

## **Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities**

by Frances Stewart

### *Summary*

Civil wars not only cause huge amounts of human distress, but are also a major cause of low-incomes. Hence their prevention should be a central aspect of poverty reduction strategies. Since about half low-income countries have been affected by wars, and a much higher proportion of the very worst off economies, policies to prevent conflict should form a central part of policies towards low-income countries. The paper draws conclusions from a research programme undertaken by WIDER and Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford which included a large number of case studies of countries that have suffered conflict in recent years..

Civil wars occur when groups mobilise against each other; their leaders use ethnicity or some other characteristic like religion, to unite and mobilise the group. Such mobilisation is effective where there are substantial horizontal inequalities, i.e. inequalities among groups, which cause resentment. Such inequalities have political, economic and social dimensions. Other factors, e.g. growth failures and a weak state, are also often present in countries in which violent conflict occurs on a substantial scale. However, strong states also frequently initiate conflict, by attacking groups which they believe might threaten the ruling power.

Policies to prevent conflict need to be directed at reducing horizontal inequalities in conflict-prone countries in all dimensions - political, economic and social. A major problem, however, is that domestic governments may not wish to pursue such policies, as they want to continue the dominance of their own group. International donors can contribute through their own expenditures, and also through policy conditionality. In practice, current conditionalities do not contribute to a reduction in horizontal inequality except accidentally. Current political conditionality is concerned with establishing democracy, not inclusive government, while current economic and social conditionality is directed towards promoting growth and efficiency and poverty reduction but not reducing horizontal inequality. Yet, the current conditionalities will not succeed in realising their objectives of economic growth and democracy if civil war occurs. Hence they need to be changed for conflict-prone countries to place the reduction of horizontal inequality as a central objective.

Countries which are conflict-prone include countries that have had serious conflict over the previous twenty years, low-income countries and countries with sharp horizontal inequalities. For all such countries, the measurement of horizontal inequalities and the introduction of policies to offset them when they are excessive should complement general development policies.

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## **I. Introduction**

Civil wars are a major source of poverty. Eight of the ten countries with the worst HDI, and similarly eight out of ten countries with the lowest GNP per capita, have had major civil wars in the recent past.<sup>1</sup> About half low-income countries as a whole have been subject to major political violence. Causality works both ways, as low-incomes lead to conditions which are conducive to violence.<sup>2</sup> But the evidence suggests that major civil wars are associated with markedly worse performance in economic growth, food production per capita and human indicators, such as infant mortality rates, school enrolment, and so on.<sup>3</sup> Hence any comprehensive strategy to tackle poverty must give the prevention of conflict a central place. Yet in the past this has not been so. Conflict prevention has, of course, been regarded as desirable as a political objective, but it has not been part of the poverty reduction or Human Development Agenda. For example, the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy documents do not deal centrally (and often not at all) with this issue, nor has the UNDP's Human Development Report treated it as a focal point for the improvement of Human Development. Partly for this reason, development strategies in general and anti-poverty policies in particular have tended to neglect issues related to conflict. Yet recognising the prevention of conflict as a central for poor societies may alter the design of policies substantially. The aim of this paper is to explore how economic and social policy making would be affected by focussing on the prevention of conflict in low-income countries as well as other development questions.

This paper, therefore, starts from the premiss that crisis prevention is essential for poverty reduction as well as to alleviate the immediate human suffering caused by conflict; and that policies aimed at reducing political violence are needed for *all* low-income countries given

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<sup>1</sup> Among the ten countries with the lowest HDI, Sierra Leone, Niger, Mali, Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guinea and Mozambique have all been subject to civil conflict at some time over the past twenty years.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the statistical evidence produced by Auvinen and Nafziger.

<sup>3</sup> Stewart and Fitzgerald, *passim*.

their high propensity to violence. Similar policies are also needed for some middle-income countries, but the incidence of civil war is substantially lower among these countries, partly reflecting the fact that those countries that have succeeded in becoming middle-income were able to do so because they had avoided conflict. Hence for middle-income countries, special crisis-prevention policies may be needed only for particularly vulnerable countries.

The aim of the paper is to identify how introducing crisis-prevention into policy-making would alter the 'normal' design of policy for low-income countries. It does so first by some general analysis of conflicts which is partly drawn from the findings of a recent research programme into the economic and social causes of conflict;<sup>4</sup> secondly, by elucidating the concept of *horizontal inequalities*, as a key element in understanding and preventing conflict; and thirdly, by providing an overview of the policy recommendations that emerge from the analysis.

