

The Theory of Conflict Prevention. What can Kosovo draw out of it?

Rok Zupančič*

Abstract

The article discusses the theories of the concept of conflict prevention. Kosovo political elites should, if they really want to stabilize the new country, take findings and recommendations of the theory of conflict prevention into consideration, and then find their own way (practice) how to address the problems, related to conflict prevention arising from political, social, economic and cultural sphere. Afterwards, the decision-makers and high officials have to model their own specific strategies and policies of conflict prevention in order to reduce possibilities of new escalation of violence. The article discusses some historical and modern explanations of origins of violence and the relation between them and conflict prevention. The article also explains the development of the concept of modern conflict prevention, beginning in the framework of the United Nations in 1960's and culminating in comprehensive approach of conflict prevention in the European Union and some other international organizations. Difference between structural and operation conflict prevention is explained in last part of the article, with argumentation the structural conflict prevention is necessity for Kosovo as a newly emerged political entity in the Western Balkans.

Key words: conflict prevention, causes and motives of wars, the United Nations, the European union, structural and operational conflict prevention, Kosovo.

"Nation states no longer seem inclined to go to war with one another, but ethnic groups fight all the time."

Daniel P. Moynihan

"We tend to study how wars are caused and fought rather than how they are prevented."

Michael S. Lund

* Rok Zupančič is Research Assistant and PhD candidate at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Rok.Zupancic@fdo.uni-lj.si

“Big overarching theories about conflict may be good for keynote speeches, and certainly good for royalties /.../ but they never seem to work very well in practice.”

Gareth Evans

Introduction

One year after the declaration of independence, the Kosovo¹ political elite should look back what have been achieved in that period of time. If most of efforts of the Kosovo elites before February 2008 have been put into assuring support for international recognition of the new established country, one year later political leadership should be striving for political, economic, social and ethnic consolidation of the country. One of key priorities for Kosovo that could potentially bring stability to the new political reality of the Western Balkans should be committed striving of the politicians and experts, as well as the people of Kosovo, for complex and durable conflict prevention in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life.

The aim of this article is not assessing what the Kosovo leadership has done since the declaration of independence regarding the complex and “slippery” world of conflict prevention, but to expose those practical and theoretical aspects of conflict prevention that the political elites should always have in mind when considering the future political decisions. To put it differently, the aim of the article is to raise awareness of politicians (decision-makers), scholars and other interested members of society that the successful conflict prevention² based on democratic standards is one of the core elements of

¹ I use the term Kosovo (and not Kosova) because the article is written in English. The term Kosovo is used also by the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK), other relevant international organizations, as well as by some websites of the Kosovo government in English language (for example, the Central Portal of Kosovo Governmental Institutions, <http://www.ks-gov.net/>).

² More on cases of successful conflict prevention throughout the world in Ramcharan, B. G., *Conflict Prevention in Practice: Essays in Honour of Jim Sutterlin*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Leiden and Boston, 2005.

the well-organized political entity, which is committed to democracy, successful transition and well-being of its people.³

For the purpose of the article, the term conflict prevention is applied to prevention of deadly armed conflicts only. Namely, not all conflicts should be prevented or avoided, since not all of them are harmful – some of conflicts can have also beneficiary results.⁴ Therefore, what is to be prevented is destructive and violent form of conflict, which could be avoided, if appropriate actions are taken. The Western Balkans has been a silent witness of non-action and non-prevention – Kosovo was not an exception.⁵ Some ethnic communities, specifically, were targets of persecution that could be avoided, if the proper strategies, policies, mechanisms, tools and actions by important actors of the international community had been applied – timely.

