funding: peacekeeping operations; economic rebuilding; public and media services; NEPAD's political framework; and, more generally, support for training and capacity building. Donor countries can pursue these objectives individually and jointly through country strategy papers, regional risk assessments and dedicated conflict prevention budgets.

Risk assessment and regional strategies

Country and regional strategies and risk assessments should be given much higher priority. They are important but under-utilized instruments that may enable more targeted preventive initiatives and better coordinated and integrated ongoing programming. Country strategies can be developed with the use of standardized indicators and the assistance of expert groups. Both the UN and the EU develop country strategies to support preventive activities, but there is room for improvement. Risk assessments and country strategies would benefit from greater use of local knowledge, including information from local experts trained in early warning and risk assessment.

NGOs

The energies of NGOs must be better harnessed and more focused than they are currently. NGOs play a crucial role in the democratic process: raising public awareness of contending issues in a constructive manner; educating the community about good governance; and helping to provide stability where civil society may be weak or absent.¹¹ NGOs are a source of local knowledge and information about the situation on the ground. They are an important resource in terms of advocacy and implementation and provide continuity – a continuous platform for debate and a tool for action. Yet NGOs are under-utilized and their actions often lack coherence and focus. NGOs need to develop a coordinated action plan in partnership with regional and subregional organizations, and donor countries. For example, the ASEAN Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) and the ASEAN People's Association are seeking to provide coordination among NGOs in the region. This coordinated activity provides a number of advantages: a structured dialogue with member states; quality assurance; and coordinated strategic planning. To facilitate this shift towards coherence, regional organizations should, like many donor bodies, work in close cooperation with NGOs.

V. Conclusions

As the regional dimensions of conflict have increasingly been recognized, so too has the need for regional responses to conflict. Activities of regional and subregional organizations, as well as of the UN, are starting to reflect this shift in thinking but much more remains to be done. Working relationships have to be forged between regional organizations and the UN; between regional organizations themselves; and between organs, departments and institutions of the UN. Where such relationships exist at rudimentary levels, they need to be improved dramatically. Similarly, there ought to be greater sharing of best practices in prevention, including training and early warning, and the development of country strategies.

This process must be nurtured, but it also must be carefully measured because there is a risk that many organizations will expand too rapidly and take on

¹¹ Ben Rawlence, *Empowering Local Actors: The UN and Multi-Track Conflict Prevention* (New York: IPA conference report, December 2001).

additional mandates and responsibilities that they are not able to fulfill. Most subregional organizations have tried to take on too many new demands and tasks, expanding before they developed the institutional and policy capacity to implement new activities. Harmonization should proceed at a deliberate and realistic speed, beginning with manageable prevention initiatives, such as: the development of regional confidence-building measures; training in early warning and risk assessment; and adoption and implementation of protocols concerning regional problems such as small arms, illicit trade and drug trafficking.

Beyond the rhetoric of cooperation between the UN, regional organizations and civil society actors, the relationships between and among them need to be pragmatically assessed. Too much rhetoric and too many good ideas left unimplemented have made conflict prevention an uncertain concept and exercise in the eyes of many stakeholders. Smaller steps, along with honest efforts to encourage long-term human development, institutional stability and conflict resolution, may help to re-instill confidence in the ability of organizations, states and non-state actors to prevent and minimize violent conflict and human suffering.

Agenda

Creating Conditions for Peace: What Role for the UN and Regional Actors?

The International Peace Academy in association with Wilton Park and with support from the Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, Department for International Development (DFID), London and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London

July 1-3, 2002

Wilton Park Conference 678

Monday, 1 July 2002

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|-----------|--|
| 1500–1515 | Introduction to the Conference
Isobelle Jaques
Associate Director, Wilton Park
and
David M. Malone
President, International Peace Academy |
| 1515-1645 | 1 From Reaction to Prevention: What are the Political and Organizational Challenges?
Gareth Evans, President, International Crisis Group |
| 1730-1900 | 2 Local, Regional and Global Capacities: What Can Be Learned From European and Commonwealth Experiences?
Rolf Ekeus, High Commissioner on National Minorities, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
and
Krishnan Srinivasan, Former Deputy Secretary General (Political), Commonwealth Secretariat |

Tuesday 2 July 2002

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 0900-1030 | 3 The Nature of Conflict: What are the Dynamics and Causes?
Peter Wallensteen, Dag Hammarskjöld Professor of Peace and Conflict Research, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University |
| 1100-1230 | 4 From Cause to Cure: Linking Problems and Responses?
Economic factors in conflict
Karen Ballentine, Senior Program Associate, International Peace Academy
and
Conflict management and democratic governance
Ben Reilly, Democratic Governance Advisor, United Nations Development Programme |
| 1500-1645 | 5 Regional Dimensions of Conflict: What are the Prospects and How to Meet the Challenges?
Surin Pitsuwan, Member of Parliament; former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok |

- 1715-1900 Parallel Working Group Discussions on Preventive Action: Lessons from Cases
- West Africa
Peter Penfold, Senior Conflict Consultant, Department for International Development
 - Central Asia
Roy Allison, Head, Russia and Eurasia Programme, Royal Institute of International Affairs
 - Georgia
Alexander Rondeli, President, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies

Wednesday 3 July 2002

- 0900–1030 6 Mobilizing Political Will: How to Encourage Responses to Potential Conflict?
Bernard Harborne, Senior Adviser on Africa, Department for International Development
- 1100-1300 7 Comprehensive Strategies: Who Acts and When?
Lansana Kouyate, Special Representative for the Togolese and Congolese Dialogue;
former Executive Secretary, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
and
Sir Brian Crowe, Former Director General, External and Politico-Military Affairs,
Council Secretariat of the European Union
- 1500-1645 Parallel Working Group Discussions on Operationalizing Structural Prevention in Africa:
Strategies and Tools
- How to improve UN action in Africa?
Jamal Benomar, Senior Advisor, Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery,
United Nations Development Programme
 - How can the European Union best act in Africa?
Anna-Maria McLaughlin, Head of Unit, Conflict prevention, crisis management and
ACP political issues, External Relations Directorate-General, European Commission
 - Actors in Africa: regional and subregional organizations
Gerald K. Muchemi, Defense Liaison Officer, East African Community
 - How can non-governmental organizations support peace processes?
Virginia Gamba, Director, SaferAfrica
- 1715-1845 8 Closing Symposium – From Promise to Practice: Strengthening Global Capacities
for The Prevention of Violent Conflict
Anna Lindh, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stockholm
- 1930 Reception followed by Conference Dinner

List of Participants

Dr. Roy Allison
Royal Institute of International Affairs

Dr. Stefan Amer
Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Stockholm

H.E. Mr. Ragnar Angeby
Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Stockholm

Ms. Julie Ashdown
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London

H.E. Ms. Kerstin Asp-Johnsson
Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Stockholm

Mr. Shaher Awawdeh
Department of Palestine at the Organization
of the Islamic Conference

Dr. Andjela Bajramovic
London School of Economics

Mr. Dimitri Ballis
"International Review" Magazine

Dr. Jamal Benomar
Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery,
United Nations Development Programme

Dr. Mely Caballero – Anthony
Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies,
Nanyang Technological University

Dr. David Carment
Norman Paterson School of
International Affairs, Carleton University

Ms. Lara Charles
Conflict Security and Development Group,
King's College London

Sir Brian Crowe
Formerly External and Politico-Military Affairs,
General Secretariat, Council of the European Union

Lady Virginia Crowe
Wilton Park

Ms. Nicola Dahrendorf
Conflict Security and Development Group,
King's College London

Mr. Karl Deuretzbacher
International Cooperation Section, Ministry of Defense

H.E. Mr. Rolf Ekeus
Office of High Commissioner on National Minorities,
OSCE

Mr. Gareth Evans
International Crisis Group

Ms. Adelle Ferguson
Department of National Defense, Ottawa

Mr. Martin Fleischer
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin

Ms. Virginia Gamba
SaferAfrica

Mr. Gordon S. Glass
2020 Vision Limited

Ms. Maria Halldorf
Analyst, FRA, Bromma

Mr. Bernard Harborne
Department for International Development, London

Rear Admiral Rolf Hauter
Strategy and Planning, South African National
Defense Force

Ms. Isobelle Jaques
Wilton Park

Ms. Anna Jardfelt
Office of the High Commissioner on National
Minorities, OSCE

Mr. Jiang Jiang
Chinese Permanent Mission to the UN

Dr. James Jonah
Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies,
Graduate School, City University of New York

Mr. Malkhaz Kakabadze
Ministry for Special Affairs, Tbilisi

Lord Wayland Kennet
Writer and Journalist, London

Mr. Lansana Kouyate
Special Representative for the Togolese Dialogue

Dr. Rolf Krause
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin

Ms. Nathalie Kröner
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

Mr. Chetan Kumar
Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery,
United Nations Development Programme

H.E. Ms. Anna Lindh
Foreign Minister, Sweden

Dr. Tatoul Manaseryan
Armenian Center for National and International Studies

Dr. Anna Matveeva
Saferworld

Mr. Andy Mclean
Saferworld

Ms. Anna-Maria McLoughlin
European Commission

Mr. Michael D. Miggins
NATO

Ms. Daria Miglietta Ferrari
United Nations, Office for the Coordination of
Humanitarian Affairs

Dr. Ben Möbius
Federal Association of German Industry

Col. Gerald Muchemi
East African Community

Sir Lopo do Nascimento
National Assembly, Luanda

Mr. Craig Oliphant
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London

Ms. Yen Nee Ong
Ministry of Defense, Singapore

Ms. Mireille Paulus
Council of Europe

Mr. Peter Penfold
Department for International Development

H.E. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan
Member of Parliament, Bangkok