## **II. Motivation, mobilisation and conflict**

The human motivation of the actors involved is clearly at the heart of any conflict situation. If a conflict is to be avoided or stopped, this motivation must be understood, and the conditions leading to a predisposition to conflict reduced or eliminated. This section aims to sketch elements that determine such motivation. While the focus is on economic motivation, other factors (political, cultural) are also obviously of importance. They are incorporated in the analysis that follows in a fundamental way since it is such factors (themselves influenced and sometimes determined by economic factors) which decide the way people view themselves and are viewed (i.e. the groups they form), as well as playing a large role in the distribution of resources. In fact, it is rarely possible to disentangle political, cultural and economic elements, as each is embedded in the other.

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<sup>4</sup> Conducted by WIDER and Queen Elizabeth House Oxford. See Nafziger, Stewart and Varynen, forthcoming.

The type of conflicts with which we are concerned are *organised group* conflicts: that is to say they are not exclusively a matter of individuals randomly committing violence against others. What is involved is *group mobilisation*, and we need to understand the underlying motivation for such mobilisation. Groups are here defined as collections of people who, for certain purposes, identify with each other as against those outside the group, normally also identifying characteristics and membership of some other group with whom they are in conflict. Group organisation may be quite informal, but it exists, implying that there is a degree of agreement (often implicit) on purposes and activities within the group. Normally there are those within any group instigating conflict, who lead or orchestrate the conflict, including constructing or enhancing the perception of group identity in order to achieve group mobilisation; and those who actively carry out the fighting, or give it some support - for shorthand, we shall call these two categories leaders and followers, though there can be considerable overlap between the two. The violence is generally *instrumental*, used in order to achieve other ends. Usually, the declared objective is political - to secure or sustain power - while power is wanted for the advantages it offers, especially the possibilities of economic gains. However, as Keen points out, sometimes, especially as wars persist, political motivation may disappear or become less important, and the wars are then pursued for the economic advantage conferred directly on those involved, the possibilities of looting etc.<sup>1</sup> But even then conflicts remain predominantly group activities. The group element, and the fact that the conflicts are instrumental, usually with political objectives, differentiate them from crime, though in the extreme case where fighting parties have disintegrated into gangs whose efforts are devoted to maximising their short run economic gains (see Keen on Sierra Leone, for example<sup>2</sup>), the distinction between crime and conflict becomes blurred.

Accepting that groups are central, the question is why and how groups are mobilised. In order to mobilise a group there must be some way that they are differentiated one from another. Studies show a number of different ways groups have been differentiated and mobilised in contemporary conflicts. For example, in central Africa, ethnic identity has been the major source of group definition and mobilisation; in Central America, group identification and organisation was along class lines, but with some overlapping ethnic dimensions; in Somalia, the cultural source of group differentiation and mobilisation is clans (different lineages within broadly the same ethnic group); in N.Ireland and the Balkans religion is the major categorising feature. Another source of differentiation is often regional location, which can, but does not always, coincide with ethnic or language divisions - for example in Biafra, Eritrea and E.Pakistan (Bangladesh).

The question of how groups are formed and when they become salient is complex and contested, and cannot be treated adequately here.<sup>3</sup> The view adopted in the present paper is that group identity is 'constructed' by political leaders, who find group cohesion and mobilisation a powerful mechanism in their competition for power and resources, adopting a strategy of 'reworking of historical memories' to engender group identity. Numerous

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<sup>1</sup> See Rangamsami, 1985; Keen, 1994;1998; .

<sup>2</sup> Keen, in Stewart and Fitzgerald, forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Alexander et al. in Nafizger et al., forthcoming; Turton, 1997; Cohen, 1974; Smith 1991.

examples have shown how 'ethnicity was used by political and intellectual elites prior to, or in the course of, wars' (Alexander et al., p 5). Yet, as Turton points out, 'neither the constructedness nor the instrumentality of ethnicity [or other similar sources of identity which are used to make groups cohere such as religion or class] can be explained unless we are prepared to see it as an independent as well as a dependent variable in human affairs' (Turton, 1997, p84; and see Smith, 1988). Some shared circumstances are needed for group construction - e.g. speaking the same language, sharing cultural traditions, living in the same place, or facing similar sources of hardship or exploitation. Past group formation, although possibly constructed for political purposes at the time, also contributes to present differences. Hence what was a dependent variable at one point in history can act as an independent variable in contributing to current perceptions.<sup>4</sup>

For the emergence of group conflict, a degree of similarity of circumstance among potential members of a group is not by itself enough to bring about group mobilisation. Several other conditions must be present. Leaders must see the creation or enhancement of group identity as helpful to the realisation of their political ambitions and work actively to achieve this, using a variety of strategies, including education, propaganda etc. In many cases, it has been shown that political leaders set out to create group consciousness in order to achieve a basis for power. Lonsdale points out that in Kenya "conflict between political elites for state (and hence economic) power led to the emergence of 'political tribalism'". (Lonsdale, p..). Government policies, particularly towards education, frequently play a role by discriminating in favour of some category and against others. The story of how differences between the Hutu and Tutsi were possibly created and certainly strongly enhanced by Colonial and post-colonial governments is powerfully illustrated in studies of Burundi and Rwanda.<sup>5</sup> In the Rwanda case, the interhamwe - the extremist leaders of the Hutu massacre of the Tutsi - deliberately and efficiently cultivated Hutu consciousness and fear of Tutsi for several years before the disaster. Some group mobilisation occurs as a defensive reaction, in response to discrimination and attacks by others. Often people don't recognise themselves as members of a group until this is 'pointed out' by outsiders. However, differences in actual underlying conditions with respect to political control and economic conditions are important conditions for the development of group identity and mobilisation. Without any differences in these factors, group identification is likely to be weak and remain a cultural rather than political or conflict-creating phenomenon.