³ The political leadership is at least officially aware of the necessity of conflict prevention in the long-lasting process of state-building. The Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi, speaking at the founding meeting of the Kosovo Security Council on 11th of February 2009 in Pristina, has defined the formation and the strengthening of institutions and democratic structures of security, trained well, responsible and *ready to prevent and confront* every threat to security “a high priority” (Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, *Prime Minister Thaçi: A secure Kosovo means prosperity for the people of Kosovo and stability for the region*, 11th February, 2009). <http://www.ks-gov.net/pm/Fillimi/tabid/36/EntryID/1672/Default.aspx>, accessed 14th February 2009.

⁴ “Conflict is a normal part of organization life, providing numerous opportunities for growth through improved understanding and insight, there is a tendency to view conflict as a negative experience caused by abnormally difficult circumstances.” (University of Wisconsin, Office of Human Resource Development, *About Conflict*. <http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/onlinetraining/resolution/aboutwhatisit.htm#whatisconflict>, accessed 14th February 2009).

⁵ More on the failure of international action and possibilities of conflict prevention in Kosovo from the late 1980's until military intervention of the NATO in 1999 in Weller, Marc, *Peace Lost: The Failure of Conflict Prevention in Kosovo*, 2008, Hoteli Publishing, Amsterdam.

***“Aggression is embodied in human beings.”
Is conflict prevention possible?***

“Never again!”

“We couldn’t do anything to prevent the massacres.”

These two strong exclamations are often heard when another shameful and disgrace, such as atrocities in Rwanda, Bosnia or Kosovo, fall on the sagging shoulders of the international community. However, the two sentences seem to be intertwined into logical paradox: if the first decisive stance implies strong commitment to spend the last atoms of energy to prevent bloodshed, the second argument (that is at least the same politically motivated as the first one and could be called an excuse) implies “Pontius Pilate’s hand-washing”.

The “hand-washing” itself would not be that dangerous, if it did not reflect the comfortable pragmatism of non-action. It is, indeed, for decision-makers and political leaders politically (and for ordinary people psychologically) easier to wait and see what will happen than playing proactive policy. The pessimist and inactive “hand-washers” are usually inclined to believe in their own irrelevance and unimportance, as well as in “the circumstances from above” that had triggered the violence. A lot of them, when fortifying their excusing inactive position, also refer to biological and anthropological explanations why human race is fighting.⁶

Voltaire, for instance, expressed the widespread belief of his time when asserting that slavery is as ancient as war and was

⁶ When massacres in Kosovo, Bosnia and Rwanda shocked the international community and the question of the possibility of intervention entered the debate, claims such as “these people had been fighting since ever” and “it is in their blood and there is nothing you can do about it” had been heard in the media myriad of times. Furthermore, the day after tragic events in Columbine in 1999, when two students brutally massacred 12 students and teacher, the spokesperson for the school’s district was quoted as saying: “You can take every reasonable step to make a positive environment for everyone, but sometimes human nature will defeat you.” (Ury, William L., *Must We Fight? From the Battlefield to the Schoolyard – A New Perspective on Violent Conflict and Its Prevention*, 2001, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, pp. 11-13).

human nature. About a century ago, Sigmund Freud posited the existence of an instinct of destruction and aggression, believing that it lays at the roots of war.⁷ Some decades later another scientist from the so called “pessimist school of thought” of conflicts origin flurried the waves – in the book *On Aggression* (1966) Konrad Lorenz, following Freudian perspective, argued that humans have embodied aggressive instinct which may cause deadly consequences, if not discharged timely.

The recent investigations and studies in the fields of primatology, anthropology and conflict resolution suggest quite a different picture of human nature with powerful implications for how it is possible to prevent wars today.⁸ So called Seville Statement on Violence, which was signed in 1986 by various scholars from different relevant sciences, rejected the alleged biological findings in mankind that have been used to justify violence and war.⁹

There are many more theorists and theories – optimistic, such as latter, as well as pessimistic – explaining why mankind is so suicidal that it is fighting “internally”, among the same species. It is not the aim of the article to discuss about all of them, but it is important to be aware the so called biological and anthropological explanations of aggression, violence and war are starless in contemporary international relations, explanations of the roots of violence and later on, conflict prevention. If this thesis is confirmed, we may argue successful conflict prevention as such is possible without reprogramming of human brains.

