

PREVENTING AND RESOLVING DEADLY CONFLICT: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Lecture by Gareth Evans, President, International Crisis Group, to Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut, 10 November 2008

Every month the International Crisis Group produces and distributes electronically to a global readership its *CrisisWatch* bulletin summarizing the state of play in some 70 different situations of actual or potential conflict around the world. Our most recent issue, published on 1 November, was fairly typical: six situations deteriorated last month, most worryingly in the Congo and Somalia; just two improved – Bolivia and the Maldives; and 70 others – from Afghanistan and Burundi to Western Sahara and Zimbabwe – remained unchangedly miserable or fragile. We identified with a ‘bomb’ sign -- indicating a particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict this month -- one case, again the Congo; but were unable to identify with our ‘dove’ sign a single new conflict resolution opportunity, certainly not anywhere in this most volatile region of all, the Middle East.

Depressing reading though this month’s bulletin makes, it was actually a little more cheerful than the 1 October issue, which identified ten deteriorated situations and two improved ones, and its 1 September predecessor, which called twelve deteriorations and just one improvement in the previous month.

So, looking out at the world around us, it is difficult for anyone following current events to believe at first glance that we have really learned anything much at all about conflict prevention and resolution, or that any of us in this business – whether governments, or intergovernmental organizations, or NGOs or research institutes and think tanks – are making any kind of difference. But let me try nonetheless to offer you some reasons why we do still have some reason to look on the bright side – and I’m not referring just to the exhilaration nearly all of us feel at last week’s election of Barack Obama as U.S. president, and the turning of the page we hope this will represent.

For everything that is still going wrong, we *have* been learning, slowly and painfully, how to do things better. *I* have certainly learned a lot from my own experience over the last twenty years, first as a Foreign Minister actively engaged in a series of conflict resolution issues, particularly in Cambodia, and since 2000 as President and CEO of the International Crisis Group, and participant in a number of global panels and commissions addressing conflict issues. And I don’t think my experience has been unique. Life is a learning experience, even for neo-cons, for whom bombing for democracy no longer has quite the appeal it used to.

So let me try to distil the lessons that I have learned, and which I think the international community as a whole *should* have learned, from the experiences of the post Cold War years. I will try to paint the canvas both broadly, so as to keep the major issues in perspective, but also in a way that– in keeping with the theme of this lecture series –

focuses wherever appropriate on the role in conflict prevention and resolution of third party mediators and facilitators, both governmental and non-governmental, and those who *assist* them, not least my own International Crisis Group. While not itself directly engaged in mediation, or the formal facilitation of negotiations, Crisis Group plays -- as I will explain -- an active role in supporting those who do with its analysis, recommendations and often behind-the-scenes input.

Successful individual mediators and facilitators come in all shapes, sizes and styles, from charismatic international political leaders or former leaders (think Nelson Mandela in Burundi, or Jimmy Carter in Oslo and many places since), to almost publicly unknown and quietly self-effacing backroom operators (think Max van der Stoep in Central and Eastern Europe after end of the Cold War), to boisterously self-confident and forceful front-stage ones (think Dick Holbrooke in Bosnia), to fascinating combinations of the stern and the avuncular (think Martti Ahtisaari in Namibia, Aceh or Kosovo). But what cannot be doubted is the proven utility of third party actors, whether official or unofficial, in providing to parties to conflict or potential conflict ladders for them to climb out of the holes they have so often dug for themselves.

My basic story is that when it comes to preventing and resolving deadly conflict -- preventing its outbreak, continuation and recurrence, and using all the instruments available to us, not just mediation and facilitation -- we are doing better than we have in the past, and better than most people believe. And if we absorb and apply the five or so main lessons we should by now have clearly learned in each of these areas, which I will now sketch out, we can do better still.

