Contemporary Conflict Resolution

The prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts

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CHAPTER 5

Preventing Violent Conflict

From the start, it has been a central purpose of conflict resolution to seek to prevent violent conflicts. As Max van der Stoel, then CSCE high commissioner for national minorities, said in 1994, violent conflicts, including ethnic conflicts, are 'not unavoidable but can indeed be prevented'. In order to do this, 'potential sources of conflict need to be identified and analysed with a view to their early resolution, and concrete steps must be taken to forestall armed confrontation' (van der Stoel, 1994). His words echo those of Kenneth Boulding and Quincy Wright in the first issue of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Fifty years after their call for early warning centres, the OSCE, the UN and many other international organizations seemed to have reached a consensus on the importance of prevention.

This was partly a reaction to the catastrophes in Rwanda, Yugoslavia and elsewhere, and partly a realization that it may be easier to tackle conflicts early, before they reach the point of mass violence. Major-General Romeo Dallaire's assertion that a mechanized brigade group of five thousand soldiers could have saved hundreds of thousands of lives in Rwanda in the spring and summer of 1994 has reverberated throughout the international community. So has a realization that prevention may be cost-effective compared with the exorbitant bill for post-conflict relief and reconstruction (Chalmers, 2004). What can be done to avert violent conflicts in cases like these in the decades to come?

In his *An Agenda for Peace,* UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali defined conflict prevention as the avoidance of new armed conflicts, containment of existing armed conflicts and non-recurrence of ended armed conflicts. In this chapter we restrict ourselves to the first of these, considering containment through peacekeeping in chapter 6 and ending armed conflicts in chapter 8. It has been observed that half of the armed conflicts that end break out again later, so there is an overlap between the scope of prevention, conflict ending and peacebuilding. But in this chapter the emphasis will be on how to stop armed conflicts before they start (see figure 5.1).

The first part of the chapter considers the causation of wars and the levels at which they can be prevented. This leads on to a discussion of how conflicts form and how their constructive handling can create a second-order capacity to handle further conflicts. The chapter then turns, first, to the factors which promote peaceful change and reduce the risks of conflicts breaking out and, second, to measures that can reduce the risk of existing conflicts turning
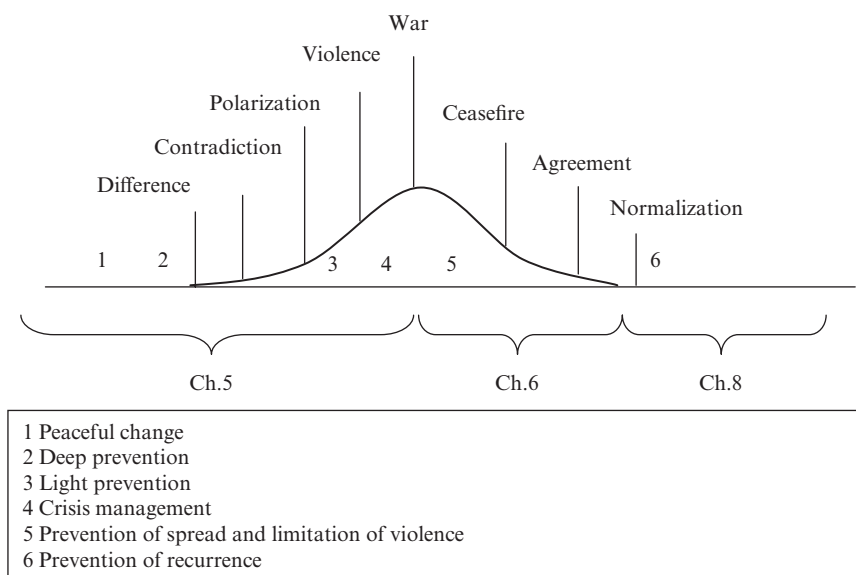
Figure 5.1 *Conflict prevention and the conflict cycle*

violent. This leads to an examination of the rise of conflict prevention to international prominence and a critical discussion of the somewhat limited practical results.

The aim of conflict prevention is not to avoid conflict altogether, but to avert violent conflicts. Conflicts pursued constructively are creative and form a necessary means of bringing about change. Here we will adopt Kriesberg's (1998a: 22) definition of constructive conflict (adding a few words in brackets): 'Conflict outcomes are constructive insofar as the parties [eventually come to] regard them as mutually acceptable. Moreover, they are constructive insofar as they provide a basis for an ongoing relationship in which future conflicts tend to be waged constructively.' One might add that constructive outcomes should contribute to well-being and the flourishing of the people affected (Pogge, 2002; Carney, 2005; Harris 2010).

A difficult underlying question here is whether it is a good thing to try to prevent violent conflict in the first place: may violence not be the only way to remedy injustice? We have addressed this question in general terms in earlier chapters, where we argued, first, that violent conflicts often result in lose–lose outcomes for all parties and the population at large, and, second, that attempts to prevent violence must also involve the satisfaction of needs, the accommodation of legitimate aspirations and the remedy of manifest injustices.

Causes and Prevention of Wars

Wars are much like road accidents. They have a general and a particular cause at the same time. Every road accident is caused in the last resort by the invention of the internal

combustion engine . . . [But] the police and the courts do not weigh profound causes. They seek a specific cause for each accident – driver's error, excessive speed, drunkenness, faulty brakes, bad road service. So it is with wars. (A. J. P. Taylor, quoted in Davies, 1996: 896)

If Taylor is right, perhaps we can learn something about the prevention of wars from the prevention of traffic accidents. It is usually possible to point to particular factors that might have prevented an individual accident. If the driver had not been inebriated, if the weather had not been foggy, if the road had been better lit, the accident might not have happened. But it is hard to be sure of the influence of any particular cause in a single incident. Only when we have a large number of traffic accidents to study can we hope to establish a relationship between accidents and the factors associated with them. This may suggest generic measures that can make roads in general safer. For example, driving tests and road lighting have a measurable impact on accident figures. They are 'preventers' of accidents.

Preventing wars is similar. We need to look for general conditions that reduce the likelihood of conflict. And we have to look at specific interventions that may prevent a conflict turning to war. Deep prevention aims to address the root causes of conflicts, such as economic grievances, lack of political access or group discrimination. Positive policies such as equitable economic development, legitimate institutions, and a culture of tolerance can thus be 'preventers' of wars. Light prevention aims to prevent an existing conflict from becoming violent – for example, by mediation, confidence-building measures, and crisis management. The capacity to manage conflict in these ways is also a 'preventer'. (Readers will find different terminologies in the literature. For instance, the influential 1997 report of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflicts calls deep prevention 'structural prevention' and light prevention 'operational prevention'.)

