

**Proceedings of Seminar on Intrastate Conflict  
And Options for Policy**

Held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague

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## **Preface**

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These proceedings report the major issues and topics discussed during the Seminar on Intrastate Conflict and Options for Policy held at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, on 16-17 November 1998. The seminar was organized by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' in collaboration with the Ministry. I would like to thank the speakers, workshop chairmen, discussants, participants and rapporteurs for their contribution to the seminar and this report.

Georg E. Frerks  
Head Research Project 'Causes of Conflict in the Third World'

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## Opening speech

Mr. H. Siblesz, Deputy Director-General for Political Affairs, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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I would like to extend a warm welcome to our guests, who have come from West Africa, South Asia, Central America, the US and Europe. You will spend two days to exchange ideas. Each one of you, scholars and policy makers alike, has to leave your own world and particular discussion, and try to think together in what way academic work may contribute to resolving a number of questions politicians and policy makers are facing in everyday practice, i.e. what topics of policy interests could be selected as issues for applied academic research. Violent conflict lends itself in particular for such an exercise, as it escapes many well-intended attempts at management and solution. Conflict seems to be more intractable than ever. Once “clear and orderly” forms of war have given way to chaotic situations. The diversity of parties involved make that the situation is difficult to understand, and even more difficult to handle. Many attempts at conflict resolution have failed, and even when agreements were made, they were disregarded by one or more parties involved. Conflicts have become protracted and very often there are gray areas between conflict and peace, interspersed with episodes of cruel violence.

This conference deals with the problem of violent intrastate conflict, the main type of conflict since 1945. Although it has been with us for the last 50 years, most of these conflicts have taken place in the Third World. Is that why it has caught the attention of policy makers only since a number of years? Also intellectual efforts of the academic community, as well as the military establishment, have been primarily focused on superpower competition and East-West relations. Intrastate conflict deserves proper study exactly because it is invariably rooted in complex political, social and economic relationships within and between the societies involved.

Although the word ‘intrastate’ may suggest otherwise, the issue is of relevance to this Ministry. First, it not only causes tremendous suffering in the world, but it also undermines years of painful development efforts and pushes countries back, in some cases for decades. Second, intrastate conflicts often have an international dimension. Not only in the specific region involved, undermining the relations between neighboring states, but also at the level of the international community it becomes a matter of concern, as such conflicts may affect stability beyond the region concerned. Third, intrastate conflict is a widespread, global phenomenon: from the Balkans to Africa, to Asia and America, the effects of which, in terms of refugees and displaced persons, are felt also elsewhere.

The scope of the problem makes it necessary for policy makers to deal with it in a structured way. In the Netherlands conflict prevention and humanitarian aid have gradually moved up the political agenda and became specific policy topics. This was partly in response to developments in the world at large, but also has to do with the Netherlands’ international outlook and active role in international organizations and discussions. The Netherlands’ concern with this topic emanates also from the fact that the Netherlands is the only country in the world whose constitution requires it to promote the international legal order as part of its international policies. In this connection it is worthy to note that the Netherlands will be a

member of the Security Council in the next two years. Increasingly, albeit reluctantly, the Security Council is dealing with intrastate conflict, thus recognizing that such conflict may threaten international peace and security.

Our concern with violent conflict has led us to develop an active multilateral and bilateral policy. We are important contributors to the programs of the ICRC, the UNHCR, World Food Program, and a multitude of NGOs active in conflict ridden countries. A special department on Humanitarian Aid and Conflict Prevention has been created within the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Our policy making in this area is now being conducted in a way that attempts to integrate all relevant aspects. Our involvement has also led to commissioning research internationally as well as in the Netherlands itself with the aim of enhancing insight into the causes of conflict. The project the Clingendael Institute has been implementing with its counterparts: the International Center for Ethnic Studies in Sri Lanka, the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress in Costa Rica, and the Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA, Senegal) and the Center for Advanced Social Science in Nigeria, is an example of such a research endeavor funded by the Dutch government. Active participation of counterparts in the Third World is an essential requirement for conducting this type of studies. I am very glad that all of you have been able to accept the invitation of the Clingendael Institute and this Ministry to discuss the findings of this research with the staff of this Ministry. This will give the discussion a sense of reality and involvement which can only be welcomed.

The complexity of intrastate conflicts and their multiple causes call for a multi-disciplinary approach, and a coordinated effort at the institutional level. Government policies can be dangerous and counterproductive. Ill-conceived policies have led to situations of violent conflict. The Clingendael study has shown how important the functioning of the state and proper government policies can be in this regard. A focused and well-designed analysis of particular cases of failure and success may be used to enhance the state's capability as well as the effectiveness of its policies.

This project on Causes of Conflict in the Third World was executed in cooperation with local institutes and researchers in the three regions concerned. This type of cooperation is promoted by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs since it gives us both the opportunity to focus on local perspectives on conflict and specific issues in the various regions and countries, and acquire in-depth knowledge. The various workshops devoted to the specific problems of each region, will be attended by representatives of the regional departments of the Ministry. We hope to benefit from the combination of a regional perspective and a thematic focus.

As regards the research project and its findings, I would like to highlight a few important themes.

- *Issues of governance:* case studies have indicated that regime characteristics are responsible for political tensions and may lead to conflict in situations where regimes are not seen as a legitimate representation of the different sections of a country's population. Organizing free and democratic elections is senseless without a democratic culture. Power sharing arrangements and re-distributive justice are essential. Too often there is a situation of "winner takes all" in which large sections of the population may become politically alienated and economically marginalized. Especially in combination with divisions along ethnic, religious or regional identities, tensions may easily develop or escalate into violent resistance. In a number of countries such government practices have led to calls for separatism.

- *Types of democracy*: on the international agenda and in discussions of international fora, much has been said about the role of Western representative democracy. Very often this form of governance is being promoted at least as the best solution imaginable. On the other hand there are concerns that models of governance like that cannot be introduced into cultures which may have different traditions of leadership and government. In the studies to be discussed at this conference much attention has been paid to issues of state formation and pluralism and questions of institutionalization and democracy. Though the studies are not conclusive as regards to what would entail the best regime as far as conflict avoidance is concerned, many factors have been identified which will invite a fruitful and stimulating discussion. The question is whether or not there is a particular way in which Africa, Asia or South America can operationalize notions of political participation and equitable decision making. The conclusions of your seminar in this connection will be relevant to both thematic departments and the regional departments of this Ministry.
- Another issue of concern is what to do in a *post-conflict situation*. Measures to be taken include the restoration of the political order and a representative system of government, judicial processes to deal with violations of human rights and reconciliation between the different parties involved in the conflict. In addition there are many needs in a physical and economic sense. Infrastructure has to be rebuilt and the economy revitalized. All these processes have to be managed properly as they may contain the seeds for new tensions and even may escalate into violent conflict if the original causes of discontent are not dealt with in the process of restoration. The suggestion by the Clingendael Institute to pay attention in their future research efforts to what one may call the conflict potential of conflict resolution mechanisms is a pertinent one. This topic is highly relevant in view of our ongoing involvement in post-conflict rehabilitation efforts.
- This brings me automatically to the next topic, namely, *the role of development cooperation* in preventing conflict or building a society in which at least tensions can be managed in a peaceful way. Without idealizing development cooperation, it is the conviction of the Dutch government that only properly implemented structural development in the Third World can provide a solution to many of the pressing problems that you will discuss today and tomorrow. Development is not a process of simple economic growth. It encompasses issues as contributions to a democratic political order, transparent and just government, participation in decision making at all levels, and respect for culture and group based identities. On the other hand the notion of development itself and the way development processes are implemented are not uncontroversial. The paradox of the situation is that under certain circumstances development may lead to tensions and even overt conflict. This paradox should be given the academic attention that it requires.

Your conclusions regarding these subjects and your agenda for future research will be of particular importance for development of policies to be implemented in the coming years. This is not a small challenge. On behalf of the Minister for Development Cooperation I invite you to invest all your professional skills to meet that challenge.

# **Major Findings of Research Project 'Causes of Conflict in the Third World'**

Prof. Dr. G.E. Frerks, Head Research Project, Clingendael Institute, The Netherlands

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It is a pleasure to have all of you with us to discuss the important topic of intrastate conflict in the Third World. It is my role today to present to you some of the major findings of the research project 'Causes of conflict in the Third World' in the hope that these may form a fruitful basis for our discussions. As Mr. Siblesz rightfully pointed out, this project has been a research endeavor by the Clingendael Institute together with four institutes in the regions concerned, i.e. the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) in Sri Lanka, the Arias Foundation in Costa Rica, the Centre for Advanced Social Science (CASS) in Nigeria and the Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in Senegal. In annexe II of the background documentation for the seminar you will find the complete list of research documents produced in the project as well as the names of the numerous individual researchers involved. If I say that I am going to summarize the major findings of the project, I may immediately add that I cannot really do justice to all the detailed material reported in these studies. Those interested in the regional and thematic issues in larger detail, are kindly invited to consult the basic documentation itself.

## **Research objectives and questions**

The goals of the research project included the contribution to a better understanding of the causes and nature of intrastate conflict in the Third World and the formulation of policy options on how to deal with such conflicts. Questions that were addressed related to the mechanisms that moved conflicts in stages with a higher level of armed violence and to the reasons as why certain countries seemed more susceptible to the escalation of conflict than others.

The research approach has been a very empirical one. These findings were not based on the prevailing literature alone, but on special case studies carried out in the countries themselves, mostly by experts from these areas, to look into specific historic circumstances of individual cases, or episodes of internal conflict. The specific research questions to be looked into were also empirical or -as some might feel- rather basic. They read as follows:

1. Which conflict histories can be identified in the countries under study and how can the course of these conflicts be described?
2. Which actors were involved in the conflict and how can their behavior be explained?
3. Which factors or clusters of interrelated factors and circumstances (political-military, socioeconomic and external) account for the origin and development of violent conflict in those countries or the absence or de-escalation thereof?
4. Which policy options or recommendations with regard to early warning, conflict prevention/mitigation, and conflict resolution can be derived from the conflict studies and the analysis of the origins and development of conflict in the countries under study?

From the questions you may already sense that one of the valuable results of the studies carried out have become the detailed descriptions of the conflicts studied. I personally was quite impressed by the dynamic and historical nature of these cases.

These studies evidently drove home the point that such conflicts usually have roots far beyond the present day or yesterday, and that we may have to go back to colonial times or earlier for a proper contextualization of the factors involved. They also show an, at times, bewildering variety of factors and circumstances that conspire to make a situation conflict-prone. It was clear that nearly each conflict was complex and locally and historically specific, but we learned also that at a higher level of abstraction there were common elements that also perhaps would be useful to consider when pondering about policies to deal with conflict situations.

Invariably it seemed also to be of importance to have a close look at the actors involved. Of central importance was in many cases the role of the state. State policies were seen to have a large impact on the origin of conflict and, by consequence, were also central to any solution of them. The role of non-state actors and that of external actors (neighboring countries, the superpowers) were scrutinized, too.

### **Explanatory factors and methodological aspects**

Besides the value of the dynamic description these cases stood also out in the sense that they addressed a fairly large number of explanatory factors that were ordered in three clusters.

The first cluster entailed *political-military factors* including the formation of states and nations and the role of governance, democratization and human rights. Also the position of minorities and the role of ethnic and cultural factors were discussed. The centralization or monopolization of state power, mechanisms of power transition and the role of the army and arms in society were also looked into. In the cluster of *socioeconomic factors* attention was paid to poverty and socioeconomic inequality. The discriminatory nature of many government policies presumably would lead to the alienation and marginalization of certain groups in society. In the cluster *external factors* the regional security setting and external military as well as economic interventions were studied.

