20 Years of 'An Agenda for Peace': A New Vision for Conflict Prevention?

Edited by Achim Wennmann

On 17 June 1992, then United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali published 'An Agenda for Peace', a landmark document about the role of the United Nations in preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping in the post-Cold War world. The 20th anniversary of 'An Agenda for Peace' is a reminder of the continued importance of a clear vision and strategy to maintain international peace and security in the 21st century. With the decline of inter- and intra-state armed conflict, with most violent deaths occurring outside of traditionally defined armed conflict areas, with new state and non-state actors on the world stage, growing civilian-military interface, and greater appreciation of the factors leading to state fragility and vulnerability, the global efforts towards the achievement of peace and security require new partnerships and approaches. Commemorating the 20th anniversary of 'An Agenda for Peace', this Paper provides perspectives for a forward-looking discussion about the new visions needed to prevent conflict and consolidate peace in a changing world.

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Introduction: 20 Years of 'An Agenda for Peace'

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev

The discussion on conflict prevention goes to the heart of the United Nations' mission and what the United Nations is all about

'An Agenda for Peace' was launched at a time of profound global transformation, when the end of the Cold War had paved the way for the introduction of democratic processes in a number of countries and a reconfiguration of relations among nations. Today, we grapple with the implications of the "Arab Spring", a deep-seated economic crisis, the rise of emerging economies, the establishment of the G-20 and other developments that are all part of a process of equally far-reaching change in the international landscape.

'An Agenda for Peace' was launched just after the 1992 Rio Summit, which brought the challenge of sustainable development onto the political agenda. Next week, leaders from across the world meet again in Rio to renew their commitment to this agenda and chart the way forward for a sustainable future. And while we may not be able to match Rio+20 in numbers of participants or the level of media attention, I think the contributions collected in this paper are part of a global reflection process on how to make our world more sustainable, more secure and more just, for our generation and for generations to come.

The discussion on conflict prevention goes to the heart of the United Nations' mission and what the United Nations is all about. The discussion is therefore also a debate about the role of the United Nations in our world today, and about how we can make the best use of this unique instrument. This Paper is not about analyzing "An Agenda for Peace"; it is about looking forward. As it so wisely says

in paragraph 85 of the Agenda itself: "Reform is a continuing process, and improvement can have no limit. We must be guided not by precedents alone, however wise these may be, but by the needs of the future and by the shape and content that we wish to give it."

So, allow me to mention a few points about what I see as the main challenges today and in the immediate future in the area of conflict prevention.

In re-reading 'An Agenda for Peace', I was struck by the analysis in the introductory parts, which outlines a very comprehensive concept of peace. This includes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, promotion of sustainable economic and social development, as well as curtailing the existence and use of massively destructive weapons. The report goes on to highlight the ongoing challenges of population growth, crushing debt burdens, barriers to trade, drugs, and disparities between rich and poor, and makes reference to a "revolution in communications that has united the world in awareness". But, the recommendations of the report focus predominantly on building capacity at a more technical level, within the Secretariat, within Member States, and in the structures and resources needed for preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping, and for post-conflict peacebuilding, which was introduced then as a concept.

'An Agenda for Peace' outlines a very comprehensive concept of peace

While progress has been made since 1992, the need for capacity-building and adequate resources, in particular in information-gathering and early warning, remains valid and important. The potential of new media and different ways of connecting people, also through social media, will need to be explored as part of this effort. Yet, I believe the main challenge is to shift the focus, to a greater extent, on to the underlying causes and driving forces of conflict – which is easier said than done, of course. Let me highlight just three key areas:

First, respect for human rights and promotion of democracy: the past year and a half has clearly shown the importance of democratic, transparent, accountable and legitimate governance, where the rights of individuals are fully respected. Protection and promotion of human rights, at national, regional and global levels, is simply fundamental to prevention of conflict. This must also include the empowerment of women and youth who in many contexts remain excluded or marginalized.

Second, disarmament. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, world military expenditure has now topped 1.6 trillion dollars. While the rate of increase has slowed, the total figure continues to increase. This testifies to a general proliferation of arms, of all types, that contribute to fuelling and sustaining instability in the world. Disarmament at all levels can help to build confidence among States, across regions and even within communities, which militates against the outbreak of conflict.

Third, sustainability. With a rapidly growing population, continued economic growth despite the current slowdown and finite resources, we need to be realistic about the potentially destabilizing effects of resource scarcity. Experts predict that by the year 2050, the global population will have increased by 50 per cent from what it was in 1999. Also by that time, scientists say, global greenhouse gas emissions must decrease by 50 per cent compared to levels at the turn of the millennium. This is what the Secretary-General has termed the "50 – 50 – 50 challenge". 1.4 billion people live without access to modern sources of energy; one billion people already live in chronic hunger, and water resources are under pressure. Sixty million people now live within one meter of sea level; by the end of the century this number will jump to 130 million.

While these developments would not, in and of themselves, lead to conflict, it would be naïve to close our eyes to the fact that they can exacerbate existing tensions over resources such as energy and land. This only increases the need to advance a sustainability agenda that integrates economic, environmental and social dimensions. Against this background, it is difficult to overemphasize the importance of the discussions in Rio next week, also for conflict prevention.

Similarly, we cannot lose sight of the impact of the economic crisis. Since the financial and economic crisis began, 200 million people have lost jobs and income. According to the International Labour Organization, 202 million people will be unemployed in 2012, growing to 207 million in 2013. The world economy is becoming increasingly fragmented, with growing inequalities, which can undermine social stability.