Suganami, in his incisive analysis *On the Causes of War* (1996), puts three questions which distinguish different types of causation. First, 'What are the conditions which must be present for wars to occur?' This is a question about the necessary causes of wars. Second, 'Under what sorts of circumstances have wars occurred most frequently?' This is a question about the correlates of wars. Third, 'How did this particular war come about?' This is a question about the history of a particular war. We can reformulate these as questions about conflict prevention. First, can war be prevented by removing its necessary conditions? Second, can the incidence of wars be reduced by controlling the circumstances under which they arise? And, third, can a particular process of conflict be changed to avoid it becoming violent? The first two questions are about deep prevention, the last about light prevention.

The first question is about the elimination of all wars, but could be reformulated in a less demanding way as follows. Under what conditions is war not considered a serious possibility? This holds within states when there are stable expectations of peaceful change and within pluralistic security communities

when states have lost their fears of attack. These conditions hold in sufficiently many circumstances to make it clear that peaceful change is a realistic and attainable aim.

The second question is addressed by the research literature on the correlates of war. Geller and Singer (1998) summarize its findings. Statistical analysis can identify structural factors that reduce the incidence of interstate and non-interstate wars.

The third question requires political analysis, judgement and evidence about a particular conflict. We can ask the same type of questions that historians ask about what makes a peaceful settlement possible. In principle these are no different from the questions we ask when we consider which factors caused a particular war (Goertz and Levy, 2007).

Emergent Conflict and Peaceful Change

One of the aims of the conflict resolution endeavour is to increase the range of situations where violence is not a possibility – that is, to create conditions where there are stable expectations of peaceful change. What we might dub 'preventive conflict resolution' is concerned with resolving conflicts before they become violent and creating *contexts, structures* and *relations* between parties that make violence less likely, and eventually inconceivable.

Let us consider first how new conflict formations emerge. Some social change creates a basis for conflict: for example, an economic change that reverses the relative fortunes of two ethnic groups, a new resource that makes a previously unclear boundary of strategic significance, a new belief system that makes the views of some people incompatible with others. In response to such changes, people collectively define goals and act together, mobilize support and sometimes form new groups or parties to pursue these goals. If the goals are incompatible with those of other groups, a conflict forms. If the incompatibility is so severe that the parties' relationship is broken and the structure of institutions and the context in which they live cannot contain the conflict, violence becomes possible.

A crucial part of this process is the definition of goals. Here the parties have their first opportunity for pursuing conflict constructively or destructively. They may choose whether or not to take the goals of others into account, and whether to define their goals in a way that can be made compatible with other goals or not. To take account of others' goals is more likely in a political community where parties are in communication with each other, when the political system gives them incentives to cooperate and where there is some shared political culture or a sense of collective values, making it likely at least that parties frame their goals in terms of a collective as well as an individual interest. In short, the first element of the capacity to prevent conflict is the degree to which goals are coordinated, or at least have a capacity to be complemented by the goals of others.

A second element that defines the development of the conflict is the choice of strategies and behaviour that parties adopt to seek to achieve their aims and their choice of communications (Mitchell, 1981a). These too are shaped by the existing relationships and context, and will be moderated in settings where parties expect to have to work together.

A third element is the relationship of the conflict to other conflict formations and in particular the implications of the conflict for other parties, which may involve how much it spreads, how it reshapes other issues, and what potential it has for polarization.

In all these respects, the parties themselves, and the social and cultural setting they are in, have the most immediate impact on the development of the conflict. It is the parties themselves who are in the best position to prevent conflicts becoming violent.

Negotiations are the main method by which parties try to resolve conflicts peacefully (Starkey et al., 1999). A crucial aspect here is the approach the parties take to negotiations and the range of negotiation options available. Most parties have a range of goals; issues may be more negotiable if parties accept the possibility that their goals might be met in different ways, or be linked to other goals, or if they are willing to redefine their goals, in ways suggested in chapter 1. A rich literature on negotiations and preventive negotiation is relevant here (Fisher and Ury, 1981; Pruitt and Carnevale 1993; Raiffa et al., 2002; Zartman 1982, 2001; Zartman and Faure, 2005). The cultural setting and context also shape the process of negotiations and the approach of the parties (Gulliver, 1979; Faure and Rubin, 1993).

In ethnic conflicts, for example, a range of options for preventing and managing conflicts is available (McGarry and O'Leary, 1993, Gurr, 1998; Cordell and Wolff, 2009). They range from minority rights, to autonomy, to voting systems and legislative assemblies that give incentives to ethnic groups to work together, to various types of power-sharing and consociational systems, to confederal and federal systems (O'Leary and McEvoy, 2010; Hannum, 1990; Rothchild and Hartzell, 1999; Horowitz, 1985; Burgess, 2006). The South Tyrol conflict, which lasted from the cession of this province, with its German-speakers, to Italy, in the Treaty of St Germain, up to the autonomy agreement in 1969, is a good example of a peacefully settled ethnic conflict (Alcock, 1970). The negotiations were protracted and difficult, and at times agreements broke down and had to be renegotiated; at one point a Tyrolese extremist group launched attacks on electricity pylons to further the cause. But the two sides avoided any more violent responses. Negotiations continued, and in the end were successful. Important factors in the process were the diplomatic protection offered by the neighbouring state, Germany, and the recognition of this by the host state, Italy. The autonomy agreement gave the minority guarantees of cultural and economic rights and a right to bring grievances to the Council of Ministers in Rome through a permanent commission. The European Convention for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes was modified

to recognize Austria's right to monitor the internal guarantees. The South Tyrol case is now frequently cited in other ethnic conflicts in Europe, and South Tyrolese experts advise the Council of Europe and others on autonomy arrangements. In this case, not only was the dispute peacefully settled, but the settlement itself became the basis for further dispute settlement systems – a key aspect in the development of preventive capacity (Ury, 1993).

To take another example of an intra-state conflict, consider the bitter and protracted conflict between the labour unions and company owners in Sweden in the 1930s (Rothstein, 2005). This pitted together incompatible beliefs of the communists, who saw Sweden as a 'bourgeois state in unholy alliance with the capitalist class', and the managers, who refused to recognize the unions and were willing to hire strike-breakers to destroy the power of the working class (ibid.: 167–200). The clash reached a climax at Ådalen in May 1931, when soldiers fired into a protesting crowd and killed five workers. Rothstein (ibid.: 183) quotes a communist, who said, 'the bullets that killed our comrades also killed our illusions of consensus and reconciliation with our class enemy.' On both sides of the industrial divide, an internal struggle followed these events. On the workers' side, union leaders needed to improve the workers' immediate conditions, as well as to resist the depredations of the capitalist class. On the managers' side, protracted strikes and lockouts were too costly to continue, and the right-wing political party that had supported intransigence was seen to stand outside the social consensus. In the end the conflict was resolved by the formation of a social democratic government that championed the rights of the unions to represent their members, within a framework of law and rights, and gained the cooperation of the managers in this enterprise. The outcome institutionalized a measure of restraint and, at the same time, laid the basis for social trust and a wider dispute settlement system which became the basis of the Swedish social welfare model.

