Conflict prevention – Taking stock

David Carment and Albrecht Schnabel

Conceptual issues

Were it as simple as relying on a definition in order to describe the process of conflict prevention, our task would be relatively straightforward. Our focus would be on the sources of conflicts and the processes associated with their prevention. However, contributors to our study were faced with a much larger problem – how to render the analyses of effective/ineffective conflict prevention and capacity building meaningful and practicable to practitioners and policy makers alike.

For the purposes of this study, we define conflict prevention as an evolving concept and innovative set of policy recommendations comprising fundamental attitudinal change among its end users. In short, conflict prevention is not a transitory ad hoc reaction to emerging and potential problems.¹ It is a medium and long-term proactive operational or structural strategy undertaken by a variety of actors, intended to identify and create the enabling conditions for a stable and more predictable international security environment. The key assumptions in our definition that merit attention are:

- Conflict prevention involves attitudinal change;
- Conflict prevention is malleable as a concept and as a policy;
- Conflict prevention can be multisectoral;
- Conflict prevention can be applied at different phases of conflict;
Conflict prevention can be implemented by a range of actors acting independently or in concert.² We recognise that our definition and assumptions are somewhat broad.³ However, they have their basis in the conceptual ground work and theoretical brush-clearing that has been conducted over the years by a number of scholars in Europe and North America. Recent research has focused on the phases of conflict, tools, and techniques for monitoring conflict, political will issues, and response strategies.⁴ Much of this work culminated in the 1998 contribution to conflict prevention undertaken by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. According to the Carnegie Commission, conflict prevention as a strategy has the potential to establish a more stable international environment through effective response to emergent, ongoing and escalating conflicts by means of economic, political, and military techniques by states, NGOs, and other international organizations. We are particularly sympathetic to the approach advocated by the Commission that conflict prevention connotes a way of thinking: a state of mind, perhaps even a culture that permeates the activities of all those engaged in the implementation of preventive policy – be they NGOs, states, or regional and global organizations.

More concretely, in order to be productive, prevention needs to be part of a policy maker’s overall policy planning process. A key question is: to what extent can prevention be integrated into the policy frameworks of individual states, NGOs and regional and global organizations? In answering this question, the contributors to this volume offer two different but not necessarily contradictory views. On the one hand, there are good reasons to favour a more short-term interplay between states and institutions. On the other hand, there is a need to square this approach with a desire for more long-term structural approaches to prevention and the institutionalization of conflict prevention through capacity building and training. There are simply not enough resources available to meet every potentially violent conflict with an operational response in every instance. From a realistic and cost-effective perspective, structural prevention and long-term attitudinal change may be preferable.

This attitudinal shift among practitioners can be traced to Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s An Agenda for Peace (1992). To be sure, Boutros-Ghali chose to reflect only on preventive diplomacy within a range of conflict management techniques that include peacebuilding, peacemaking, and peacekeeping and essentially on those activities that usually, but not always, fall under the purview of the United Nations, such as confidence building measures, arms control, and preventive deployment.

Ten years after An Agenda for Peace was published, preventive diplomacy has now come to refer to a response generated by a state, a coalition of states, or a multilateral organization intended to address
the rapid escalation of emergent crises, disputes, and interstate hostilities. Preventive diplomacy entails primarily, but not exclusively, short and medium-term consultations using non-compartmentalized and non-hierarchical forms of information gathering, contingency planning, and operational response mechanisms. The risks are proximate and analysis and action are combined at once in rapid succession.\(^5\)