The hypothesis is that in any society there are some differences in individuals' circumstances - including cultural, geographic, economic - which provide the potential for the construction of group identity as a source of political mobilisation. Political leaders, in government or outside, may use this potential in their competition for power and resources, in the course of which they enhance group identification by reworking history, introducing new symbols etc. However, cultural differences alone are not sufficient to bring about violent group mobilisation. As Cohen points out "Men may and do certainly joke about or ridicule the strange and bizarre customs of men from other ethnic groups, because these customs are different from their own. But they do not fight over such differences alone. When men *do*, on

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<sup>4</sup> Smith has argued that "the [past] acts as a constraint on invention. Though the past can be 'read' in different ways, it is not any past" (Smith, 1991, pp357-358, quoted in Turton, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> See Gaffney; and Uvin in Nafziger et al.

the other hand, fight across ethnic lines it is nearly always the case that they fight over some fundamental issues concerning the distribution and exercise of power, whether economic, political, or both” (Cohen, 1974, p94).

Economic and political differentiation among groups is then of fundamental importance to group mobilisation. This is the reason that *relative* position rather than absolute is more often observed to be the underlying determinant of conflict (see Gurr) . If a whole society is uniformly impoverished, there may be despair, but there is no motivation for group organisation. Even if political leaders hoped to use group mobilisation as a source of power, they would find it difficult to secure sufficient response among followers without some underlying economic differences among the people they hoped to mobilise. Hence in general if there is group conflict, *we should expect sharp economic differences between conflicting groups associated (or believed to be associated) with differences in political control.*

Relevant economic differences vary according to the nature of the economy (e.g. land may be irrelevant in modern urban societies and employment relevant, but the converse could be true in rural-based economies). Although the prime cause if group conflict arises from inequalities among groups, i.e. their *relative* position, the *absolute* situation may also be relevant, since an absolute deterioration in conditions may force attention onto the relative situation (e.g. when water becomes a scarce resource people may fight over it, but not when its plentiful), while, conversely, when incomes/resources are increasing generally people may be expected to mind less about their relative position. The latter situation obtained in Kenya in the 1960s and 1970s and has been argued to be one reason why despite persistent relative inequality among tribal groups large scale conflict did not result (see Klugman, forthcoming). But in some contexts, improving conditions, if the improvements are regarded as being unfairly shared, can give rise to conflict, as in Nigeria in the late 1960s.

Political power is an important instrument of economic power, setting the rules and determining allocation of employment, of government economic and social investments and incentives for private investment. In general one would expect that political power would be a more compelling means of securing (or conversely being deprived of) economic resources, the greater the role of government in the economy, and especially the more its discretionary power. It is plausible to argue that the role of the state relative to the market and the discretionary decisions of government may initially increase and are then likely to fall as development proceeds. I.e. in very underdeveloped societies, government expenditure and employment is low; this increases as does government’ discretionary economic power as countries industrialise; but in the later stages of industrialisation, the market tends to take a larger role and government decisions are less discretionary and more rule-based. This would suggest that struggles to control state power might be greatest in the middle stages of development.

It should be noted that it is not necessarily the relatively deprived who instigate violence. The privileged may do so, fearing loss of position. For example, the prospect of possible loss of political power can act as a powerful motive for state-sponsored violence which occurs with the aim of suppressing opposition and maintaining power. Since the government has access to an organised force (police/army) and to finance, state terrorism is sometimes an important source of humanitarian emergencies. This was the case, for example, in most of the major episodes of violence in Uganda, in Haiti, and in Iraq’s suppression of the Kurds. Holsti points out that state violence is more often than not the initiating cause in recent conflicts (Holsti,

forthcoming).

In many societies some level of organised violence persists over very long periods. Given underlying conditions that are conducive to conflict, there may be low-level conflict for certain periods, and then periods of violence on a greater scale (civil war), sometimes culminating in major catastrophes. The past history of violence then contributes to group identification, animosities and mobilisation increasing the likelihood of future conflict. This has been shown statistically by Auvinen and Nafziger. Such a long history of violence of fluctuating strength appears to have occurred in many recent cases - e.g. Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi. Hence a full understanding of causes must include an explanation both of the underlying vulnerability to conflict and the particular triggers that led to a sharp escalation. Preventative policies should address both the underlying causes and the 'trigger'. The trigger necessarily involves some change - including changes in relative deprivation or the activities of a particular political leader.