Definition of conflict prevention

The old proverb *it is better to prevent than to heal*, known in many cultures throughout the world, fits in the field of international relations, as well. Also if one put aside the moral aspect of

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Seville Statement on Violence, Spain, 1986. http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3247&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html, accessed 15th February 2009.

necessity to prevent the war and avoid loss of lives, there is still a strong argument to strive for conflict prevention: the costs of preventing bloodshed and overall destruction are dramatically lower than huge costs of armed conflict.¹⁰ Brown and Rosecrance, who have conducted scientific analysis of the cases of the conflict prevention, argue that prevention was significantly cheaper in all cases, with the ratios of prevention to war ranging from 1:1,3 to 1:479 (average of 1:59).¹¹ Of course, it should not be the rationale of costs the ultimate question of preventing conflicts – if the subject of international relations (be the country, international organizations or some other subject) wants to substantiate as a credible player of international community, it shall take into consideration also the issues that could be described as moral obligations/responsibilities to avoid human suffering.

It is, of course, difficult to assess one specific action or set of actions as good (or bad) mechanism of conflict prevention in international relations. The term *conflict prevention* is more often heard in international relations recently than it used to be previously – soon after the end of the Cold War, when an apparent explosion in the number of demands for full-fledged ethnic self-determination had occurred, the term *conflict resolution* was predominantly used. Lund argues it is not clear whether the activities carried out under the rubric of conflict prevention are new – despite the ambiguity due to the idea's rise to fame, analysts have hammered out a core definition.¹²

Definitions of the conflict prevention have varied in two main aspects: a) the stage or phase during emergence of violence when prevention comes into play, and b) its methods of engagement, which are geared to the differing drivers of

¹⁰ According to estimates the costs of interventions in recent wars compared with the costs if preventive action had been taken, and the actual costs of preventive action taken in vulnerable societies that did not break out into wars compared with the estimated costs had war occurred showed huge possible savings (Lund, Michael S., *Methods of Managing Conflict*. In Bercovitch, Jacob (ed.) *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, Sage Publications Ltd., Los Angeles, 2008, pp. 308).

¹¹ Brown, Michael and Rosecrance, David, *The Costs of Conflict: Prevention and Cure in the Global Area*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 1999.

¹² Lund, Michael S., *Methods of Managing Conflict*. In Bercovitch, Jacob (ed.) *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, Sage Publications Ltd., Los Angeles, 2008, pp. 288.

potential conflicts that preventive efforts address. Conflict prevention applies to peaceful situations where substantial physical violence is possible, based on typical indicators of rising hostilities. Public controversies that get so rancorous that social groups stop communicating are socially unhealthy, but much less grievous than states or groups about to kill each other with deadly weapons.¹³

P. Douma, L. Van de Goor and K van Walraven argue there are two main approaches to the definitions of conflict prevention. The first, more narrowly defined approach to conflict prevention, denotes any kind of (political, military or economic) activity with the aim to prevent outburst of violence as such (according to that definition, conflict prevention can only exist if a conflict has not reached a violent stage). In the second, more broadly defined approach, the concept of conflict prevention denotes any kind of (political, military and economic) activity with the aim to prevent either the eruption of violence or the escalation of a violent conflict (according to that definition, conflict prevention is related to concepts as reduction, conflict containment or management, and even conflict mediation).¹⁴

Conflict prevention as such should be distinguished both from conflict management and conflict resolution, since it takes place (or better to say, should take place) prior to both of them. Whereas conflict prevention is essentially meant to avoid conflicts from happening, conflict management presupposes that a conflict has broken out, rendering certain action necessary which is essentially aimed at halting hostilities at request and/or with the consent of warring parties. Howsoever, conflict prevention should be understood as the concept of preventing conflicts *between* and *within* the countries.¹⁵

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ P. Douma, K. van de Goor, K. Van Walraven, *Research Methodologies and Practice: A Comparative Perspective on Methods for Assessing the Outbreak of Conflict and the Implementation in Practice by International Organisations*, in P. Cross and G. Rasamoelina (eds.), *Conflict Prevention Policy of the European Union*, p. 80, in Kronenberger, Vincent and Wouters, Jan, *The European Union and Conflict Prevention: policy and legal aspects*, 2004, TMS Asser Press, Haag, pp. XXIII-XXIV.