Preventing Conflict and Consolidating Peace in a Changing World

Elissa Golberg

'An Agenda for Peace' outlined issues of preventive diplomacy, peace operations, peacemaking and peacebuilding – which continue to dominate international conflict management discourse, even as the context in which we operationalize these ideas continuously evolves.

I would like to focus my contribution to our dialogue on two objectives: First, I think it is worthwhile to briefly recognize and take stock of how far we have come in 20 years from a practitioner-diplomatic-government perspective, and second, to recognize and reflect on how far there is yet to go. In this latter respect, I will focus on three concrete actions we can take to better prevent conflict and consolidate peace, including better shared analysis to enable early action, the use of new technologies and media, and the adaptation and maturing of stabilization and reconstruction tools.

Twenty years of positive progress

In terms of how far we have come, it is appropriate to begin by noting the precipitous decline in the number of international armed conflicts and even civil wars in the past twenty years, and to acknowledge that those that remain tend to be less destructive than their predecessors.

Second, we have identified and even applied – albeit haphazardly – lessons learned from our experiences working on some of the most difficult and damaging problems societies can face – whether in the Balkans, West Africa, Afghanistan or Iraq. For instance, we are now finally really coming to grips with what it means to support local ownership particularly for ensuring the sustainability of our engagements. Indeed, we have long said that the role of the international community is to help others to help themselves. We said it, but we didn't live it. We are also more cognizant of the need to focus more deliberately on increasing the effectiveness of international engagement, including recognizing that that conflict prevention is not exclusively about funding. Here I am reminded of Charles Darwin who said: "If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin." And for our sins over the past two decades we have learned about using aid effectively, particularly in places affected by violent conflict. We understand that it is not the volume, but rather the effectiveness of our aid that counts. Finally, we have gained a much better appreciation of the role that can and should be played by regional partners, including better ways of working with them in crisis situations. These lessons are informing our involvement in new contexts, such a Libya, where, while the road ahead is bumpy, it is a promising road. With the support of multilateral agencies, the private sector and regional leaders, Libyans are taking charge of their future.

Third, we can largely declare victory on early warning. It is not possible to accurately predict the timing of when a crisis will erupt – that is the stuff of crystal balls - but we do know which countries could be vulnerable and why. Syria, Mali and Guinea-Bissau are some examples.

Moreover, I think we can even say early action is much improved although it remains inconsistent and subject to the vicissitudes of politics and resources. This improvement comes largely because we have recognized our limitations and strengths. We are beginning to understand, to really appreciate, that helping other countries does not mean reforming them in our own image. Instead, it means supporting them to develop their own unique and appropriate ways of achieving freedom, universally agreed human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

We are finally really coming to grips with what it means to support local ownership, particularly for ensuring the sustainability of our engagements

All change, all the time and what we can do about it

And yet, despite these advances, new trends are evident in our ever changing world, and the nature of peacebuilding, conflict prevention, early warning, funding and so on must duly change right along with it.

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDESA, the world population is projected to grow by 47 percent to 8.9 billion in 2050. Less developed regions will account for 99 percent of the growth. Disturbingly, 80 percent of this growth will be in urban slums, many in middle-income countries. This massive, unprecedented growth of urban slums, together with a sharp escalation in the incidences and severity of urban violence, raises the spectre of 'mega' slums that may well constitute the future frontier of armed violence and global insecurity. Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa are of particular concern.

Already these urban centres are increasingly the battlegrounds for violent conflict: pitched battles between the state and criminal organizations in competition over territory, resources and influence. The violence exhibits many of the characteristics of conventional armed conflict but so far lack the same international attention as more traditional wars and state fragility.

And of course even while these trends are apparent, we likewise must deal with many civil wars that continue to be frustratingly intractable, and suffer from confounding levels of recidivism. In the past decade, more than 90 percent of civil wars occurred in countries that experienced a war in the previous 30 years.

In concrete terms, what does this changing environment mean for our conflict prevention and peace consolidation efforts? I would like to suggest three practical areas in which we can make a difference:

First, we can improve our shared analysis, and early and sustained engagement. Arguably, we have access to more data today about what is happening in a given country at risk of violence than ever before. The countries themselves offer statistics and reporting for a variety of purposes. Diplomatic missions and UN country teams produce assessments, along with local civil society organizations foundations and think tanks. Regional organizations also contribute overviews of potential challenges and entry points for action. As such, we have more extensive material, aided by a better understanding of triggers for crises.

But how does our analysis work for middle income countries where much of the urban growth and new violence is taking place? How can we adapt our analytical tools to understand the complex interplay between urban violence and state resilience? And what do our analyses tell us about societies that have suffered from war for generations and for whom violent conflict is their normal reality? How can we help these societies take constructive ownership of their own transformation, recognizing this will take a longer term commitment than election cycles or media will generally allow? How can we ensure that our attention does not wane, and that we commit to medium and long term investments we know are necessary, or at least ensure better burden sharing and sequencing of donors and their instruments over time?