Despite its post-Cold War faddishness, popular usage of this kind of conflict prevention can be traced to the activities of UNSG Dag Hammarskjöld (although its underlying logic has existed at least since the emergence of the modern state system; the Westphalian Treaty at its birth was an attempt to prevent the continuation of interstate warfare of the early seventeenth century; and indeed, its rationale is deeply imbedded in such fundamentals of statecraft as deterrence, reassurance, and compellence).\(^6\) Hammarskjöld realized that early engagement of the global organization could act to forestall the destructiveness of conflict created by external military intervention and arms transfers. According to Väyrynen, "preventive action stemmed from the more general reasoning that external interventions can be avoided or tempered if a region is made more autonomous in terms of security" (this volume). The underlying rationale was expressed in Hammarskjöld’s introduction to the 1959–60 annual report of the United Nations: preventive action “must in the first place aim at filling the vacuum so that it will not provoke action from any of the major parties.”\(^7\) When crisis threatens, traditional diplomacy continues, but more urgent preventive efforts are required – through unilateral and multilateral channels – to arbitrate, mediate, or lend “good offices” to encourage dialogue.

Today, preventive diplomacy is considered important, due in part to the evolving nature of conflict. The shift from inter-state to intra-state conflict is well documented. However, this change in itself is not sufficient to generate a call for revised thinking on preventive action. It is the surrounding circumstances, the ability of such complex conflicts to spread vertically and horizontally – in essence the potential of such conflicts to do harm to others, ordinary citizens, neighbouring states, refugees, and minorities – that generate preventive diplomacy efforts.\(^8\)

Moreover, official diplomacy can be greatly strengthened by private sector activity. Long used in international negotiations by leaders to take informal soundings of adversaries’ intentions, so-called track-two diplomacy is increasingly the strategy of choice for dealing with problems beyond the reach of official efforts. Some governments have found NGOs very useful in brokering political agreements and supplementing governmental roles. In recent years, many groups in the United States and Europe, such as the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, International Alert, the Carter Center’s International Negotiation Network, the Inter-
national Crisis Group, the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response, the Project on Ethnic Relations and the Conflict Management Group, have developed models for multi-track diplomacy and conflict resolution. These organizations have played active roles in building relationships between conflicting parties and interested governments, offering training in diplomacy and conflict resolution, and providing good offices to parties that are committed to the peaceful resolution of conflict.

Kalypso Nicolaides provides a useful conceptual framework for determining how preventive diplomacy relates to conflict prevention. Preventive diplomacy is principally an operational response. It is premised on incentive structures provided by outside actors to change specific kinds of undesirable behaviour. Preventive diplomacy is therefore, targeted and short-term and the preventive action taken relates directly to changes in conflict escalation and conflict dynamics (see Jentleson, this volume). In this regard outside actors can seek to influence the course of events and try to alter or induce specific behaviour through coercive and operational threats and deterrents (see Väyrynen, this volume) or through less coercive strategies of persuasion and inducement (see Jentleson, this volume).

Ultimately though, while outside actors can work to influence the incentives of the relevant parties engaged in conflict, they cannot change the initial conditions that led to conflict in the first place. That process has to take place within. Thus, structural approaches emphasize capacity building to provide conflict-prone societies with the means to address root causes of conflict. In this sense, structural conflict prevention strategies, such as those focusing on human security, conflict transformation and development cast a much broader net. They tend to be long term and are generally applied across a range of countries, issues, and actors. The goal is to transform conflictual behaviour over time. This change in behaviour can be dependent on institutional inducements – such as conditionality for membership in international institutions, arms control agreements and stability pacts or on the promotion of sustainable development, support for human security, and regional confidence building mechanisms.

An analogy of clinical and environmental approaches to health care highlights the difference between operational and structural approaches. Clinical and environmental health care may both be preventively oriented. However, the former focuses on the treatment of sick individuals whereas the latter emphasizes a public health model that aims to prevent illness by focusing on its associated environmental factors. Of course, operational and structural approaches are not mutually exclusive activities. Shifting attitudinal change necessarily entails, in our opinion, a concerted movement toward, and investment in, both strategic operational
responses and long-term approaches. This view is shared, for instance, by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose report on Preventing Violent Conflict proposes early conflict prevention strategies as the corner stone of Sweden’s developmental assistance programmes. Among its recommendations are: the call for a strengthening of a secretariat or “task force” within the Swedish Foreign Ministry whose activities would be to establish methods for preventive measures through development cooperation, the development of security mechanisms within troubled regions, and the establishment of regional early warning networks.