Preventing Conflict Outbreak

The first rule for preventing deadly conflict is *don't start it*. This is a message the U.S. has had cause to ponder long and hard after its rush to war in Iraq in 2003, and, it is to be hoped, it will ponder long and hard again before taking any preemptive military action against Iran, or encouraging or allowing Israel to do so. The Iran nuclear issue is one on which Crisis Group has had quite a deal to say, and on which I have been personally active, visiting Tehran, maintaining contact with senior Iranian officials, and talking regularly to senior US and European officials. We have taken the line, not very popular until now in the West, that what matters more than trying to hold an increasingly unsustainable line against Iran engaging in any uranium enrichment activity, is drawing a very strong red line against any move toward actual weaponisation, and holding it through a combination of a very intrusive monitoring regime, negotiated incentives, and good old-fashioned containment and deterrence. This is a package which I continue to believe is eminently deliverable, and which we will be continuing to push hard to both sides in the months ahead.

There are circumstances in which there will simply be no alternative to taking coercive military action, to respond to real and immediate cross-border threats (as in the case of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991), and -- in the case of man-made internal crises of the kind we confronted in the Balkans and Rwanda and elsewhere so often in the last decade

– to do so in the context of the principle of the ‘responsibility to protect’ (R2P) endorsed by the 2005 UN Summit, and about which I have just published a book of my own. But such action should only ever be undertaken in the most serious cases, as a last resort, and in circumstances where it will do more good than harm. It should certainly not be assumed that R2P requires it, even in the most explosive cases. Kenya at the beginning of 2008 is a case in point, with the violence and ethnic cleansing being stopped not by sending in the Marines but by Kofi Annan’s diplomatic mediation.

The second rule of conflict prevention is to *understand the causes*: the factors at work – political, economic, cultural, personal – in each particular risk situation. The basic point about conflict is that it is always context specific. Big overarching theories – whether cast in terms of clash of civilizations, ancient tribal enmity, economic greed, economic grievance, or anything else – may be good for keynote speeches, and are certainly good for academic royalties. They may also be quite helpful in identifying particular explanatory factors that should certainly be taken into account in trying to understand the dynamics of particular situations. But they never seem to work very well in sorting between those situations which are combustible and those which are not. For that you need detailed, case by case analysis, not making assumptions on the basis of experience elsewhere, or what has gone before, but looking at what is under your nose, right now.

That is perhaps the real strength of the International Crisis Group, whose distinctive methodology is founded on *field-based* reporting and analysis. The organisation was established in 1995 by a group of prominent international citizens and foreign policy specialists – including its first Chairman, Senator George Mitchell (one of Lebanon’s most distinguished grandsons), and Mark Malloch Brown, who later became the later Deputy Secretary-General of the UN – who were appalled by the international community’s failure to anticipate and respond effectively to the catastrophes in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda.

The aim was to create a sophisticated, professional new international organisation, wholly independent of any government, with a high profile and highly experienced Board and senior management, which could persuade governments and intergovernmental organisations – when it came to deadly conflict and mass violence – to think about things they didn’t particularly want to think about, and do things to prevent and resolve conflict and violence they really didn’t want to do.

From very small beginnings – two people in a London office and a tiny field staff in the Balkans – Crisis Group has grown to having over 130 full time staff working across five continents in over sixty different areas of actual or potential conflict, with an advocacy or liaison presence in Brussels (the Headquarters), in Washington, next to the UN in New York, and in London, Moscow and Beijing. We produce around 90 freely available reports and briefing papers a year, promote them directly and intensely with senior policy makers and those who influence them; and are widely regarded now as perhaps the world’s leading non-government source of early warning, analysis and advice to governments and intergovernmental organisations in relation to the prevention of deadly conflict and mass violence (although some uncharitable souls might suggest that we can

claim to be the best at what we do only because we are the *only* organisation doing precisely what we do!)

Crisis Group's particular value-added, when it comes to both analysis and policy recommendations, is that all our reporting is field-based. At last count we had people on the ground from 49 different nationalities, speaking between them 52 different languages. They are steeped in local language and culture, getting dust on their boots, engaged in endless interaction with locals and internationals on the scene, and operating from nearly thirty regional or local field offices across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the still volatile parts of Europe. .

