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# **Preventing Interstate Armed Conflict: Whose responsibility?**

Bachelor Thesis in Political Sciences  
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Jönköping: December, 2010

## **Abstract**

This is a study of interstate armed conflict prevention. The concept of conflict, armed conflict and conflict prevention is defined and explained in order to be able to investigate if there is any single institution saddled with the responsibility of preventing interstate armed conflict and also to verify if adequate efforts are been put in this area which is of importance to mankind. The relationship between conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution is also discussed so that a proper understanding of interstate armed conflict prevention is made.

The latter part of this study is aimed at investigating who has the responsibility to prevent interstate armed conflict and the importance of external actors in conflict prevention. After which this study will then investigate if the efforts so far made are adequate in preventing interstate armed conflict before a discussion and conclusion is made on the findings of this research.

Conclusion drawn from this study is of two parts. First it was discovered that no single institution has the responsibility to prevent interstate armed conflict but rather conflict prevention can only be achieved by collective efforts of the international community involving but state and non state actors. Lastly the study showed that quite a lot is being done in this area of conflict prevention but there is room for improvement.

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**Abbreviations:**

AU: African Union

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CFE: Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe

ECCAS: Economic Community of Central African States

ECOMOG: Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

GATT: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development

IMF: International monetary fund

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NHDR: National Human Development Report

NFZ: Nuclear free zone

NPT: Non- Proliferation Treaty

OAS: Organization of American states

OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

SADC: South African development community

SALT: Strategic Arms Limitation Talks

START: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

UN: United Nations

UCDP: Uppsala Conflict Data Project

WTO: World Trade Organization

## **1. Introduction**

Peace is a relevant factor for social economic development, and conflict on the other hand undermines development efforts and policies. Thus preventing the outburst of armed conflict should be high on the agendas of international organizations, regional organizations and government of states. Today the world seems to be getting more dangerous due several new factors which now affect international relations. Terrorism and nuclear related issues seems to be straining the relationship between states. Even if it is believed that violent conflicts are at a much lower level than at the end of the Cold War, Gleditsch et al, (2002) but studies still show that there have been rises in attacks by a state on another over the past 20 years.

The importance of preventing interstate armed conflict has somewhat been on the agenda of governments and international organizations since the end of the Second World War. But given the recent up-rise in interstate conflict and tensions, I am motivated to find out who is responsible for the prevention of interstate armed conflict, and if who or those responsible are doing enough to prevent and reduce the continued rise in interstate conflicts and tensions.

This first section of this chapter will give the background and purpose of research, followed by method and material, disposition sections and lastly a section dedicated to the limitations faced during this research.

### **1.1. Background and purpose**

Preventing the outbreak of destructive conflict remains one of the most difficult challenges in the 21st century. Cases such as the continued violence in the Middle East, Georgia versus Russia conflict in relation to south Ossetia and still ongoing Iraq and Afghanistan wars which possibly could have been avoided has

pointed to the necessity of increasing efforts to averting armed conflicts which leads to unnecessary loss of lives, human disasters, starvation, regional instability and all other social and economic cost associated with armed conflict. Recent trends such as war on terrorism, Confrontations with North Korea and Iran over nuclear Weapons and the tension in the Korean peninsula risks future armed conflicts.

Facing such threats of future interstate conflicts, governments and international organizations should evaluate the field of conflict prevention. Evaluating the field of conflict prevention would help the international community identify problems and solutions to averting the escalation of emerging tensions such as in the Korean peninsula into armed conflict, thus avoiding the immense human suffering and problems that conflicts cause, both for the countries involved and the rest of the world. The cost of preventing a conflict is much lesser than the huge costs of conflict and post conflict reconstruction as evident in Iraq, Afghanistan and other conflicts in the past. Research on third-party diplomacy has shown that acting before high levels of conflict intensity is better than trying to end them, (Miall, 1992).

However, conflict is viewed as a generic process which is involved in all social behavior (Nicholson, 1992) but the primary purpose of this thesis is to discuss who has the responsibility to prevent interstate armed conflict, what the international community is doing and can do to increase preventive conflict measures.

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

- Interstate armed conflict prevention is whose responsibility?
- Are those responsible doing enough?

I do not seek to fully answer these questions, but hoping to find out who has the responsibility to prevent interstate armed conflict and also what is being done in this important area.

## **1.2. Method and Materials**

In order to answer the research questions above a qualitative analysis of sources will be used. Silverman (1993) explained that the purpose of the research determines the type of method the researcher will choose to use. The reason for choosing to use qualitative analysis in this research was influenced by my desire to do an in depth investigation and also explore the richness as well as the complexity of occurrences, events and facts relating to conflict prevention.