Analytical needs

A key concern in ensuring effective conflict prevention is how to ensure that the practitioner is equipped with the best available analytical skills to ensure valid and reliable evaluations of potential problems. To be sure, the increasing role of academics, private organizations, and non-governmental organizations in providing risk assessments, analyses and early warning information points to a fundamental change in the way in which potential threats to security are assessed and acted upon. Nevertheless, understanding the root causes of conflict, identifying the point at which a conflict is likely to become violent and deciding what to do about them is more akin to “solving mysteries” (e.g. group problem-solving) than it is to “breaking secrets” (e.g. spying).

The impetus for current UN-based approaches to risk assessment and early warning came from UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar’s first Annual Report to the General Assembly in 1982. In the report, he called for “more systematic,” less last-minute use of the Security Council, and urged that “if the Council were to keep an active watch on dangerous situations and, if necessary, initiate discussions with the parties before they reach the point of crisis, it might otherwise be possible to defuse them at an early stage before they degenerate into violence.” Since the call for preventive diplomacy by former UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali in 1992, the UN inter-agency arrangement for humanitarian early warning (HEWS) was created to assist humanitarian operations. However, it has not succeeded. It was never properly equipped to detect or analyse political and military warning signals and the UN lost whatever capacity it had to analyse political early warning information when it disbanded the Office for Research and Collection of Information (ORCI).

A more fundamental deficiency is that the early warning currently required to respond to human-generated disasters is often late warning; a response to crises that are already at an advanced stage of escalation and violence, that are well known and where causes are proximate. The
inherent risk for decision makers in this approach is that, at the height of a crisis, policy options are rapidly and significantly constrained and significantly narrowed to operational responses (usually military and humanitarian) such as those detailed in our volume. Late response, with the attendant likelihood that a strategy will be less than successful, is the strongest impediment to developing more coherent forward-looking approaches. Critics are quick to claim that early warning rarely succeeds, but the evidence they cite to support this argument are situations where action is taken to treat the symptoms rather than the underlying causes.\textsuperscript{18}

It is a truism to say that effective conflict prevention entails a substantial understanding of conflict dynamics, their structural consequences, the processes by which they become violent, and what well-meaning leaders, NGOs, and governments can do about them. Unfortunately, while the bulk of research is useful for understanding why, when and how some conflicts originate, it is less useful in explaining or predicting when or how violent interactions will occur in a way that is directly consumable by policy makers. One response to this problem has been to ensure that policy makers are better equipped to do their own in-field analyses (as suggested by Cockell in this volume).\textsuperscript{19}

As a result, many organizations, such as the European Union, have developed an in-house capacity for conducting their own risk assessments and are developing independent procedures for conducting early warning, monitoring, and response. One of the obvious dangers in creating independent analytical tools of this sort is that these “lenses” can and do point to fundamentally different causes of conflict. For example, some may rely on the monitoring of background factors and enabling conditions that are associated with the risk of conflict while others only provide information on the probability of specific events leading to conflict.\textsuperscript{20} Ideally, both approaches should be pursued simultaneously. However, it is obvious that analytical capacity alone will never be sufficient for generating effective response.\textsuperscript{21} There is also a need for field monitoring of indicators of specific types of behaviour, monitoring of indicators of related factors and proximate causes or systematic analysis of events through predictive models.\textsuperscript{22} Collectively, their objective is to combine monitoring of indicators with diagnosis, using theoretical findings and index construction to develop knowledge of certain causes that produce specific effects.\textsuperscript{23} The effect can be either a danger, such as a crisis, war or genocide, or an opportunity, such as economic investment or the victory of a democratic government. Risk assessments precede and complement early warning. Therefore, accurate diagnosis has implications for strategic planning. Assessments identify background and intervening conditions that establish the risk for potential crisis and conflict. They focus monitoring and analytical attention on high-risk situations before they are
fully developed and they provide a framework for interpreting the results of real-time monitoring.24

Once information is weighed for its relative importance, there still remains a significant gap between analysing the information and developing a strategy to deal with the problem. Analysis by itself does not generate an immediate solution. At best, monitoring of indicators helps in regulating the flow of information to policy makers.25 Thus, early warning systems are not confined just to analysing a conflict, but also relate to and, indeed, see their raison d’être in the capacities and response strategies for dealing with a conflict.