While Crisis Group's basic methodology has three dimensions – field based analysis, policy prescription and high-level advocacy (with the latter two depending on inputs from a wider range of sources) – everything starts with the first: an accurate take on what is happening on the ground, focusing particularly on both the issues that are resonating and the personalities that are driving them. For a variety of reasons, mainly security and budgetary, traditional diplomats are not performing this function in as much breadth and depth as they traditionally have – it's hard to get out and about when you are locked up in a fortress or have minimal staff resources -- and both early warning and effective conflict prevention capacity have become more at risk as a result. This is a gap that Crisis Group has been widely seen as very successful in filling.

As I hope you will be aware, we have produced many reports over the years on the ebb and flow of events, issues and problems in the Middle East in particular: with most attention, inevitably, to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iraq and Iran, but with a series of reports also on Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and other countries and situations in the region, all the time explaining the local dynamics, trying to strip away the myths and misunderstandings that so often afflict reporting of these issues in the West, and constantly suggesting new ways forward.

Occasionally we produce thematic reports distilling what we have learned from our work on the ground and linking it into more general research: one of the best, and probably the most influential, of our reports of this kind was *Understanding Islamism* in 2005, which tackled head-on the indefensible Western tendency, especially after 9/11, to lump all forms of Islamism together, whether missionary, political or jihadist, brand them all as radical and treat them all as hostile. But a great many think tanks and research institutes do general thematic research: Crisis Group's real strength comes from our detailed local knowledge of particular local situations, and our capacity to force policymakers to sit up and take notice of the implications of that analysis. One of the many areas in which that approach has won favourable reviews has been our reporting on one particular stream of genuinely violent Islamism in South East Asia, the Jemaah Islamiyah movement, which has regularly been described by senior Western intelligence officials as 'gold standard'. But then, knowing what we now know about the performance of major Western intelligence agencies, that's perhaps not these days quite the compliment it might once have been...

The ultimate utility of field-based analysis, as distinct from the kind that is routinely produced behind research institute and think-tank computers, is that there is a much better chance of getting right the policy decisions that flow from it. The current situation in the eastern Congo, for example, with Nkunda's militia claiming to be protecting the local Tutsi population from murderously inclined Rwandan Hutus supported by the Kabila government, has been routinely portrayed as a replay of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, requiring more and more external military intervention of a kind that was so lamentably lacking then. But the situation in fact is far more complex and nuanced than that – with Nkunda's own troops being among the worst human-right abusers in the since 2004, with many other internal and actors at fault – and it cries out for an effectively applied political solution at least as much, if not more, than a military one.

I was taught a lesson in my first months with Crisis Group which has coloured my thinking ever since about the absolute need to base policy recommendations on reliable and completely up to date field information. We issued a report a shortly before the Serbian election of 2000, largely written in our Washington DC office where our strongly activist Balkans Program Director was located, urging its boycott on the grounds that there was no way the opposition could unite sufficiently to beat Milosevic. The trouble was that, although this was a defensible reading of the situation on the ground when an analyst had last flown in and out six weeks earlier, the local dynamics had recently dramatically changed, and within a few days of our report coming out the opposition had united around Kostunica: a few weeks later Milosevic was history, and Crisis Group had egg all over its face which it took a very long time to wipe off.

The third big lesson we have learned about conflict prevention is the need to fully *understand the conflict prevention toolbox*, and be prepared to apply flexibly as circumstances change the whole range of possible measures, that can be deployed to deal with high-risk situations. The simplest way of getting one's head around the options available in any given situation is to think, literally, of a toolbox with two trays – for long term structural prevention and short term more direct operational measures respectively. Each tray in turn has four basic compartments for, respectively, political and diplomatic measures, legal and constitutional measures, economic and social measures, and security sector and military measures. And there are sub-compartments within each of these – to take just the economic area, direct economic measures might include positive incentives (e.g. to take just one area in which Crisis Group has been involved, an energy package for N Korea), negative incentives or sanctions (e.g. which in a Korean peninsula context might mean cutting off the flow of remittances to N Korea from Japan), and focused humanitarian aid.