It is not possible to accurately predict the timing of when a crisis will erupt, but we do know which countries could be vulnerable and why

New trends are evident in our ever changing world, and conflict prevention and early warning must duly change with it

We can improve our shared analysis, and early and sustained engagement

If thinking about how to bring this together at the global level is too daunting, we can narrow our focus and at least commit to doing a better job within our respective organizations. In my own government, further to our experiences in Afghanistan, Haiti and Sudan, there has been a commitment to encourage more sophisticated whole-of-government assessments of priority countries at risk of crisis, in order to develop a common action plans and advice to Ministers. Helping societies transform themselves is not the exclusive purview of any one government department or agency; it requires all the resources a government can bring to bear.

Second, we must adapt to new technologies and media. Internet and social media not only increase the amount of information available; they greatly expand the scope and effectiveness of crisis networking and advocacy. While this new media ecosystem is available to all actors, civil society is perhaps the most eager and adept at harnessing it. As we have seen with the Arab Spring, the new media can increase public attention towards an international crisis, accelerate events on the ground, and increase pressure on the international community to respond to the situation. Several actions are required. If we are to more effectively harness these new developments we need to sustain the access activists have to such tools. We must also become increasingly agile in how we respond to the increasing volumes of information and advocacy, and explore how we can use these same new media as part of our crisis management operations. There are examples within our conflict management community of where we are aiming to do better – the virtual network and community of practice established by the International Stabilization and Peacebuilding Initiative comes to mind.

Finally, stabilization and recovery. As I have said, over the course of the past 20 years, we have developed more sophisticated systems and approaches to stabilization and recovery that work, but we need to continuously adapt our architecture, funding and expertise to respond to the changing realities.

Of note are efforts by some governments to create more flexible funding arrangements that can respond to transition contexts, where timely investments in state capacity building to provide basic services or address grievances pertaining to human rights and the rule of law can make all the difference in facilitating successful transitions and (re)building confidence between citizens and the state. The UN Peacebuilding Fund and new thinking within the World Bank and the regional development banks complement these efforts and offer potential, but remain nascent and will need to be expanded further. Finally, increasing emphasis is also being placed on improving our ability to deploy civilian expertise to reinforce national efforts in areas such as rule of law, governance, accountability and oversight. The World Development Report 2011 spoke effectively to this agenda.

Conclusion

The agenda going forward is not about new, more or better policy work. It is about implementation, it is about practical concrete work that helps enable people to make positive differences in their lives.

Helping societies transform themselves is not the exclusive purview of any one government department or agency; it requires all the resources a government can bring to bear

We must adapt to new technologies and media and greatly expand the scope and effectiveness of crisis networking and advocacy

Looking back, when we consider the nature of the conflicts that emerged and our fitful responses, the early-to-mid 1990s were a tough time for conflict prevention and peace consolidation. I am optimistic however that 20 years from now, we will look back on today and see it for the peaceful watershed it is.

We have not stumbled upon this peace accidentally. As Boutros-Ghali said in the agenda for peace: the search for improved techniques will be of little significance unless "propelled by the will to take the hard decisions demanded by this time of opportunity".

The hard decision we are faced with today is to act on the past 20 years of learning and experience, so that fewer people in the next 20 years will be savaged by the scourge of violent conflict.

And is that really such a hard decision?

The Agenda for Peace Twenty Years On: Scholarly Perspectives on the United Nations and Intrastate Conflicts

Timothy D. Sisk

The 1992 landmark United Nations document, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping*, emerged in a period of crisis and change in the international system aptly characterized as "turbulence" by the eminent scholar James Rosenau (1990). The concept of turbulence in the 1990s reflected the multiple, seismic, systemic changes that were occurring in relations among key states at the end of the Cold War and a concomitant rapid increase in globalization, interdependency, and worldwide technological and social change during these years. The 'Agenda for Peace', penned by United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali just following the first-ever meeting of the UN Security Council at the level of heads of state in January of that year, both reflected and ultimately shaped the ability of the world's preeminent organization to adapt to the turbulent systemic change under way in the international system.

In this way, the Agenda reflected the turbulence and change in the early 1990s by reaffirming that volatile transition in political systems could yield state failure, ethnocide and genocide, and pose costly humanitarian tragedies not seen since the Second World War. The Agenda emerged in the immediate aftermath of civil war and famine in Somalia, the onset of civil war and "ethnic cleansing" in former Yugoslavia, and sudden and often extensive UN engagement in the transitions of Namibia, El Salvador, Cambodia, and Mozambique.

It was steeped in the need for "humanitarian intervention," and the reality that the UN had a new role in protecting humanitarian relief efforts and fostering the end of war through a guided transition within states aided by a complex,

multidimensional peace operation. In the Agenda, Boutros-Ghali poignantly argued that:

> The time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty, however, has passed; its theory was never matched by reality. It is the task of leaders of States today to understand this and to find a balance between the needs of good internal governance and the requirements of an ever more interdependent world (UNSC 1992: para 17).

However, beyond simply reflecting the post-Cold War doctrine of humanitarian intervention in intrastate crises, the Agenda fundamentally *shaped* the UN's response to these new realities over time by establishing a simple yet elegant framework that captured well the multidimensional and complex nature of addressing the mostly internal, civil wars of the 1990s and 2000s. The Agenda's framing of prevention, peacemaking, and peacebuilding are all manifested in the subsequent evolution of norms, institutions and actors, and policy approaches through the UN over the last two decades. With considerable effect, the 1992 Agenda's perspective and terms have shaped the discourse, strategic approach, and practice of the UN in the ensuing twenty years.