Several problems arise in translating analysis into action. First, there is a need to know what to look for, and what, specifically, should be warned about. Ethnic warfare, regime failure, massive human rights violations and refugee flows are the results of different combinations of factors, hence require somewhat different models, explanations, strategies, and responses. Second, there is a need for specificity in the combinations of risk factors and sequences of events that are likely to lead to crises. Lists of variables or indicators are only a starting point. Explanations should identify which measurable conditions, in what combination or sequence, establish a potential for certain types and kinds of crises.

The question of how to actually bring early warning into the process of policy planning also needs to be considered (Cockell, this volume; Rowlands and Joseph, this volume). There are two complementary approaches. The first is primarily an array of decentralized early warning networks for the analysis of impending humanitarian crises and complex emergencies. This option would see states and NGOs rely to some extent on global networks for their information analysis.

A second option is to pursue the integration of risk assessments into the strategic planning processes of states, NGOs and regional organizations – beginning with developmental aid – in order to develop coherent, sustainable, and long-term policies on conflict prevention (see Cockell, this volume; Duke, this volume). This is a five-step process: first, because risk assessment data and information must satisfy the needs of different agencies, there is a need to integrate them more closely into routinized foreign policy activities of the various departments engaged in foreign and security policy. Second, integration means that assessments are used to identify not only future risks but also to identify links between conflict processes and identifiable focal points of activity in which the end user is engaged. Assessments should be able to identify a sequence of events that are logically consistent with operational responses. Third, end users should be able to use the information in a way that helps them plan for contingencies. In essence, the goal is to establish a risk assessment chain that is multi-departmental, multi-purpose and multi-directional.
Fourth, measurements of effectiveness need to be harmonized across states. As structured databases will continue to be an important tool despite their imperfections, the current situation of decentralized data holding will only be able to function if the information handling systems— including indicators—in the different countries are harmonized. Fifth and finally, an essential step would be to establish conflict prevention secretariats and councils within states and organizations.

Political will

According to Jentleson (this volume) one of the main reasons why leaders have been so reluctant to take on comprehensive conflict prevention is that they have held to the conventional wisdom that the costs to be borne and risks to be run are too high, and the interests at stake are too low. In recent years states have not always fared well in mustering the necessary response to an emerging problem. This is because the essence of statecraft is to develop and manage relationships with other states in ways that will protect and enhance one’s own security and welfare.

In a perfect world there would be a clear undivided link between information and action. In an ideal world there would be a healthy synergy between particularist and universalist interests that would in fact consider global humanitarian interests, for instance, as an inherent part of one’s own national interest. And in an ideal world the average citizen in country A would be aware of his/her responsibility to participate in meeting the human needs of his/her counterpart in country Z. But constructing and “selling” effective policy is always more complicated. For example, Jentleson shows that political will is not an insurmountable problem: political constraints do have a degree of malleability. Jentleson’s claim is especially pertinent to institutionalized approaches to conflict prevention. Institutions are most likely to be the lead actors in specific activities that advance human security, alleviate poverty, increase respect for human rights, foster good and stable governance and contribute in one way or another to long-term stability and the prevention of disintegration and violence.

Regional organizations also offer several advantages in pursuit of effective conflict prevention. Most notable is their familiarity with the history of the locale and parties to an impending dispute (see Ehrhart, this volume). These organizations often have the most at stake and therefore they are generally more willing to get involved. By their proximity to a conflict, regional organizations almost inevitably are involved because their members must deal with refugee-related problems and other consequences. Finally, states that hesitate to refer a local dispute to
the United Nations – for fear that it will no longer be under their control – may be more willing to see the matter addressed at a regional level.