To arrive at a certain level of comparability between the twenty-odd case studies a common conceptual and analytical framework and checklists were used in the data collection, description and analysis. In order to focus the discussion of the results, which were mainly based on an inductive approach, on a similar set of issues, a number of tentative working hypotheses were formulated. Causal relationships were pre-supposed between the outbreak of violent conflict and factors that were thought to be instrumental in this connection. You find these hypotheses on page three of the background document and they focus on the institutional capacity of a regime, power sharing and transition, economic factors (poverty, growth and inequality) and external interventions and the regional security setting.

As regard to the role of such factors in the different phases of the conflict (such as the *tensing*, *escalating*, *de-escalating* and *settlement* phases), it was possible to distinguish them into four different categories. *Triggers* are events that indeed trigger off a conflict but are not necessary or sufficient to explain it. *Pivotal factors* lay at the root of a conflict and appear in almost all phases of the conflict and need to be addressed in order to solve the conflict eventually. Issues around which individuals or groups are mobilized into violent action are called *mobilizing factors*. The role of leaders and political entrepreneurs is always important in this connection. Finally, we have *aggravating factors*. They add to the weight of mobilizing or pivotal factors but are not sufficient on their own to cause conflict. An example is the proliferation of small arms.



Regarding the regions and countries selected there were salient differences in colonial history and present-day politics and circumstances of conflict in respectively South Asia, Central America and West Africa. In this short introduction I cannot dwell on the historical and actual characteristics of those regions and countries and have to leave that to your own imagination. In chapter two of the background document we have given a brief, synoptic history of each region and an overview of the conflicts studied in each country. A limited number of countries in these regions were believed to have had a comparatively peaceful, recent past in which there had been no major intrastate conflict. They were included in the study as a type of control case. Costa Rica is an example, and Ghana. Bangladesh was originally also put into this category, but did -on closer scrutiny- better qualify as a state with intrastate conflict, though of a very diversified nature.

### **Types of conflict**

The descriptive overview of conflicts showed a variety of different types of conflict. In a majority of the countries we have seen some border dispute with a neighboring state, the most explosive being perhaps the Jammu-Kashmir case between Pakistan and India. These border disputes were in many cases a heritage of colonial times. But it also happened that they were a spillover effect of intrastate conflict, e.g. through the movement of populations or refugees over the border. Most countries have problems around minority groups, be they of an ethnic, religious and sectarian, linguistic or regional nature. Often the conflicts center around the issue of political power, but others have to do with regional claims or those on scarce resources, sometimes exacerbated through the influx of competing groups from elsewhere. In some areas there are tribal or inter-tribal conflicts. Conflict may also be of an ideological nature and again in other parts it is just to do with unchecked criminal and terrorist activity.

Conflicts that have identity politics and state discrimination as their root causes may develop into movements for autonomy or full independence. A number of them have turned into bloody civil wars. In other cases we saw resistance movements against dictatorial and authoritarian regimes, that were often of a military nature. Most of these conflicts were intrastate in the sense that there was no officially declared war between two states, but this is not to say there was no external (overt or covert) interference by or spillover effects to other countries. The borderline between intrastate and interstate conflict is not as precise as the words would suggest, and this may call for a re-conceptualization of this dichotomy.

### **Major findings: political-military aspects**

Many of the conflicts studied centered around the political problem of creating or sustaining states in a plural ethnic, religious or cultural society. This was nearly always related to the way the governments of the day were functioning. Governments that were initially conceived as secular and non-partisan mediators between the various sectors and groups of society have been favoring certain sectors of society (usually their own groups and allies), while excluding or even repressing other ethnic, religious or political groups.

The politicization of especially ethnic and related cultural identities, often as a result of discriminating policies at the national level, has caused severe conflicts, the most extreme example perhaps being the secession of East Bengal. Exclusion and a failing political system without fair and equal access to decision-making and resources at the Center, create a potential for mobilization among excluded groups as well as for violent opposition movements. Before we embrace democracy as a solution for all ills, our studies provide the sobering insight that both authoritarian states and democratic regimes face internal conflict

due to these reasons. Democracy and democratization do not seem to guarantee the absence or prevention of violent conflict.

For any regime the aspects of consensus, authority, loyalty and consent are important for regime legitimacy. A legitimacy deficit can result in violent conflict. There are democracies, where the (e.g. ethnic) majority is not prepared to share power with minorities or to form coalitions. The mere fact of having formally a democratic order does not yet imply equal access to resources and opportunities for all to participate effectively in politics. The way democratic governments guarantee rights and opportunities of minority groups is highly significant when it comes to preventing conflict. When democracies become exclusionary democracies –as happened in a number of cases in our research-, minorities may feel that they have no alternatives than violent opposition to voice their discontent. In some African countries it was prohibited in the Constitution to organize political parties along ethnic lines to prevent such a thing from happening, but the suppression of sub-state identities in this way neither provided an answer. The alternative was frequently a type of one-party system having other disadvantages from a democratic point of view.

In again other countries, we have seen military dictatorships or authoritarian regimes that lacked legitimacy and only served the interests of those in power and their immediate friends and allies. In some cases these regimes even turned into so called predatory states that extracted resources and exploited and suppressed their populations. It will be evident that such behavior undermines the legitimacy of the state quickly and simultaneously may even endanger the whole concept of the state itself.

A third aspect of statehood refers to the institutional capacity, the instrumental machinery to deliver goods and services to the population. Some governments seem nearly completely unable to do so and can be referred to as failed states, which nearly have lost their sovereign authority. Others show serious weaknesses and omissions in this regard. An analysis of the performance of the state in e.g. the executive, juridical, security and development sectors may shed light on the state's capacity concerned. In some countries the state is out of control of areas which are governed by criminal gangs and 'extortion lords'. In other states we find serious shortcomings in the judiciary, while elsewhere the state fails to deliver basic goods and services to particular areas or sometimes even to the population at large. The capacity to deliver seems to have eroded even further as a consequence of the IMF and World Bank sponsored structural adjustments programs.

### **Economic aspects**

Structural factors in the economies concerned as well as issues of poverty, inequality and economic growth do not directly relate to conflict in most of the cases studied in this project. Conflict could occur under circumstances of relative poverty as well as relative progress and among better-off groups as well as less privileged ones. Only when inequality and poverty were perceived as a result of identity politics and conscious, discriminatory government policies leading to dynamics of differentiation vis-à-vis other (competing) groups in society, then they could directly be related to conflict. Absolute levels of poverty matter less than staying behind or deteriorating in comparison with others. It is logical that in these cases we see a clear overlap with the political dimension of conflict.

Another observation in the socioeconomic realm also relates to a situation of relative deprivation. Groups that were earlier predominant, are now losing their erstwhile more powerful positions to other contenders for power and resources. This often creates tensions

that turn violent as evidenced in more than one case. In connection with the institutional capacity of the government something has been said already about the delivery of goods and services. A failure to address the development aspirations of the people may eventually cause discontent and tensions. However, to erupt into violent action such a failure should normally be linked to discriminatory treatment by the government along divisions of identity and culture or be discussed in terms of a radical ideology.

### **External dimensions**

The external dimensions in Asia have to do with the dominant position of India compared to its neighbors and the fact that South Asia always has been a prime target for major external political powers. This culminated in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and US support to *mujahideen* forces. All neighboring states are at present involved in one way or the other in the Afghanistan imbroglio. Also the relationship between India and Pakistan has evidently an external dimension. The protracted character of many conflicts in the region has created, moreover, new actors and some of them have strategic interests to continue violent confrontations in a bid to acquire power or profit through a whole range of illicit activities.

The regional security setting in Africa was relatively quiet in the period right after independence, but has witnessed a proliferation of intrastate conflicts in the last decades. The most important external power in the region has always been France that continued to be heavily involved in the politics and economies of most of the Francophone countries. But there have also been other countries involved such as during the Biafra war. Interstate border disputes were largely a result of colonial state formation and the arbitrary delineation of borders in that period. This also resulted in incongruities between ethno-linguistic communities and state borders as well as problems of resource distribution between those communities.

The major external dimension in Central America has been the continuous political and economic interference of the United States and the ideological contradictions of the cold war. Superpower contradictions turned into an all-out proxy war in the region after the Sandinist revolution took place. Most of the outside military support was generally, however, in response to intrastate conflicts once they had emerged, and not so much preceding and causing them.

### **Some final conclusions**

The political-military aspects are most salient as to explain the outbreak and course of violent conflict in the Third World. The institutional capacity of the state and adequate processes of power sharing and transition are important factors. The cases lend support to the notion that the likelihood of conflict diminishes with an increase the state's institutional capacity. This not only refers to institutional presence and the instrumental strength of the state to control its populations and territories or to implement policies. This can even be achieved without popular backing and by the use of force and coercion. It rather does mean legitimacy: an evaluation of the state in terms of its performance and acceptance among the groups and areas under its control.

Power sharing is closely related and refers to the way in which groups constituting the community of a state are represented and able to participate in politics in all its dimensions, including access to state allocated funds and services and decision-making at the different levels in society. The failure of states to grant rights to minority groups has led in general to violent conflict in all three regions though in Asia and Africa these were primarily based on

identity politics and in Central America more on ideological divisions. Once these violent situations have emerged, however, they are difficult to reverse, even if concessions are made eventually by the state. Although the concrete grievances, tensions and type of conflicts vary, there is a strong support to the notion that a lack of power sharing -or the implementation of conscious policies of marginalization and exclusion by the state-, contribute to violent conflict. When such conflicts are identity-related they become very difficult to handle.

The studies also support the notion that rapid power transitions or the sudden or gradual loss of power by erstwhile predominant groups may lead to violent reactions.

In summary, it can be concluded that the political dimension studied in the cases was a powerful determinant or contributor to violence. It was, in contrast, a salient and perhaps surprising result of the study, that economic factors in and of themselves were not such determinant or pivotal factors as regard to the outbreak of conflict. Absolute levels of poverty, inequality and lack of economic growth or progress did not show a clear covariance with the prevalence of violent conflict and armed struggle. They certainly became relevant in a number of situations, but this was nearly always in combination with other factors, such as identity politics, discriminatory or exclusionary government policies, the relative improvement of other groups in society as compared to the relative decline of one's own (i.e. relative deprivation). Such issues also required often an ideological context, leadership or political entrepreneurs before people rallied around them.

The role of external factors has been important in a number of conflicts where there was direct military interference of outside powers, but in most cases the contribution of external factors has been more indirect. Military aid was mostly given once conflict had started and, at the most, increased the duration and intensity of the conflict. Economic interference has never led to the outbreak of conflict directly, but massive economic aid has propped up the parties involved in conflict and in this manner prolonged the struggle in some cases. An unstable regional and superpower setting has led to proxy wars. Mostly, external meddling was more diffuse, in which outside interventions and covert actions have intensified or prolonged the conflict.

By way of final conclusion, I may forward that the study has given some clear indications of what is important in the study of violent conflict. The nature of the conflicts has been conceptualized and contextualized. Conflicts are historical, dynamic and multi-dimensional, they have multiple causes and consequences of which a number are unexpected and unintended. They also involve a multitude of actors and have to be approached from different levels of analysis and intervention. Though we have not pursued the analysis at the micro-level, I believe that the multiplex nature of conflict at that level is even more difficult to tackle, as also gender and generational issues have to be taken into account, to mention only some obvious elements.

In our attempt at explanation, issues of a 'real' political nature have once again become salient and even seem to relate to present-day development fashions around issues of democracy and good governance as promoted by the international community. However, it was at the same time established that a simple, formal approach to such questions would be insufficient in the circumstances prevailing in the countries studied. The relevance of identity politics was asserted again and it was painful to see how states have failed to deal with this issue sensibly. In this connection, the role of political entrepreneurs and the use of different

types of discourse could have been studied at more depth than was done perhaps in the present study.

Regarding the economic factors we have stressed that they played an aggravating or mobilizing role in combination with other factors mainly of a political nature. I myself was rather puzzled by this outcome. In my mind it raises questions as to the exact relationship between economic factors and conflict, between poverty and conflict and between such an issue as resource scarcity in the future and chances on conflict. What is then the role of development and development co-operation, or is this role controversial and paradoxical per definition, as analyzed in some Dutch white papers on conflict and development, and as also suggested in the speech by Mr. Siblesz? Is there a moment conceivable when economic factors become an issue in themselves or do poverty, inequality, economic decline and resource scarcity always have to be mediated through a process of political mobilization or incensed by identity politics, exclusion and discrimination, before they become conflict-prone?