A critical question for the present, and the central theme of this essay, is: Have the normative, institutional, and policy-practice improvements reflected in the Agenda been effective in limiting, managing, and reducing the prevalence of armed conflict globally? More simply, does UN engagement work to prevent, manage, and build peace after internal conflict actually work?

Clearly, such complicated questions with many varying perspectives and opinions cannot be effectively answered in any single essay, nor can the question of "causality" of UN engagement be proven definitively. Nor is it possible in a short essay to adequately reflect the depth and variety of scholarly research. Some scholars have, however, made the inference that because internal armed conflict is on a downward trend since 1992, UN engagement is indeed effective in addressing the scourge of internal conflict and that overall the world is becoming a more peaceful place. Thus there is value in a brief survey of some scholarly perspective on trends and causal dynamics of internal and UN responses in the twenty years since the Agenda for Peace set the stage for a new international regime to prevent when possible wars within states, and to subsequently respond to the consequences and build peace when prevention fails.

I argue that scholarly research findings affirm at least one of the reasons for a more peaceful world into the 21st century is the evolution of an international regime through the UN – reflecting new norms and operational approaches – to address internal armed conflict. The essay surveys some scholarly findings by reflecting four areas in which scholarship has reflected light on the question of the efficacy of the UN's efforts to prevent internal armed conflict.

- The first is scholarly research on interpreting trends in armed conflict: In what ways have patterns, intensity, and duration of armed conflict changed since the end of the Cold War?

'An Agenda for Peace' emerged in a period of crisis and change in the international system aptly characterized as "turbulence"

The Agenda's framing of prevention, peacemaking, and peacebuilding are all manifested in the subsequent evolution of norms, institutions and actors, and policy approaches through the UN over the last two decades

- Second: How well do existing country-level surveillance instruments measure vulnerability to armed conflict and armed violence, or "fragility"?
- Third: How effective is the UN in organizing, facilitating, mediating, and backstopping peace agreements?
- Finally, can the peacebuilding – and now statebuilding – agenda address the long-term needs of consolidating peace in the war-torn states?

The fact that armed conflict increased in 2011 compared to 2010, with new "onsets" of civil war in Libya, Yemen, Sudan, and Syria, suggests that this regime is at best incomplete. Thus, the essay ends with two observations on what is need into the coming years to strengthen the core framework of global responses to internal conflict that the Agenda established some 20 years ago. In conclusion, I contend that while the Agenda for Peace did create the framework for a new global regime to address internal conflicts, the framework it laid out is, and remains, incomplete. First, beyond peacebuilding has been the need to focus on statebuilding and violence reduction as an approach to recurring crises of fragility, a project which remains very much under development and fraught with dilemmas of strategy and operational action. Second is the need to return to the Agenda's brief mention of "peace enforcement units," or the ability to more rapidly react to crises when they arise. Unless and until there is progress on the ability of the international system to respond quickly, and robustly, in moments of crisis, the UN's ability to prevent armed conflict will remain incomplete in the likely still-turbulent years that lie ahead.

Changing patterns in armed conflict

One of the most clear and consistent findings of scholarly research is that the prevalence of armed conflict is on the decline. The most recent report of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program reflects that in 2011 there were 37 armed conflicts around the globe (with a threshold of 25 "battle-related deaths), which measures an increase of six conflicts over the prior year (Themnér and Wallensteen 2012). Even with the increases of 2011, the overall trend is still clearly in decline since the early 1990s. The Uppsala scholars report that the 2011 levels are still "substantially lower" that the post-Cold War peak of armed conflict in 1992 in which there were 53 active armed conflicts. These findings are echoed by other scholars, such as the work of Hewitt, Wilkenfeld and Gurr (2010) which have also found (using a slightly different methodology) that armed conflict has been on the decline since they 1990s, although they, too, report a leveling off in the latter part of the decade of the 2000s and they suggest that the key problem facing the world today is recurrence of conflict in countries that had prior experiences of civil war. Indeed, they suggest that

> Post-conflict states face great challenges of reconstruction, political and social as much as economic. The implication of increased risks of recurrence is that the internationally brokered settlement or containment of many armed conflicts since the early 1990s did not deal effectively with root causes (2010: 2).

A related development in scholarly monitoring of the prevalence and trends in armed conflicts is the changing nature of definitions and the recognition of the new manifestations of conflict to which the UN is to respond. Since 2008, scholars have begun to put the focus on the problem of armed violence globally,

highlighting that murder, gangs, transnational criminal organizations, and violence against women are critical threats to global security and barriers to development (Geneva Declaration Secretariat 2011). This work on armed violence has complemented and expanded the nature of threats to international peace and security in ways that go well beyond the framework of prevention, peacemaking, and peacebuilding presented in the Agenda for Peace that addresses the problem of armed conflict. Moreover, there has been an appreciation of the need to expand and improve the monitoring capabilities that seek to capture not just a strict definition of armed conflict, but also problems of "one-sided violence" (states that are violent against their own people), non-state conflict (e.g., communal riots), and further ways to more accurately pinpoint the geographic location of conflict through geo-referencing.

Scholarly efforts to measure trends, then, yield somewhat ambiguous results. Certainly, the nature of the challenges that the UN must face into the 2012s has continue to change and expand – much like the turbulent period of the early 1990s. As a result, the UN's agenda has somewhat expanded and transformed to now include a variety of types of intrastate conflict – such as violence against women, election-related violence, or transnational crime – even while many conventional armed conflicts on the UN agenda, such as in Afghanistan, Somalia, or Sudan/South Sudan, have remained consistent over time. Indeed, some research suggests that there are at least 300 or more currently active or latent conflict contexts that could emerge to be violent in future (Heidelberg Institute 2010).