A third example can be found at the level of international negotiations over resources, in the talks which led to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (Sebenius, 1984). Although the final convention can be criticized for legitimating the interests of the multinational mineral companies and coastal states, and for lacking enforcement powers, it was a remarkable negotiation leading to wide international agreement on the delineation of coastal waters, rights to the seabed and rights to fisheries. The agreement created a regime for settling maritime disputes and a source of lessons for later international resource and environmental agreements.

A common characteristic of all these conflicts was the statement of incompatible positions at the outset, followed by long and difficult negotiations, which sometimes broke down, and, eventually, either through the negotiation process or some transformative development in the context of the conflict, the discovery of a way forward. Preventive conflict resolution accepts limits, but is rarely easy or quick.

Deep or Structural Prevention

We referred in chapter 1 to the hourglass model of conflict resolution (see figure 1.3, p. 00). In this model, the freedom of action to deal with conflict is at its widest at the early stage of pre-violence prevention and at the late stage of post-violence peacebuilding. At these stages, the issues of conflict management, which narrow down to a few critical choices at the point of crisis, widen out to embrace the broader political context. Here the questions of how to prevent and manage conflict become very similar to the classical questions that we ask of any polity. How are resources and roles to be allocated in a way that is legitimate and accepted? What is the basis of political community? How are relationships to be conducted between individuals and groups within and between political communities? What are the accepted values, norms and rules of the community? How are public goods to be provided? How are the community's values, norms and rules to be upheld?

When there is an agreed and legitimate basis for a political community and the community provides public goods and secures the accepted values of its members, violent conflict is likely to be avoided. When coercion is used as the basis for the allocation of resources and roles, and when this allocation is uneven, illegitimate and unacceptable to people, violent conflict is more likely to occur.

This applies at any level of political community: at the level of global society as well as at the national level and at the level of particular communities. Conflict formations run through our political communities at all levels, from the global to the national to the local. Moreover, these conflict formations are intertwined. Clearly the agenda for conflict prevention has to deal with conflict formations at the international, national and sub-national levels. If we see the context of conflict as forming a vital element of conflict transformation, there is no possibility of addressing local and regional conflicts without also taking the international setting into account.

At the international level, different authors have identified a range of preventers of war. Wallensteen (1984) notes the tendency of states to preserve the international system, especially in 'universalistic' periods where there is a common interest in system maintenance). Keohane and Nye (1989b) argue that complex bonds of interdependence tend to create a set of interlocking issue areas in which security concerns are not necessarily privileged over others. Russet and O'Neal (2001) maintain that involvement in international organizations reduced the risk of war. Hegre (2003) contends that development tends to be a preventer of war. The well-known 'democratic peace' literature asserts that democratic regime types are a preventer between democratic regimes (though not between democracies and other regime types).

These preventive factors are a complex of linked conditions which contribute to the remarkable phenomenon of the 'liberal peace': the group of mainly

western and developed states who have for a long period avoided major wars among themselves.

Rasmussen (2003) argues convincingly that these conditions did not develop by accident, but were constructed deliberately as part of a historical process. The close political relationships fostered between Britain and America formed the nucleus of an evolving set of political ties. As Rasmussen puts it, 'peace is not a fact, it is a policy'. The liberal peace was made because it suited the interests of the liberal states, who benefited from mutual trade, interdependence and avoidance of war between themselves. The victors of the world wars deliberately embedded liberal principles in the postwar orders. The success of the liberal order then led to its expansion. Democracies tended to win wars and defeated states then ousted autocracies and installed democracies. As a consequence, there was a systematic growth in the number of liberal states, and these states were incorporated in the western-dominated liberal system. As Mitchell, Gates and Hegre (1999) argue, 'democratization tends to follow war, democratization decreases the systemic amount of war, and the substantive and pacific impact of democracy on war increases over time.'

Democracy promotion is now a conscious adjunct of development, peacebuilding and conflict prevention policy. As such, it has been taken up by the major international institutions and is used as a condition of financial support by the international financial agencies. Democratization may indeed become an instrument of conflict prevention and conflict management when democratic institutions flourish in ways which are appropriate to local conditions. The danger is that it is applied only as a veneer, in response to external pressure, and used to legitimize one-party rule or the dominance of the largest ethnic group. Then democratization can indeed be a factor which exacerbates conflicts.

The 'liberal peace' is in many ways a huge achievement, especially in its European manifestation. It may now be in the course of extension to overcome the historic rivalry between Russia and the West. Yet it remains a flawed peace. It is a peace at home combined with an easy willingness to use armed force abroad, which protects the prosperity of millions of people at the expense of the destitution of other millions. Above all, it is fragile because the institutions at its core have developed around continued growth, mobile global finances, high employment, an unlimited supply of cheap oil and expanding trade. If these conditions falter, as the global recession suggests they might, the associations between economic development, democracy, trade and peace could turn out to be uncomfortable in reverse.

A more recent research tradition has now explored non-interstate wars in similar depth. This has turned up a host of findings about preventers of internal wars. Perhaps the strongest finding is that past civil wars predict future civil wars, so the duration of peace is, unsurprisingly, a preventer of civil war (Sambanis, 2002). Changes of regime, whether from autocracy to democracy or vice versa, tend to be associated with conflict, and so political stability is

another preventer. There is also a strong relationship between civil war and low per capita income, indicating that development and a sufficient level of prosperity are preventers of internal war.

In the West, democratic governance has been basic to political legitimacy in recent decades, although what constitutes adequate democratic governance is of course a subject of lively debate. In non-western countries, imposed democracies have not always been successful. There is evidence that settled democracies are less prone to civil wars than other regime types. Stable autocracies also experience relatively few civil wars. It is semi-democracies and transitional regimes that have the highest incidence (Hegre et al., 2001). This is partly because such polities tend to be unstable, and political instability and regime change clearly increase the probability of civil war. But, even allowing for this effect, a higher level of civil war is found in 'semi-democracies' (ibid.: 43).

In many cases, the issue of what kind of democracy is to be established is perhaps more crucial than whether a polity is democratic, especially if, as in some Central and Eastern European countries and many African countries, democratic institutions are a matter more of form than of substance (Schöpflin, 1994; Clapham, 1996a). Societies that offer avenues for peaceful change and regulation of conflict, in which people can live fruitful and productive lives, will be peaceful whether or not they conform to contemporary stereotypes of liberal democratic forms. Moreover, there is a wide range of practices across different cultures for managing conflict. Western practices should not be regarded as superior. Indeed, practices transplanted into non-western societies may well be inferior to indigenous methods. Avoiding war depends most of all on whether local domestic institutions can provide adequate models for dealing with conflict and fostering development in locally acceptable ways. Locally adapted proportional voting systems, for example, appear to have been strikingly successful in preventing violent conflict (Reynal-Querol, 2002). The question of democracy and conflict resolution is carried further in chapter 11.