The crucial thing is to recognise not only that each situation has its own characteristics, and that one-size spanners don't fit all, but that each situation is likely to require a complex combination of measures, the balance between which is bound to change over time as circumstances evolve. Burma/Myanmar is a good example of a need for a fundamental rethink of the right tools to apply, with the longstanding Western focus on coercive sanctions bearing, in the absence of comparable regional pressure, no obvious fruit in changing the military regime's inward-looking, undemocratic, authoritarianism.

Although I am an old anti-apartheid campaigner for whom ‘constructive engagement’ has long been an almost obscure expression, I have been persuaded by Crisis Group’s field analysis, and we have been arguing accordingly for some time now, that re-engagement through major programs of development assistance would not only make life less miserable in the short term for Burma’s people, but do more than coercion alone to change regime behaviour.

One of the reasons for Crisis Group’s credibility with governments around the world is that whenever simple solutions are just simplistic, we are prepared to complexify them. Our reports don’t easily lend themselves to seven-second sound bites – except for occasional cases like Darfur where, when the catastrophic violence first broke out in 2003, to get any action at all a major campaign had to be initially mounted with a very simple core message: “stop the killing and get the humanitarian aid flowing now or a million will die”. An average report of ours, and we have produced over 800 of them since 1995, will have fifteen to twenty substantial recommendations, many of them quite detailed, directed as appropriate locally, regionally and globally to all those actors capable of influencing outcomes.

A fourth rule of effective conflict prevention is to *be prepared to work without recognition*. In diplomacy, as in life itself, more can often be achieved by allowing others credit for whatever is achieved, or by nobody seeking overt acknowledgment, than by a competitive clamour for attention. Third party diplomacy, be it governmental, intergovernmental or private, to prevent the threatened initial outbreak of conflict or mass violence is most successful when nothing happens, and nobody notices -- which is one of the reasons it is so hard to mobilize. As I can testify after 21 years in Australian government and politics, for most people in public office, performing good works without anyone noticing it is like having your teeth pulled.

But while our rewards may have to wait for heaven, there have been many successful preventive efforts over the years in which Crisis Group can reasonably claim to have played a significant part, e.g. the sustained effort mounted since the mid-90s to stop a Rwanda-type explosion erupting in neighbouring Burundi (where we have been a constant advisory presence), and the rapid mobilization of international pressure at the UN (in which the International Crisis Group played a key part) to stop what in November 2007 looked to be the imminent resumption of major war between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

One of the best examples anywhere of unheralded but extraordinarily effective preventive activity has been the heroic mediation effort of the OSCE’s High Commissioner for National Minorities over many years, particularly during the volatile early post-Cold War period when Max van der Stoep held the post, to quietly stop as many as a dozen major ethnic and language-based conflicts from breaking out across Central and Eastern Europe, from the Baltics to Romania – using essentially the political, legal and constitutional sub-compartments of the conflict prevention toolbox to find solutions acceptable to both majorities and minorities. Since the Russia-Georgia conflict this year, new anxieties have arisen about the capacity for these minority issues to again generate confrontation and violence in the former Soviet space, and Crisis Group, for one, has

been advocating close and careful attention to these issues. To take one small example: with Russian nationalist sentiment resurgent in the Ukraine's Crimea, in particular, it doesn't make much sense, and we have been saying so, to have the signs at the Sevastopol airport in two language only, Ukrainian and English!

The fifth rule is to *be prepared to commit the necessary resources*, governmental and intergovernmental, when and where they are needed, and particularly at the early prevention stage, where any investment now is likely to be infinitely cheaper than paying later for military action, humanitarian relief assistance and post-conflict reconstruction - something the international community is still much better at talking about than doing.

There are many examples one could give of money being able to be better spent than it has been, but one of the most succinct and graphic I have seen is a table published in the *New York Times* in mid 2004, just over a year after the invasion of Iraq, which showed that the \$144 billion already by then spent in Iraq – and costs, of course, have multiplied almost exponentially since -- could have paid for, among other things, the more or less complete safeguarding of US ports, airports and airliners (\$34 billion); the security from theft of the world's stock of weapons-grade nuclear materials and the deactivation of warheads (another \$34 billion); the complete rebuilding of Afghanistan, including drug crop conversion (\$20 billion); the addition of another 65 000 U.S. troops, if anyone thought this necessary (\$40 billion); and another \$10 billion in development assistance (which would have filled, for one year anyway, nearly 20 per cent of the gap then identified if the Millennium Development goals relating to poverty, disease and the like were to be met).