Looking ahead the prevalence of armed conflicts with organized insurgencies facing sovereign states may well continue to be the decline in the long term, and some scholars peering into the future using statistical models argue that the overall downward trend in armed conflict will continue in a positive direction in the coming decade. For example, Håvard Hegre and his colleagues"… predict that the incidence of minor conflict is likely to decrease further in the future, but that the incidence of major conflicts (more than 1000 battle-related deaths per year) will remain stable" (2010: 2).

Understanding and monitoring fragility

What of the scholarly literature that looks at causes of conflict that underlies the trend data? In this body of research, the period since the Agenda for Peace has been characterized by various efforts to get at the "root causes" of conflict or to identify those key or pivotal drivers of violence. In terms of prevention, clearly a related concern is the question of "early warning" and indeed of understanding the interactions between deep drivers of conflict in underlying economic, social, or political conditions, and the patterns and precipitants of escalation that can convert grievances into violent encounters. Indeed, many comprehensive efforts to evaluate conflict prevention, particularly the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict (1998), started with the premise that a precursor to prevention and ultimately to peacebuilding was a clear diagnostic on conflict's underlying causes rather than simply addressing the symptoms of violence through critical instruments such as peacekeeping.

The work on armed violence has complemented and expanded the nature of threats to international peace and security in ways that go well beyond the framework of prevention, peacemaking, and peacebuilding presented in the Agenda for Peace

The period since the Agenda for Peace has been characterized by various efforts to get at the "root causes" of conflict

The scholarly research in this area has tended to seek to identify the most salient variables in conflict causes, characterized simplistically as the debate between those who focus on often identity-based grievances, or ethnic conflict, and those emphasizing primarily "greed" or economics-derived theories of resource capture and collective action. The literature also departs from an appreciation of the need for looking at multiple levels of analysis – international, regional, national, and local – and the interactions among these levels (Rubin 2003). For example, some see causal drivers in local conditions such as scarcity, inequality, migration, or relative economic deprivation among social groups, whereas for others the causal drivers are much deeper such as climate change, global terms of trade, and primary-commodity dependent economies. For these reasons, the scholarship has moved beyond efforts to define narrow theories of conflict causation and instead the research tends to focus the root-cause debates on the interactive effects of "need, greed, and creed" (Arson and Zartman 2005).

The root causes of conflict are now described in terms of a syndrome of "fragility"

Thus, the root causes of conflict are now described in terms of a syndrome of "fragility" in which there are interactive effects among root causes to include the problem of recurring incidence or cycles of violence in an estimated 40-60 states on the globe that experience a lethal combination of chronic poverty and violent conflict (World Bank 2011). Clearly a critical source of fragility is the inability or unwillingness of states to function in a way that delivers basic human security and to provide the governance conditions for human development (Stewart and Brown 2009). Scholarly efforts to measure the fragility syndrome have featured, for example, large databases that capture a variety of indicators that are together aggregated into fragility indices and rankings of countries and to develop indicators that allow the international community to better assess conflict root causes (Slotin, Wyeth and Romita 2010). A recent "meta-analysis" of this literature showed that many of the research projects that measure fragility produce similar findings, and that there are perhaps three tiers of states in the international system: those that are "trapped" in recurrent conflict and poverty cycles, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, those that appear stable but are highly vulnerable to regime collapse (such as Libya in 2011), and those that appear not to be vulnerable to large-scale conflict (Hughes, Moyer, and Sisk 2011). It does then appear that there is increasing scholarly consensus and robust findings on the nature of intrastate violence, the syndrome of fragility as reflecting interactive effects among root causes, and ways to measure the vulnerability of countries, and even more local contexts such as cities or subregions to violent interactions.

A key unknown on root-cause factors into the years ahead is whether and if systemic changes in the world's climate, or other factors such as the decline of global oil supplies, could induce new conflict, state failure, and humanitarian catastrophe. On this issue, scholars seem to be more deeply divided. Some have seen direct causal relationships among environmental stressors and violent outbreaks and they argue that future scarcities and competition over resources in an over-crowded planet may well lead to a renewed uptick in armed conflict around the world. Others are less convinced of the direct nexus between environment and climate change and they suggest that capable and improved governance is the principal intervening factor between deep drivers of social transformation and new conflicts on the horizon (Buhaug et al. 2008, UNEP 2004).

Assessing the track record of UN peacemaking and peacebuilding

Some scholarly research projects do in fact claim that a clear reason for the decline of armed conflict in the twenty years ensuing from the Agenda for Peace is the result of improved UN capacities at brokering and securing peace agreements and for building peace after civil war. In an analysis of conflict in Africa, for example, the 2007 Human Security Report Project Brief found that:

> The doubling of new conflicts [in Africa] starting in the 1990s indicates that whatever conflict prevention initiatives were being attempted during this period were having a negligible impact. This was bad news for policy-makers at the UN and elsewhere, where the idea that "prevention is better than cure" has become widely accepted - though much less widely practiced. The number of armed conflicts in the region fell by more than half. But the fact that the average number of conflicts ending each year in the 1990s was more than twice that of the 1980s, and that a much greater percentage of these terminations was made up of negotiated settlements, was good news. It indicated that what the UN calls "peacemaking" - initiatives designed to bring conflicts to an end – was meeting with growing success (Mack 2007: 5).