Unfortunately, regional organizations are extremely hesitant in engaging in costly prevention strategies at the outset, as they lack either the necessary resources or consensus to fulfil their commitments. The inherent problem is that not only do quick terminations of escalating violence require the military backing and political support of major powers, they also require long-term post-conflict commitments. It is no longer sufficient to stop the violence – refugees must be protected and returned, political control must be reinstated, and economic development pursued. If preventive actions at the early stages of a conflict demand close coordination of military, diplomatic, and non-governmental assets, then the post-conflict phase requires an even more complex coordinated operation plan; one that engages global organizations and cuts across civilian and military control. In sum, considerable resources are required to foster development, inter-communal interdependence and attitude change over a long time – perhaps generations.26

Capacity building

It is important that institutions obtain a better understanding of both long-term structural and operational strategies. More importantly, individuals within these institutions must understand how they can best use the array of political instruments available to them to create more effective responses. Such an approach requires that organizations have a better sense of their own institutional needs and capabilities – far more than they do now.

Capacity building is central to the strengthening of conflict prevention in four ways. First, there is an important long-term investment in conflict prevention through the publication of policy reports/handbooks on methods in risk assessment, conflict analysis, and conflict prevention policy. Second, field workers and desk officers engaged in the analysis of conflict-prone societies need specific analytical skills and risk assessment techniques. Most successful monitoring and preventive efforts have been training programmes that introduce people who live in conflict areas to the theory and practice of conflict management, and that provide training in negotiation, facilitation, mediation, and consensus building. An important objective of such efforts is to improve future preventive efforts by analysing the consequences of different policies that improve conflict prevention effectiveness (peace and conflict impact assessment).

Third, conflict prevention practitioners are ultimately responsible for their own evaluation and impact assessment of their prevention methods.
Such evaluation includes the systematic documentation of conflict interventions and post-conflict assessments; improved information exchange among conflict prevention practitioners and with parties outside the conflict management field; assessment and evaluation of conflict prevention interventions; and improved coordination of conflict prevention activities. Fourth, there is the need to create a network of local conflict prevention specialists who will be able to run conflict prevention training seminars at their organizations and institutions.

It is also important that the link between early warning and preventive measures be a direct function of the proximity of the analyst to senior decision makers. As Tapio Kanninen has argued, “[e]arly warning is linked to possible immediate action by an actor who is close to one giving the early warning, e.g. belonging to the same organization.” This, he asserts, calls for early warning to be “practice-oriented, dynamic, and geared to the possibilities of the actor to intervene purposefully.”

Such close interaction between different parts of an organization can only result from successful mainstreaming efforts of conflict prevention strategies within the organization.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, conflict prevention is an evolving concept and innovative set of policy recommendations comprising fundamental attitudinal change among its end users. In short, conflict prevention is not a transitory ad hoc reaction to emerging and potential problems. It is a medium and long-term proactive strategy intended to identify and create the enabling conditions for a stable and more predictable international security environment. The former point highlights the main weakness of past thinking among practitioners that prevention was regarded primarily as a “technical” issue that encompasses early warning, arms control, preventive deployment of peacekeepers, fact-finding, and related matters. Structural factors create several problems that contribute to conflict, such as reconciling multicultural reality with the principle of national self-determination; the pursuit of a stable, democratic society in a tumultuous regional system; uneven economic development; and coping with fundamental changes brought about by the outbreak of violent conflict. Greater understanding of these deeper problems will be needed if effective structural prevention becomes a possibility. Only then can a comprehensive and balanced approach to alleviate the pressures that trigger violent conflict through elemental aid, developmental assistance, and the work of NGOs be developed. Over the long run, structural prevention strategies include the creation and strengthening of international legal
systems, dispute resolution mechanisms, and cooperative arrangements at the regional level, as well as meeting people’s basic economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian needs.