¹⁵ Kronenberger, Vincent and Wouters, Jan, *The European Union and Conflict Prevention: policy and legal aspects*, 2004, TMS Asser Press, Haag, pp. XXII-XXIII.

As we have seen, recent conceptualizations of conflict prevention have broadened the concept to nearly all possible means of avoiding the conflict and contributing to resolve disputes in a peaceful manner. Therefore, the concept, applied to international relations, should be understood nowadays very broadly as a wide bunch of strategies, policies, mechanisms, tools, initiatives and other actions that may result in reducing tensions between two or more potential adversaries that could, if their mutual relations were not addressed in a proper way, result in major outbreak of violence.

Development of (modern) concept of conflict prevention

Whatsoever, conflict prevention has not been understood as comprehensive approach since ever. It has been evolving for centuries long, but the most important evolution happened in last six decades. Looking at the concept of modern conflict prevention through the prism of historical development, it should be noted that in the realm of the United Nations (UN) the term became alive in 1960's with then UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. It is true, indeed, the term "*prevent*" (or *prevention, preventive, preventing*) has been used in the Charter of the UN seven times – interestingly, the Covenant of the League of Nations mentions the term *prevent* (or *prevented, prevention*) six times¹⁶ –, but the usage of it in the document always lays "aside of something" and never as the core concept itself.¹⁷

¹⁶ The Covenant of the League of Nations, 1924.

¹⁷ The Article 1, Paragraph 1, of the UN Charter, among the Purposes of the UN, says that »...*effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace*« shall be taken to maintain international peace and security. (The United Nations Charter, Article 1). The second use of the term is found in the Article 2, Paragraph 5, saying the Members of the UN »...*shall refrain from giving assistance to any state against which the United Nations is taking preventive or enforcement action*«. The term in the Article 5 is used in the same meaning as in the Article 2, saying that »*A member of the United Nations against which preventive or enforcement action has been taken by the Security Council may be suspended from the exercise of the rights and privileges of membership...*«. Next use of the term is in the famous Chapter VII: Article 40 says "*In order to prevent an aggravation of the situation...*". Article 50 uses the term in the same way as the Articles 2 and 5: "*If preventive or enforcement measures against any state are taken...*". Meanwhile, the Article 53, 1st Paragraph, does bring something new

Therefore, it is difficult to argue the Founding Fathers of the UN (or those of the League of Nations) did think thoroughly and extensively about the term of conflict prevention. However, it is necessary to say the both two organizations were established in order to prevent potential outbreaks of wars. “*To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war*”¹⁸, the first and probably the most famous thought of the UN Charter’s Preamble, does not imply anything but preventing the deadly consequences of bloodshed.

As already mentioned, Hammarskjöld was the pioneer of systematic approach to conflict prevention in international relations, though the concept has been developing during the decades. When Hammarskjöld first coined term “preventive diplomacy”, he has had in mind the UN keeping superpower proxy wars in third-world countries from escalation into global confrontations, argues Lund. When the end of Cold War brought unexpected changes in the paradigm of the world security, with outburst of intra-state wars such as one in Yugoslavia, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali extended the term of the Hammarskjöld’s time - not to mean only preventing escalation of regional conflicts going into global, but to prevent all possible forms and varieties of the bloodshed.¹⁹ Boutros-Ghali’s Agenda for Peace (1992) carries an important contribution to the concept of conflict prevention, with preventive diplomacy (seeking to resolve disputes before violence breaks out) as one of the core pillars of appropriate response to the conflicts in post-Cold War world. In Chapter III of the Agenda for Peace Boutros-Ghali listed following measures as tools of preventive diplomacy: confidence-building