Other qualities of governance besides democratic forms are important. Where governance is legitimate and accountable to citizens, and when the rule of law prevails, armed conflict is less likely. As we saw in chapter 4, Azar theorized that armed conflict degrades governance, deforms institutions and destroys development. The reverse can be shown to be true: good governance, sound institutions and effective development inhibit the incidence of armed conflict (Miall, 2003).

Development is an important preventive factor. Henderson and Singer (2000), in a study of the onset of civil wars in postcolonial states in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, identify development, demilitarization and full decolonization as factors that tend to inhibit the inception of civil wars. Collier and Hoeffler (1998) and Hegre et al. (2001) confirm the widely accepted view that high levels of development reduce the risk of civil war. In contrast, as noted in chapter 3, mal-development creates a 'conflict trap' that the poorest

countries find difficult to escape (Collier et al., 2003). The risk of violent civil conflict is highest in the poorest group of countries. In turn, violent conflict impoverishes people and puts development into reverse. So the poorest group of countries, with stagnant economies and a history of past conflicts, are most at risk. Middle-income countries have a lower risk of civil war, and this risk is diminishing over time as development proceeds. OECD countries have an almost negligible risk of civil war. Collier (Collier et al., 2003: 187) argues that, if a package of policy measures were introduced that obtained a sustained growth rate of 3 per cent per year in the poorest countries, shortened conflicts by a year and cut the rate of relapse into conflict of post-conflict societies, the global incidence of civil war could be halved.

Another significant factor is the level of inequality between different groups. Stewart (2002) maintains that these horizontal inequalities add significantly to the risk of conflict among low-income and middle-income countries. It follows that equity between groups and inclusivity are preventive factors.

Similarly, abuse of human rights is widely recognized as an indicator of incipient conflict. Human rights violations are often an early warning sign of impending conflict, and of course human rights abuses are both a trigger for escalation (as, for example, in Kosovo) and a concomitant of protracted fighting. In contrast, high levels of observance of human rights tend to accompany other related factors, among them democratic governance, level of development and quality of governance.

We conclude by highlighting the links between these findings and Azar's theory of protracted social conflict. Light or operational preventers of non-interstate war roughly correspond to Azar's 'process dynamic' variables in protracted social conflict: flexible and accommodating state actions and strategies, moderate communal actions and strategies on the part of the leaders of challenging groups, and mutually de-escalatory 'built-in mechanisms' of conflict management. Deep or structural preventers address Azar's 'preconditions' for protracted social conflict. They include adequate political institutions and good governance, cohesive social structures, opportunities for groups to develop economically and culturally, and the presence of accepted legal or social norms capable of accommodating and peacefully transforming these formations. A stable and peaceful wider regional setting is also often of vital importance. As table 5.1 shows, preventers of internal conflict can operate at a number of different levels. We will return to the question of democracy and conflict from a different perspective in chapter 11.

Early Warning

In principle, international capacity to respond to conflicts should be a preventer of war. An important part of such capacity, dear to the hearts of the founders of the conflict resolution field, as shown in chapter 2, is the contemporary effort to establish an early warning system for violent political

Table 5.1 Preventers of intrastate conflict

Factors generating conflict	Possible preventers
Global level	
Inappropriate systemic structures	Changes in international order
Regional level	
Regional diasporas	Regional security arrangements
State level	
Ethnic stratification	Power-sharing/federalism/autonomy
Weak economies	Appropriate development
Authoritarian rule	Legitimacy, democratization
Human rights abuse	Rule of law, human rights monitoring/protection
Societal level	
Weak societies	Strengthening civic society, institutions
Weak communications	Round tables, workshops, community relations
Polarized attitudes	Cross-cultural work
Poverty, inequality	Poverty reduction and social reforms
Elite/individual level	
Exclusionist policies	Stronger moderates

conflicts. There are two tasks involved here: first, identification of the type of conflicts and location of the conflicts that could become violent; second, monitoring and assessing their progress with a view to assessing how close to violence they are.

The statistical work which is used to identify factors that cause or prevent wars can also be used for early warning. We can take Ted Gurr's work as an example of this approach. Using data from his Minorities at Risk project, he identifies three factors that affect the proneness of a communal group to rebel: collective incentives, capacity for joint action and external opportunities. Each concept is represented by indicators constructed from data coded for the project and justified by correlations with the magnitude of ethnic rebellions in previous years. The resulting table makes it possible to rank the minorities according to their risk-proneness (Gurr, 2000). The assumption is that the more risk-prone are those with high scores on both incentives for rebellion and capacity/opportunity. Using this type of risk assessment, Gurr was able to anticipate a relatively high probability that the Kosovo Albanians and East Timorese would rebel, and that other disadvantaged groups would not.

Econometric forecasting takes a similar approach. For example, Collier et al. (2003: 53) find that 'countries with low, stagnant and unequally distributed per capita incomes that have remained dependent on primary commodities for their exports face dangerously high risks of prolonged conflict.' The World

Bank is developing economic 'at risk' indicators which classify countries' risk of conflict from a range of indicators of security (such as armed diasporas, arms imports), social cohesion (such as ethnic dominance), economic performance and governance (Cleves et al., 2002).

Other comparable approaches focus on indicators of genocide (Davies et al., 1997), human rights abuse (Schmid, 1997: 74), state failure (Esty et al., 1998), refugee flows, food crises, tracking arms flows, and indicators of environmental conflict (Davies and Gurr, 1998); Austin (2004) reviews other early-warning models.

These statistical approaches are a guide as to where conflict prevention agencies might concentrate their efforts, but offer a probabilistic measure of conflict-proneness rather than a precise warning.

Turning from quantitative to qualitative conflict monitoring, a mass of information is available on particular societies and situations. It includes the reports of humanitarian agencies (linked together on the ReliefWeb site on the internet), qualitative analyses of particular conflicts and groups of conflicts at risk by the International Crisis Group, analyses by the media and by the academic community, and reports from the diplomatic services of governments and international organizations. There is also now 'real-time' information from actual or potential crisis spots such as the USHAHIDI initiative described in chapter 3, or new proposals for on-site early warning networks such as Brian Lapping's PAX initiative. Qualitative monitoring offers vastly more content-rich and contextual information than quantitative statistical analysis, but presents the problems of noise and information overload. Given the current state of the art, qualitative monitoring is likely to be most useful for gaining early warning of conflict in particular cases: the expertise of the area scholar and the local observer, steeped in situational knowledge, is difficult to beat. Networks of country experts, policy-makers and analysts, as brought together by the International Crisis Group, or networks of practitioners and agencies monitoring particular situations, can both warn and encourage actions (Austin, 2004).