In the early stages of this thesis, it was my intension to use both quantitative and qualitative methods in conducting the analysis. But careful analyses of the information available in the area of conflict prevention showed that data available comprises of both interstate and intrastate conflicts. Previous researches in conflict prevention have always dealt with interstate and intrastate conflict when treating conflict prevention. Hence this thesis went ahead with a non-numerical analysis of interstate armed conflict prevention so as to keep the reader on focus with the topic and ensure clarity on the discussion of interstate conflict prevention.

The choice of method here makes it possible to use diverse sources that can be consulted and contrasted in order to provide a clear and credible content, to exclude the likelihood of bias that is normally linked to an over-reliance on one source. This choice of method will also be helpful during this work because this thesis attempts to investigate conflict prevention from interstate perspective which has often not been the case when conflict prevention is being discussed as

earlier mentioned above. An explanatory model will be developed, which aims at explaining conflict prevention in a manner the reader will clearly understand.

The empirical parts of the study will be based on selected information from reliable primary and secondary sources such as the United Nations homepage, reports, books, articles and information from some research departments like the Uppsala peace and conflict research department in Sweden.

Later in this thesis some concepts would be defined, various definitions are available on these concepts. A careful thought was given in the evaluating of sources for these concepts and for this entire research; the final choice of sources was based on several underlying factors outlined in Esaiasson (2003). These factors are authenticity, independence, concurrency and tendency. By authenticity it meant that the source has to be true and not forged, while by independence it has to be a primary source and in tendency it implies the source has to be carefully examined to ensure it is not a biased source.

The criteria's above was helpful in the choice of sources because during the acquisition of sources I was engulfed with different books, articles and journals on conflict, conflict prevention and conflict prevention measures. But with the help of the factors set by Esaiasson for the evaluation of sources, the sources to be used were decided upon. For example, when deciding on the sources to be used in the definition of some concepts like conflict and armed conflict which has several conflicting views and definitions, the authenticity of these sources and its independence were carefully examined. This is why the Uppsala conflict data project, the United Nations conflict reports, Michael Lund and Peter Wallensteen, who are established researchers in conflict prevention, will often

be used and referred to in this thesis. This thereby ensures primary and secondary sources will mostly be used in this thesis.

Giving all these accounts on the method of analysis, choice of materials and criteria for the evaluation of sources, a disposition of this research will follow in the next section.

### **1.3 Disposition**

This thesis will start by defining several concepts like conflict and armed conflict which will then be followed up by a dedicated chapter to conflict prevention owing to the fact that the primary purpose of this thesis is conflict prevention. A brief discussion of the relationship between Concepts like conflict prevention, conflict resolution and conflict management will also be made in that chapter.

The fourth chapter of this thesis will discuss *preventive responsibility* where an investigation n responsibility will be done. Chapter four will attempt to answer one of the research questions, the purpose of the chapter will be to check if there is any institution directly responsible to preventing interstate armed conflict.

Chapter five of this thesis will discuss the importance of international mediators such as the United Nations, regional organizations and others in the prevention of interstate armed conflict will also be discussed. Chapter 6 will follow and would try to answer the last research question by discussing what is being done today to ensure interstate armed conflict do not occur and the modalities that has been set up for this function. This will be followed by a reflection and discussion of this entire research before a conclusion will be drawn based on facts presented in this research

## **1.4 Limitations**

Upon the choice of this topic, the initial intention was to do both a qualitative and quantitative analysis which according to Silverman (1993) could both complement each other. But as the research progressed, it was evident that statistical tables available in the area of conflict prevention included both intrastate and interstate conflicts. To ensure clarity in the minds of the reader, it was decided not to include statistical data but instead use a qualitative model to carry out this research.

## **2. The Concept of Conflict and Armed Conflict**

Conflict in the general context is not always bad, sometimes conflict is necessary for positive changes to come. Differences in opinions and disagreements often result in better understanding and solutions to new and existing problems. This thesis and chapter would not be discussing conflict in human society but rather armed conflict among states. So it is imperative that a sound understanding of the definition of conflict in the interstate context is made before exploring how to prevent such occurrences. And also because there has to be some sort of conflict before the initiation of conflict prevention.

This chapter will treat the concept of conflict and armed conflict, the definition which would be adopted here would be the definition associated with interstate conflict.

### **2.1 Concept of Conflict**

Almost every academic discipline has its theoretical approach of understanding the concept conflict. Economists are focused on game-theory and decision making, psychologist explores interpersonal conflicts, and sociologists take status and class conflicts as their focal point, while political science is centered on intra-national and international conflicts.

However, this thesis focuses on international conflict which is mainly armed but it will be necessary to give a widely accepted definition of conflict which covers all areas for a clearer picture of conflict to be made.

Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research defined conflicts as: “the clashing of interests (positional differences) on national values of some duration and magnitude between at least two parties (organized groups, states,

groups of states, organizations) that are determined to pursue their interests and win their cases” (HIIK 2005). I have chosen this definition of conflict in order to broaden the term conflict to cover as much areas of conflict as possible before exploring armed conflict in the next section.

## **2.2 Armed Conflict**

Recent events within the last 15 years like the war on terror, have questioned what constitutes an armed conflict under international law. Currently there is no universally accepted definition of armed conflict. The Geneva Conventions recognize two distinct categories of armed conflict—international and non-international. Under the Geneva Conventions, an international armed Conflict arises between two or more of the High Contracting Parties. However, since only states can be High Contracting Parties, an international armed conflict has traditionally been viewed as a conflict between two states. The war on terror clearly does not fit into this definition based on the fact that the war on terror is most times not a war between states. Drawing a clear distinction between situations that constitute armed conflict and those that do not is not an easy task based on the complexity of emerging conflicts.

Some conflicts clearly fall within the definition of armed conflict. For example, conflicts in which state actors are involved on both sides fall within the core definition of international armed conflict, such as the conflict in Afghanistan during the early period where the both the United States and Afghanistan were both state actors. As in this case and many other cases it is not clear whether a particular situation qualifies as an armed conflict. One may want to ask if the conflict in Lebanon between state parties (Israel) and a non-state actor (Hezbollah) an armed conflict. Or if the Irish Republican Army a party in an armed conflict or is it a criminal organization governed solely by domestic

criminal law as the British government has always maintained? (Brooks, 2004). The emergence of non-state groups as a major threat to international peace and security has rendered the definition of armed conflict even more controversial.

In this research in order to have a proper understanding of armed conflict, the definition of armed conflict by the Uppsala conflict data project would be adopted. The choice of this adoption of the definition by Uppsala conflict data project is two way. The first being because the aim for this research is not to debate on the validity of what is and what is not an armed conflict or if the armed conflict is proven to be international or non international but rather it focuses on prevention of an interstate conflict where one exists. Secondly and lastly the adoption is based on the credibility of this project by Uppsala University Sweden.

The Uppsala conflict data project defined an armed conflict as a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.

In accordance with above definition, different types of armed conflict were identified by UCDP and they are:

- Interstate armed conflict which occurs between two or more states.
- Extra state armed conflict which occurs between a state and a non-state group outside its own territory.
- Internationalized internal armed conflict which occurs between the government of a state and internal opposition groups with intervention from other states.
- Internal armed conflict that occurs between the government of a state and internal opposition groups without intervention from other states.

Historically, the Uppsala armed conflict dataset shows a total of 225 armed conflict was recorded between 1946- 2001 and of this 225 armed conflict 42 were interstate conflicts. Almost every region of the world has seen its share of interstate armed conflict since the cold war, Ethiopia versus Eritrea in Africa and Georgia versus Russia in Europe to mention a few.

The Uppsala armed conflict data set now see a major decline in interstate armed conflict since the end of the second world war but it is argued by some scholars that the criteria UCDP used for collection of data to make this conclusion are empirical findings, which can be derived directly from these data by simply counting the number of conflicts assigned proper names. An example of this UCDP critic is Sarkees, (2003), who argues that focusing on the number of casualties in conflicts rather than the number of conflicts show that data on conflict “reflect a disquieting constancy in warfare”. Be that as it may, we would agree that today there is an imminent rise in interstate tensions since the end of the cold war which could be associated with the war on terror, nuclear disarmament, global warming and globalization.

With the understanding and differentiation of the concepts conflict and armed conflict, the next chapter will discuss another concept (Conflict Prevention) vital to this research which needs to be clearly understood in order to discuss the research questions.

### **3. Conflict Prevention**

Preventing a war has been one of the major focuses of international relations; it was the dominant theme at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 which put into effect a number of measures, such as mutual consultations, the establishment of neutral states and demilitarized zones, and the peaceful settlement of conflicts, Craig et al (1995). It may also be right to say the African union, European Union, United Nations and some other regional organizations were founded with the major goal of preventing conflict through interstate interaction and cooperation.

Further affirming the importance of conflict prevention in the world today, is the United Nations, which made Conflict prevention a central feature in its Charter; Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter contains a series of preventive devices such as fact-finding, negotiation, mediation, conciliation, judicial settlement, and arbitration. This shows that the international community understands the importance of conflict prevention.

Historically during the Cold War, many practitioners and academics viewed preventive action as synonymous with pre-emptive strikes Wallenstein, (1998) but after the Cold War the means of preventing conflicts changed to a more peaceful way of preventing interstate conflict. Originally the term 'preventive diplomacy' was used officially for the first time in 1960 by then UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. He emphasized on keeping regional conflicts localized so as to prevent their violent spillover into the superpower arena. This may arguably be the birth of conflict prevention because after him his successors continued to emphasize the importance of preventing conflict before the escalation of violence.