The dichotomy intrastate and interstate conflict seems to need a re-conceptualization as well as the thinking in categories like local, national, state and sub-state. It seems to me that interdependencies at all levels and between all actors have to be acknowledged before we will learn how to deal with these intractable and protracted forms of conflict.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the results of these studies will help us to ask the correct questions and may help us also, at least, to formulate some answers to them. I am sure this seminar will be a fruitful step into that direction.

I thank you very much for your kind attention.

# Causes of Conflict: The Political-Military Dimension

Keynote speaker: Dr. F. Deng, The Brookings Institution, USA

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Conflict resolution, human rights, democracy, and sustainable development are major problem areas that call for serious study that can be translated into policy to be acted upon. In this all, culture is a cross-cutting theme.

First, it is important to look at some global trends that impact upon our perceptions of conflict situations and policy implications. The most obvious is the post Cold War shift from the distorted perception of superpower conflict to a contextualization of conflict. The withdrawal of superpowers from the Third World conflicts has led to a marginalization of certain areas, which is clearly a negative effect, but a challenge as well. There is also a paradoxical tension between the processes of globalization (e.g. in economic dimensions) and localization in which various groups are beginning to assert their identity, and demand recognition and effective participation in the national and regional processes. Here as well, cultural dimensions raise critical questions.

In order to understand conflicts, and here the focus will be on Africa, it is very important to look at the logic of the evolution of a crisis. One of the factors we have to look at is colonialism, which created diversities as well as disparities in power and resources. During this period, the unifying factor was found in the liberation struggle. At independence, the emergence of differences became a threat to the integrity of the state, and therefore it was decided to respect and preserve the colonial borders, and that there be a centralization of power within the states. Democracy and human rights were considered to be secondary to preserving unity and development. This however shifted towards authoritarianism, human rights violations, and dictatorial regimes. During the Cold War period, these states were relatively strong through external support along an ideological divide, but the end of the Cold War meant a weakening of the state. External support was withdrawn, and the lack of indigenous support for the state and internal diversities came to the fore.

One of the diversities is related to identity. An identity crisis can manifest itself in a number of ways, most of which have to do with the degree to which the nation is defined with reference to one's identity group. Often there is a gap between the definition of a nation and identities of the various groups and the sharing of power based on identity. It is however not the differences in itself that cause conflict, but instead the consequences of these differences, e.g. the level of participation. We should realize that identity cleavages are often fictional or mythical and created during historical processes.

In the African context we can correlate the extent of co-operation and conflict to the nature or model of society. Some are homogeneous and differences are minimal (e.g. Botswana). Most African societies however are characterized by intense ethnic diversity. Some of these, and the West African in particular, have found ways to co-opt leaders of various groups, and managed to some extent to cater for the demands of these groups, even though there is no explicit constitutional recognition of diversity. In other countries, like South Africa and Sudan, cleavages are much more acute, and cannot be easily managed. Much also seems to

depend on how ethnic divide coincides with territorial differences. Discussions have shifted from unitary solutions to measures as devolution, federalism and even secession.

All these issues require the development of a normative framework. Although norms are only a first step, they can be important in providing guidelines. The fundamental principle appears to be sovereignty. There is a notion of responsibility inherent in sovereignty. This means human rights and democratic liberties, and maintaining stability. Hence, sovereignty means responsibility, and this implies accountability at local, regional and international level. However, when a state fails to fulfil its sovereign duties, the international community cannot watch and do nothing. The task of my mandate as a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Internal Displacement has been to develop a normative framework based on international instruments of humanitarian law, human rights law, and refugee law, in order to hold governments accountable to protect and assist their population, or else expect the international community to be concerned and involved.

This need for a framework has also led the African Leadership Forum to try to learn from the lessons of Europe, and focus on issues of security, stability, development and co-operation. Human rights should be the fundamental norms by which to approach these issues. We should however realize that there are different ways of reaching human dignity, and although the principles of human rights are universal, there is also a need to contextualize them. Human rights should be looked at in a holistic way, not only emphasizing political rights, but social and economic rights as well, as they are interconnected. Then the concept of human rights will become more palatable, and are not just seen as finger-pointing and criticism by Western donor countries. The concept also involves elements of assistance, of protection, and of development. Here we can find a common ground to pursue together the cause of human dignity with degrees of differences but not incompatibilities.

The post-Cold War period has made us rethink our levels of analysis. We have seen the emergence of the sub-regional level as a critical factor. These are the countries that are immediately influenced by developments within the region. Security is thus inseparable and is a common concern. There needs to be apportionment of responsibility. An example of this development is ECOWAS. However, there is a chance that neighboring countries will bring in their own self-interest, and it is for this reason that external, international involvement is necessary to balance these interests. We often assume the international level as a given, and assume that international actors have an obligation to intervene. In reality, arguments as national interest also figure as a basis of involvement elsewhere. Hopefully the idea of welfare for the nation will expand to humanity, human dignity, and global solidarity.

# Causes of Conflict: The Socioeconomic Dimension

Keynote speaker: Dr. M. Midlarsky, Rutgers University, Center for International Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies, USA

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Socioeconomic factors, and in particular economic discrimination, inequality, and poverty, rarely affect the nature of conflict in a direct way. Although it is useful to consider socioeconomic conditions like inequality to be necessary for the occurrence of violence, they are not sufficient. Other intervening variables are required to supplement the necessary socioeconomic conditions in order to achieve sufficiency. Four relevant areas may be distinguished that demonstrate the effects of the socioeconomic dimension on violent conflict: 1) economic, 2) demographic 3) affine populations and 4) cultural.

In the first place economic inequality; Although the notion of inequality is often reduced to income inequality, here the focus will be on the broader concept of wealth inequality. A specific and extremely relevant case of inequality in wealth is land inequality. This appears to be a particularly relevant notion of inequality in Central America, where research has demonstrated clear patterns of land distribution. Patterned inequality can lead to certain types of violent outcomes: An exponential distribution at the lower end (peasant holdings) of the distribution combined with a fractal distribution at the upper end (large landholders) can yield class-based political violence. The exponential distribution implies lesser degrees of inequality among the peasants, whereas the fractal distribution implies much greater degrees of inequality between large landholders as a class and the peasantry. The pattern of inequality, then, can tell whether the initial stage of insurrection will be single-class (as in El Salvador), or multi-class (as the Nicaraguan revolution) of character.

But there is a second important long term consequence of land inequality and this is its association historically with democracy which can lead to peace both within and between states. This is not the patterned inequality mentioned previously, but a generalized inequality emerging mostly from fractal distributions in the upper range of land holdings. These holdings are emblematic of a secure landholding elite which gradually, over time can yield small political rights which can later burgeon into a contemporary liberal form. The history of England provides a prototypical example. Yet clearly too much inequality of any kind is inimical to democracy if only in its potential for political violence. A curvilinear relationship between wealth inequality and democracy indicates the importance for democracy of at least a moderate amount of this inequality, but too little inequality (e.g. communism) or too much yields lower levels of democracy. At the same time, we must recognize that the process of democratization itself can be inimical to peace both internal and external to the state.

Turning to a second category, the variable of concern here is differential demographic growth. One group's population grows more rapidly than another within a particular unit – country or region; a former dominance is exchanged now for secondary status. Under these circumstances, the displaced dominant group may feel especially threatened. If there is a neighboring affine ethnic population, especially a local majority that can come to aid of the dispossessed dominant, then it may do so. Even only a threatened future local dominance, as the result of a high birthrate, may fuel ethnic hatreds, with potentially murderous consequences.



As a third category, a neighboring affine population can aid in the attack on a minority population, as in the case of Serbia helping the Bosnian Serbs in their destruction of Muslim communities, but only if there is no neighboring large additional affine population to protect the minority. More generally, the presence of an affine population within close proximity of a threatened local population can make the difference between the outcome of a protracted conflict or a shorter genocidal one. Consider the case of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Although only a minority of the population in Sri Lanka, the presence of the vastly greater Tamil population in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, just across the Palk Straits, probably did much to prevent serious thoughts of genocidal activity by the majority Sinhalese. A populous state containing an affine population nested within a much more powerful country (India) must have been a source of considerable discouragement to the local Sri Lankan majority.

The recognition of status reversal can fuel the protracted conflict. A member of a minority Tamil community in Sri Lanka exposed to discriminatory provisions by the majority Sinhalese knows that in Tamil Nadu he or she would be a member of the majority and enjoy, if anything, a favored status. Resentments can yield additional fodder to protract the conflict and not yield to the temptation of political settlement.

Finally, culture as a component of intrastate conflict has been examined. This is especially important in Huntington's assertion of the incompatibility between political cultures such as Islam and the West with its emphasis on democracy and human rights. Here, it is instead argued that one should be careful in stating a relation between culture and conflict, and take the limitations of the concept into account. And although Western-style liberal democracy may be incompatible with Islam, this is not true of voting rights. More rudimentary forms of democracy could be successfully introduced in Islamic countries, with liberal forms possibly gradually developing at a later time. Indeed, analysis revealed that democracies may evolve in a sequence beginning first with voting rights, later institutional development, followed by the introduction of liberal reforms. However, the democratization process itself could present some very rough patches for newly democratizing Islamic countries, especially those with multiple ethnicities within their borders.

In conclusion, it could be said that although socioeconomic deprivation appears to be a necessary condition for conflict, it is not a sufficient one. Additional factors have to be taken into account, such as an incipient or actual change in the balance of power between ethnic groups, the occurrence of a "tipping" event as a conspicuous public event which can galvanize ethnic sentiments, leadership or identity entrepreneurs who can act to mobilize ethnic populations, access to resources and development of organizations to channel these resources into the conflict arenas, and finally the strong possibility of foreign assistance which can support the mobilization efforts of one or more committed ethnies. Together, those individual approaches make for a comprehensive explanation.

# Causes of Conflict: The Policy Dimension

Keynote speech: Prof. Dr. A. Sawyer, Center for Democratic Empowerment, Liberia

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The main causative variables in the research on causes of conflict are found in the political-military dimension. These concern the structures of authority relations, the effectiveness of coercive powers of government, and the application of power sharing mechanisms. The cluster of variables that is referred to as institutional capacity building, or the quality of the management by the state, contains some policy implications in the African case.

Often arguments are heard that justification of the African colonial state is found in the need to preserve unity and to mobilize for rapid development. However, the African state is not performing well on either of the issues. Economic disparities are growing, institutions are breaking down, and the state in itself in some instances is on the verge of collapse. It is therefore necessary to raise the issue of redesigning the African state.

One approach would be the devolution of authority, which in many cases comes down to de-concentration of authority. The challenge however is in finding devolution of authority in greater participation from the bottom. This means finding a way to bridge the interface between the state as a penetrant society on the one hand, and enduring social formations (which range from centralized hierarchies, and different types of patronage systems, to segmentary regimes) that have their own dynamics and transformations, in order to come to an integrative participatory arrangement.

When we talk of redesigning the African state, this involves new institutional arrangements as well as new conceptions of governance. The conceptions of governance and institutions that are commonly in use strive for uniformity, and do not leave room for flexibility and diversity. Up till now, the African state has not evolved a theory of democracy as a normative framework. This however is necessary if one wishes to create the basis for an evolution of structures that will allow for diversity. In particular the attainment of democratic governance at the local level needs to be addressed with some urgency. This is even more so, because some of the West African countries are going through a process of major political transformations. Although each country has to find its own way, the process should receive support from the international community. It is not as much research into policy formulation that is needed, but instead international cooperation into strengthening research institutions and broadening the debate. In this way, research can benefit from societal responses and cross cultural exchanges, and contribute to an innovation that is derived from local realities but enriched with experiences from elsewhere.