Preventing Continuation: Conflict Resolution

When efforts to prevent the outbreak of conflict fails, the task becomes that of preventing its continuation, or conflict resolution – hopefully achieved by peacemaking negotiations rather than the use of overriding military force. In this context, again, there are a number of lessons we have painfully learned about what makes a successful peace accord.

First, peacemaking requires, as does earlier conflict prevention effort, the *commitment of serious diplomatic resources*, both in quality and quantity, at whatever level is most likely to bring success -- through the UN, through a regional organization, through a particular government initiative, or sometimes through second-track or unofficial mechanisms. At the UN level the crucial role is played by the dozens of special representatives or envoys of the Secretary General who, it has been rightly said, need a combination of “excellent political, negotiation, leadership and management skills” combined with a “a superabundance of optimism, persistence and patience.” The trouble is the UN's selection process for such special representatives remains largely ad hoc and informal, and it is almost entirely a matter of chance whether any of these qualities will exist, let alone all of them: one representative has confessed that he almost certainly found himself top of the list for a post for which he was, on the face of it, only marginally qualified (although in which, in fact, he performed excellently) because his surname began with “A.”

Good selection is only the beginning. It must be accompanied by carefully designed and implemented training, and practitioners going into the field have to have first class initial briefing, and ongoing advice and assistance. Here again Crisis Group has played a significant role over the years, in supporting peace negotiators behind the scenes with background information and analysis based on our own knowledge of the local scene and relevant actors, substantive ideas for solutions and suggestions about process -- for example in the north-south negotiations in Sudan, in Burundi over many years, and in support of Martti Ahtisaari's successful peacemaking in Indonesia's Aceh.

Second, successful peace negotiating requires *creativity and stamina, and a willingness to work with all the players that matter*, however ugly their past behaviour may have been. The most difficult peace negotiations in which I have ever been personally directly engaged, those over 1989–93 bringing to an end the long-running conflict in Cambodia, which involved all these elements. The situation was extraordinarily complex, being played out at three distinct levels: first, the warring internal factions, with Hun Sen's government against a fragile coalition of noncommunist royalists and others on the one hand, and the reduced but still dangerous Khmer Rouge on the other; second, the region, with Vietnam supporting Hun Sen and ASEAN his opponents; and third, the great powers, with China (determined to neutralize Vietnam's influence) supporting the Khmer Rouge and Prince Sihanouk, the Soviet Union supporting Hun Sen, and the United States favoring the two noncommunist resistance groups.

The key to unraveling it all was China: without its willingness to step back and withdraw support from the Khmer Rouge, the latter simply could not have been isolated and marginalized, a broad-based "independent" government formed, and a sustainable peace achieved. What finally broke the impasse was an Australian proposal to give the UN an unprecedentedly large role in the civil administration of the country during the transition period, which was expressly designed to give China a face-saving way of engaging in just that withdrawal. This was the critical creative idea – but it would have disappeared without trace without the extraordinarily intense and sustained diplomatic effort that then went into selling it and bedding it down, over nearly five years of sustained activity, to all the interlocutors that mattered – from Phnom Penh to Jakarta to Hanoi to Beijing to Washington and New York. Within Cambodia, which meant talking face to face with the leadership of the Khmer Rouge: not an experience I can, to this day, recall without shuddering, but a necessary one.

In the Middle East probably the most single creative idea that Crisis Group has come up with – which we first articulated in a series of reports in 2002 which fed into the initial Geneva Accord process the following year, and has dominated the thinking of policymakers since, even if success remains as elusive as ever -- was approaching the Arab-Israeli conflict in a way that focused on the 'endgame first', in contrast to Oslo-type incremental confidence-building, leaving all the hard issues until last, which as we now know all too well, makes the whole process completely hostage to extremists on either side.