In 1992 Boutros-Ghali went further to list five specific measures: confidence building, fact-finding missions, early warning networks, preventive deployment,

and demilitarized zones. Continuing the efforts by previous secretary generals in conflict prevention, Kofi Annan moved the United Nations from a ‘culture of reaction to a culture of prevention’ by spelling out some of the primary requirements for preventive action. Annan has also argued for the UN’s moral responsibility in preventing large-scale violence, such as genocide as evident in his conflict report of 2001.

### **3.1 Conceptual definition of Conflict Prevention**

Today conflict prevention still doesn’t have a universally accepted definition because it means different things to different people. This has led to diverse definitions for conflict prevention, among the diverse definitions for conflict prevention is:

- Boutros-Ghali, (1996). “Preventive diplomacy is the use of diplomatic techniques to prevent disputes arising, prevent them from escalating into armed conflict and prevent the armed conflict from spreading”.
- Miall et al, (1999). “actions which prevent armed conflicts or mass violence from breaking out”.
- Lund, (2002). “any structural or intersectoral means to keep intrastate or interstate tensions and disputes from escalating into significant violence and the use of armed force, to strengthen the capabilities of parties to possible violent conflicts for resolving their disputes peacefully, and to progressively reduce the underlying problems that produce those tensions and disputes”.
- Carment & Schnabel, (2003). “a medium and long-term proactive operational or structural strategy undertaken by a variety of actors, intended to identify and create the enabling conditions for a stable and more predictable international security environment”.

Some of these definitions make conflict prevention too wide, thereby making the concept consist of a wide range of issues and they differ according to the aim of prevention from reducing violence to resolving the conflict. Lund argues that a more rigorous definition should distinguish conflict prevention from other close related concepts such as preventive diplomacy, foreign policy and intervention.

In order to define conflict prevention in the context that embodies armed conflict. This thesis will adopt the definition of conflict prevention by Franche et al, 2004 where Conflict prevention is defined as the wide range of actions, interventions, programmes, activities, mechanisms and procedures that address structural risks, prevent the escalation of tension into deadly and destabilising conflict in addition to preventing the continuation of conflict or the reoccurrence of armed conflicts in post-conflict situations.

The definition of conflict prevention adopted above encompasses both methods of conflict prevention thereby making the definition a full representation of conflict prevention in all of its methods of prevention which will be discussed in the next section to give a clearer picture of this complex and commonly misunderstood concept.

### **3.2 Methods of Conflict Prevention**

Targeting the causes of conflict is the most important factor in determining which method of approach should be used in conflict prevention. As earlier mentioned, Boutros-Ghali listed early warning, mediation, confidence building measures, fact-finding, preventive deployment, and peace zones as factors to be considered in determine preventive measures. Although the UN policy papers of the 1990 such as the Agenda For Development greatly expanded preventive

measures to policies that address the institutional, socio-economic, and global environment within which conflicting actors operate – as diverse as humanitarian aid, arms control, social welfare, military deployment, and media.

However, since this thesis adopted the definition by Franche et al, (2004). Which defined conflict prevention as the wide range of actions, interventions, programmes, activities, mechanisms and procedures that address structural risks, prevent the escalation of tension into deadly and destabilising conflict in addition to preventing the continuation of conflict or the reoccurrence of armed conflicts in post-conflict situations? It will important here to discuss this wide range of actions, interventions etc.

Therefore Conflict prevention is often divided into two categories: Direct Prevention and Structural Prevention.

- **Direct Conflict Prevention**

Direct conflict prevention refers to measures that are aimed at preventing short-term, often imminent escalation of a potential conflict. Also included in direct prevention are the withdrawals of military forces or the involvement of mediators as seen in the present attempt by US, China and others to ease the rising tensions associated with border lines which is an inherited grievance from the previous Korean War in the Korean peninsula.

- **Structural Prevention**

Structural prevention focuses on more long term measures which deal with the causes of a potential conflict along with potentially escalating and triggering factors. An example of this kind of measures includes economic development assistance and or increased political participation. These kinds of measure are most effective in intra state conflict.

Although an intrastate conflict may lead to an interstate conflict, since conflict can spread to neighboring states due to ethnicity as seen in most conflicts in Africa. Hence structural prevention avoids the spread of conflict, thereby serving the purpose of a long term prevention of interstate conflict.

### **3.3 Relationship between conflict prevention, conflict resolution and management**

Conflict prevention as previously defined by Boutros-Ghali (1996) is the use of diplomatic techniques to prevent disputes arising, prevent them from escalating into armed conflict and prevent the armed conflict from spreading. Conflict resolution and conflict management has a variety of definitions but for simplicity and for the fact that this research focuses on armed conflict I will attempt to define conflict resolution and management in relation to armed conflict.