Similarly, other scholars such as Virginia Page Fortna also find that peacekeeping, overall, works and the UN interventions are often critical to successful war termination (Fortna 2010).

At least part of the explanation for why the UN contributes to the decline in armed conflict in the 1990s and 2000s is its role in two specific areas that in many ways find their origins reflected in the Agenda for Peace. The first is UN peacemaking, or its efforts to negotiate settlements in civil wars. Indeed, peacemaking is critical because parties seeking to exit civil war through negotiation – typically, when they have fought to a bloody stalemate – need the UN or other outsiders to provide "credible commitment" to the terms of peace agreements (Walter 1997). Case studies of peacemaking suggest that a key concern is the need for broad international consensus and concerted action among leading states – absent which, in Syria in 2012, UN peacemaking is unlikely to be effective – and that the determination, strategy, resources, and skill of leading mediators is essential to peacemaking success (Crocker, Hampson, and Aall 2004).

Whether negotiated settlements are in fact good for long-term peace remains an open question in the literature. Some, such as Toft (2011), have argued that in fact military victories may be more facilitative of peace as the vagaries of negotiated outcomes and the unwillingness of often insurgent parties to demobilize have frustrated the building of peace in the long term. On the other hand, some scholars have in fact found that UN peacebuilding (and by implication, statebuilding) activities have contributed to preventing conflict recurrence and reducing the incidence of armed conflict in the post-Cold War period if the right mission is deployed to fit the context, if there is clear lines of authority and legitimacy for international intervention, and if adequate resources are provided (Doyle and Sambanis 2006).

The United Nations – understood as an international regime to address internal armed conflict – has been effective in that overall armed conflict declined

Conclusion

With the hindsight of history, the definition of peacebuilding in the original Agenda for Peace - efforts to prevent the recurrence of war – seems much too narrow. Although the Agenda (in paras. 56-58 especially) define the goal of peacebuilding as preventing conflict recurrence, it also begins to suggest that consolidation of peace is much more extensive and intrusive than preventing conflict recurrence; peacebuilding involves "the transformation of deficient national structures and capabilities, and for the strengthening of new democratic institutions" (para. 59). This core notion in the Agenda has taken this idea in the emergence of a long-term perspective on consolidating of 'statebuilding' – a term not found in the Agenda but yet which completes the prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding cycle-of-conflict nomenclature.

Indeed, it was scholarly research on the myopic and often externally-driven agendas in peacebuilding that led to the present policy and practitioner focus on rebuilding (or in some cases, building anew) the authority, legitimacy, and capacity of states as an antidote to the conflict-trap syndrome (Paris 2004). In turn, this has led to efforts to revisit the extent to which UN intervention can be successful over the long term to help build the internal institutions and governance capacities of the state and indeed to help countries forge the underlying social cohesion needed to consolidate peace over the long term (Dobbins et al 2005). Overall, scholarly research on the statebuilding theme has yielded evidence that international efforts to build states within are inherently fraught with strategic, policy, and operational dilemmas (Paris and Sisk 2009), suggesting that the statebuilding concept is still one with need for further understanding and conceptual and practical development. Indeed, there has been an active scholarly critique of present statebuilding practices and of the often heavy-handed efforts of the international community to promote democratization and neo-liberal economic reforms in post-war contexts (Newman 2009).

With the addition of the statebuilding term and lens to the concepts of prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding ideas advanced in the Agenda, the evolution of the international regime to address civil wars has advanced significantly since 1992. Scholarly research, in sum, does seem to confirm that the incipient international regime to address internal armed conflict is effective in that overall armed conflict is on the decline, that the ability to conduct early warning and "fragility analysis" has greatly improved, and that there is some initial (yet disputed) evidence that UN peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding activities work.

Two yawning gaps continue to exist in the international system's ability to respond to internal armed conflict into the 21st century. The first is the ability to see violence beyond aggregate measures of armed conflict or even to understand the drivers or determinants of fragility; the challenge today is to further adapt the UN's strategies and country-level approaches to include an explicit violence-reduction agenda (Muggah and Krause 2009). The UN's ability to address societal-level violence, for example through international policing cooperation combined with micro-level development initiatives, seems inadequate especially when the violence unfolds in otherwise stable states not affected by armed conflict (as in Mexico).

The second area is the need for the UN to have a more robust military reaction capacity and to be able to deploy quickly to stem or resolve incipient crises, especially in giving meaning to the norm of the Responsibility to protect when decaying, despotic regimes turn their guns against their own people. It should not be forgotten that the original Agenda for Peace in 1992 recognizes that the UN must be ready to deploy rapidly in crises and, when there is global consensus within the Security Council, to engage in "peace enforcement" (para 44). The call and need for the UN to have a greater standing capacity to respond with robust force, or peace-enforcement units, has been heard often since 1992, notably in the proposals of Sir Brian Urquhart for the creation of a UN volunteer force (Urquhart 1993). Recent crises, particularly the civil-war imbroglio in Syria in 2011-2012, suggest that the ability of the UN to field militarily robust forces in times of conflict to protect humanitarian relief, or to provide the necessary credible commitment for peace negotiations to be successful, underscore that the vision of the Agenda for Peace in laying out a full framework for an effective international regime to stem armed conflict remains regrettably incomplete.