A third lesson we have learned is that *peacemaking is not an event so much as a process*, and signing the agreement is not the end of it. The critical need is to generate commitment to, and ownership of, the peace by the warring parties: so their commitments are not just formal, but internalized, and will stick. That takes, in turn, real skill and commitment on the part of those mediating or otherwise assisting the negotiation.

Although South Africa's Thabo Mbeki won a strong and deserved reputation for his peacemaking efforts in the Great Lakes and elsewhere in Africa, his approach to resolving the harrowing situation in Zimbabwe has been almost a textbook example of what not to do: first in not putting any pressure at all on Robert Mugabe, then in insisting on a power-sharing deal with the opposition which could only possibly resolve the mess if it was rigorously and fairly enforced, and then in being unable or unwilling to do so. No one underestimates the difficulty of the problem, given the intractability of Mugabe and those around him, but it is hard to believe that a more determined effort by South Africa and its leadership would not have made a difference, and would not make a difference even now. It is hardly an excuse that South Africa's neighbours have been just as supine – as evidenced once again by the failure of the SADC meeting yesterday to impose any united and effective pressure on Mugabe to accept Morgan Tsvangirai and his party as a genuine partner in government.

Fourth, we know that any peace accord must *deal with all the fundamentals of the dispute*: all the issues which will have to be resolved if normality is to return. Sometimes that can be done in a sequential or stage-by-stage way, with confidence building measures now and some key issues deferred: we have suggested that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in the Caucasus, between Azerbaijan and Armenia, might be such an example, but the failed Oslo process for Israel-Palestine shows how risky that approach can be. One of the most fragile of the peace agreements currently in place is that for Kenya, for precisely this reason: the Annan negotiation, while producing an effective political fix at the top, through a power-sharing agreement which stopped the initial violence, left completely unresolved the fundamental underlying causes of the explosion of ethnic violence, including land distribution, economic disparities and inadequate constitutional and legal protections.

Fifth, any successful peace accord must *get the balance right between peace and justice*. This is a lot easier said than done. The South African truth and reconciliation commission model, with its amnesties for the perpetrators of even serious crimes, is widely admired, but in other cases sustainable peace will not be possible without significant retributive justice: i.e. the visible trial and punishment of those most guilty. What is clear is that the people of every country, whether it's Cambodia or Rwanda or East Timor or Liberia, have to resolve what works for them.

And peace negotiators trying to resolve conflicts that are still ongoing have to work out what is best, not in principle and not in the distant future, but here and now, to achieve that objective. Faced with the competing demands of peace and justice, they are often faced with a cruel dilemma: do you insist on no impunity for the worst human rights violators, and risk the conflict continuing with all the further major loss of life and

immiseration that conflict brings with it, or do give them – as the price of the conflict coming to an end - a soft landing of some kind? The asylum given by Nigeria to Liberia's villainous Charles Taylor in 2003 was entirely defensible, given the prospect then looming of a bloody final battle for Monrovia. What I think was much less defensible – though human rights organizations are hard to persuade about this – was Nigeria's later decision, under strong international pressure, to hand Taylor over for trial in the Sierra Leone Special Court: this sent a message to other dictators (not least Robert Mugabe) that amnesty deals were not to be trusted, and has made the job of peace negotiators everywhere that much harder.

Two current situations where the peace v. justice issue is looming very large indeed are Northern Uganda, where the LRA leader Joseph Kony, has been indicted by the International Criminal Court, and – more difficult still – Sudan, where an indictment is pending against the head of state, President Bashir, for his behaviour in Darfur, and the question is whether the Security Council will, in the interests of getting a peace settlement, use its power to override any such prosecution. My own, and Crisis Group's, view of these issues is that there is sometimes a case to be made for peace taking precedence over justice, but only in the most exceptional cases where there is clear and unequivocal evidence that there will be a major peace dividend – and that is not the case for now in either Uganda or Sudan.

Sixth, the terms of any accord, and the method of its enforcement and implementation, must be *sufficiently resilient to deal with spoilers* – those who would seek to undermine or overturn it. That has been a constant problem in most of the peace settlements in Africa and elsewhere that have not held, or which remain incomplete – as happened before in Rwanda and Angola for example, and is happening now in the Congo.