Conflict resolution refers to the resolution of the underlying incompatibilities in a conflict and mutual acceptance of each party's existence while conflict management refers to measures that limit, mitigate and/or contain a conflict without necessarily solving it. Unlike conflict prevention which is the use of diplomatic techniques in preventing disputes, conflict management tries resolving the current conflict so that things proceed while conflict resolution aims at resolving the underlying conflict over time. The relationship here is that conflict prevention is a tool that can be used for prevention while conflict resolution and conflict management are used at different stages of conflicts. Although conflict management could sometimes be used as a preventive measure in ensuring conflicts do not escalate into a full-blown war, (Wallensteen, 2002).

### **3.4 Practical and Conceptual Difficulties of Conflict Prevention**

Conflict prevention covers an array of practical difficulties such as conflict prediction, understanding conflict, motivating outside actors and proving policy success. It also covers problems relating to the assumptions on the root causes of war and the ethics of intervention. Some of these practical difficulties are as follows:

- **Predicting conflict**

Predicting conflict at the early stages is difficult, particularly in the case of internal war. Predicting a conflict or disagreement is very dangerous because overestimating the possibility of war may lead to a false alarm and outside intervention may lead to an increase in tension rather than decrease tensions (Wallensteen, 2002).

- **Motivating outside actors**

Even if the early warning mechanisms seem to function, motivating external actors to act is quite difficult and another problem with conflict prevention concerns the mobilization of outside actors when there is no pressing need to intervene or immediate threat to international security. The persistence of realist mindsets in governments and international organizations leads to a reluctance to reconsider international norms on non-interference and sovereignty, and a lack of interest in regions of little strategic interest.

Motivating outside actors who lack interest in the region has been the issue in attempts to ending the constant conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. A deaf ear is turned on when the United Nations try to push for third party negotiations or assistance to the region. Sometimes even if interest exists, some countries have

the policy of not meddling in the affairs of other states so that others don't meddle in theirs. Examples to this is China who has a business interest in Sudan but has decided to ignore what is happening in Sudan and also has refused to condemn their neighbor North Korea even when they violate international law. This, I may say, is one of the most pressing problems conflict prevention faces today.

- **Understanding Conflict**

Understanding conflict is a problem in conflict prevention implementation, sometimes the differentiation of a conflict to being an interstate or intrastate is a difficult task due to the complexity of the origin of the Conflict. Interstate conflicts sometimes have developed from intrastate conflicts and vice versa. Hence a careful examination of individual cases should be critically done to enable the implementation of the right preventive measures.

Taking a closer look at the Afghan conflict which in the beginning was clearly an interstate conflict but today one cannot really tell what kind of war it has become. Some scholars say it is an intrastate conflict, some say it is still an interstate conflict since there is still one state actor and others say it encompasses both at the same time. The questions here are what kind of conflict exactly is this conflict today and so what kind of measures should be used for both long and short term preventive measures. Whichever class of conflict the Afghan conflict is classified is not of importance to this section but what is clearly demonstrated in the conflict here is that understanding conflict is a problem to conflict prevention implementers and also that sometimes a particular conflict in this new world era mutates.

- **Proving policy success**

Lastly, another problem with promoting conflict prevention is that of proving the success of policies or third party intervention. This last problem here embodies the earlier two mentioned problems. At the end of a conflict, it is always difficult to prove that preventive action, rather than other factors, stopped the outbreak of a violent conflict. Hence since success cannot be measured or clearly visible in some cases, then governments and organizations would continue to think that conflicting parties want peace and with or without interference conflicting parties would make peace. This at the end makes policy choices complex thereby leading to escalation of violence due to ignorance.

This chapter has dealt with the various definition of conflict prevention and decided to adopt the definition of conflict prevention by Franche et al which embodies some of the important preventive measures. Methods of prevention were also discussed and the relationship between conflict management, resolution and prevention was also explained. Lastly the practical and conceptual problems associated with conflict prevention was treated, the next chapter would now discuss preventive responsibility to investigate who is responsible to ensuring interstate conflicts do not thrive.

#### **4. Preventive responsibility**

The United Nations, African Union, European Union and some other regional organizations are founded to serve as a platform for negotiations among member states for the primary purpose of preventing future conflict. In their constitutions or working guidelines a section is always dedicated to ensuring members comply with norms that ensure peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts.

An example to the above is the United Nations charter which in its working guidelines for the 192 member states today, states clearly there that, by virtue of becoming members of the organization, members have agreed to resolve their disputes peacefully, to respect human rights, to work for social and economic justice, to practice tolerance, and to live together in peace. This shows the importance of preventing conflict in today's world.