Even when observers have issued 'early warnings', it is by no means certain that they will be heard, or that there will be a response. Governments and international organizations may be distracted by other crises (as in the case of Yugoslavia) or be unwilling to change existing policies (as in the case of Rwanda). The governments of countries seen to be vulnerable also tend to resist external interference. The UN Secretariat has attempted to develop an early warning capacity, although this has not been systematically sustained. Given the unpredictability of human decision-making, no system of forecasting can give certain results. Nevertheless, there is already sufficient knowledge of situations where there is proneness to war to justify an appropriate response. For some time it has been realized that the key issue is not, in fact, providing early warning, but mustering the political resources to make an appropriate early response.

In many cases, it is possible to anticipate likely conflicts simply because existing conflicts are recurrent and protracted, and because conflicts tend to spill over in conflict regions. 'Enduring rivalries' – that is, protracted disputes between pairs of states or peoples – have accounted for half the wars between 1816 and 1992. These may be expected to be sources of further disputes. As noted in chapter 3, it is not difficult to point to regions – such as West Africa, the Great Lakes region of Africa, the Caucasus, the India–Pakistan border and parts of Indonesia – where future violent conflicts can be expected. We also know from economic indicators that the risk of civil war in poor states, especially those with previous civil wars, is far higher than in more developed states. There are therefore plentiful indicators of areas where a preventive response is needed. What measures can be taken to provide an early preventive response to known conflict formations?

Light or Operational Prevention

When disputes are close to the point of violence, light or operational prevention comes into play. This is often called 'preventive diplomacy', but we prefer the more general term since it allows for a wider range of actors. As we have seen, the protagonists themselves often play the most decisive role by pursuing moderate and constructive strategies (Kriesberg, 1998a). Moreover, direct negotiations between the contending parties may limit the risk of conflict escalation at an early stage (Zartman, 2001). In some of the most cited cases of conflict prevention, such as Macedonia and Estonia, a combination of internal and external actions combined together to limit potential conflicts.

A wide range of policy options are in principle available for light prevention (Creative Associates, 1997: 3–6). They range from official diplomacy (mediation, conciliation, fact-finding, good offices, peace conferences, envoys, conflict prevention centres, hotlines) through non-official diplomacy (private mediation, message-carrying and creation of back-channels, peace commissions, problem-solving workshops, conflict resolution training, round tables) to peacemaking efforts by local actors (church-facilitated talks, debates between politicians, cross-party discussions). In some cases exploratory talks and trust-building by respected mediators are crucial. In others, positive and negative inducements by relevant states are significant. The literature (Carnegie Commission, 1997; Wallensteen, 1998; Leatherman et al., 1999; Zartman, 2001; Hampson and Malone, 2002) explores a range of political measures (mediation with muscle, mobilization through regional and global organizations, attempts to influence the media); economic measures (sanctions, emergency aid, conditional offers of financial support); and military measures (preventive peacekeeping, arms embargoes, demilitarization).

Operational prevention thus goes wider than conflict resolution, if that is conceived as bringing parties together to analyse and transform a dispute.

Box 5.1 Conflict prevention in Estonia

In 1993 the citizens of Narva voted by an overwhelming majority to secede from Estonia. They were almost all Russians who had been dismayed to become what they saw as second-class citizens in their own country. The Estonian government declared that the referendum was illegal and threatened to use force if necessary to prevent the break-up of Estonia. Russian vigilante groups began to arm themselves, and in Russia the president warned that he would intervene if necessary to protect the rights of Russian speakers. At a time when it appeared that this deadlock could lead to the outbreak of fighting, the OSCE high commissioner on national minorities, Max van der Stoel, interceded. After meeting with representatives of the Narva city council and the government, he suggested that the Narva council should regard the referendum as a declaration of aspiration without immediate effect. At the same time he suggested to the Estonian government that they abandon their threat to use force against the city. His suggestions were adopted and no armed conflict took place.

In assessing the influence of the high commissioner in the Estonia case, we have to weigh the importance of other factors: the lack of mobilization of the Russian-speaking identity, the unwillingness of Russia to get involved at a stage when it was dependent on western support, and the capacity of the Estonian political system to manage its own disputes. Estonia had adopted a voting system which gave political parties an incentive to seek broad-based support, and the Centre Party became a vehicle for Russian-speakers to express their interests. This, together with the exercise of local government, helped to provide capacity for managing the conflict, even though it did not resolve it. Structural prevention, in the form of some constitutional capacity for managing conflict, together with the presence in the OSCE of an institution which was allowed to monitor minorities, combined with operational and direct diplomacy of Max van der Stoel's diplomatic intervention to head off a potential conflict.

Source: Khrychikov and Miall, 2002

However, the effort to resolve conflict at an early stage is at the heart of prevention. It involves identifying the key issues, clearing mistrust and misperceptions and exploring feasible outcomes that bridge the opposing positions of the parties. Finding ways to negotiate agreements and agree procedures and channels for dispute resolution and transforming contentious relationships is central to the enterprise. These were characteristic of the work of Max van der Stoel, the OSCE high commissioner for national minorities, whose intervention in Estonia is noted in box 5.1, and whose work in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s is one of the beacons of quiet preventive diplomacy in practice (Kemp, 2001). They are also the hallmarks of efforts by internal and external non-governmental peacemakers.

In some cases quite protracted conflicts continue at a political level, with successive negotiations, breakdowns, agreements and disagreements, but the conflict is eventually settled or suspended without violence breaking out. The long struggle over South Tyrol was negotiated between the Austrian and Italian governments and the local parties in Alto Adige. In other cases a negotiation process prevents a political conflict reaching any risk of violence. The peaceful divorce of the Czech and Slovak republics and the negotiations

between Moscow and the Tatar government over the status of Tatarstan within the Russian Federation are examples (Hopmann, 2001: 151–6).

Non-governmental organizations, development agencies and social actors also take significant steps to address conflict and attempt to prevent violence at an early stage. It is difficult to evaluate the impact of this kind of 'preventive peacebuilding', especially when the main intended impact may be to improve relations between specific groups or address needs at a community or regional level. It is only when there is an obvious relationship between programmes at the local and community level and impact on the elite level that conflict impact assessment is clear. The work can sometimes be very challenging. For example, the programme by Conciliation Resources in Fiji supported a Citizens' Constitutional Forum which contributed to the adoption in 1997 of a power-sharing system. This was intended to address the domination of the indigenous Fijians over the Indian-Fijian group. But, following the coup which overthrew the constitution in 2000, the situation became more polarized than ever. Conciliation Resources continues to work with its partners to encourage multiculturalism, respect for human rights and the re-establishment of the constitution.