Addressing questions of redesigning and building institutional capacity at the national level requires improvement of the constitutional arrangement and the perfection of electoral systems. The effort to build democratic pluralism however has mainly taken place in the framework of multiparty democracy and some formula for ethnic or regional involvement. Now that experience is gained with elections and they have become regular features in African society, the key question is how to improve on the content. The discontent coming from elections often is a cause for conflict, and even though patchworks of arrangements are often made after elections, these do not prevent conflict in the long run.

Hence, redesigning from the top requires a new theory of democracy and a polycentric power design: an arrangement that moves beyond decentralization as we know it, of institutional power sharing at the local, regional and national level through constitutional means, and yet where the locales of power are residing in the individual. Institutions of conflict management should evolve, as well as a government that is willing to cooperate. Here the role of presidents and tenure of power are of significance, since this touches upon regime behavior in the long term, and whether it can be an agent of change in itself. Further, there is a need to entrench certain values, e.g. human rights and democracy, into civil society.

A last point that needs to be touched upon, is the proliferation of small arms as a significant aggravating factor of conflict. Some initiatives of co-operation are now undertaken at the international, subregional and intrastate level, as the chance of conflict may be minimized with a scarcity of small arms.

# Causes of Conflict: A Plenary Discussion

Chair: Prof. Dr. G.E. Frerks, Head of Research Project, Clingendael Institute,  
The Netherlands

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## **The concept of state**

In the keynote speeches on the causes of conflict, the various speakers used different approaches to the concept of state. Whereas Dr. Midlarsky of the Center for International Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies was clearly state-oriented in his speech, expecting the state to provide some leadership to bring society up, Prof. Dr. Sawyer of the Center for Democratic Empowerment instead chose a society-oriented approach, reminding us to take society seriously. Dr. Deng of The Brookings Institutions talked about the African state as a to some extent artificial colonial creation.

While observing this disagreement in approach, Prof. Dr. Mitra of the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg remarked that a theory of the state for the 21st century is still lacking. State formation today is much more difficult and complex as it has been in the 16th and 17th century. What is the state we are aiming at? According to Prof. Mitra this is a question of theory, and needs a lot more discussion.

## **Euro-centric bias on Western ideas**

Prof. Dr. Mitra further remarked that in many discussions on state formation there is an underlying bias on Western ideas. Liberal state theories imply that Third World countries need to learn the western virtues of social tolerance, reciprocity, and civil society. At the same time these liberal states apply their human rights policies in a selective manner. The assumption that there is something as a broad normative consensus is incorrect. It is instead a question of how to put those different cultural virtues into the agent of the state, while respecting the norms of the modern state.

Dr. Midlarsky remarked that it is not yet clear what “authentic” is. More authentic systems are still in the process of development. Currently, the “basic norms” that we are talking about are more universal, and this happens to be the representative system we have in the West. Only when authentic systems have come to full development, we have the possibility of looking at them more carefully and make comparisons.

Dr. Deng commented that although the African state is a colonial creation, there has also been an indigenization process. The African state now is caught between a perception of the state as an external imposition and the attempt to give it domestic roots. It depends on the degree in which we try to make use of indigenous values and institutions in the process of building an African nation. We need to be more sensitive to diversity within nations. It is not simply a question of political accommodation. Even in terms of development these indigenous values and institutions and patterns of behavior are enormous resources that have not been utilized to the full extent. For too long we have looked “external” to Africa, but we need to look “internally” and tap from our own indigenous institutions and values.

In the opinion of Prof. Dr. Sawyer, it may indeed be necessary also to emphasize normative matters that are often referred to as Western ideas and mechanisms. In Africa ethnic,

religious, and communal sentiments are mobilized in sometimes deadly power struggles, and politics are still viewed as a zero-sum game, in which the winner takes all. It is then important to learn from mechanisms that can help to develop expressions of values, a regularity of processes, and continue survival of the opposition.

### **Centralization versus decentralization**

Prof. Dr. Ganguly of Hunter College commented on what he called the “false dichotomy of centralization and decentralization”. Although centralization often has a bad name in the Third World, under certain circumstances it is essential. Without centralized neutral power you cannot get past certain forms of social backwardness, change certain unfair social conditions, and people are then left to the vagaries of local politics and wielders of local power.

### **The conflict potential of development**

While talking about ways to mitigate and limit conflict, the need was expressed to realize that development in itself is an inherently conflict-ridden process. Development generates all manners of conflict as people become mobilized, enter the political arena, clash over and compete for scarce resources. It is therefore necessary to study conflict in a longer historical perspective, and only then try to find ways of mitigation.

The same goes for the democratization process as a cause of conflict. Prof. Dr. Ganguly however warns that this should not be interpreted as democracy in itself being a cause of conflict. The conflict potential instead is related to inadequate development of democracy, where no properly embedded norms exist and institutions remain weak.

## **Regional Workshop: South Asia**

Chair: Prof. Dr. S.W.R. de A. Samarasinghe, Tulane University, USA

Research findings: Prof. Dr. K.M. de Silva, Director ICES, Kandy, Sri Lanka

Comments: Prof. Dr. S. Ganguly, Hunter College, CUNY, USA

Comments: Mr. A. Lansink, The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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### **Major research findings by Prof. Dr. de Silva**

In comparison to the other regions, the South Asian region is more prone to intra-state conflict. Prof. Dr. de Silva mentioned two facts that influence the nature of conflict in the region. First, the South Asian countries still live in the shadow of the Raj, which affects stability on questions of boundaries (e.g. Raj–Tibet; Raj–Afghanistan) and on questions of partition (with, amongst others, the Kashmir conflict as a consequence). Second, the dominance of one regional power, India. Recently a third, more dangerous dimension is added by the nuclear tests in India and Pakistan. China, as an external nuclear power affects India and Pakistan in this connection. This issue of nuclear power, however, has not been included in the report on South Asia, since it was written before the tests took place.

Prof. Dr. de Silva continued by looking at the roots of the problems in the region, which he concludes to be a heritage of the past. The main focus was placed on identity issues: With regard to religion it was mentioned in the first place that religious sentiment made it impossible to keep the Raj together. Also the case of Sri Lanka was mentioned, where under Portuguese and Dutch colonial rule the reformation and counter-reformation took place. Whereas people became Christian (mainly) to advance into a better situation, this ‘government christianity’ has caused general cynicism. The British, however, did not associate themselves with a religious trend. So Sri Lanka, which nowadays has to cope with a conflict between Tamils and Buddhists, until 50 years ago was facing a main split between Christians and Buddhists. Another aspect of identity was related to language. After independence the question arose whether to replace colonial language with an indigenous one, and if so, which indigenous language. This has led to a whole series of strife, with the Sinhala-only policy in Sri Lanka being exemplary of opening Pandora’s box.

A third cause of conflict in the South Asian region could be found in ideology. An example of such an ideological conflict of ‘democracy’ versus ‘marxism’ is the conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the JVP. Lastly, Prof. Dr. de Silva mentioned separatism and the continuing process of splitting up the region. And although there are many separatist movements in the South Asian region, nobody has yet discovered how to deal with them (is the use of counter-violence a feasible solution?).

### **Alternative perspectives and comments by Prof. Dr. Ganguly**

Prof. Dr. Ganguly found some areas of disagreement with the introduction of the research findings. First, it is wrong to say that the Raj has created all the problems in the region, as India “has sinned on its own” as well. Second, the dominance of India in the region should not be overstated, and although India is big, the absence of Indian foreign policies should not be ignored. Further, Prof. Dr. Ganguly disagreed with the observation that the current rulers in Delhi are unrepresentative of the whole country. It should also be taken into account that the Indian caste structure is not pyramid-shaped any more. People have become increasingly

capable of standing up for their right, and nowadays people from the lower castes are government members as well. A last comment concerned separatism, as Prof. Dr. Ganguly argued that a distinction should be made between separatism and regional or cultural autonomy. It is indeed the oppression of regional and cultural autonomy that creates separatism.

On the basis of these comments, a different framework for conflict resolution was proposed. Prof. Dr. Ganguly preferred to focus on the manipulation of the colonial legacy instead of the colonial legacy in itself. People have autonomy, and the main question then is what have people done with this legacy. Further, in congruence with the current research on conflicts, it is deemed of importance to include the issue of refugees, internally displaced persons and cross border migration into research. Also modernization has provoked conflict in many ways, for example the unequal distribution of resources, power shifts, and threatening identities. In this regard, the observation was made that ideologies of ethnic dominance are growing. Although the main focus in this regard has been on India, the issue is of concern in the other countries of the region as well. Lastly, the extraordinary rise of political mobilization in South Asia was mentioned. A very sophisticated electorate has been created, amongst others through mass media. Simultaneously, however, there is a dramatic institutional decay. As people have no way to express their political discontent or dissent, the combination fuels conflict.

#### **Comments from a policy point of view by Mr. Lansink**

Due to the complexity of South Asian conflicts, Mr. Lansink chose to single out just one area of importance to focus on, namely institutional capacity. In this conflict-prone region, anarchy and an authoritarian regime seem to be the only options. And although the role of government should be the provision of law and order and the protection of life and property, this is not always guaranteed in South Asia. This is understandable as a reaction to colonial government. Government today is over-extended in areas it is not specialized in, while it is not well-functioning in much-needed areas.

#### **Discussion**

Prof. Dr. Mitra of the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg criticized the liberal assumptions of “Orientalism” and the idea that all conflicts are bad. Instead, it should be realized that conflicts do not just happen, they are a product of rational actions. Further, he observed that the external support to minorities often is not strong enough to crush the majority, and not little enough to make the minority hopeless, thus prolonging the conflict.

Prof. Dr. Waseem of St. Antony's College mentioned that the historical reality of British legacy cannot be set aside when studying the conflict history of the region. And although nowadays successive elections have brought indigenous elites to power, it is the performance of the state that provides its legitimacy.

Prof. Dr. Clements of the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution of George Mason University remarked that the research has been extremely state-centric and has almost completely left out the role of civil society. He asked if new visions are developing in the region itself, for example regional institutions such as SAARC, co-operation in conflict solving, and the utilization of economic strength. Other questions were raised as well, for example by Dr. Reilly of International IDEA, who would like to know what is the strength of democracy in the region, and if democracy really could be valued as a solution. Dr. Faber of Interkerkelijk Vredesberaad wondered if the nuclear tests of May 1998 would have changed

the conclusions of the report. Prof. Dr. de Silva answered that this question has not been focus of any research yet, and concludes by saying that the state in South Asia is still alive and kicking, making it unlikely that it will weaken in the near future.



## **Regional Workshop: West Africa**

Chair: Dr. A. M'bembe, CODESRIA, Senegal

Research findings: Dr. E. Nwokedi, Ife University, Nigeria

Comments: Dr. F. Deng, The Brookings Institution, USA

Comments: Mr. G. Smaling, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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### **Major research findings by Dr. Nwokedi**

Dr. Nwokedi opened the workshop by presenting three large conflicts that have been under study. First of all the armed conflict in Niger in the beginning of the 1990s, where Tuaregs and Toubou rebelled. Second, the civil war in Nigeria between 1967 and 1970, during which the Biafra region revolted against the government. Finally, the case of Senegal, with an eruption of intra-state conflict in the Casamance. Dr. Nwokedi made brief mention of the fact that in all three conflict areas under study, external parties played a significant role, be it in supplying arms to the various rebel movements, in mediating between the various parties, or in diplomatic support.

The three conflicts studied have some predominant characteristics in common, including the imposition of a unitary state (in the case of Niger and Senegal) or federation (in the case of Nigeria), and some form of domination by the post-colonial state (in particular in Niger). Apart from these common features, each conflict had its own, more specific conditions. In the case of Niger, one of the aggravating factors was the drought in the 1970s and 1980s that hit the Sahel severely. In Nigeria significant factors were the military coup d'état of 1996, the Ibgo victims of massacres and the import and proliferation of arms. Apart from these so-called aggravating factors, some triggers can be identified as well. The declaration of Biafra in Nigeria, and the issue of self-determination in Niger and Senegal, for example, were triggers that pushed the various parties into conflict.