*Dimensions of differentiation in the political, economic and social position of groups*

Leaders often seize on, change and exaggerate, some cultural or religious differences - or symbolic systems<sup>6</sup> - as a mechanism of group mobilisation. But it is suggested here that to make these symbolic systems 'work' effectively as a source of mobilisation for violence, it is necessary that there are parallel differences in political and/or economic dimensions. For simplification, we can categorise the latter into four areas: political participation; economic assets; incomes and employment; and social aspects. Each of these categories contains a number of elements. For example, political participation can occur at the level of the cabinet, the bureaucracy, the army and so on; economic assets comprise land, livestock, machinery etc.

The four categories and the main elements are presented in the table below, with a column for each category. Each of the four categories is important in itself, but most are also instrumental for achieving others. For example, political power is both an ends and a means; control over economic assets is primarily a means to secure income but it is also an end. Clearly as noted earlier, the relevance of a particular element varies according to whether it forms an important source of incomes or well-being in a particular society. The allocation of housing, for example, is generally more relevant in industrialised countries, while land is of huge importance where agriculture accounts for most output and employment, but gets less important as development proceeds. Water, as a productive resource, can be very important in parts of the world where rainwater is inadequate. Access to minerals can be a source of great wealth, and gaining such access an important source of conflict in countries with mineral resources (see Fairhead; Reno).

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<sup>6</sup> 'Symbolic systems' are the values, myths, rituals and ceremonials which are used to organise and unite groups. (See Cohen, 1974).

Table 1: Sources of differentiation among groups

Categories of differentiation	Political participation	Economic Assets	Employment and incomes	Social access and situation
Elements of categories	political parties	land	government	education
	government ministers, senior	human capital	private	health services
	government ministers, junior	communal resources, inc. water	'elite' employment	safe water
	army	minerals	'rents'	housing
	parliament	privately owned capital/credit	skilled	unemployment
	local government	govt. infrastructure	unskilled	poverty
	respect for human rights	security against theft	informal sector opportunities	personal and household security

Evidence from conflicts shows that group inequalities on the political dimension is virtually universal - these inequalities tend to arise on each of the elements identified in the matrix, with the consequence that the inequalities permeate political power. It must be noted that democratic institutions are not sufficient to prevent such inequalities, partly because majorities can discriminate against minorities, and partly because even with 'shared' power at the top, lower level elements may involve inequalities. Inequalities in political power often lead to (and/or stem from) similar inequalities in economic dimensions. Biassed distribution of government jobs, infrastructure and so on is common with the group in power discriminating in its favour. For example, in Burundi, half of government investment went to Bujumbura and its vicinity, from where the elite Tutsi came. In some countries, the President and his coterie take a massive share of state resources for their private use - for example, the Duvaliers in Haiti. Education has been shown to be a very common source of inequality, and one which, of course, strengthens other economic inequalities. Unequal educational access was prevalent from Colonial times in Rwanda, Burundi, and until the Khmer revolution, in Cambodia. In post-colonial Burundi there have been deliberate attempts to limit educational access by the Hutu, while educated Hutu were targeted for killing in the 1970s. Unequal access to state resources is often paralleled by inequalities in access to private assets, employment and income, partly because the state resources (including education as well as more corrupt practices) provide a major source of success in private accumulation. But in some societies, success in private accumulation may go to groups that are relatively deprived of state power and benefits (like the Kikuyu in Kenya, or minority religions or ethnicities, such as the Chinese in many Asian countries, or the Huguenots or Jews in Europe). This divergence may reduce tensions, as far as the groups excluded from the state are concerned, but can enhance the likelihood of state terrorism against the economically privileged minority.

***Other elements to be considered in an analysis of the causes of conflict***

In addition, to the factors just mentioned - which may be summed up as the existence of *horizontal inequalities* - four other elements play a role; *perceptions*; *private costs and benefits*; *constraints*; and *finance and opportunities*.

First, we have already noted the important role of perceptions. People are not born with a sense of which group they belong to, who are friends and who enemies - this is socially constructed by family, community, state etc. As noted above, each category may accentuate differences or reject them, changing perceptions and hence group mobilisation.

Secondly, while social influences are especially important in conflict, there are also 'rational' choice type *private* benefits and costs of conflict to group members. Individual action is taken partly (the extreme neo-classical position would argue entirely) as a result of a calculus of individual or private costs and benefits of action. Of course, especially at times of high tension, group gains or losses also enter individual welfare functions. In some situations, people have been observed to take action which is completely counter to their private interests - for example, rioters have burned down factories in Sri Lanka where they themselves work, thereby destroying their own employment.<sup>7</sup> The role of leaders is to see that group considerations coincide with or override private ones, either by changing private incentives or by the use of propaganda and force.