regarding the use of the term: “...the Organization may, on request of the Governments concerned, be charged with the responsibility for preventing further aggression by such a state.” The last use of the term is found in the Article 95, but that use is not relevant for our discussion, because the term is used in other meaning: “Nothing in the present Charter shall prevent Members of the United Nations from entrusting the solution of their differences to other tribunals...” (The United Nations Charter, Articles 1, 2, 5, 40, 50, 53, 95).

¹⁸ The Charter of the United Nations, Preamble, 1945.

¹⁹ Lund, Michael S., *Methods of Managing Conflict*. In Bercovitch, Jacob (ed.) *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, Sage Publications Ltd., Los Angeles, 2008, pp. 288.

measures, fact-finding, early-warning, preventive deployment and demilitarized zones.²⁰

Next Secretary-General of the UN Kofi Annan has done much to advance the idea and practice of preventing violent conflicts. Among important initiatives he had introduced was to move the focus of the UN from “*a culture of reaction to the culture of prevention*” by spelling out some of the primary arguments for preventive action. Among other, Annan has argued for the moral responsibility of the UN to prevent large-scale violence, such as genocide.²¹

The importance of preventive action as an international policy was also adopted by UN-related agencies (e. g. World Bank, the Global Environment Facility), regional organizations (e. g. the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union (EU)), subregional agencies (e. g. Southern Africa Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States), development agencies of several major countries, as well as by nongovernmental actors.²²

European Union and conflict prevention

The years following the end of the Cold War have seen an increasing emphasis on conflict prevention, though neither the UN nor regional (security) organizations have developed a cohesive approach to conflict prevention. Indeed, there is general disagreement about which level is most appropriate for such approach.²³ The “successful” years from conflict prevention perspective since establishing the European Coal

²⁰ Boutros-Ghali, Boutros, *The Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, 1992, United Nations, New York.

The Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping, report of the Secretary-General, 1992. <http://www.un.org/docs/SG/agpeace.html>, accessed 15th February 2009.

²¹ Ackermann, Alice, *The Idea and Practice of Conflict Prevention*, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 40, Nr. 3, 2003, pp. 340.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Duke, Simon, *Regional organizations and conflict prevention: CFSP and ESDI in Europe*, in Carment, David and Schnabel, Albert, *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?*, 2003, Tokyo, The United Nations University Press, pp. 92.

and Steel Community in 1951 and afterwards, the creation of the European Economic Community in 1957 and the EU in 1992, led to the idea that the organization can help preventing the development of deadly conflicts not from within only, but also outside its traditional “operational territory”. The EU, seeming to be as one of the principal guarantors of the stability in the Western Balkans and recognized by the countries there as such, has therefore developed and broadened the concept of conflict prevention substantially in last few years.²⁴

If the countries of the Western Balkans – and Kosovo could not be an exception – want to prove themselves as reliable and committed partners of the EU, they would be put under strict and detailed supervision during the long-term process of approaching the European club. Therefore, Kosovo political elite should put high on its “priorities agenda” the need to adapt their policies on that field, or better to say, to adopt the modern understanding of conflict prevention. However, it will not be enough – consequently it would be necessary to act in accordance with it.