Putting the Pieces Together: Towards a Unified Approach to Prevention at the United Nations

Andrew Tomlinson

The 'Agenda for Peace' came at an extraordinary moment in the history of the UN. The cold war had come to an end: over the prior two years, Soviet forces had withdrawn from Afghanistan, the Berlin Wall had come down and the START I treaty had been signed. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) had been officially dissolved in December 1991. That year had also seen a group of Member States authorized by the Security Council to act on its behalf in response to the invasion of Kuwait, as well as the beginning of the dismantling of the apartheid system in South Africa. The president's note from the Security Council meeting on 31st January, the first ever to be held at the level of Heads of State and Government, (and the source of the request to the Secretary General for a new report on preventive diplomacy, peace-making and peacekeeping), is almost euphoric: "The members of the Council agree that the world now has the best chance of achieving international peace and security since the foundation of the United Nations".

An extraordinary sense of excitement and opportunity springs out of these documents, as well as a feeling of urgency. Not only was the report delivered in 5 months: those months saw significant changes at the UN, including a major reorganization of the Secretariat that created the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations from a number of existing units. So the first half of 1992 saw a resetting of both the normative and the organizational framing of the peace and security apparatus of the UN which largely remains with us today.

'Peace by Numbers'

The report itself was innovative in a number of aspects, notable among them the introduction of the concept of peacebuilding to the UN lexicon, (although it is interesting to note that the concept of peacebuilding described in the report includes not only post-conflict reconstruction, but also rebuilding relations between nations formerly at war). There is a sense of confidence in an understanding of conflict as sequential and that, with the addition of peacebuilding, the UN now had a toolkit to address every stage in that conflict sequence. Moreover, now that the political constraints of the cold war had ended, all that remained was for the UN to go out and apply those tools: "[The United Nations'] security arm, once disabled by circumstances it was not created or equipped to control [i.e. the Cold War], has emerged as a central instrument for the prevention and resolution of conflicts and for the preservation of peace."

A new sequence of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding was to become the core of an orderly and rational approach to conflict

The result of this situation was the evolution of a new sequence of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding which was to become the core of an orderly and rational approach to conflict. The report states "These four areas of action, taken together, and carried out with the backing of all Members, offer a coherent contribution towards securing peace in the spirit of the Charter". It should also be noted that this approach was very much top-down and extrinsic, a to-do list for the international community, not a recommendation for local actors.

10 Years Later – Starting the Shift from Response to Prevention

Ten years later, in the Secretary General's 2001 report on Prevention of Armed Conflict, in the wake of Rwanda and Srebrenica, the mood was very different, and the feeling was growing that something was needed to complement the crisis response mechanisms that had proven inadequate to the task: "...the time has come to intensify our efforts to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention". By 2006, the Progress Report on Prevention of Armed Conflict was even clearer: "...the thrust of preventive work must shift...from reactive, external interventions with ultimately superficial impact to internally driven initiatives for developing local and national capacities for prevention".

The primary responsibility for conflict prevention rested with national governments, but other actors, including regional organizations and civil society, had significant roles

The 2001 report was also more explicit about the limitations to UN action, noting that that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention rested with national governments, and that other actors, including regional organizations and, in particular, civil society, had significant roles to play. Indeed, the 2001 report provided one of the more extensive discussions in formal UN documents of the roles that civil society can play in these contexts…NGOs can…offer non-violent avenues for addressing the root causes of conflict…conduct Track II diplomacy…provide studies of early warning and response opportunities…and can act as advocates in raising international consciousness of particular situations". Nevertheless, the framing of the issue was still a conflict cycle, with prevention being the first stage of action – "Preventive action should be initiated at the earliest possible stage of a conflict cycle in order to be most effective".

20 Years Later – A Growing Understanding of Conflict and Complexity

20 years later, the world seems a more complicated place, and the traditional allocation of UN and donor resources, still heavily weighted to last-minute crisis response and to inter- and intra-state conflict, seems increasingly misplaced. Our understanding of violent conflict has grown, as detailed in analyses such as the 2011 World Development Report. Looking at the world today, it is becoming clear that violent conflict is neither sequential, nor time-bound, nor limited by borders. The analysis produced as part of the process of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, showing that violent deaths in non-conflict settings outnumber those in conflict settings by 10 to 1 is just one, graphic example of how much our perspective on the problem has changed. Any analysis of violent conflict today, and any set of responses, has to encompass a wide variety of situations including:

- Violent instability as a result of the impact of local and cross-border organized crime;
- Urban violence, as the pace of urbanization continues to accelerate;
- Deep and rapid political change as societies transform themselves after decades of stasis;
- Violent conflict arising from deep, long term divisions, often based on longstanding issues such as land disputes, and often exacerbated by political rivalries;
- The negative impact on fragile governments of a growing list of external stress factors, from the continuing economic crisis to the effects of climate change;
- Distortion of local priorities driven by the perceived security needs of other actors.

Conflict and fragility are no longer issues that only affect low-income societies, if they ever were, and although violence and instability can contribute to poverty and chronic under-development, poverty does not necessarily lead to violence and development is not necessarily the primary answer to breaking cycles of conflict. Rather, what has become clear, and is now being articulated even by the most fragile and conflict-affected countries themselves, (in the form of the *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*, for example), is that preventing violent conflict requires building or rebuilding sustainable relationships between individuals, communities and their governments. Even for these, the hardest situations, we see the 2011 Peacebuilding and Statebuilding goals (as set out in the New Deal) emphasize issues of political dialogue, people's security and accessible justice as much as they emphasize economic issues or service delivery.