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<sup>7</sup> M. O'Sullivan, personal communication.

Individuals and groups may *gain* from conflict - e.g. by looting, use of forced labour, changes in the terms of trade in their favour, the creation of new economic opportunities, controlling emergency aid. Keen has analysed such gains in the Sudan and elsewhere (Keen, 1994; 1998). However, many people lose from the physical violence, disrupted markets, reduced state benefits, theft and looting. The private calculus of costs and benefits also depends on the gains from avoiding conflict in terms of potential state benefits and economic rewards from development in a peaceful environment. Hence the general prospects for economic development and the extent to which the individual and the group to which (s)he belongs is likely to share in development gains is an important consideration. If these are low, the calculation is more likely to come out in favour of conflict. The costs and benefits may be differentiated by gender (and by group).

The cost/ benefit calculation may be different for leaders and followers and also between those actively involved and the rest of the population. Leaders are generally seeking to form a government, control resources, secure high office and so on. But they can do little without followers. However, if the followers - ie those providing the manpower and other resources - are strongly supportive of conflict, against the views of their existing leaders, new leaders may emerge.

Any long run 'solution' must try and change the calculus of both leaders and followers with respect to individual and group costs and benefits. Individuals (leaders and followers) can be offered 'bribes' to stop fighting - e.g. power and status for leaders, finance and jobs for followers. But unless the group differences that formed the underlying causes are also addressed, new leaders and followers are likely to emerge, if not immediately in the medium term.

Thirdly, conflicts can be prevented where there are strong *constraints*, normally in the form of a strong state which suppresses violence. Even with strong motives for conflict on the basis of individual and group calculations, a strong state (or other authority) can prevent, eliminate or reduce conflict, while a weak authority may not be able to constrain violence. Some of the conflicts in the former Soviet Union can be seen as primarily due to the weakening of state authority and its ability to suppress conflicts so that underlying conflicts may again be openly expressed. In some of the African conflicts, too, the weakening of the state - for example in Somalia and Sierra Leone - has permitted conflicts to erupt and enlarge, which might have been suppressed with a stronger state. In Kenya, in contrast, a relatively strong state has kept violent conflict to a fairly small level (Klugman). But, as noted earlier, the state can also deliberately foster violence to undermine opposition groups, often provoking violent reactions by its actions. The state quite often has instigated violence by attacking opposition groups as noted earlier, including, for example, in Haiti, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda in the 1970s and 1980s.

*Finance and opportunities:* conflicts need resources, including arms, soldiers and food. Some can be seized from the local territory - more readily if the conflict is popular locally, which again depends on whether the group involved regards itself as being seriously disadvantaged. Fighting groups can survive without foreign resources, but the availability of support from outside - credit, food, technical advice, and arms - clearly helps the resource situation and thus 'feeds' the conflict. The Cold War conflicts were largely financed from outside: since the Cold War, external support has continued to be important - from governments (outside and within

the region), from NGOs and from the private sector. External resources supplied by governments played a considerable financing role in the wars in Central America, Afghanistan (from the US, Pakistan and Russia during the Cold War era, and subsequently from Pakistan and NGOs), Sudan and Cambodia, for example. Private finance - from companies seeking mineral resources, from the sale of drugs and from international crime - have been important in Afghanistan, Guatemala, the Congo, Angola and the Balkans.<sup>8</sup> Finance is rarely an effective constraint, partly because wars don't always cost much (a low-level conflict like that in Somalia, does not use expensive weapons), partly because they create opportunities for money-making (via theft and looting, blackmarkets and other crimes), and partly because there seem to be generous sources of credit for those at war.<sup>9</sup>

The same *reality* in terms of the relative and absolute position of groups in political and economic terms may have different effects in terms of conflict-occurrence according to the four other elements just discussed. For example, a poor 'objective' situation in terms of group inequality may not translate itself into conflict if there is a strong state which suppresses it, or if ideological elements are such that the inequalities are not widely perceived. A new conflict may emerge either if objective conditions change or if some of the other elements change - e.g. the state weakens, new sources of external support for conflict develop, or leaders emerge who powerfully and effectively communicate the actual inequalities to the members of the group.

*Trigger events:*

Where there is high potential for conflict because of group inequalities and animosities, a trigger event may lead to eruption or escalation of conflict. Such a trigger may arise from a *change* in relative access to any important resource in the table. This might occur because of some political event (as in Afghanistan with the Russian invasion), or because of endogenous or policy changes.

*Endogenous (or semi-endogenous)* developments include growing population/land pressures; environmental changes (e.g. desertification); or changes brought about by success or failure of the development model resulting in changing absolute and relative access to employment and incomes. For example, tensions arising from growing land pressures are believed to have been one factor leading to the recent eruption of the Rwanda conflict (Plateau..). But others have attributed the situation to the development model which enriched a few, while perpetuating the impoverishment of the masses (Uvin).