Notes

1. According to Michael Lund, “conflict prevention entails any structural or interactive means to keep intrastate and interstate tensions and disputes from escalating into significant violence and to strengthen the capabilities to resolve such disputes peacefully as well as alleviating the underlying problems that produce them, including forestalling the spread of hostilities into new places. It comes into play both in places where conflicts have not occurred recently and where recent largely terminated conflicts could recur. Depending on how they are applied, it can include the particular methods and means of any policy sector, whether labelled prevention or not (e.g. sanctions, conditional aid, mediation, structural adjustment, democratic institution building etc.), and they might be carried out by global, regional, national or local levels by any governmental or non-governmental actor.” Michael Lund, “Improving Conflict Prevention by Learning from Experience: Context, Issues, Approaches and Findings,” paper presented at the Conflict Prevention Network Annual Conference, Berlin, 31 October 1999.

2. For a precise and exhaustive list of conflict prevention terms, see Alex Schmid, *The-saurus and Glossary of Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Terms*, London: Synthesis Books and FEWER Publications, 1998. In applying these assumptions to the objectives of this book it is obvious that a broad conceptual base has several advantages. For example, in some instances the term conflict prevention is qualified by the antecedents “violent” or “deadly,” suggesting that some conflicts may be constructive and are not in need of immediate attention or are at least less threatening. Others have taken conflict prevention to mean the task of addressing latent, underlying, or non-violent behaviour, which, under certain conditions, has the potential to become deadly. Still others equate preventive diplomacy with conflict prevention (see Jentleson, this volume), which carries with it connotations of crisis management, statecraft, and the use of force in order to prevent the escalation of organized and wide-scale violence.


5. The form of such interventions is best seen as a continuum. Different third party techniques are set in motion at different points within a conflict (Lund, *Preventing Violent Conflict*). At one end of the intervention spectrum is pure mediation – the facilitation of a negotiated settlement through persuasion, control of information and identification of alternatives by a party who is perceived to be impartial. Further along the spectrum of preventive strategies is “mediation with muscle,” or the deliberate and strategic use of rewards and punishments to bring the belligerents to the negotiating table. Finally, where consent is absent, third parties are likely to be required to take on a multiplicity of functions, including peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and possibly peace enforcement. See David Carment and Frank Harvey, *Using Force to Prevent Ethnic Violence*, Westport, CT: Praeger Press, 2000. At this end of the spectrum, preventive efforts involve the exercise of force to either deter or, possibly, subdue intransigent combatants. Thus the forms of prevention range from traditional preventive diplomacy to its more forceful descendents. The specific tactics and strategies associated with these third-party efforts are examined elsewhere, for example in I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*, 2nd ed., New York: Oxford University Press, 1989; William J. Durch, *The Evolution of UN Peacemaking: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993; John G. Ruggie, “The New US Peacekeeping Doctrine,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 175–84, 1994; David Carment and Patrick James, eds., *Peace in the Midst of Wars: Preventing and Managing International Ethnic Conflicts*, Columbus, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998. Recent international developments have led to fundamental changes in the nature of conflict prevention (Jentleson, this volume). Before the end of the Cold War, preventive efforts were generally performed to monitor cease-fire arrangements between warring states. The superpowers of the Cold War period could either block formal United Nations missions or deter most unilateral efforts on the part of their rival. David Carment and Dane Rowlands, “Three’s Company: Evaluating Third Party Intervention into Intrastate Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 42, No. 6, October, 2000.
1998, pp. 572–99. With the reduced importance of traditional ideologically based rivalry, the ability for individual states or state coalitions to intervene in the conflicts of others has increased dramatically. Furthermore, with the loosening of ideological bonds and the erosion of strong state centres backed by foreign governments, the likelihood of intrastate conflict has risen, especially conflict over territory and identity.