Although not specifically defined, the EU sees itself as the organization aiming at (successful) conflict prevention; even more, the EU claims it is already heavily engaged in conflict prevention, though at the same time it acknowledges it can and must do more. The EU asserts it has various financial and political means to support conflict prevention efforts, which are as follows:²⁵

²⁴ It was at the June 2001 Göteborg European Council that the Heads of State and Government of the then 15 member states of the EU indicated that “conflict prevention is one of the main objectives of the Union’s external relations and should be integrated in all its relevant aspects (...)”. Consequently, the numerous analyses on the subject have been published recently, discussing the difficulties, challenges and capacities of the EU as an effective actor of conflict prevention, for example Kronenberger, Vincent and Wouters, Jan, *The European Union and Conflict Prevention: policy and legal aspects*, 2004, TMS Asser Press, Haag; Duke, Simon, *Regional organizations and conflict prevention: CFSP and ESDI in Europe*, in Carment, David and Schnabel, Albert, *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?*, 2003, Tokyo, The United Nations University Press, pp. 91-111.

²⁵ [Directorate-General for External Relations](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/cfsp/cpcm/index.htm) of the EU, *Conflict Prevention & Civilian Crisis Management – Overview*, http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/cfsp/cpcm/index.htm, accessed 13th February 2009).

- a) development co-operation and external assistance,
- b) trade policy instruments,
- c) humanitarian aid,
- d) social and environmental policies,
- e) diplomatic instruments and political dialogue,
- f) co-operation with international partners and non-governmental organizations,
- g) as well as the new instruments in the field of crisis management.

It is usually argued the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) do have a conflict prevention role. Anyhow, progress from the conceptual stage towards practical arrangements for conflict prevention depends partly upon the willingness of EU and NATO member states to give substance to related concepts, as well as upon visible political level agreement that priority should be accorded to conflict prevention. However, the experience of ESDI and CFSP with conflict prevention is extremely limited. Until the intervention of the NATO in 1999 because of the atrocities that had taken place in Kosovo before, it was not immediately apparent to many people that there should even be a conflict prevention role for CFSP or ESDI. Official documents and specialist academic literature on European security rarely mention conflict prevention in this context.²⁶

It is evident also from the European Consensus on Development, a policy statement that “reflects the EU’s willingness to eradicate poverty and build a more stable and equitable world”, that the EU is going to develop comprehensive plans for countries where there is a significant danger of conflicts. The adopted policies may, if properly applied, reduce the risk of conflict and could support conflict prevention by addressing the root-causes of violent conflict,

²⁶ Duke, Simon, Regional organizations and conflict prevention: CFSP and ESDI in Europe, in Carment, David and Schnabel, Albert, *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?*, 2003, Tokyo, The United Nations University Press, pp. 94.

including poverty, degradation, exploitation, unequal distribution, access to land and natural resources, weak governance, human rights abuses and gender inequality. Furthermore, the EU is also going to promote dialogue, participation and reconciliation with a view to promoting peace and preventing outbreaks of violence.²⁷

Among other initiatives, it is important to mention the European Security Strategy (2003) that calls for an integrated approach to conflict prevention and crisis management, as well as to other security threats.²⁸ The European Neighbourhood Policy, the framework that aims also to conflict prevention in EU neighbouring countries with a myriad of different policy instruments and specific conflict prevention activities, has to be mentioned, as well.²⁹

So, where Kosovo stands in this story? The EU, meaning the European Commission and majority of the member states, is committed to stabilizing Kosovo, which encompasses also a big portion of conflict prevention.³⁰ It is not too ambitious to say that the EU's strategy on conflict prevention for Kosovo, at least on the declarative level, embodies all the important elements of comprehensive (broad) approach to conflict prevention. That kind of approach, used not only by the EU, but by most of

²⁷ *The European Consensus on Development*, Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the governments of the Member states meeting with the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission, 2005, pp. 26, http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/eu_consensus_en.pdf, accessed 20th February 2009.

²⁸ *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy*, adopted by the European Council, 12th December 2003, <http://www.consilium.eu.int/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf> (20th February 2009).

²⁹ European Commission, *The Policy: What is the European Neighbourhood Policy?*, 2008, http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm, accessed 20th February 2009.