*Policy changes may include:*

- *Institutional:* property rights; water regulations; commons access. While these undoubtedly cause tensions, it is not possible to identify any major conflict that has resulted from this type of change.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In Angola, for example, the impoverished government is acquiring finance to fight the rebels by selling licenses for oil drilling.

<sup>9</sup> A seven country study of countries at war showed debt rising rapidly, faster than non-war countries (see Stewart and Fitzgerald, forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup> For example, Swain explores the ways in which shortage of water resources contribute to growing tension, but he does not identify any significant conflict resulting, but foresees the possibility of such conflicts arising as the world water shortage grows.

- *Adjustment/stabilisation policies*: sharp changes in the terms of trade, resulting from devaluation, or price deregulation, removal of consumer subsidies, reduced employment and incomes or changes in state benefits associated with adjustment policies have been suggested as a cause of conflict. Yet careful empirical evidence shows that while these often lead to protests, some violent, the violence tends to be contained to relatively modest proportions (see Morrisson, forthcoming).
- *Political/patronage*: changes in the distribution of state benefits for political reasons.

*International developments* can also lead to changes in the relative access of different groups. Such changes include market access; the international terms of trade; debt and interest payments; and capital flows (including aid). Reduced aid, following loss of interest in the country after the Cold War, has been argued to be an element in the Sierra Leone and Liberian conflicts - the government no longer had the resources to secure allegiance from potential rivals.

However, the underlying reality about the absolute and, especially, the relative position of the group is of paramount importance. This is because the other factors are all permissive, but would not bring about a conflict in the absence of these inequalities. The next section will elaborate on the concept of horizontal inequality which is critical to the analysis presented in this paper.

### **III. Horizontal versus vertical inequality**

The analysis of the causes of conflict presented above places overriding emphasis on inequality among groups along a number of dimensions. Yet societies we consider to be unequal are not invariably ridden by major conflict; for example, high inequality has been present in Kenya, Thailand, Pakistan and Brazil without leading to large scale conflict. This is partly because other factors mentioned above may prevent the high inequality erupting in conflict, e.g. because absolute conditions improve, or a strong state is able to suppress potential conflict. But it is also because of the way inequality is measured and assessed does not correspond to the type of inequality relevant to conflict - that is inequality is normally assessed in relation to the distribution of *income* only and measured as *vertical* rather than *horizontal* inequality.

In the analysis above, a matrix of 28 potentially relevant aspects of inequality were presented, made up of four broad categories, consisting of P (political), A (assets), Y (incomes/employment) and S (social) dimensions. Each category consists of a vector of different elements, i.e.  $P = P_i, P_{ii}, P_{iii}, \dots$ ;  $A = A_i, A_{ii}, \dots$  Etc. where  $P_i, P_{ii}, \dots, A_i, A_{ii}$  are different kinds of political participation and economic assets. Table 1 picked out seven in each category, but it is possible to extend them and indeed to imagine additional categories that might be relevant in some societies.

Inequality in income distribution - economists' normal space for measuring inequality - is a summary measure of the incomes/employment dimension but fails to capture, or gives only a partial indicator of, the others. Moreover, income distribution is a *vertical* measure, i.e. it takes everyone in society from 'top' to 'bottom' and measures their incomes and the consequent inequality. What is needed for our analysis is a horizontal measure of inequality which measures inequality between groups, where groups are defined by region/ethnicity/class/religion, according to the most appropriate type of group identification

in the particular society.

It is possible to have sharp vertical inequality in any dimension without any horizontal inequality - for example if the average income of all groups were the same and distribution within each group was highly unequal. Conversely, it is possible to have considerable inter-group inequality, while overall societal vertical inequality is small because intra-group inequality is small. However, there is necessarily some connection between vertical and horizontal inequality since any overall measure of societal inequality of income distribution (like the Gini or the Theil coefficients) (i.e. vertical measures) can be decomposed into the weighted sum of two elements - inter-group inequality and intra-group inequality.<sup>11</sup>

Strong intra-group vertical inequality may actually *reduce* the potential for inter-group conflict for any given degree of horizontal inequality because it may be more difficult to get group cohesion where there is high intra-group inequality, and because elite members of a group may identify more with members of the elite from other groups than with lower-income members of their own group. This broadly may be the Kenya situation. However, this is not always the case; strong vertical inequality within groups can lead to intra-group resentments which group leaders 'buy' off by directing animosity against other groups - this crudely summarises the Rwanda situation.