With these enormous commitments by states to various organizations and agreeing to resolve disputes among member states in a peaceful manner, one would ask why are there still conflicts among member states everywhere. Today North and South Korea are at the brink of an armed conflict and also Wikileaks released documents of discussions by the United States diplomatic offices have shown the continued support by some Arab states to the use force to disarm Iran of its purported nuclear possessions. Again one will ask why these states are urging for the use of violence to resolving issues or rather why these states are not upholding their signed commitments to ensuring peaceful resolutions.

To answer some of these questions just mentioned above and most importantly the research question on who has the responsibility to prevent interstate armed conflict. It is imperative to look at these organizations closely to see if there is a means of monitoring if states abide by their commitments as being part of these organizations, with this we could relate that to the question of who has the

responsibility to prevent interstate conflict. This is because, if abiding by agreements is the only commitment to prevent conflict since there is no global government, there is need to ensure that states abide with these agreements to its fullest.

To do these, the United Nations will be best to examine since it has the highest number of states as members. In attempting to investigate the above, this thesis discovered that in the United Nations charter, Article 33, paragraph 1, states that it is the responsibility of individual sovereign Governments to prevent armed inter-state conflict and, to that end, to make use of the tools and forums provided for the peaceful resolution of disputes. States are expected to make use of the tools and procedures set forth by the United Nations to resolve disputes. These tools include the International Court of Justice as successfully used by Nigeria and Cameroun to resolve the border lines in between the countries in 2002. This clearly does not enforce conflict prevention at the state level, since obviously it is the free will of these states to decide whether to use these tools or not.

Article 33, paragraph 1 of the United Nations thereby obliges the United Nations from being directly responsible for preventing interstate conflict and transferring the burden on member states to ensure the use of tools set forth . I may be right to say this clearly puts the responsibility of conflict prevention in anarchy. This clearly shows there is nobody directly responsible for ensuring tensions do not turn violent or conflicting parties make use of these tools set forth in the Charter.

Since this research has discovered that Charter of the largest global organization (UN), in terms of member states resources and experience has actually shelved the responsibility of ensuring peace to states who themselves hope in the United Nations to resolving their own problems. This thesis will move to the next chapter to actually discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the UN and

regional organizations as mediators in interstate conflict prevention since this is the only possible way to resolve disputes among states. History has also shown that States do not always agree on how much outside interference they will allow in their regional or internal struggles.

## **5. Role of Non-state actors in Interstate Conflict Prevention**

Regional and global intergovernmental organizations have grown both in number and scope since the end of the Cold War. European regional organizations take an active role in managing regional conflicts (Chigas et al, 1996). Regional organizations have become increasingly likely to develop mechanisms for handling domestic and interstate disputes. Some have established conflict-prevention centers with early warning systems and have taken very important steps to advance the applicable normative framework in their regions. Often, regional organizations, by virtue of their proximity to the sources of conflicts, have the responsibility and credibility to encourage their members to adhere to particular norms such as good governance (UN Progress report, 2006). For example, the treaties and protocols of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) establish numerous provisions for conflict management, including the creation of an institutional cease-fire monitoring mechanism (ECOMOG).

Global organizations, on the other hand, are typically more centralized, institutionalized, and resource-rich, which may enhance the success of their conflict management activities. The United Nations, one of the most highly institutionalized and funded organizations, has been the most frequent (non-state) mediator of interstate and intrastate conflicts since WWII (Bercovitch and Schneider, 2000).

### **5.1 Role of the United Nations as an Actor in Conflict Prevention**

The United Nations today can be said to be the only global organization with 192 state members whose primary function is the peaceful settlement of disputes. The UN has a number of distinct advantages and they are:

- 192 member states have, by virtue of becoming members of the organization, agreed to resolve their disputes peacefully, to respect human rights, to work for social and economic justice, to practice tolerance, and to live together in peace. Because some regions do not yet have regional organizations, and because a number of states that are members of the UN do not belong to any regional arrangement, the coverage of the United Nations is greater than that of regional organizations.
- UN provides the most comprehensive dispute settlement system available, with a full range of organs (the Secretary-General, the International Court of Justice, and the Security Council) and a wide range of methods (ranging from good offices through peace enforcement).
- The UN's is the world's only global organization with unparalleled legitimacy. Sometimes this legitimacy may be strained and be different or viewed differently in different parts of the world, there is still no substitute for the moral authority, institutional experience and convening power of the UN.
- The UN's human and financial resources are considerably greater than those of any other intergovernmental or non-governmental organization operating in the field of conflict prevention and resolution.
- The various activities of the United Nations constantly socialize governments to conform to developing international norms and by so doing help states to interact and discontinue existing tensions.

The most obvious disadvantage of the United Nations, which sometimes discredit some UN preventive policy in some regions like Asia are bilateral and

multilateral relationships outside the UN system. These bilateral or multilateral relationships which is against the principle of the UN Charter brings political baggage to state interactions within the UN which leads to political trade-offs, and results in inconsistent and slow decision making, motivated by coalitional political and economic interests.