Seventh – and this follows particularly from the last point – a peace accord to be successful must have the *necessary degree of international support*: with all the guarantees and commitment of resources that are necessary to make it stick. And this leads us to the last set of lessons I want to discuss, necessarily very briefly in the time remaining.

Preventing Recurrence: Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

The biggest lessons of all about the handling of conflict that we have learned in recent years - not least from Rwanda (where the 1994 genocide, taking 800 000 lives, followed the Arusha peace deal just a year before), Angola (where the 1991 Bicesse Agreement to end the war in was followed by a relapse into bloody conflict for another decade with another million or more lives lost), Haiti, Afghanistan and now Iraq -- is the critical necessity of effective post-conflict peacebuilding, to ensure that the whole weary conflict cycle does not begin again. One of the things we now understand most clearly about conflict is that the countries and regions most likely to lapse into it are those that have been there before. There is not a straight line sequence between the anticipation of conflict and attempts to prevent it breaking out; the resolution of conflict, by negotiation or force, when it has broken out; and post-conflict peacebuilding. Rather there is a

cyclical process, in which each post-conflict environment contains the potential seeds of the next round of destruction. In recent decades nearly 30 per cent of negotiated settlements have broken down in under five years.

What follows from that is that far more effort has to be put into consolidating the peace after it has been won. Sustainable peace cannot be guaranteed just because a diplomatic peacemaking initiative has apparently been successful, or because a clear-cut military victory has apparently been won. The conflict containment structures and capacities that need to be applied in a post-conflict environment, to prevent violence recurring, are essentially exactly the same as those that need to be applied in failed or failing states to prevent violent conflict breaking out in the first place. The focus in each case must be on structural prevention – building institutional structures and processes (military, political, legal, economic and social) which are capable of relieving non-violently all the crucial stress points that arise between individuals and groups. Post conflict peacebuilding is a hugely complex and often hugely costly enterprise. It has all too often been neglected or mismanaged or short-changed in terms of time commitment – and when this happens it is only a matter of time before the boil erupts again.

Crisis Group, for all these reasons, puts just as much effort into monitoring and analysing post conflict peace building as we do into pre-conflict prevention and current conflict resolution. We have people on the ground - producing a substantial series of reports on what is going wrong and what is needed to correct it – in, for example, Iraq, Afghanistan, Burundi, the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Southern Sudan, Kosovo, Tajikistan, Nepal and Haiti. A great deal of this reporting has had a substantial influence, both acknowledged and unacknowledged, on policy making: for example the former High Representative to Bosnia & Herzegovina, Paddy Ashdown, has been kind enough to say publicly that our report on rule of law issues was his ‘bible’.

What does all this mean for negotiators trying to put together international peacebuilding missions that won't fall apart, and for those then charged with holding them together? I think, on the basis of my own and Crisis Group's experience, it means five very basic things, which can be stated very succinctly.

First, *sort out who should do what and when* - immediately, over a medium transition period and in the longer term: allocate the roles and coordinate them effectively both at headquarters and on the ground. Of all the things that have gone wrong in Afghanistan, among the most serious have been weaknesses on this front – poor coordination among all the international players (between military and military, civilian and civilian, and military and civilian) and as between them and the Afghan government.

Second, *commit the necessary resources*, and sustain that commitment for as long as it takes: this has been envisaged as a critical role for the new UN Peacebuilding Commission, which is slowly finding its feet with cases like Burundi and Sierra Leone, and certainly needs to, given the long and lamentable history of ad hoc donors' conferences, and rapidly waning attention, and generosity, once the immediate crisis is over. Afghanistan and Haiti have in the past been classic cases of international players

bringing conflicts to an end but then dropping the ball, and Bosnia may be a case now where this phenomenon is again in play.

Third, *understand the local political dynamics* – and the cultural and other limits within outsiders must operate. Iraq and Afghanistan are both unhappy major examples of how much can go wrong when that understanding is lacking, and there are many others about which Crisis Group has written.