Like vertical inequality, there can be a number of alternative measures of horizontal inequality. It is possible to use the same measures as for vertical inequality, such as the Gini coefficient or Theil index, where the population consists of groups rather than individuals. These are more complex measures (especially as there are usually only a few groups) than seems necessary. A simpler summary measure is the coefficient of variation. The ratio of the worst performing group to the average and to the best performance are other useful measures. From the perspective of causing resentment and ultimately conflict, consistent relative deprivation over a number of dimensions may as relevant as the actual coefficient of variation with respect to any one dimension. This may be measured by looking at rankings in performance on different dimensions (elements) and averaging them. Persistence in the same horizontal inequalities over time is another relevant factor. If gaps between groups narrow or reverse this reduces their potential to cause conflict. Conversely, widening gaps are more likely to provoke conflict. Whether high levels of horizontal inequality are likely to cause serious conflict also depends on the importance of the various groups. Where groups are very small, even if discriminated against consistently, their potential to cause conflict on a substantial scale, i.e. enough to constitute a CHE, is limited.

In practice, data may not be available to measure horizontal inequality, since most concern to date has been with vertical inequality (and even measures of this are often lacking). Moreover, in politically tense societies, governments are not likely to want to publicise horizontal inequalities. Nonetheless, it is important to collect such data, since it is essential for identification of potential problems and possible solutions. Measurement may be relatively easy for some elements (e.g. some aspects of political participation); while for others rough estimates may be made, or proxies used, such as taking regional data to represent differences among ethnicities, or distribution of land as a proxy for distribution of agricultural incomes.

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<sup>11</sup> For a decomposition of the Gini of this kind see Fei, Ranis and Kuo; and for a decomposition of the Theil see Anand.

Identifying the appropriate groups for measuring horizontal inequality presents some rather fundamental difficulties. In most conflicts, group differentiation is not based on some obvious objective differences between people (e.g. all people over 6' tall versus all those below 6' in height), but is constructed or created in order to mobilise people for political purposes, as discussed earlier. Group construction is dynamic and fluid, changing with circumstances. In some situations, group identification may nonetheless be obvious (e.g. where a conflict has been ongoing for many years and the lines of differentiation are clearly drawn), but in others groups may split or new groups may emerge in response to the developing situation. Then identification of groups for the purpose of measuring horizontal inequality may not only be difficult but may actually change the on-the-ground situation, either by reinforcing distinctions, or by creating some perceived political advantages in new alliances and groupings. Moreover, the announcement of the existence of a large degree of horizontal inequality may itself be conflict provoking. It is clearly of the greatest importance that the act of measurement, and the subsequent policies, avoid worsening a conflict situation. But to avoid any assessment of horizontal inequality altogether for these reasons, would be to lose an important tool for analysis of causes and prevention of conflict. My conclusion is that measurement of horizontal inequality and the uses to which it is put should be conducted with sensitivity to the considerations just discussed.

#### **IV Policy Conclusions**

The analysis of the sources of conflict contained above contains some strong implications for policy formulation aimed at preventing, or ending, conflict. Policy needs to address the underlying causes systematically - other permissive elements (resources for conflict, for example) are relevant too, but action on these aspects would not have lasting effects unless the root causes are tackled. As a first priority, policy formulation needs to consider both the issues of horizontal inequality among groups and that of the private incentives to leaders and followers. The two sets of issues - the conditions of groups and private incentives - overlap but are not the same.

Policy change is particularly difficult to achieve in the context of a country prone to violence, perhaps currently experiencing it, and having a recent and longer history of violence. In this context there are inherited memories and grievances, and entrenched group identity and inter-group animosities. The government is rarely broad based and normally represents only a subset of the groups potentially involved in conflict. It would often be naive to think that the government even wants to promote peace, given the prevalence of state-instigated violence. Hence the policies to be suggested below may fall on hostile ears as far as the government is concerned. The same may be true of the international community which has its own reasons for pursuing the actions it has taken, which, too, have often been conflict-provoking. Hence the context for introducing policy change must be recognised as structurally unfavourable. Nonetheless, it is worth elucidating policies liable to reduce vulnerability to conflict since some governments may wish to pursue them as would some international donors, at least judged by their rhetoric; and for others, these policies can act as a standard against which actual policies may be judged.

#### ***Group (or horizontal) inequality***

The general direction of policy change must be to reduce group inequalities. To achieve this it essential to have *inclusive government, politically, economically and socially*. Inclusive

government politically means that all major groups in a society participate in political power, the administration, the army and the police. Inclusive government economically implies that horizontal inequality in economic aspects (assets, employment and incomes) is moderate; and inclusive government socially that horizontal inequality in social participation and achieved well-being is also moderate. 'Moderate' is a loose term. Group equality would be the ideal. Differences of more than two in average achievements between groups would normally constitute severe inequality. The importance of any measure of inequality is increased if it occurs systematically over a number of dimensions and grows over time. Hence such consistency (or otherwise) and developments over time should enter into considerations determining what is an acceptable degree of horizontal inequality. 'Horizontal equity' describes an acceptable degree of horizontal inequality.