³⁰ The EU has reiterated (most recently at the June 2008 European Council) "that Kosovo UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (UNSCR 1244) has a clear European perspective in line with the European perspective of the Western Balkans region." The EU remains committed to playing a leading role in ensuring the stability of Kosovo through a European Security and Defence Policy mission in the rule of law area, through its Special Representative and also its contribution to the international civilian office. Furthermore, the money pledged by the EU donors (Commission and EU Member States) to Kosovo on the Donors' Conference in Brussels exceeded 1,2 billion euro. More on European Commission, Kosovo - EU Kosovo relations, 2008. http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/potential-candidate-countries/kosovo/eu_kosovo_relations_en.htm, accessed 23th February 2009.

modern international organizations (the UN, The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe etc.), is defined with the term *structural prevention*.

Necessity of Structural Prevention (versus Operational Prevention)

It may be embodied in the nature of human beings that we mostly work reactively, answering and taking measures only when and if something unwanted happens. The traditional conflict prevention tools that aim to prevent aggravation of conflicts at the moment when conflict begins to escalate, threatens to take violent turn or has already taken a violent turn are focused directly on convincing potentially violent parties to change their behavior work reactively. That kind of tools can be dubbed as operational prevention. Examples of traditional (operational) conflict prevention tools, which in the short term indeed could lead to results, but do not address the root-causes of violence, are diplomatic pressure, mediation, peace negotiations, financial, economic, military or any other form of support, threats of diplomatic, economic or other sanctions, an arms embargo, sending civilian or military personnel as peace monitors or peace keepers.³¹

The Western Balkans, also Kosovo, has witnessed or is still subject to most of the traditional (operational) conflict prevention tools. If harsher “punishing” tools have been used by the international community to bring changes in first decade after the disintegration of Yugoslavia (esp. on the regime of Milošević’s Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), more proactive and promising tools, which would be named as “carrots”, are mostly used after 2001 for its successors: Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo.

However, the traditional reactive conflict prevention tools are necessary to halt the violence, but cannot be a solid base for

³¹ Keukeleire, Stephen, EU Structural Foreign Policy and Structural Conflict Prevention, in Kronenberger, Vincent and Wouters, Jan, *The European Union and Conflict Prevention: policy and legal aspects*, 2004, TMS Asser Press, Haag, pp. 151.

conflict resolution. If they succeed to sustain or prevent bloodshed, the time for more systematic, comprehensive, long-term and proactive conflict prevention comes. This is the momentum, when most of the countries where such approach shall be applied, fail. This long-lasting, usually expensive and often unpopular phase of conflict, which by some definitions coincides with post-conflict resolution/reconstruction, is the one that can and should provide steady foundation for building-up the society. However, it is usually difficult to mobilize enough resources for proactive conflict prevention – when the conflict is “unseen”, subtle or in so called latent phase, other (political) priorities have higher stakes on (political) agendas. The rationale of the elites (as well as of the public) is logical, indeed: why should country consume time, energy and scarce resources for something that cannot be translated in immediate results?

Nevertheless, there is sense of urgency that it is simply not enough just to have a long-winded list of direct and structural preventive tools without some coherent preventive strategy. Each model for the formulation of preventive strategy has to be specified on a case-to-case basis, meaning it is impossible to invent one formula that could be applied to all. To make such a preventive action strategy operational would require the coordination of actions by preventive actors, and the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the preventive action taken. Lund recommends guidelines for the formulation of an effective prevention policy which can roughly be divided in three parts: *conflict analysis* (the diagnosis of the structural and immediate causes of conflict prevention and identification of potential preventive actors), *prevention analysis* (a matching of preventive measures to the diagnosed causes of conflict and a preliminary appraisal as to the possible effectiveness of such measures once implemented) and *preventive action* (how to organize and implement preventive action, monitoring and evaluating the results of such action).³²

³² Ackermann, Alice, *The Idea and Practice of Conflict Prevention*, Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 40, Nr. 3, 2003, pp. 343-344.