Fourth, recognise that multiple objectives have to be pursued simultaneously: physical security may always be the first priority, but it cannot be the only one, and rule of law and justice issues, and economic governance and anti-corruption measures, deserve much higher priority than they have usually been given. Afghanistan is perhaps again the best and clearest recent example, where the international efforts to help create an effective police and court system in particular have been, at least until very recently, hopelessly and lamentably inadequate.

Fifth, all intrusive peace operations need an exit strategy, if not an exit timetable, and one that is not just devoted to holding elections as soon as possible, as important as it obviously is to vest real authority and responsibility in the people of the country being rebuilt. Every peacebuilding situation has its own dynamic, but many of the worst peacebuilding mistakes of the last decade and a half have had more to do with leaving too soon, or doing too little, than staying too long or doing too much. That reality now seems to have been recognized on all sides in the case of Iraq, where the wrongheadedness and irresponsibility of the original invasion would be matched only by the wrongheadedness and irresponsibility of a premature withdrawal. The US and its allies *do* need to leave as soon as possible, but only in the context of national institutions being strong enough to avoid the country plunging back into a genocidal ethnic and sectarian bloodbath.

Preventing and Resolving Deadly Conflict: The Case for Optimism

One last, and hopefully more cheering, word. Whatever our newspaper reading and intuitions seem to tell us about the ever increasing scale and incidence of war and mass atrocity crimes – that we are, ever faster, going to hell in a handbasket – that perception, let me tell you, is just plain wrong.

The evidence comes from the statistics that have in recent years been meticulously compiled, drawing on the best available worldwide data (not much of which is available from UN or other official sources) by the Human Security Report team now working out of Simon Fraser University in Canada, and published in successive reports since 2005, and summarized in a *miniAtlas of Human Security* published just last month and available online.

Since the early 1990s, despite all the terrible cases we all remember, and all the terrible cases still ongoing in the Congo and elsewhere, there has been an extraordinary *decrease* in the number of wars, the number of episodes of mass killing, and the number of people

dying violent battle deaths. In the case of serious conflicts (defined as those with 1000 or more reported battle deaths in a year) and mass killings there has been an *80 per cent* decline since the early '90s. Though a number of significant new conflicts have commenced, and a number of apparently successfully concluded conflicts have broken out again within a few years, many more conflicts have stopped than started.

There has even more striking decrease in the number of battle deaths. Whereas most years from the 1940s through to the 1990s had over 100,000 such reported deaths – and sometimes as many as 500,000 – the average for the first years of this new century has been fewer than 20,000. For wars in which states, as distinct from non-state groups, are one or more of the actors, for every 30 people killed in 1950, only one was killed in 2005. Of course violent battle deaths are only a small part of the whole story of the misery of war: 90 per cent or more of war-related deaths are due to disease and malnutrition rather than direct violence, as we have seen, for example, in the Congo and Darfur. But the trend decline in battle deaths is significant, and hugely encouraging.

Even more encouraging is the analysis which lies behind these figures. The dramatic decline in wars and battle deaths is partly explained by the end of the era of colonialism, which generated two-thirds or more of all wars from the 1950s to the 1980s; and of course the end of the Cold War, which meant no more proxy wars fuelled by Washington or Moscow, and also the demise of a number of authoritarian governments, generating internal resentment and resistance, that each side had been propping up.

But, the best explanation is the one that stares us in the face, even if a great many don't want to acknowledge it: the huge upsurge in activity in conflict prevention, conflict management, and post-conflict peacebuilding activity that has occurred over the last decade and a half, with most of this being spearheaded by the UN itself. UN diplomatic peacemaking missions rose from four in 1990 to fifteen in 2002; peacekeeping operations rose from ten in 1990 to seventeen in 2005, and generally with much broader protective mandates. And beyond the UN, a number of regional organizations, individual states, and literally thousands of NGOs have played significant roles of their own.

So those of us who have been devoting large chunks of our professional and personal lives to preventing and resolving deadly conflict -- and those of you in this audience who I hope will be tempted to in your future careers -- my final message is clear, simple and I hope encouraging: we are not all wasting our time.

GE10xi08