## **5.2 Role of Regional Organizations as Actors in Conflict Prevention.**

The United Nations charter, Chapter VIII, includes regional organizations and arrangements as part of its system and also explicitly encourages their development.

A major advantage of regional organization is that they are likely to be familiar with the actors in a dispute, as well as with the situation on the ground, how it is developing and how it developed. Proximity to an area of conflict most times generates interests because conflict as we know and have seen in some conflicts in Africa spreads over regions (e.g. Liberia-Congo-serri lone). More importantly, neighbors are likely to take a greater interest in conflict prevention in an adjacent state if they fear that fighting could spread or result in uncontrolled flows of arms or refugees through their territory.

But on the other hand regional organization as an actor in conflict prevention could become a disadvantage because neighbors sometimes have a vested interest in a dispute, such as when members of an aggrieved group in a neighboring state are ethnic kin to another. This relationship by ethnic kin or any other relationships may lead to some sort of sectional assistance thereby fueling the conflict.

Regional organizations have had tremendous impact in Africa and other parts of the world especially in the area of intrastate conflict. Examples of some notable interstate conflict are the League of Arab States (Arab league) influence in Egypt-Sudan crisis in 1958 and the influence exerted by defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Nigeria-Cameroun dispute in 1981.

This chapter has dealt with the advantages and disadvantages of different mediators in conflict prevention which is very important to know if conflict prevention is to flourish in this fast changing world and also to be able to see the efforts so far. Before a conclusion is made the next chapter will try to discuss what is being done so far in the areas of conflict prevention in a more detailed way.

## **6. What is being done to prevent Interstate Armed Conflict?**

To discuss the efforts being made in the area of conflict prevention, it is imperative that we must understand that even if studies have shown that the amount of interstate armed conflict has declined tremendously. The recent armed conflict between states as we have seen in Russia-Georgia conflict over South Ossetia and other unaverted conflicts reflect the inadequacy in this area. But one should also understand that the decline in interstate was has been due to the significant efforts devoted to preventive action and capacity building as earlier mentioned in this thesis.

Examples of conflicts and crisis that were handled or resolved before war erupted since the end of the cold war are the Cuban missile crisis, the border conflicts between China and Kyrgyzstan and the Nigeria-Cameroun land dispute to mention a few. In all of these disputes tools like the ICC and others which is made available for states by the United Nations were utilized and it yielded positive results, thus avoiding interstate armed conflict

Notably since the end of the cold war some efforts have been made by the international community to strengthening interstate and intrastate conflict prevention in general. There have been significant efforts in areas of Institutional capacity-building due to ongoing response mechanisms been set up to trigger actions automatically based on risk criteria. The UN Secretariat, the European Union, and intergovernmental, regional, and sub-regional bodies have staffed small units to watch for early warning signs and consider preventive responses. In addition to the most active regional mechanisms of the OSCE and OAS, all African sub-regional organizations have agreed to prevention mechanisms such as AU, ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC and ECCAS. Although some are not fully operational, some have been used to respond to threatening situations, UN progress report, (2006).

Apart from institutional capacity building where the international community and the United Nations has done quite a lot. Other efforts have been made in preventing interstate armed conflict and some efforts according to Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict are:

- **Deterrence of Aggressor States**

Deterrence, takes the form of an alliance or a unilateral step and it prevents deadly conflicts by threatening to pose unacceptable costs on states that initiate them. Such measures include creation of NATO, Nuclear deterrence U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and The U.S.-Korea alliance.

- **Arms Control**

Arms control according to Carnegie Commission has three objectives: to make war less likely; to make preparing for war less costly; and to make war less destructive. The first two objectives were the main focus of U.S.-Soviet Cold War arms control agreements; efforts to control "loose nukes" and prevent proliferation continue that emphasis like the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention. Arms control measures have also been introduced to eliminate or reduce conventional weapons in Europe and other regions, and the recent ban on land mines. These agreements include SALT and START agreements-limiting nuclear arms, NPT-constraining the proliferation of nuclear weapons, NFZ-establishing nuclear-free zones and CFE-reducing conventional arms in Europe.

- **Developing an Open International Economy**

Economic interdependence and open trading systems encourage peaceful relations between states and promote prosperity and even, perhaps, democracy thereby reducing the potential for conflict. Such Economic initiatives include the Creation of the IMF, the World Bank, GATT and more recently the WTO. This creates an international financial and trade system that encourages open, lawful trade and investment, hence spurring economic growth.

- **Strengthening International Institutions Promoting Norms and Cooperative Security Relations**

International norms of peace and cooperation and international institutions help prevent conflict by creating a sense of accountability to the norms, and also creating an environment in which a state may fully realize all of its national interests by only participating in the institutions and adhering to the institutional law. Such institutions include The United Nations where the rules for membership are clearly outlined in the UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Right as well as Regional organizations such as ASEAN and the OSCE.