Development agencies have a range of impacts, some positive, some highly negative (Muscat, 2002). Large government donors typically work with the local government and may have negative impacts on local communities when centrally financed development programmes impact on them. For example, EU support for irrigation schemes in the Awash valley in Ethiopia have led to the intensification of latent conflict between local Afar clans and the central government, although this has been partly offset by a small-scale local project with the regional government (of which the central government disapproved). Development agencies bring substantial resources into poor countries and it is difficult for them to avoid enmeshment in local conflicts.

The effectiveness of measures to prevent violent conflicts depends on circumstances. As Stedman (1995) argued, they can exacerbate some situations, and, as Lund (1995) countered, they can mitigate others. Efforts to prevent latent conflicts from becoming violent are always justified, but, if they are not to do more harm than good, they must be informed, sensitive and well judged, and carried out with representatives of the affected population.

Although ethnicity has been a frequent source of ethnic conflict in the 1990s and 2000s, there are many ethnic groups which have lived peaceably, though not without conflict, together with majority communities – for example, the Chinese community in Malaysia, the French-speaking population in Canada, the Macedonian community in Albania, and so on. Horowitz (1985) and Gurr (2000) give examples and analyses of the factors that have prevented potential conflicts in these cases.

Assessing conflict prevention evidently depends considerably on the frame of analysis chosen and the criteria used to assess proneness to conflict. Wallensteen (2002b) offers a list of thirty candidates for conflict prevention

analysis since the end of the Cold War where operational conflict prevention of some kind took place. A much larger list could be compiled to examine the impact of structural prevention. The study of the impact of both operational and structural prevention on conflict incidence, and of their interaction with forces fuelling conflict, is still in its infancy.

The Adoption of Conflict Prevention by International Organizations

Fifty years after the idea was first examined by the pioneers of the conflict resolution field, it is remarkable how the idea of conflict prevention came to be adopted as the leading edge of international and multilateral conflict management policy. Mechanisms for peaceful change and systems for anticipation of future issues, two of the key perquisites for international peace and security which were absent from all of the historic peace treaties noted by Holsti in chapter 2 of this book (see table 2.1, p. 00), started to be designed into the security architectures of regional and international organizations through the commitment to programmes of conflict prevention. The UN, the OSCE, the EU, the AU, ECOWAS, SADC, IGAD, ASEAN, the G8, the IMF and the World Bank all adopted some type of commitment to conflict prevention. However, as we shall see, the translation of these commitments into practice was disappointing. After 9/11 and the shift of global attention towards the prevention of terrorism, the tide in the direction of a wider conception of conflict prevention seemed, at least for a time, to have reached a high-water mark.

The UN's concern with conflict prevention evolved from *An Agenda for Peace* (Boutros-Ghali, 1992), through the Brahimi Report (Brahimi, 2000), to the Secretary-General's report on conflict prevention (United Nations, 2001) to the 55th Session of the General Assembly in June 2001, which made conflict prevention a priority of the organization. Kofi Annan urged his staff to develop a 'culture of prevention'. Similarly, UN Security Council Resolution 1366 of August 2001 identified a key role for the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflict. A Trust Fund for Preventive Action was established and a system-wide training programme on early warning and preventive measures initiated. Within the UN family, the UNDP defined its role in post-conflict peacebuilding through a conflict prevention strategy adopted in November 2000, and 20 per cent of UNDP Track III funding was set aside for 'preventive and curative activities'.

The UN made further commitments in 2004, with the adoption of the High Level Report and the acceptance of a 'responsibility to prevent' (Bellamy, 2008). It was hoped that the Peace Building Commission could take on these responsibilities. But in the event the member states were divided over accepting Kofi Annan's call for a 'culture of prevention' and made it clear that they would not accept this proposal. More will be said about this in chapters 8 and 9. The commitment of UN funds to conflict prevention has remained quite

limited, and responsibility for prevention has not been concentrated in a particular agency in the Secretariat (Piiparinen, 2008). Some states favoured a larger UN role, but developing states that might have become recipients of conflict prevention measures were nervous of great power interference. Others, notably China and Russia, argued that the principle of sovereignty remained the best basis for protecting states. The Bush administration's adoption of a policy of pre-emptive war alarmed many UN member states, but, with Vice-President Biden's statement that 'we will strive to act preventively, and not pre-emptively, to avoid where possible a choice of last resort between the risks of war and the dangers of inaction' (Woocher, 2009), the Obama administration has now returned to a focus on prevention.

Perhaps the global challenges over climate change, resource use, energy and food security will provide a new impetus for those who seek to foster a stronger UN capability. This is the argument of the report *Sustainable Global Governance for the 21st Century*, prepared by a panel of academics and UN officials (Weiss et al., 2009). More will be said about this in chapter 12.

If there has been resistance to the principle of conflict prevention among some UN member states, it is in the regional organizations, and above all in Europe, where progress has been most noticeable.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has fifty-five participating states spanning Vancouver to Vladivostok, and has evolved as a primary regional organization for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. Its conflict prevention structures and roles include a Conflict Prevention Centre, an Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and, as we have seen, a high commissioner for national minorities (HCNM) whose task is to identify and seek early resolution of ethnic tensions that might endanger peace, stability or friendly relations between the participating states of the OSCE. The HCNM gathers information, mediates, promotes dialogue, makes recommendations and informs OSCE members of potential conflicts; significantly, the HCNM does not require approval by states of the OSCE before becoming involved. This was an impressive innovation, and the member states' acceptance of a right of other members to monitor their internal affairs set an important precedent.

The European Union has perhaps made the deepest commitment to conflict prevention of any international organization. This became a priority for the Council and the Commission and an organizing framework for many EU policies, among them the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the European Security and Defence Policy and development cooperation policies (Stewart, 2008). The Swedish presidency made conflict prevention a strong theme (Bjorkdahl, 2007). At the Gothenburg Summit in June 2001, the European Council declared:

> Conflict prevention calls for a cooperative approach to facilitate peaceful solutions to disputes, and implies addressing the root causes of conflicts. The EU underlines its political commitment to pursue conflict prevention as one of the main objectives of the

EU's external relations. It resolves to continue to improve its capacity to prevent violent conflicts and to contribute to a global culture of prevention.

A comprehensive set of policies and policy instruments were developed, drawing together human rights programmes, measures to combat the spread of small arms, support for security sector reform, governance reforms and economic support. The Commission identified 'structural stability' as its aim in terms very similar to those identified above, 'the capacity to manage change without resort to conflict'. Conflict prevention assessment missions were sent to areas of conflict, including Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Indonesia and Nepal. A Rapid Reaction Mechanism was created in 2001 and used for missions to areas in acute crisis (Kronenberger and Wouters, 2004).