Ms. Eugenia Piza Lopez
International Alert

Dr. Vesselin Popovski
University of Exeter

Ms. Debra Price
Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations

Dr. Babu Rahman
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London

Dr. Ben Reilly
United Nations Development Programme, New York

Ms. Sarah Richards
Department for International Development, London

Captain Ian Richardson
Ministry of Defense, Swindon

Dr. Alexander Rondeli
Georgian Foundation for Strategic and
International Studies

Mr. Anders Ronquist
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Stockholm

Ms. Charlotte Scawen
Department for International Development, London

Mr. Krishnan Srinivasan
Formerly Commonwealth Secretariat

Mr. Christopher Timura
University of Michigan

Professor Anatoly Utkin
Russian Academy of Sciences

Colonel Jan van den Elsen
Cimic Group North

Mr. Paul van Tongeren
European Center for Conflict Prevention

Mr. François Voeffray
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bern

Professor Peter Wallensteen
Uppsala University

Mr. Martin Wikfalk
International IDEA

Mr. Aiichiro Yamamoto
Japan International Cooperation Agency

International Peace Academy

Dr. David M. Malone

Ms. Karen Ballentine

Dr. Chandra Sriram

Ms. Zoe Nielsen

About the program

From Promise to Practice: Strengthening UN Capacities for the Prevention of Violent Conflict

Senior Program Associate: Dr. Chandra Lekha Sriram
Senior Program Officer: Zoe Nielsen
Senior Program Officer: Karin Wermester (on leave)
Duration: September 2000 – June 2003

While preventing violent conflict has many advocates at a general level, knowledge about how it is to be done, under what circumstances, when, and by whom, remains significantly underdeveloped. This is partly a problem for analysts, whose techniques for assessing volatile situations and potential remedies need to be sharpened. It is also a significant problem for organizations and institutions, whose practices, cultures, and styles of decision-making, and whose systems of learning and accountability, often inhibit effective responses to the complex environments in which conflict may turn violent.

In 2000-2001, IPA conducted an initial research and policy development project entitled "From Reaction to Prevention: Opportunities for the UN System in the New Millennium." The project aimed to determine the degree of consensus and discord in recent research on conflict trends and causes of conflict and peace, and to use these findings to help shape policy and action on conflict prevention within the UN system. We drew several conclusions from this initial work, including recognition of the urgent need to address the developmental aspects of conflict prevention. In light of this, IPA launched a three-year project entitled "From Promise to Practice: Strengthening UN Capacities for the Prevention of Violent Conflict." The goal is to find opportunities to strengthen the conflict prevention capacity within the UN system. The project devotes considerable attention to structural prevention, emphasizing the role of development and capacity-building.

The profile of conflict prevention has been raised by the publication of the Secretary-General's report on the subject in June 2000. The development of this report engaged broad sectors of the UN community, including member states, and IPA contributed to the advancement of the concept prior to the report by holding a number of workshops and informal discussions, including a Security Council workshop. The project is organized around three interrelated components: policy development, networking, and research. Policy development involves briefings, workshops, conferences, and policy fora bringing together the UN and New York-based policy community with international experts and practitioners to discuss research findings and present new ideas. We seek to build networks of expert practitioners in the UN system and among the UN, member states, and relevant NGO personnel and academics in order to sustain and increase involvement in preventive efforts. More information on program events and all of the program reports are available on the program website at <http://www.ipacademy.org/Programs/Research/ProgReseConf_body.htm>.

IPA's research aims to identify the most appropriate tools, actors, and strategies for a range of preventive actions to be undertaken by the United Nations. Case studies of preventive action were commissioned on the following nine countries: Georgia (Javakheti), Burundi, Tanzania (Zanzibar), Fiji, Kenya, East Timor, Colombia, Tajikistan, and Liberia. In order to develop cases that are both rigorous and as policy-relevant as possible, consultations have involved the UN system and its agencies, research institutes, civil society actors, experts, and others, developing guidelines for authors to give priority to the policy insights gained from cases. An edited volume of these cases will be published in late 2002. A policy report on lessons from the case studies was disseminated to the UN and the larger policy community in the spring of 2002. The report presents ideas on best practices and policy recommendations for a wide variety of situations and identifies cooperative potential among UN actors, regional and subregional organizations, member states, NGOs, civil society, and the business community in preventing violent conflict.

The prevention project has developed two meetings to examine the role of regional and subregional organizations. A workshop held in April 2002 with the Swedish Institute in Alexandria, Egypt sought to share best practices on conflict prevention and examine collaboration and cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organizations at a working level to distill practical policy-oriented and operational suggestions. A senior level conference held at Wilton Park, UK, in July 2002 built on insights from the workshop and focused on further steps that can be taken to strengthen the role of regional and subregional organizations in conflict prevention.



International Peace Academy

687-4300

FAX [212] 983-8246

E-MAIL ipa@ipacademy.org