Dr. Nwokedi continued by talking about the trajectories of the conflicts. Notably in Senegal (the Casamance region), conflict escalated in guerrilla fashion, and this conflict has not been solved up till now. This is, amongst other reasons, due to the large amount of arms being transferred to the Casamance region from Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Iraq. Further, in the 1990s the military have become an increasingly important factor in West-African affairs by staging numerous coup d'états. West-African politics have become "politics by other means", leading to an increase in conflicts.

### **Alternative perspectives and comments by Dr. Deng**

The first comment of Dr. Deng related to the legitimacy of the state. Despite the numerous conflicts in the region, generally there is a broad acceptance of the state. In this regard, the West-African model is distinctive and particularly relevant for Africa as a whole. Various groups in West-African societies today make demands for 'good governance', a more equitable distribution of power and adherence to human rights. The legitimacy of the state as such is not challenged. Of greater significance is the issue of identity. Ethnic and religious identity are structural elements in West-African societies, and although it is realized that these are factors that can be manipulated, they have to be reckoned with. Further, Dr. Deng emphasized the need to distinguish between 'objective means of poverty and inequality' and subjective self-perceptions of poverty. The latter notion is of particular significance to create

scope for development without conflict. When people get incorporated in the world economy, they start to perceive themselves in relation to others, which in some cases may lead to diminishing self-conceptions. Under these circumstances, conflicts are more likely to happen.

In West Africa, and in Sudan in particular, another potential for conflict is found in the process of Islamization. Especially in cases where this process coincides with the election of a Christian leader in a country with a Muslim majority, tensions between various groups in society can increase. Finally, Dr. Deng emphasized that more attention should be directed at the regional level, as the region plays an intermediary role between global forces and the local context.

### **Comments from a policy point of view by Mr. Smaling**

In his contribution, Mr. Smaling pleaded for strengthening the reforms of the UN system. Since the international community has a responsibility beyond humanitarian assistance, there should be room for so-called 'peace aid'. This certainly means integrating 'development' into politics. In this respect, Mr. Smaling stressed the significant contribution of external conflict prevention, which is worth more than military action. Mr. Smaling then mentioned some suggestions with regard to the United Nations: the system should be trimmed down; integration of different policy instruments should be enhanced; deliberation of socio-economic, political and environmental issues at the highest levels; increased efficiency; a cut down in the number of UN meetings; authority should be delegated to lower levels, rather than discussing everything at the UN headquarters in New York.

### **Discussion**

Dr. Ibeanu, representing the Centre for Advanced Social Science in Nigeria, remarked that a lot of conflicts are not mentioned in the outcome of the research (e.g. inter-group conflicts that are not directed at the state). This however is related to the research framework and the rather narrow definition of conflict. His second remark was on the decentralization of the state as a consequence of the failure of the colonial state. Furthermore, the role of state violence was stressed, since it often is the state that makes conflicts in Africa protracted and complex, rather than mediating in the conflict. A last remark concerned the sceptical notion of an "Hobbesian Africa". According to Dr. Ibeanu, we should not only look at the destructive forces in Africa, but focus on potential transnational forces in African nation-building as well.

On the remark of Dr. Eavis of SaverWorld with regard to the role of private companies, Dr. Deng briefly commented by acknowledging multinationals more and more as partners in development, as opposed to the role of those companies in the 1970s and 1980s.

Mr. Sciarone, from the Permanent Delegation of The Netherlands to the OECD, expressed his surprise with regard to the outcome of the research that there is no direct relation between conflict and poverty.

Dr. Schlichte, from the Institut für Politische Wissenschaft at the University of Hamburg, concluded the discussion with the question if there might be a new type of conflict, which one could call the "Taylor-Kabila model": a conflict that is prolonged with the assistance (e.g. arms) from outside, and that could include private companies. Mr. Douma, of the Clingendael Institute for International Relations, responded that, although there are companies that benefit from conflict, this cannot be seen as a model for the entire region. Mr. Deng mentioned that although the symptoms of conflict are of importance, we should be aware that we do not suffice with the suppression of the symptoms, thereby ignoring the underlying problems.

## Regional Workshop: Central America

Chair: Dr. F. Duran Ayanegui, Arias Foundation, Costa Rica

Research findings: Prof. Dr. D. Mares, University of California, USA

Comments: Prof. Dr. D. Kruijt, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands

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### Major research findings by Prof. Dr. Mares

The various countries under study in Central America all followed different paths toward violence and peace settlement. Honduras was characterized by its low level of violence and suppression, leading to a moderate settlement that did not change much. In Nicaragua the predominant element in the conflict was the high level of external interference, which aside from the United States involved Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela. The settlement of the conflict involved a radical change, which left only the military in the hands of the Sandinistas.

Research into the causes of conflict in Central America has shown a general trend in both conflict and settlement: whereas the political-military factor is dominant, socio-economic variables are underlying factors. With regard to the political-military factor, three common characteristics for the Central American region were mentioned to be of significance in the causation of conflict. First, there is a weak institutional structure, political institutions do not embrace the opposition and authoritarian regimes are from the political-left as well as from the right. A further characteristic is the elite's unwillingness to share power. Lastly, demands from civil society for radical change also appear to be crucial in contributing to the followed path toward power transition.

Prof. Dr. Mares continued by focusing on what we may learn from the Central American case to avoid the same life cycle of violence in the future, and on what are the lessons with regard to early warning and foreign intervention in a positive sense. Although the Nicaraguan case stands out as an example in which foreign intervention resulted in an escalation of conflict, the importance and necessity of foreign involvement cannot be stressed enough. The international community however should realize that the development into a modern state takes a long period of time and various stages. By demanding that everything be done at once, domestic development could be undermined. Exemplary is the issue of democracy, which in the Central American case should not be interpreted as the rule of the majority. In these polarized societies, elites are afraid of reform, since their position after reform is not guaranteed. This is an issue that still needs to be addressed.

### Alternative perspectives and comments by Prof. Dr. Kruijt

Prof. Dr. Kruijt first of all stressed the importance of including other countries in the regional study. This could broaden the historical context and include racial and ethnic issues, and shed light on political elite persistence. Further, Prof. Dr. Kruijt mentioned the important role of the military at the political stage (*politicos-militares*). Military orthodoxy, and the idea of political armies is a point of great concern. He suggests that in future research the role of drugs and the army should be included. These are issues that have come to the fore in the post-conflict stage in Central America.

## **Discussion**

Dr. Rosende, of the Organization of American States and closely involved in the research, expanded on the post-conflict situation, and stressed the overarching negative influence of the weak state institutions on Central American society today. Due to the high level of centralization of institutional power, post-conflict zones continue to be peripheral zones, characterized by high levels of violence, poverty, and a lack of state institutions, in particular regarding its primary functions of police and court. Although it could be said that democracy works in the central zone and at the national level, this is not the case for the peripheral zones. Further, Dr. Rosende pointed to the clear link between power-sharing abilities of the elite and conflict-proneness. Whereas Nicaragua and Guatemala have very closed oligarchies, the Salvadoran oligarchy is exemplary of having learned to share institutional and economic power, which has led to a strong peace agreement. With regard to foreign intervention it was mentioned that in the past conflict, U.S. influence does not suffice to explain the violence and problematic situation in the region. For the present and future the international community (UN, OAS, bilateral relations) should play a significant role, since domestic institutions have no legitimacy for all national parties. International involvement then would increase legitimacy of e.g. the police force. Moreover, Latin America has the most unequal societies, and the huge differences in socioeconomic position should be related to conflict-proneness. Dr. Rosende concluded by pointing out the significance of the Central American experience in conflict resolution. Lessons learned in Central America could for example help Colombia to solve problems in the short term.

Mr. Girot, a consultant involved in the research by the Arias Foundation, extended on the aftermath of the conflict and the changes that have occurred in Central America since then. Mention was made of strong demographic changes through population growth, which could affect the ethnic composition of the population most notably in Guatemala, but can also strongly impact on territorial issues and resources. Border issues then, continue to create intra-statal as well as inter-statal tensions. Recent events in Central America also ask for attention. Hurricane "Mitch" probably holds many lessons, and has clearly changed the landscape in Central America. The army has gained in influence, as it was the only institution capable of reacting adequately to the disaster.

Mr. Ängeby of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs posed the question of what donor-countries can do to prevent conflict. As some other countries have done, the Swedish government invested in strengthening institutions and civil society in Central America. He however wonders how and whether normative issues (which are often valued as Western ethno-centric) should be incorporated into development aid. Prof. Dr. Mares responded to the question by stressing the need of foreign assistance and support for the development of institutions. This is particularly the case because in the life cycle of conflict and peace there is only a brief moment for institution building. If the moment passes, chances increase that change is sought in other ways.

# Thematic Workshop: State and Society

Introduction and Chair: Prof. Dr. S. Mitra, University of Heidelberg

First discussant: Mrs. A. Gosses, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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The aim of the workshop was to discuss the issues of state and society, and to what extent the modern state and norms serve the interests of the peoples in the Third World. What does the state do when faced with challenges from society? To what extent is the state a legitimate representative, efficient, and what should donor states do in terms of conditionalities when a non-western state does not behave according to expectations?

## **Some comments on liberal political and social science**

In his introduction, Prof. Dr. Mitra made some critical remarks on liberal political science, with its bias against conflict. This approach ignores the fact that people resort to conflict as a last tactic. It is also a-historical in forgetting that Western democracies were founded after some major problems regarding territory and governance were settled through brutal violence, piracy and other practices. Polarisation models, as developed by Huntington, see the collapse of the state as a logic outcome of escalating conflict. Prof. Dr. Mitra cautioned against these linear models and reminded there is always space for policy to alter chains of events. Liberal social science clearly has a bias towards individuals, and has no feel of group rights and group identities. Hence, there is a need to expand the repertoire of political science with indigenous discourses and ideas from a plurality of political actors, especially from Africa, Latin America and Asia.

## **The concept of state**

According to Prof. Dr. Frerks of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, we have become used to think and act in terms of nation-states as the natural counterpart of foreign affairs ministries, although it is not clear how to conceptualize these states at present. Is it still a useful concept, and does it cover what is there?

Mrs. Gosses talked about the present day political context as one of receding states, due to a number of processes referred to as globalisation, which includes the information revolution, an increase in trade and the emergence of actors as transnational companies that operate without interference of the state, population movements and shifts in international power relations. On the other hand there is an emphasis on good governance, and hence on the state level. Mr. Krop of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in France remarked that we have to be sceptical about state retreat, because there is no other intervention mechanism that can replace the state. Instead we have to re-invent the state to make it function properly. The question of how to deal with the state, however, remains. Hence, there is a need for the state, but it should create more space for indigenous categories and ideas. It is therefore necessary for the state to address inequalities, yet also leave space for cultural diversity.

## **The state as a cause of conflict**

Dr. Nwokedi of the Centre for Advanced Social Science reflected on the nature of the state in Africa, and identified the bad management of states as one of the key problems. Also Prof. Dr. Waseem of St. Anthony's College stated that in most cases conflicts involve the fight for control over resources, not ideologies. The state often is involved in conflict. This may be

related to the fact that little qualitative change has followed de-colonization. Another factor is the financial state of many governments, which debilitates them in seeking solutions for local problems.

### **Globalisation and the international community**

Dr. M'bembe of CODESRIA pointed to the effects of globalisation processes with the example of Cameroon, that was till 10 to 15 years ago a well-functioning state. It had control over its territory, raised taxes and had economic growth, and although there was no democracy, there was a certain sense of consensus where an implicit contract solicited obedience in exchange of redistribution of resources. Now, however, world wide privatisation and fetishism of the market have differential effects, with a plurality of trajectories.