The EU's conflict prevention measures embraced both deep and light elements – support for governance, rule of law, economic development, and missions concerned with policing and peacebuilding, as in the cases of Kosovo and Bosnia (Kronenberger and Wouters, 2004: 151–72). The language of 'conflict prevention' has gradually changed in EU discourse towards 'crisis management', which was enshrined in European Security and Defence Policy in 1999. For example, in an EU conference in 2007 entitled 'From Early Warning to Early Action: Developing the EU's Response to Crisis and Longer-Term Threats', Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner said:

> The European Union has a comprehensive range of tools at its disposal for crisis management. To maximise their impact we must ensure that at every stage, from planning to the final stages of implementation, Member States, Council Secretariat and Commission work closely together. We have to focus on ensuring all instruments, not only our rapid reaction programmes but also our long term development assistance, humanitarian assistance and ESDP rule of law, police and military missions, are carefully coordinated and complementary.

Between 2003 and 2010 the EU dispatched twenty-six military, policing, rule of law and monitoring missions to areas of conflict such as Aceh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eastern Chad, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Macedonia, Moldova and Somalia. Despite internal turf wars and difficulties on the ground – for example, in bridging the gap between international and local policing standards – the EU has taken a lead, and the Lisbon Treaty reforms may make this area more important in years to come.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), through its Development Assistance Committee, has also produced guidelines for conflict prevention which depend on long-term structural preventive measures built into developmental assistance programmes (Ackermann, 2003). Many of the agencies of the UN, and other international regional and sub-regional organizations, were themselves developing policies and programmes that emphasized the importance of robust values and structures for conflict prevention (Ackermann, 2003; Mack, 2003; Smith, 2003). It was also widely recognized that conflict prevention is a less costly policy than intervention after the onset of armed conflicts. Chalmers (2004) argued that, for every

£1 spent on preventive activity, an average of £4.1 will be generated on savings for the international community, compared with the costs of intervention after the onset of violent conflict.

Comparable institutional advances can be seen in the African Union's peace, security and early warning architecture. The first definition of this new comprehensive and continent-wide peace architecture was announced with the Peace and Security Council Protocol of December 2003, which identified the core pillars of the AU: the Peace and Security Council, the Panel of the Wise, the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), the African Standby Force and the Peace Fund (Engel and Porto, 2010). The Peace and Security Council has a specific mandate to 'anticipate and prevent conflicts'. The Panel of the Wise was set up to advise the chairperson of the AU on issues of conflict prevention. The CEWS is composed of '. . . a hybrid module that combines quantitative and qualitative methods of conflict analysis' (ibid.: 10). In sum, and while it remains short of resources and limited in operational reach, the peacemaking and conflict prevention pillars of the AU outlined here do reflect a real expression of African intentions to deliver African solutions to African problems by institutionalizing norms that reflect a cosmopolitan and continent-wide aspiration to address and transform Africa's conflict-proneness.

It is nevertheless generally recognized that, when it comes to conflict prevention in practice, there is a long way to go in translating rhetoric into reality. This is especially the case as far as the UN is concerned, where the resources available for preventive programmes are meagre. Perhaps the main significance of Annan's 'culture of prevention' lay in its role in norm-setting. Ackermann has pointed out that, in general, norm-setting evolves through three stages: awareness-raising and advocacy, acceptance and institutionalization, and internationalization (Ackermann, 2003: 347). In the period of the first decade of the new century the conflict prevention norm made at least some progress towards the second stage.

The 2001 Report to the General Assembly and Security Council Resolution 1366 both recognized that it was important for member states and organizations of civil society to commit to conflict prevention. Many have responded. The G8 countries produced their Rome Initiative on Conflict Prevention in July 2001, concentrating on small arms and light weapons, conflict diamonds, children in conflict, civilian policing, conflict and development, the role of women and the contribution of the private sector in conflict prevention. The same year the government of the United Kingdom launched its Global Conflict Prevention Pool, combining the three key departments (the Ministry of Defence, the Department for International Development and the Foreign Office) in an attempt to coordinate strategy around policy development and programme delivery (Kapila and Wermester, 2002). The budget of £74 million in 2004 was limited, but the rhetorical commitment was clear. NGOs have continued to research, advocate and implement appropriate conflict prevention activities, including International Alert, the International Crisis Group

and the European Centre for Conflict Prevention, whose database of conflict prevention organizations listed about 850 organizations active in 2004 (www. euconflict.org).

Kenya: A Case Study

Kenya has suffered from inter-ethnic conflicts associated with the control of the state by dominant ethnic groups. Stagnant or declining economic growth in the 1990s, combined with conflicts in peripheral areas (such as among the pastoralists in the north-east), seemed to threaten the country's stability. However, the elections of 2002 brought the opposition to power peacefully – an unusual event in Africa. The new government's policy of providing free education, encouraging agricultural cooperatives and tackling corruption gained dividends initially in economic progress and international support. Notwithstanding its ethnic and economic divisions, Kenya avoided large-scale internal conflict until violence erupted again sparked by disputed election results in January 2008. What happened next can be seen as a demonstration of the effectiveness of the combination of factors noted in this chapter: well-directed immediate crisis action, linking to deeper national conflict management structures and regionalized capacity, and backed up by remarkable local initiatives.

In the initial violence in 2008 over 1,500 people were killed in inter-communal violence. This threatened to escalate further and destroy the achievements of the preceding period. But in the event the situation was rescued following mediation by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who moved fast to broker talks between Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki and the leader of the opposition Orange Democratic Movement, Raila Odinga. The talks led to a power-sharing agreement which, despite the persistence of intercommunal tensions, succeeded in stabilizing the situation and creating space for preventive actions and programmes. Here rapid international response was able to build on existing power-sharing arrangements at the national level.

This in turn related to the wider prevention capacities of the African Union, as noted above. In this case the head of African Union (President John Kufour of Ghana), Archbishop Tutu of South Africa, and representatives of the Forum of Former African heads of state and government all visited the country to encourage political leaders to seek a negotiated solution. Kofi Annan was chosen to lead an African Union mandated Panel of Eminent African Personalities. By 29 January 2008, a Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation (KNDR) initiative was launched. A power-sharing agreement had been reached by 28 February, and the KNDR continues to support initiatives for the long-term resolution of the conflict. As is noted below, the Panel of Eminent African Personalities mirrored the Panel of the Wise, one of the pillars of the emergent peace, security and conflict prevention architecture of

the AU (see the report of the Kenyan mediation and dialogue process at http://kofiannanfoundation.org/).