7. Hammarskjöld’s approach covers, however, only one type of conflict action, i.e. the horizontal, cross-border escalation of violence. In addition, escalation can also be vertical when the destructiveness of violence increases within a given political unit without spilling over boundaries to other units. A critical difference between these two processes of escalation lies in their relationship with the principle of sovereignty. In the former case, national sovereignty is violated and thus the offence-defence cycle is set in motion.

8. According to the Carnegie Commission’s *Report*, in declining situations a number of steps may help manage the crisis and prevent the emergence of violence. First, states should resist the traditional urge to suspend diplomatic relations as a substitute for action and instead maintain open, high fidelity lines of communication with leaders and groups in crisis. Second, governments and international organizations must express in a clear and compelling way the interests being affected. Third, the crisis should immediately be put on the agenda of the UN Security Council or of the relevant international organization, or both, early enough to permit preventive action. At the same time, a means should be established to track developments in the crisis, to provide regular updates, and to include a mechanism to incorporate information from NGOs and other non-governmental actors to support high-level deliberations on unfolding events. Fourth, and notwithstanding the foregoing imperative to broaden the multilateral context of an unfolding crisis, governments should be attentive to opportunities to support quiet diplomacy and dialogue with and between moderate leaders in the crisis. Special envoys and representatives of key states or regional organizations or on behalf of the UN have time and again demonstrated their value, particularly in the early stages of a crisis. Diplomatic and political strategies to avert a looming crisis demand creative ways of defusing tensions and facilitating mutual accommodation among potential belligerents.


11. In this respect the behaviour and actions of the outside actors is contingent on a specific and usually pre-specified desired behaviour of the internal parties, or they can do so through support for a more “hands on” approach which seeks transformation or changes in the initial conditions which precipitated the conflict. Nicolaides, “International Preventive Action: Developing a Strategic Framework.” pp. 23–72.

12. Capacity building is the process by which outside actors provide the means to address root causes through blueprints and resources – for local stakeholders through such activities often associated with development, support for human rights and democratization, but not exclusively.


15. Margaretha Af Ugglas, a former Chairman in Office of the OSCE and former Swedish Foreign Minister contends that success in conflict prevention is related to the following five key factors: the degree of political support from the parties concerned; the prudent selection of political and diplomatic instruments to be applied; a careful balance between public and quiet diplomacy; the adoption of a long-term approach; the extent of cooperation with other international organizations.

16. Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Preventing Violent Conflict: A Study, Stockholm: Norstedts Tryckeri AB, 1997. Key recommendations include: strengthening civil society, strengthening of regional security arrangements, efforts to address religious and cultural conflicts and strengthening of early warning mechanisms such as FEWER.


18. See for example Stedman, “Alchemy for a New World Disorder: Overselling Preventive Diplomacy.”

19. Here the distinction between risk assessment and early warning is important. The policy relevance of early warning stems directly from the fact early warning systems are not restricted to analysing a crisis, but also assess the capacities, needs, and responses for dealing with a crisis. Second, early warning is essentially networks – states, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs – conducting their analyses together in order to prevent likely events from occurring. According to the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER) early warning is “the communication of information on a crisis area, analysis of that information and development of potential strategic responses to respond to the crisis in a timely manner. The central purpose of early warning is not only to identify potential problems but also to create the necessary political will for preventive action to be taken”, www.fewer.org.


21. Indeed, to convince themselves that action is necessary, strategists must have knowledge about the costs of not being involved coupled with the likelihood that a conflict will escalate. Early warning is necessary only if decision makers can be persuaded that accurate information is useful for finding an appropriate fit between strategy, the problem at hand and the resources available (Jentleson, this volume). Such an approach has two implications. First, it means that the analysis of events and intelligence gathering do not fit neatly into compartmentalized and modular frameworks of responsibilities
(if they ever did). Second, it means that in order to cope with events as they unfold "just in time," strategies of information gathering and analysis become crucial. Long-term planning tends to take a back seat to more medium and short-term contingency planning.


23. Gurr, "Early Warning Systems."


25. Gurr, "Early Warning Systems."