Also Prof. Dr. Waseem pointed to the international dimension, as much of the budget of Third World states go to debt repayment and defense, and the West is heavily involved in these arms sales. Also Dr. Nwokedi mentioned a contradiction in donor countries' behavior: they advocate good governance, yet feel comfortable dealing with leaders without legitimacy. Mrs. Gosses responded that not all Western states and diplomats are like that, and also Mr. Krop objected to exclusively blaming outside forces in this regard. Local governments have the sovereignty to say no, there is nothing decisive about outside factors.

### **Conditionality and good governance**

Prof. Dr. Mitra raised the question whether donor countries should decide on when governance is qualified as good. Should that not be done locally? In his opinion, the definition of 'good' is a reflection of power relations more than objective standards. Mrs. Gosses extended on the issue of good governance, and remarked that, as it is, the good governance policy Foreign Affairs adheres to, is derived from human rights concerns and mainly addressed to states. It is also embedded in multilateral relations, and there is an increasing tendency for conditionality by multilateral actors as well as by direct foreign investors. The concern, then, goes beyond the institutionalization of democracy, and includes transparent and accountable governance. A recent assessment of aid by the World Bank, conducted by David Dollar, made a plea for stricter conditionalities.

Dr. M'bembe did not agree, and remarked that due to Structural Adjustment Programmes, a government needs to ask permission for expenditure on education and health. But what accountability exists in the World Bank itself? In some places, conditionality leads to a situation of organized disorder, where some people make a lot of money out of creating disorder, and which results in a privatisation of violence. Prof. Dr. Clements of the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution of George Mason University, interpreted this as a need for more conditionality, both political and economic. He identified the problem as some states being façades for criminal activities. He agreed that, when systems create more insecurity, then giving aid is an irresponsible act, since it is aiding violence.

Mrs. Gosses observed that still several dilemmas remain: When conditions are not met, can we deny aid, even when people are extremely poor? How can we ensure that conditional aid really works? And how much room is left for the sovereignty of the state and local cultures?

# **Thematic Workshop: Poverty, Aid and Conflict / Entitlements and Policies of Redistribution**

Chair and Introduction Poverty: Prof. R. Niemeijer, Consultant

Introduction Entitlements: Prof. Dr. A. Sawyer, Center for Democratic Empowerment, Liberia

First discussant: Prof. Dr. D. Kruijt, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands

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The aim of the workshop was to discuss poverty and inequality as causes of conflict, not as a consequence of conflict. And, if poverty and inequality are partial causes of conflict, will policies directed at redistribution and the eradication of poverty be able to prevent conflict? How should the donor community assess the effect of its own intervention through aid?

## **The concepts of poverty and inequality as causes of conflict**

Prof. Niemeijer opened the discussion with a general stocktaking of various aspects of the concept of poverty. A process of widening the definition of poverty during the last decade has included various social aspects such as access to health care, education and legal protection into the definition of poverty. Poverty and inequality are felt to be conducive to intra-statal conflict not by itself, but as a feeling of lack of legitimacy of the situation.

## **Poverty of entitlements**

“Lack of access”, then, is deemed to be the central issue. Here a clear link may be established with the issue of entitlements and policies of redistribution, as Prof. Dr. Sawyer stresses that we should look at redistribution as one of the main strategies of poverty alleviation. It is hence the poverty of entitlements that has a high conflict potential. Prof. Dr. Kruijt as well prefers to include the social context in the discussion on the conflict potential of poverty, since it is social exclusion, racism, and injustice that hurts, not poverty as such.

## **The role of the middle class**

The question if international aid should then target relatively deprived groups within society, brought the position of the middle class and its potential moderating role as protector of democratic institutions to the fore. The idea of supporting middle class development should nevertheless not only be related to education (provision of secondary and higher education), but is mainly of relevance in the light of policies and opportunities. When legitimacy of the distribution system appears to be low, the middle class tends to be the most ardent proponent of conflict. The Indian and Sri Lanka case demonstrate such a high level of middle class involvement in conflict, in a struggle for jobs and education. The role of the middle class could also be linked to economic growth: if the economy is not growing while the middle class is expanding, the struggle for a bigger piece of the cake could take increasingly violent expression.

## **Governance and aid**

Governance is deemed to be of great significance in conflict prevention, and support for good governance becomes crucial in many conflict-prone situations. In a situation where governments lack legitimacy, aid could easily become a tool in the power struggle between various groups. Aid is spent unequally, and entitlements become a political issue. It is therefore the political context that has to be addressed first if you want aid to have any success. The donor community should try to convince the political community of the need for

good governance. In a plea for the necessity of “aid for governance”, it appeared that until now too narrow a definition has been used for aid. Instead, there should be more flexibility in foreign aid, including not only economic and social aspects, but political ones as well.

### **Practical guidelines for aid**

Although a normative element can be found in all development communities, and intervention through aid always involves choices, people often do not realize what are the consequences of aid. Social and economic aid is not as much debated as political and military intervention. Aid is a foreign intervention, and although it has no direct relation to conflict, it has an impact and therefore should be studied for its potential for conflict. Hence it is not the question of how to foresee the development of conflict, but rather what is the effect of your own intervention. Most participants agreed that such a diagnosis per country does not yet exist.

All discussants agreed that the discussion should not limit itself to an academic one concerning the concepts of poverty and inequality. Instead, the discussion should contribute in guiding practitioners (development agencies as well as governments) in analyzing the effect of their interventions through aid programs. Conflict impact assessments should be developed in order to better judge whether this intervention is contributing to the building of peace (or maybe more realistic: neutral to conflict), or whether it is instead contributing to conflict. What criteria should be developed for such a conflict impact assessment?

With regard to the diagnosis of aid effectiveness, some issues were mentioned that need close attention:

1. Analysis of power structure, evaluation of conflict risk; there should be a broader evaluation of stakeholders in conflict. Groups outside the power structure are often left out of the analysis;
2. Regional analysis; analysis should be more aware of the specifics of the region and the country;
3. Measures for impact assessments; further research should be undertaken to develop a methodology, in order to make better use of data that are often already available;
4. Aid agencies should address the question of how to come to sustainable development out of disaster/emergency relief.



# **Thematic Workshop: Demographic and Environmental Changes and Migration**

Introduction and Chair: Mr. P. Girot, consultant Arias Foundation, Costa Rica  
First Discussant: Dr. A. Visser, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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While talking about demographic and environmental change, it is important to make a first distinction in terms of scale: global climate change and global migration patterns are different phenomena than national and local scale events which are more linked to environmental crises, natural disasters, seasonal migration, and rural-urban migration. In the workshop the emphasis was on environmental, and to a lesser extent on demographic issues.

## **The concept of environmental security**

Although initially the concept of security has centered on issues of national sovereignty and regional military alliance, it has broadened to embrace long term security of societies, economic systems, regions, communities, and in some cases even individual human security. The inclusion of environment in the security debate has become a new and compelling issue.

## **Environment as a cause of conflict**

Traditional state-centered approaches to security, then, have tended to emphasize the political aspects of conflict. Yet, there is a need for an integrated approach to conflict, incorporating environmental, ethnic, social and economic variables. Mr. Girot therefore values resource scarcity as a key conflict inducing factor, that is conditioned partly by population density, governance and resource allocation, access to technology and by market pressure and speculation. Dr. Visser agreed that environment appears to be at the beginning of the causal chain leading to conflict, although it is difficult to decide on the exact weight of environment as a cause of conflict. Hence, understanding the nature of conflicts and the weight of demographic and environmental factors would contribute to preventing and solving them more effectively. It is however undervalued, as Prof. Dr. Schmid of PIOOM mentioned, that environmental degradation and change often is a slow onset process with a prolonged time span.

## **Migration and environmental refugees**

The issue of migration was discussed in various ways. First, Prof. Dr. Schmid pointed to migration as a major threat in the security context. Dr. Ibeanu of the Centre for Advanced Social Science, remarked that conflict arising from migration is mainly related to issues of domination and subordination of social groups. With regard to the question in what way public expenditure may mitigate the effects of migration, Mrs. Noorduynd from the Center of Environmental Studies put forward that it should aim at prevention. Dr. Ibeanu proposed a different perception on refugees by stressing their possible productivity. Hence, in his opinion public investment should go into the development of these refugees.

Aside from social and political issues influencing refugee movements, environmental change have increasingly become valued as a cause for migration. However, there is still no international law recognizing environmental refugees. All participants in the workshop therefore state the significance of taking up this concept of environmental refugee by UNHCR and other agencies.

### **Environment and its policy relevance**

Dr. Visser pointed to several significant elements with regard to the practical value of environment in relation to conflict. First of all, the concept of sustainable development is important. There is however a lack of instruments, and there is a need for an analytical and normative framework in order to link sustainable development to conflict prevention and environmental policies. In the second place, emphasis should be placed on local resource management, and an official recognition of environmental refugees. Further, it is necessary to assure political and economic attention to the subject, which is related to the last issue of how to get environment in relation to conflict on the agenda.

### **Governance**

Research into the causes of conflict in the Third World has demonstrated a key role for national government. Also in the field of environment and conflict, governance is a central issue.

### **Policy recommendations**

With regard to policy in relation to environment, conflict and migration some policy recommendations were presented:

1. There is an urgent need for comparative research on the context of conflict, processes and outcome, in order to develop an early warning mechanism. Research on environmental, social and economic indicators for potential conflict should be intensified. A world wide monitoring system should be set up.
2. A policy discussion among multilateral humanitarian organizations should be promoted on the topic of "environmental refugees" as an officially recognized and separate category of refugees.
3. Policy instruments for sustainable development should incorporate aspects of conflict prevention and demographic and environmental migration.
4. In order to avoid the issue of sovereignty, it is desirable for the international community to develop a normative framework for dealing with, or preventing or mitigating, environmental and humanitarian crises.

# **Thematic Workshop: Security Issues and the Role of External Involvement**

Introduction and Chair: Prof. Dr. L. Reychler, University of Leuven, Belgium  
First discussant: Mr. B. ter Haar, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Although internal conflicts have various international dimensions, the workshop focused mainly on potential intervention by the international community, and the possibilities of regional co-operation in a security framework. What are the possibilities for exporting European models of regional cooperation with regard to confidence and security building measures, arms control, disarmament and demilitarization?

## **Conflict Prevention**

Prof. Dr. Reychler opened the workshop with an exposition on conflict prevention, which he considers to be the number one security issue for the next century. Five issues are of importance and need to be addressed in a security regime for conflict prevention. First, the aim of conflict prevention has to be clearly defined. Second, early warning systems have to be in place and operate effectively. Third, the issues of accounting and accountability have to be addressed. Pro-active cost assessments should be made, as well as cost calculations after the escalation of conflict. People who use violence have to be made accountable. Fourth, practical conflict prevention and peace building skills need to be acquired. Fifth, the various actors involved should share the burden. All these issues require political will, and necessarily must involve a learning process.

## **External involvement and questions of sovereignty**

Mr. ter Haar first addressed the question of sovereignty, which is a relative concept. Currently, we could say that countries have lost considerable sovereignty, which is not only a consequence of a changing international environment, but also the result of clear decisions in joining organizations such as NATO, UN, and EU. Further, Mr. ter Haar shortly outlined the point of view of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs with regard to military involvement. Two reasons exist to take up arms, a threat to international peace and security, and genocide. Military force will always be used in the biggest coalition possible. However, although command may be placed with NATO, the use of military force will remain a national decision. Nevertheless it should be realized that intervention in international affairs has effects on conflict, which may be of a stimulating as well as a preventive nature. It is therefore necessary to have proactive conflict-impact assessments of policies and projects.

## **Newly independent states**

The question was raised whether the international community should tolerate the proliferation of new independent states. The question was answered affirmatively, but only under strict conditions: Separation should be peacefully, the new country should be viable, and if new minorities come into existence as a result of the separation, their rights should be assured.