While the initial response to the crisis was concerned to stabilize the political situation, conflict prevention initiatives were also launched as part of a comprehensive programme of peacebuilding to address the causes of the conflict at communal and grassroots levels, along the lines looked at further in chapter 9. Here, Kenya witnessed the emergence of an innovative cyberpeacemaking initiative. As noted in box 3.1 (p. 00), the USHAHIDI web-based platform was developed to enable Kenyans to map incidents of violence via mobile phones, SMS (text messaging), email and the web so that crisis information can be gathered quickly and in real time by citizen-based organizations and NGOs. The data is then matched and analysed through geographic information and mapping tools. The system was designed explicitly to create an effective grassroots-based early warning system. It is an open source technology, which means it can be adapted and developed for a variety of uses and in a variety of contexts. The philosophy and modus operandi is that:

> the USHAHIDI engine is there for 'everyday' people to link with each other and to let the world know what is happening in their area during a crisis, emergency or other situation. Bringing awareness, linking those in need to those who can assist, and providing the framework for better visualization of information graphically. (www.ushahidi.com)

This kind of analysis was complemented by a variety of community-based peacebuilding activities organized by UNDP Kenya. For example a 'Tuelewane' Youth Exchange Programme was initiated and, from October 2007 to December 2009, six Tuelewane activities were organized to provide training and education on peace and conflict resolution within six major communities affected by the conflict. Activities included football and other sporting events used for peacebuilding, and local radio was employed to promote mutual understanding, conflict resolution and reconciliation (see United Nations Development Programme Kenya at http://www.ke.undp.org/newsitem/16).

All of this may be seen to support the evidence, cited in chapter 3, that some progress is being made in reducing the incidence of violent conflict – including evidence that African wars now last significantly less long than the average elsewhere.

Conclusion

It is notoriously difficult to establish whether or not particular initiatives have prevented particular violent conflicts. Earlier in the chapter we mentioned the intervention of the OSCE high commissioner for national minorities (HCNM) in Estonia in 1993. But how can we be sure that his intervention was crucial in preventing armed conflict? To answer this question, we have to enter a difficult field much disputed by historians, philosophers and

philosophers of science – namely, the issue of causation and counterfactuals. In order to attribute the non-occurrence of armed conflict to the presence of the HCNM, we need to have convincing reasons to conclude that other factors on their own would have been insufficient to have prevented war, and that his intervention not only preceded and accompanied the de-escalatioin of tension but, in conjunction with the other factors, made an escalation to war increasingly less likely.

For this and related reasons, the effects of intensified efforts to prevent violent conflict in the post-Cold War era are hard to evaluate. One can point to particular case studies where conflict prevention measures have been influential, such as the EU measures in Macedonia, the role of the OSCE in Moldova and Tatarstan, or the prevention in Kenya cited in the case study. More globally, the evidence is still inconclusive. We saw in chapter 3 how, in most recent surveys, the incidence of major armed conflict has been going down since the mid-1990s (see figure 3.1), but there is no clear evidence of a fall in the number of new wars (Hegre, 2004). Since much of what has taken place under a conflict prevention rubric involves post-conflict peacebuilding, it is perhaps unrealistic to date to expect to find an impact of policy measures on global changes. For example, in the first major large-N study on the impact of early conflict prevention measures in conflicts where ethnic groups were challenging governments in the 1990s, Oberg, Moller and Wallensteen (2009) show that diplomatic interventions and relief efforts dampened the likelihood of conflict, although carrots tended to increase the prospect of escalation. We can expect further fine-grained research to throw more light on the effectiveness of prevention policies.

In this chapter we have looked at the causes and preventers of contemporary armed conflicts. If, as A. J. P. Taylor suggests, wars have both general and specific causes, then systems of conflict prevention should address both the generic conditions which make societies prone to armed conflicts and the potential triggers which translate war-pronenss into armed conflict. If structural conflict prevention is successful in providing capacity to manage emergent conflicts peacefully at an early stage, it should make societies less conflict-prone. If operational conflict prevention is successful, it should avert armed conflicts without necessarily removing the underlying conditions of proneness to armed conflict (see table 5.2). Both light and deep approaches to conflict prevention are clearly necessary.

Having examined structural and operational prevention and the actors

Table 5.2 Success and failure in confict prevention

	Success	Failure
Light measures	Armed conflict averted	Armed conflict
Deep measures	Peaceful change	Conflict-prone situation

involved in prevention policy, we end the chapter by stressing again the importance of regional and contextual variations in the application and likelihood of success of conflict prevention policies and approaches in the post-Cold War period through to the second decade of the twenty-first century.

We have noted the existence of very different risks of violent conflict in different types of states in chapter 3. In the OECD, no new internal or interstate wars within or between member states have started for many years. Clearly the combination of cross-cutting interests and identities, international institutions, dispute settlement mechanisms and membership of common security bodies in this area has largely eliminated the risk of intra-OECD warfare. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union a long period without armed conflict was ended by the break-up of the Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia, but after a burst of fresh conflicts, mainly over secession and self-determination, the number of new conflicts in this area is falling. Latin America has experienced no new internal wars since 1985. This leaves South and South-East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa, all as regions with continuing inceptions of new wars as well as continuing old ones. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region that has experienced an increase in the level of armed conflicts.

Capacity to prevent conflict varies regionally too. Capacity exists at an international level (in the form of international institutions, norms), at the national level (in the form of state institutions, parliaments, laws, etc.) and at sub-state levels (local communities, civic associations, etc.). As we have seen, it is strongest in Europe, where the risks of conflict are low, and weakest in the areas where the risk of conflict is high. It is very weak or non-existent in countries where states have failed or are failing and economies are stagnating – although the example of Somalia shows how even here local capacities for conflict resolution can be remarkable (see chapter 8). A combination of factors, including different configurations of structural causes and preventers of conflict, distinguish regions with little or no violent conflict from those with endemic violent conflicts.

The cases we have quoted suggest that conflict prevention is not easy. It is difficult for the preventers to gain a purchase in situations of violence or chaotic change, and episodes of violence can readily overwhelm them. Nevertheless, where preventive measures have begun, and where circumstances are propitious, a cumulative process of peacebuilding can be seen. The challenge is gradually to introduce and strengthen the capacity for prevention and to foster a culture of preventive conflict resolution, with early identification, discussion and transformation of emergent conflicts.

Recommended reading

Engel and Porto (2010); Hampson and Malone (2002); Leatherman et al. (1999); Lund (1996); Miall (2007); Rubin and Jones (2007); Wallensteen (1998); Woocher (2009); Zartman (2001).

Recommended videos

Rob Hof (2000) *The Silent Diplomat*. Amersfoort, Netherlands; Hof Filmproductions [a film about Max van der Stoel].

Responding to Conflict, The Wajir Story (2010), at http://vimeo.com/9935744 [a film about conflict transformation in Kenya].