The above efforts and those previously discussed indicate that much has been achieved, considering the numerous obstacles that exist in the implementation of some of these preventive measures. The Efforts could undoubtedly have been better or possibly much could still be achieved. But let us not forget that the situation today could also have been worse.

This chapter discussed what is being done to averting interstate armed conflict. In the discussion, the structures available were clearly shown and at the end it

was obvious that quite a lot is being done in the area of interstate armed conflict prevention. The next chapter will reflect on this entire research and its findings, included in these reflections are discussion and the author's opinions.

## **7. Reflections and Discussion**

Reflecting on this research I would like to note that in previous chapters I defined some important concepts relating to interstate armed conflict prevention and conflict prevention itself in detail to enable this research arrive at its desired destination.

Preventive responsibility was also looked upon and there an investigation was done on who has the responsibility to prevent interstate armed conflict, thereby trying to answer the research question on responsibility. That chapter with support from the next found out that there is no institution or body with the direct responsibility to prevent interstate armed conflict but rather the UN, regional organizations and states acts as mediators between conflicting states.

There it also showed that the United Nations is a frontier in conflict prevention because of the powers, expertise and experience it possess in the area of conflict prevention but success heavily depend on States and regional organizations to ensure that the tools available which were created by States in the UN are fully utilized.

Considering this lack of clear authority, self dependence and leadership by the United Nations or any organization in the area of conflict prevention, I may be right to say the international system that coordinates interstate conflict prevention is in anarchy because nobody is saddled with the direct responsibility to ensuring conflict prevention by making states abide by their obligations of peaceful resolution of disputes. Sometimes regional organization expects the UN to act based on the powers it possess on states and the UN on the other hand urges the regional organization to intervene first based on the fact of their proximity to the conflict. This also brings lack of coordination into the problem of conflict prevention.

Hence, conflict prevention can only be successful by the joint efforts of the international community in implementing theories and policies.

This thesis went further in chapter five to investigate the modalities present today to avert or minimizing interstate armed conflict, the chapter also attempted to answer the research question to see if enough is being done in this area. It showed here that efforts are high in this area but there exist problems such as political will of states to meddle in conflict outside their economically and politically interests. Other problems include understanding conflict, understanding early warning signs and providing the right preventive policy for different conflicts.

These problems were also admitted by the former secretary general (Kofi Annan) in his progress report on prevention of armed conflict, 2006. There he stated that

“The General Assembly recognized the need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations for early warning, collection of information and analysis. I regret to report that no significant progress has been made in this area. In fact, unlike some regional organizations, the United Nations still lacks the capability to analyze and integrate data from different parts of the system into comprehensive early warning reports and strategies on conflict prevention. Likewise, knowledge-management mechanisms are developed unevenly across the system. Some United Nations system partners reflect on their experience systematically to draw lessons and identify good practices from their conflict-prevention activities, whereas others review their work only in an ad hoc fashion. As a whole, the United Nations system lacks a comprehensive repository for the knowledge gained in its diverse conflict-prevention activities — its institutional memory in this field is fragmented and incomplete”

(Progress report on prevention of armed conflict, 2006)

Even in this admission of flaws it is still obvious that the little being done is of immense importance to the world. That is why there has been an immense drop in the amount of interstate armed conflict since the end of the Cold War. Which shows that we are better off with the little efforts been made.

Finally, having answered the research questions the next chapter would conclude this research by making some positive suggestions to interstate armed conflict prevention.

## **8. Conclusion**

Scholars in the field of conflict prevention all point the failure or the inadequacy (as also shown in this research) in conflict prevention to the failure to effectively coordinate the division of labor between actors holding expertise in different preventive policy areas. And as a result, policy is often un-reactive and uncoordinated, leading to wasted resources and counterproductive actions.

Above all, a successful conflict prevention policy requires an accurate interpretation of the root causes of conflict and an understanding of conflicting issues. It is obvious from the Secretary General's report of 2006 that what is needed to be done to improve the effectiveness of interstate conflict preventive measures is clear and hence appropriate measure should be taken to tackle these gray areas.

The United Nations who are frontiers with enormous unfulfilled potentials has not lived up to expectation, owing to the fact that vested interest of states and structural inadequacies has continued to impede the fulfillment of its potentials thereby making it slow to respond to growing tensions and emerging conflicts.

Lastly the international community will only be able to continue contributing to conflict prevention efforts if states maintain their support and political will. Not only by the use of the mandate and the preventive tools made available by the United Nations, but also of the conflict prevention facilities and the management methods which they have created in the United Nations' system. If this is done the question of who is responsible or the issue of effectiveness would not arise.

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