## **Regional co-operation**

The idea of exporting the European model for peace and security to the rest of the world was generally thought to be impossible. The OSCE was valued as a product of the Cold War, and therefore a somewhat outdated model. Furthermore, it should be recognized that in other parts

of the world institutions, capacity, and state structures and processes differ from the European experience, and they therefore need to identify their own possibilities. Another major impediment to copying the European model, is that in many parts of the world territory and existing borders are still disputed, and there is a want to redress them. Some also noted the overemphasis placed on the power of the institutions, and stress that the continuation of European co-operation after the Cold War is based on the existence of common values. Nevertheless, despite these mentioned differences, it was argued that parts of the European model could be copied in other regions.

### **Unconventional approaches to security and cooperation**

For the South Asian region it was suggested to be recommendable to look for an unconventional approach to security, due to lack of a common security perception. Exemplary of an unconventional approach is the case of the ECOWAS members in West Africa, agreeing on a moratorium on arms exports, which is indirectly related to hard-core security. Environmental security was mentioned as an option for Central American co-operation after the devastation of hurricane Mitch, whereas the potential for wider co-operation in South Asia may be found in the Indus river co-operation.

Another suggestion to increase security concerned the creation of an independent institution that is not state-affiliated, and that can be approached if necessary for mediation in a conflict situation. The International Committee of the Red Cross, for example, could stand model for this institution. Several objections were brought forward, related to the problematic nature of neutrality in itself, as well as with regard to the effective operation of this institution for which a lot of expertise is needed. Nevertheless, the proposal was welcomed as a low-cost option for countries when other channels of mediation (e.g. the International Court of Justice) are too costly. Special reference was made to the Central American region. For South Asia it was argued that the need for such a mediating institution is not clear straight away, due to a low level of external power involvement.

### **Related questions**

The discussion has raised many new questions that could not be addressed in the workshop, but are worth mentioning here. A first set of questions concerned international relations and the changing nature of war (e.g. war becoming a commercial undertaking, and the criminalization of the economy): Is the United Nations Charter still useful? And is human rights law better applicable in these conflicts as an alternative to international law guiding behavior between states? A second set of questions focused on conflict prevention: Why is the sensitivity to conflicts around the world different? Why is it that not all conflicts receive equal treatment (most of it seems to come down to the political and security considerations at home)? How can equal sensitivity to conflicts be achieved? Should an institution be set up to co-ordinate systematic, predictable and institutionalized responses to crises?

# **Thematic Workshop: Minorities, Nationalists and the State**

Introduction and Chair: C. Mahendran, ICES, Sri Lanka

First discussant: Mr. R. van der Veen, The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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The main focus in the workshop was on how minorities and nationalists interact with the state.

## **Centralized authority**

Mr. Mahendran opened the meeting by stressing that the question of whether the concept of state is dead, is not valid in the case of South Asia. Hence, the state should not be disregarded in the discussion on minorities and nationalist. The state is very much alive and kicking, and it is within this entity that minorities and nationalists have to find their place.

## **The concept of state and nation**

In an attempt to clarify the discussion on the concepts of state and nation, Mr. Van der Veen mentioned the importance of distinguishing between the various concepts of state. In the liberal point of view a minority, defined as a group with their own identity that differs from the majority, does not necessarily equal the concept of state. On the other hand, in the romantic point of view a nation should be kept as homogenous as possible, which gives rise to tensions about a change of borders, or even ethnic cleansing. It is thus the romantic conception of state that identifies itself with nation, which is dangerous.

## **Policy and government responsibility**

The objective of any policy should therefore never be the mono-ethnic, linguistic or cultural state, but instead the establishment of pluralistic societies where everyone has the same rights and duties. The significance of policy, as Mr. Van der Veen remarked, thus is the management of tensions. It is the responsibility of the government to assure proportional representation, human rights, the creation of peaceful cooperating systems, and multi-ethnic institutions. One way to reach this goal is positive discrimination. However, many forms of power sharing have been tried already, and if they haven't failed completely, then they almost certainly had negative aspects.

Some measures were mentioned to mitigate the problems of minority communities. These included the effort to try as much as possible to accommodate the problems faced by minorities, and take care of it by establishing institutions within the state to overcome these problems. Specific mention was made of an independent judiciary, an independent police, and an independent electoral commission. The armed forces as well should represent the whole community. Prof. Dr. Siccama of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs identified proportional representation in the armed forces and the police as an important issue.

## **Separatism**

Mr. De Jong, of the Amsterdam School for Social Science Research, spoke about separatism as the creation of a negative nexus between local society and the state, by rejection of the state. He however wondered if separatist movements have the knowledge about how to function once separated. Are they capable of running a state, and more important, do they actually know what a state is? Related to this is the question if a demand for separatism can

ever be allowed. Prof. Dr. Siccama was of opinion that a state should be kept together as long as possible. He also mentioned that many conflicts related to minority and nationalist issues often find support from outside, e.g. diaspora, and wondered in what way these should be included in the search for a solution.

### **International community**

Although it was acknowledged that the international community has a responsibility, and should support human rights, dialogue, and concrete development projects, this is not an automatic one. Some expressed the fear that when an international reaction is guaranteed, this would create a situation in which violent conflicts are started for the reason of drawing attention. However, as Prof. Dr. de Silva mentioned, in some cases there is a clear responsibility, for example in the case of Afghanistan, that has functioned as a buffer state first for the UK, then the USSR and USA. A third related issue is the question if the international community is capable of having an impact. This question, raised by Mr. Van der Veen is particularly relevant for big countries like India, that will never allow for external election monitoring. The impact, then is limited to the smaller and democratic countries.

Prof. Dr. de Silva remarked that, as nationalists and minorities feel isolated, there cannot be peace until you come to terms with the insecurities on both sides. Mr. Van der Veen then concluded that human rights, democracy and the rule of law have to be in place in order for minorities to accept the state.

# Policy Relevant Issues: A Plenary Discussion

Chair: Mrs. T. Blankhart, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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On the basis of the reports from the various thematic workshops, Mrs. Blankhart opened the discussion by pointing out the special interest of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the policy relevance of conflict research. The Clingendael Research Project on 'Causes of Conflict in the Third World' has as its aim not only knowledge for understanding, but in particular also research for action. Hence, in this plenary discussion the focal point was an effort to clarify the implications of policy interventions, and to come to policy recommendations. A distinction should be made between three levels of policy interventions: First, the national and local level (i.e. state and civil society), second the regional level, and third, the international level.

## *The National and Local Level*

### **The state and institutions**

Prof. Dr. Mares of the University of California made a plea for greater international involvement with regard to institution building. We often think about the state as an institutional framework within which competing groups interact, and in which institutions ensure the promises that the actors themselves make to each other. A major obstacle the Central American countries encounter in their settlement phase is how to assure that the agreements made will stick, in a context where institutions are used to oppress one another. Here, the international community should come in to provide institutional credibility to enforce the peace agreement. We should also realize that this settlement phase goes on for many years, since it involves reconstructing the state in a different way, e.g. retraining the police and judiciary.

Also Dr. Nwokedi of the Center for Advanced Social Sciences in Nigeria agreed that there is no way of getting round the state. It is, however, necessary to reinvent the state. In the case of Africa, it is important to approach this issue from a regional perspective, and develop a regional conflict mechanism.

### **Civil society**

Prof. Dr. Sawyer of the Center for Democratic Empowerment in Liberia raised the question of how to develop strategies for dealing with situations in which the state is either unable to play a mediating role, is a party to the conflict, or has appropriated conflict or taken a side. Much talk is heard on 'sovereignty', but whose sovereignty? In order to deal with this, emphasis has also shifted to civil society. We should however realize that civil society incorporates good guys as well as warring parties. So the question still remains of how to fashion policies for intervention with civil society. How can we determine which civil society corporation is worthy of co-operation? To answer these questions, case histories are necessary. It is important to look at conditions on the ground, and then make a deliberate determination in which of the entities are indeed valid and genuine.

### **Minority rights and new states**

Prof. Dr. Siccama of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressed some questions

with regard to conflict prevention strategies at the national level, but pointed to the paradoxes involved as well. The OSCE adheres to the strategy of keeping states together as long as possible, which implies denying collective rights to minorities as long as possible. However, in some cases there is the need to recognize new states, collective rights and new formulas for power sharing, in order to find a peaceful solution within a state. Could we transplant this strategy of the OSCE to other parts of the world? Hence, the solution to recognize new states is only a last resort. But there is a tendency that violence pays, although this is exactly what we want to prevent. Is there a way of solution to this paradox?

Mr. Mahendran of ICES in Sri Lanka stressed the importance of the development of regional bodies, as well as the international society buttressing the ongoing process of state institution building to give confidence to all players. National institutions should be created –some in the liberal democratic tradition, others out of it- to encourage actors within the state to work out and implement policies in this regard. There is a need for commitment to work out agreements, and thereby bringing about consensus.

Prof. Dr. Ganguly of Hunter College agreed that, instead of separation, a plea should be made for the notions of federalism and democracy. These should be applied as broad principles. Here is an important role for the international community to support these principles.

### ***The Regional Level***

#### **An intermediary level**

A lot of talk focuses on the donor agency and the nation as the target of action. It was mentioned that there are many different levels of decision making in between, that have to be acknowledged, respected and consulted. Although regional settlement procedures may be a little slower, they are likely to have more enduring results.

Also Mr. Eavis of Saferworld mentioned the regional level as the level of activity that enables us both to have an impact nationally, and to do some articulation globally. While thinking about a new global security system, there should be a closer link between the various parts and levels.

### ***The International Level***

#### **Conditionality and good governance**

Mr. Sciarone, of the Permanent Delegation of the Netherlands to the OECD, pointed to the duality that is often found in international relations and the formulation of development strategies. First of all, for many years the Washington Consensus focused on liberalization, stabilization and privatization. Recently, as was learned from Asia and Russia, these ideas have become under attack even by chief economists at the World Bank. It has become obvious that we have to go for much more comprehensive development strategies.

Further, there are often conflicts between commercial interests, and interests of human rights, justice, and human suffering. When we are realistic, we have to admit that it is often the former group of interests that wins. It is hence necessary to clarify what your aims are. If you give development assistance with the aim of promoting economic growth or improve welfare, you can give it to any country. But when your criteria is feasibility, then development cooperation that goes to countries with bad governance should not qualify as official development assistance.



Finally, and related to the previous issue, the emphasis is put on good governance. But what do we do with countries that are qualified as having bad governance? We cannot leave them as they are, since it is often these countries that are on the road to violent conflict. Hence several issues are raised that should be part of the agenda for future work on policy: What aid policies can we develop in order to put pressure on these countries? But also how can we change our own behavior in international relations? Should we develop codes of conduct for trade and investment, linked to human rights conditions? Or codes of conduct for governments in their international relations with other countries?

### **International law**

Prof. Dr. Niemeijer agreed that policy interventions should also take place at the international level, and he made a special reference to the development of and support for the international legal system. International and regional courts should be established in which citizens can hold governments responsible and accountable.

Prof. Dr. Mares extended on the significance of international law and the important contribution it can make to domestic issues, e.g. with regard to corruption. Since most of the money goes to international banks, anti-corruption laws should be strengthened at the international level. Also multinationals can contribute in this regard, by putting strong demands to corrupt governments and practices. However, Prof. Dr. Mares also pointed to a more cautionary tale of international law, in line with remarks on contextualization. He clarified this with the example of international law pursuing leaders that violated human rights, as is now the case with Pinochet. We have to remember however that the conflict resolution in Chile came about through negotiated agreements between the competing sides. The international community can supplant these national compromises, in the name of sanctity of the individual, but it can also unravel national compromise that allowed for the conflict to end and the transition to democracy to go forward. This is an extremely difficult problem in polarised societies that are looking for ways to accommodate.

Dr. Midlarsky of the Center for International Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies argued that this problem is mainly related to the lack of credibility of international law, and it not being a credible guarantor and protector of threatened populations. He therefore suggested that it could be made more credible with a rapid deployment force as guarantee.