Conclusion

The main aim of this article has not been the discussion which would be the best alternative to approach the complex and difficult task of conflict prevention for Kosovo, but merely to clarify and warn which are the traps the decision-makers can encounter. It would be too ambitious (or even lofty) to advise to the political elites of Kosovo which strategy of conflict prevention to take. It is on them to find and decide for its own approach, based on political, economic, social and cultural specifics of the new political reality in the Western Balkans. It will be their merit to reap fruits of successful transition and peaceful coexistence of its people, as well as they will have to assume responsibility for non-success, if it happens. It is true, indeed, that the heritage they obtained (*de iure* a year ago with the declaration of independence and *de facto* in 1999 when the protectorate of international community has been established) was not something prosperous that could be envied by anyone. The plague of corruption, organized crime, unemployment and other problems related to transitional economies gives hard time to Kosovo and its people, but shall not be an excuse for non-action.

It would be too ambitious, too, to say the international community as a whole supports Kosovo transition to modern state, but it is promising to say the important parts of international community do support the new country: having the big majority of the European union, as well as the USA and some other important players on its side could be good starting point for Kosovo. The EU, with the EULEX mission, however disputed and questioned its legal and moral status is in some parts of Kosovo, does have developed approaches to structural conflict prevention, but it is on Kosovo whether it is going to use them or not. Operational conflict prevention has worked so far to prevent new episode of bloodshed in the Western Balkans, but the success of structural conflict prevention would be the key measure of Kosovo success – or failure.

Bibliography

- Ackermann, Alice, *The Idea and Practice of Conflict Prevention*, Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 40, Nr. 3, pp. 339-347, 2003.
- Bercovitch, Jacob (ed.) *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, Sage Publications Ltd., Los Angeles, 2008.
- Brown, Michael and Rosecrance, David, *The Costs of Conflict: Prevention and Cure in the Global Area*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 1999.
- Boutros-Ghali, Boutros, *The Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, report of the Secretary-General, adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council, 31st January 1992, A/47/277-S/24111, United Nations, New York, 1992.
- Carment, David and Schnabel, Albert, *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?* Tokyo, The United Nations University Press, 2003.
- Duke, Simon, Regional organizations and conflict prevention: CFSP and ESDI in Europe, in Carment, David and Schnabel, Albert, *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?* Tokyo, The United Nations University Press, 2003.
- Kronenberger, Vincent and Wouters, Jan, *The European Union and Conflict Prevention: policy and legal aspects*, TMS Asser Press, Haag, 2004.
- Lund, Michael S., Methods of Managing Conflict. In Bercovitch, Jacob (ed.) *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, Sage Publications, Los Angeles, 2008.
- Mason, David T., Meernik, James D., *Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Post-War Societies. Sustaining the peace*, Routledge, London and New York, 2006.
- Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Kosovo, *Prime Minister Thaçi: A secure Kosovo means prosperity for the people of Kosovo and stability for the region*, 2009. <http://www.ks-gov.net/pm/Fillimi/tabid/36/EntryID/1672/Default.aspx>, accessed 14th February 2009.
- Peck, Connie, *The United Nations as a Dispute Settlement System: Improving Mechanisms for the Prevention and Resolution of Conflict*. Kluwer Law International, Haag, London and Boston, 1996.
- Ramcharan, B. G., *Conflict Prevention in Practice: Essays in Honour of Jim Sutterlin*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Leiden and Boston, 2005.
- University of Wisconsin, Office of Human Resource Development, *About Conflict*. <http://www.ohrd.wisc.edu/onlinetraining/resolution/aboutwhatisit.htm#whatisconflict>, accessed 14th February 2009.

Ury, William L., *Must We Fight? From the Battlefield to the Schoolyard – A New Perspective on Violent Conflict and Its Prevention*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2001.

Weller, Marc, *Peace Lost: The Failure of Conflict Prevention in Kosovo*, Hotei Publishing, Amsterdam, 2008.