Even where the threats and stresses are external, a society that has resilience, and that has strengthened its capacity to build dialogue and to make inclusive and collaborative decisions, will be more robust and resistant to breakdown than one that has not. There will always be a need for an effective response mechanism, but

Violent deaths in non-conflict settings outnumber those in conflict settings by 10 to 1

Preventing violent conflict requires building or rebuilding sustainable relationships between individuals, communities and their governments

currently the balance between the resources devoted to response, and those devoted to developing local preventive capacities, is still far too heavily weighted towards response.

A developing toolkit: Flexibility and adaptation

Interestingly, many parts of the UN system have adapted to this new reality, although in some cases progress has occurred in spite of the broader UN architecture rather than because of it. On the ground, UN actors have been finding ways to assist countries and communities in developing their own capacity to negotiate collaborative and inclusive outcomes, through programmes such as the joint programme for conflict prevention of the United Nations Development Programme and the Department of Political Affairs for Building National Capacities, which deploys Peace and Development Advisors to assist national actors, at their request, in nearly 30 countries. We are also increasingly seeing UN Peacekeeping missions taking on an explicit conflict prevention role, as in South Sudan. The need to begin to address prevention issues on a regional basis has led to the establishment of three regional political missions. New funding mechanisms are being developed, like the Peacebuilding Fund which provides catalytic funding to meet urgent needs with a short turnaround.

At a member state level, we are seeing a new openness to cooperation with regional organizations, the development of organizational structures such as the Peacebuilding Commission, (with its potential for peer support through political accompaniment and South-South exchanges), and the development of peer review mechanisms, like the Universal Periodic Review and the African Peer Review Mechanism, opening up new directions in mutual support and accountability. Moreover, there is now a wide range of preventive activity that takes place across the UN system, from the work on violence as a health issue at the World Health Organisation (WHO), to the various processes around Armed Violence and Development, including the Geneva Declaration, to the development of the Rapporteur system and the joint office of the Special Advisers, to name only a few such initiatives.

Nevertheless, it should be clear that many of these advances have been made in isolation: the UN system is far from adopting a unified approach to prevention issues, or even a common understanding of how all these pieces can work together. There is also still a leaning towards top-down and government-centric processes, and the UN still has to develop better mechanisms for broad consultation with civil society and others on the ground, outside the elites and beyond the capital. And the formal organization of the UN machinery still largely follows the fourfold 'prevention by numbers' approach of the 'Agenda for Peace': preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

The UN system is far from adopting a unified approach to prevention issues, or even a common understanding of how all these pieces can work together

Next Steps: Putting the Pieces Together

In considering a way forward, several issues present themselves:

There is a real need for a single unifying analytical and conceptual framework for prevention, response and peacebuilding at the UN, that would replace the sequential conflict cycle paradigm and would bridge the divides that still beset this discussion, between security and development, between crisis response and capacity building, and would encompass our new conception of violence in a variety of environments. This should, however, be a tool for communication rather than a prescriptive device: work on the ground still needs to be driven by iterative, evidence-based processes rather than as the top-down implementation of a framework or theory.

Once consensus has been built around such a framework, the next logical step would be to create a new UN strategy that would line up member states' and the UN's resources and organizational structures and processes behind a unifying vision. In practical terms, however, it will take some time to build the kind of consensus that would be necessary to frame such a strategy. Rather, in the near term, I would suggest that there are three things that could usefully take place:

- Sustained attention from researchers, think-tanks and thought-leaders on the challenges presented by this new, broader perspective on violence, matched by continuing experimentation on the ground to identify what works and what doesn't; (we may find that what we learn in non-traditional contexts may usefully inform violence prevention in conflict affected environments),
- A continuing shift in donor attention towards programmes and approaches that are targeted at assisting societies to build preventive capacity; and most importantly,
- Increasing leadership from societies that are impacted by violence, in articulating their needs, sharing experience and lessons learned, and looking pro-actively and where appropriate for support from the international community for their own efforts.

It is time to replace the sequential conflict cycle paradigm

Work on the ground needs to be driven by iterative, evidence-based processes rather than as the top-down implementation of a framework

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About this paper

This Paper collects the contributions to an event commemorating the 20 years of 'An Agenda for Peace' convened by the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform in Geneva, on 15 June 2012.

The paper has been edited by Dr. Achim Wennmann, Executive Coordinator of the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, and Researcher at the Centre on Conflict Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) of the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies in Geneva.

About the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform

The Geneva Peacebuilding Platform is an inter-agency network that connects the critical mass of peacebuilding actors, resources, and expertise in Geneva and worldwide. Founded in 2008, the Platform has a mandate to facilitate interaction on peacebuilding between different institutions and sectors, and to advance new knowledge and understanding of peacebuilding issues and contexts. It also plays a creative role in building bridges between International Geneva, the United Nations peacebuilding architecture in New York, and peacebuilding activities in the field. The Platform's network comprises more than 2500 peacebuilding professionals and over 60 institutions working on peacebuilding directly or indirectly. As part of its 2012-2014 Programme, the Platform provides policy-relevant advice and services, ensures the continuous exchange of information through seminars, consultations, and conferences, and facilitates outcome-oriented peacebuilding dialogues in five focus areas. For more information see http://www.gpplatform.ch.

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