### **Conflict impact assessments and context-specific checklists**

Mr. Honeywell of International Alert stressed the importance of getting the discussion out of the theoretic debate to the decision-making level of practitioners. Since it is clear that all interventions have an impact on conflict, he raised the question if we can come to some practical, useful tools that enable practitioners to analyse the causes of conflict in the country where they work, and to analyse the impact of their own intervention on the conflict. The conflict impact, hence, should be made much more explicit in the decision making processes on aid projects and investments.

With regard to the need for a checklist on which we can decide whether or not to support a regime, Prof. Dr. Mitra of the South Asia Institute at the University of Heidelberg remarked that many of the concepts are still heavily debated. Exemplary is the concept of good governance. Who decides what is 'good'? Should that not be decided locally, instead of by an outside actor? If you make aid conditional on your own definition of good governance, then you take away someone else's autonomy to decide what is good for his purposes and identity.

In developing a checklist, we have to understand what political conflicts are about, and realize that not all conflicts are bad. Decisions should be made on the basis of ground reality, and should involve international donors as well as national and local actors. Only then it is possible to come to convergence and talk about a consensus at a normative level.

The question still remains for the international community who to negotiate with. In case of a paralysed national state, should you then turn to the NGOs? This, however, undercuts the legitimacy of the normal political institutions. Hence, when developing a checklist, this should not necessarily be based on a definition of good governance, but rather on the issue of process. Often the mistake is made to put all non-western states in the same bag. Instead, it is necessary to make a case-by-case checklist, and have ears for the different sides and levels.

Dr. Midlarsky extended on the issue of undercutting state legitimacy. He argued that helping the state should not mean helping the state apparatus. Instead, aid policy should flow into helping those institutions of state which are not authority wielding in a direct sense, e.g. parliament as a law making body, political parties, the judiciary, trade unions, and professional organizations. Dr. Midlarsky also pleads for debt relief, because the resource base of these societies is drying up.

Mrs. Blankhart concluded by summarizing the abundant number of relevant topics. These include the concepts of regionalization, human security, and minority rights within states. On the international level a change should take place in the attitude towards social responsibility. This includes international organisations, but multinationals as well. Hence, the choices that are made with regard to international aid are of great importance, since they have a strong impact on state and society. Therefore, conflict impact assessments need to be made not only when providing aid, but in any planned intervention.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Prof. Dr. G.E. Frerks, Head Research Project, Clingendael Institute, The Netherlands

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### **Concepts**

We have had some fundamental discussions on the concepts and definitions used in the research project and during the conference. The question was raised whether the words we are using are the correct ones, or whether they do have all kinds of connotations? One of the discussions for example concerned the concept of conflict itself. Is the idea that conflict could and should be avoided biased? Is conflict not a part of history and do we not have to accommodate to it? It is evident that we still need to arrive at a deeper understanding of the different layers of meaning and connotations which we attach to the central concept of conflict. It should not be used in an a-historical and individualistic way, without looking at the group connotations involved. Hence, we cannot look at these issues from a narrow-minded perspective, and we have to contextualize the concept in its proper dimensions. This should be done not only from a liberal social science or westernized point of view, but we also need to try to take aboard indigenous notions of what these concepts could entail. Perhaps you need special interlocuteurs to deal with these questions.

We also found that most of the other concepts discussed are multidimensional, and have to be looked at in a comprehensive way. When we talked about security and poverty, the workshops remarked that these are concepts which include social, judicial, economic and environmental aspects. This is important with regard to the level of analysis. How are you going to look at the issues and the problems? Also the cultural dimension should not be forgotten, as well as the moral issues involved. Although the inclusion of cultural and moral issues may lead to value-laden judgements, we cannot and should not avoid this. It is important to put them on the agenda, so they can be discussed, and are no longer imposed.

### **Analysis**

A further important issue that we have discussed is how far you need to go in your attempts at contextualization. This not only involves the geographical distance, but also the historical perspective and interdisciplinary and cross-cultural borders and notions. In the whole variety of explanatory factors of conflict, we have been able to see certain patterns, although they were sometimes at a high level of abstraction.

One of the interesting and surprising results was that at least we can say that political factors are on the agenda again. We have focused on issues of state and state formation, of governance, but we also concluded that economic factors are still relevant. Although they are not direct causes of conflict, we have to look at economic –but also environmental- factors in the perspective of identity politics or relative deprivation and of discriminatory or exclusionary government policies.

With regard to the concept of the state, there was a variety of ideas. Although we said that in certain areas the state was alive and kicking, others said that the state has to be redesigned or reinvented. Moreover, the state can be fragmented, militarized, criminalized, without a resource base, and without ways to raise revenues. Perhaps we can talk about state failure, but also about state non-performance. Hence, it is necessary to make a specific analysis of what

we can expect from the state, what it still can do, and what kind of support it should get in order to function at least at a certain level.

One very clear conclusion we all subscribed to, was that the state and governance should be more inclusive. There cannot be a standardized answer as to how the state should operate. Nevertheless, the state should be able to accommodate the diversity of interests and identities and also should be prepared to make compromises in this regard.

### **Approaches and policies**

We have talked about approaches to the state, and about forms of decentralization, devolution of power, even to the level of regional autonomy. We have discussed the essential role of an independent judiciary, a police which is reliable, and an army under civilian control which represents the various sectors in society. These approaches were also discussed at a lower level of society: NGOs and civil society. But also here a cautionary distance was argued for. How do we know exactly what these NGOs are, what they are doing, and whether they are reliable? At the same time, it was mentioned, we need to be careful, because some kinds of discourses are just the fashion of the day in the donor community, and although these are embraced and mimicked by everyone, it does not mean that they are implemented and accepted. A clear example is the orthodoxy of the Washington Agenda, which is now called into doubt. Hence, a critical analysis of donor discourse is necessary.

### **Methods and instruments**

Although the world is complex and multidimensional, nearly all actors including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have to make decisions on a day-to-day basis. Hence, the question was raised whether it is possible to suggest at least some methods, tools or instruments to reduce this complexity to a certain type of order on the basis of which we can still make decisions. These should assist us in telling whether a development intervention is appropriate in a (post) conflict situation, or whether it will only create new tensions. Is it possible to have this type of impact assessment instruments? Are there any other tools at the international level? Could we promote perhaps regional approaches, so that also the particularistic characteristics of each region are taken into account? In this regard a number of very useful suggestions were made.

I would like to conclude by thanking you for your contribution to the seminar. The discussions have been very useful, and have led to new insights, some of which are still very puzzling and some of which give rise to concern. Your contributions have been stimulating and thought-provoking and may hopefully also contribute to improvements at the level of the ongoing policy debates and practices.

# Annex I: Seminar Programme

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## *Seminar on Intrastate Conflict and Options for Policy*

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague  
16 – 17 November 1998

### **Day I – Monday 16 November**

09.00–09.30	Registration
09.30–09.35	Welcome speech by A. van Staden, Director Clingendael Institute
09.35–10.00	Opening speech by H.H. Siblesz, Deputy Director-General for Political Affairs, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

### *Session I: Causes of Conflict: Overview of Major Research Findings*

10.00–10.30	<i>Major findings Causes of Conflict Project</i> G.E. Frerks, Head Research Project Clingendael Institute
10.30–10.45	Coffee Break
10.45–11.00	<i>Causes of Conflict: The Political Military Dimension</i> F. Deng, The Brookings Institution, USA
11.00–11.15	<i>Causes of Conflict: The Socioeconomic Dimension</i> M.I. Midlarsky, Rutgers University, Center for International Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies, USA
11.15–11.30	<i>Causes of Conflict: The Policy Dimension</i> A. Sawyer, Center for Democratic Empowerment, Liberia
11.30–12.30	Plenary discussion
12.30–14.00	Lunch

## ***Session II: Workshop Presentations of Regional Findings***

Afternoon chairs :    Workshop A:     S.W.R. de A. Samarasinghe  
                             Workshop B:     A. M'bembe  
                             Workshop C:     F. Duran Ayanegui

### ***Workshop A: South Asia***

14.00–14.30     *Major Findings of the South Asian Team*  
                         K.M. de Silva, Director ICES, Kandy, Sri Lanka  
14.30–14.45     *Causes of Conflict in South Asia – Alternative Perspectives and*  
                         *Comments*  
                         S. Ganguly, Hunter College, City University of New York  
14.45–15.00     *Comments from a Policy Point of View*  
                         A.H.M. Lansink, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
15.00–16.00     Discussions

### ***Workshop B: West Africa***

14.00–14.30     *Major Findings of the West African Team*  
                         E. Nwokedi, Ife University, Nigeria  
14.30–14.45     *Causes of Conflict in West Africa – Alternative Perspectives and*  
                         *Comments*  
                         F. Deng, The Brookings Institution, USA  
14.45–15.00     *Comments from a Policy Point of View*  
                         G.H. Smaling, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
15.00–16.00     Discussions

### ***Workshop C: Central America***

14.00–14.30     *Major Findings of the Central American Team*  
                         D. Mares, University of California, USA  
14.30–14.45     *Causes of Conflict in Central America – Alternative Perspectives and*  
                         *Comments*  
                         D. Kruijt, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands  
14.45–16.00     Discussions  
  
16.00–16.15     Coffee break

## ***Session III: Plenary Presentation of Workshop-Findings***

16.15–16.45     Presentations of the major issues discussed in the regional workshops by  
                         the Workshop Chairmen (10 minutes per presentation)  
  
16.45–17.00     General conclusions of Day I by general chair A. van Staden

## **Day II – Tuesday 17 November**

09.30–10.00      *Presentation major thematic findings resulting from the first conference day, G.E. Frerks*

### ***Session IV: Workshop Discussion of Policy Relevant Issues***

#### **Topics**

##### **A *State and Society***

Introduction and Chair: S.K. Mitra, University of Heidelberg

First Discussant: A.H. Gosses, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

##### **B *Poverty, Aid and Conflict/Entitlements and Policies of Redistribution***

Introduction Poverty and Chair: R. Niemeijer, Consultant

Introduction Entitlements: A. Sawyer, Center for Democratic Empowerment

First Discussant: D. Kruijt, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands

##### **C *Demographic and Environmental Changes and Migration***

Introduction and Chair: P.O. Girot, Costa Rica

First Discussant: A.P.R. Visser, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

##### **D *Security Issues and the Role of External Powers***

Introduction and Chair: L. Reyckler, University of Leuven, Belgium

First Discussant: B. ter Haar, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

##### **E *Minorities, Nationalists and the State***

Introduction and Chair: C. Mahendran, Sri Lanka

First Discussant: R.J. van der Veen, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

#### ***Workshop Program***

10.15–10.30	Introduction by Workshop Chair
10.30–10.45	Policy Perspectives by representative of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
10.45–12.30	Discussion
12.30–14.00	Lunch

### ***Session V: Plenary Discussion of Findings***

14.00–14.30	Reporting of Workshop Findings by Chairmen of the Workshops
14.30–16.00	Plenary discussion on the ideas and recommendations resulting from the various workshops with regard to policies, actors and instruments Chair: Th. Blankhart, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
16.00–16.30	<i>Concluding Remarks</i> G.E. Frerks
16.30–16.40	<i>Closing of Seminar</i> J.Q.Th. Rood, Director of Studies, Clingendael Institute
16.40–	Drinks

## Annex II: Workshop Documents

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### **Regional Workshops:**

- Regional Findings of the South Asian Region
- Regional Findings of the West African Region
- Regional Findings of the Central American Region

### **Thematic Workshops:**

- State and Society
- Poverty, Aid and Conflict
- Entitlements and Policies of Redistribution<sup>1</sup>
- Demographic and Environmental Changes and Migration
- Security Issues and the Role of External Powers
- Minorities, Nationalists and the State

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<sup>1</sup> Because of the interrelated nature of the issues involved, the workshop on Poverty, Aid and Conflict and the workshop on Entitlements and Policies of Redistribution were merged.