The general objective of inclusivity and moderate horizontal inequality will translate differently into specific policy recommendations in particular cases depending on the relevant groups in the society, the dimensions of importance in the particular society and those in which there is substantial horizontal inequality.

### ***Political inclusivity***

The most universal requirement is for political inclusivity because it is monopolisation of political power by one group or another that is normally responsible for many of the other inequalities. Yet achieving political inclusivity is among the most difficult changes to bring about. It is not just a matter of democracy, defined as rule with the support of the majority, as majority rule can be consistent with abuse of minorities, as, for example, in the recent history of Rwanda, Cambodia, and Zimbabwe. In a politically inclusive democratic system, particular types of proportional representation are needed to ensure participation by all major groups in the elected bodies. For inclusive government, representation of all such groups is essential not only at the level of the cabinet but also other organs of government. For political inclusivity members of major groups also need to be included at all levels of the civil service, the army and the police.

Since every case of conflict we have observed lacks such political inclusivity, this requirement can be regarded as a universal prescription for conflict-prone societies. Such politically inclusive policies have been adopted by well-known peace-making regimes, e.g. the post-Pinochet Chilean government, Museveni in Uganda, South Africa under Mandela.

These political requirements for conflict-prone countries do not currently form part of the dialogue of political conditionality adopted by some bilateral donors - as noted above, at times the requirement of political inclusivity may even be inconsistent with the normal political conditionality. At other times, it may be a matter of adding requirements to the set of political conditions. The usual political conditionality includes rule with the consent of the majority, multiparty democracy and respect for human rights. Political conditions for avoiding conflict would certainly include the requirement of respect for human rights. But the requirement for majority rule is not a sufficient condition for conflict-avoidance, as noted above, while multiparty democracy may not be consistent with conflict prevention since political parties are often formed on ethnic (or other group) lines and can encourage group animosity (see Stewart and O'Sullivan, 1999).

### ***Economic and social inclusivity***

Some of the economic and social recommendations appropriate are likely to differ among

countries. Those concerning government expenditure and jobs, however, are universal:

1. To ensure balance in group benefits from government expenditure and aid (including the distribution of investment, and jobs).
2. To ensure balance in group access to education at all levels; health services; water and sanitation; housing and consumer subsidies (if relevant). Equality of access in education is particularly important since this contributes to equity in income earning potential, while its absence perpetuates inequality in incomes.

The private sector can be an important source of group differentiation. It is generally a less explosive source politically than an inequitable state sector as it is less directly under political control. Nonetheless, in societies where the private sector forms a major source of group inequality in jobs, incomes and assets, horizontal inequality in this sector could be conducive to conflict; in such a situation it would be necessary to adopt policies to reduce the horizontal inequality present in the private sector. The situation in South Africa represents an example where a huge amount of horizontal inequality stems from private sector activity. The particular policies to be followed to deal with private sector sources of horizontal inequality differ across countries, but may include:

3. Land reform so as to ensure fair access to land by different groups. This policy would only be relevant where differential access to land is an important aspect of horizontal inequality. In recent conflicts, El Salvador provides a clear example.
4. Policies to ensure balanced participation in education and the acquisition of skills at all levels. This has been an important and effective policy measure in Malaysia.
5. Policies to promote balanced access to industrial assets and employment. This is more difficult to achieve than reform of public sector policies and need only be attempted where the private sector is a major source of group inequality - which is generally not the case in many conflict situations in very undeveloped economies. Private sector firms may be required to have an equal opportunities policy; they should be monitored and where horizontal inequality is high may be required to provide a certain proportion of jobs at every level to members of the main groups. Similarly, banks may be required to spread their lending across groups. Asset redistribution across groups can be achieved by government purchase of assets and redistribution to disadvantaged groups.

Policies of this sort, designed to reduced horizontal inequalities, were introduced by the Malaysian government in its New Economic Policy (NEP) which effectively narrowed the gap in incomes, employment and assets among the major groups.

While the detailed policy requirements would differ according to the situation in a particular country, the important recommendation is the general requirement to follow inclusive policies, offsetting major elements of horizontal inequality.

Since, as noted, many governments are pursuing precisely the opposite policies, it is critically important that such policies are built into the requirements of the international community in its dealings with conflict-prone countries. In fact at present they are not - certainly not explicitly. Aid allocation within a country depends on efficiency considerations and sometimes vertical equity but not horizontal equity. Pursuing horizontal equity may sometimes conflict with efficiency or even with vertical equity. These are trade-offs that may have to be accepted. In the long-term both growth and poverty would benefit more from the avoidance of conflict than is lost from any short-term output reduction that the new policy might involve. Mostly, there would not be a significant trade-off with poverty reduction as balanced policies are also likely

to be poverty-reducing, while extending education to the deprived would be likely to contribute to economic growth. Malaysia, for example, was remarkably successful in achieving economic growth and poverty reduction as well horizontal equity through the NEP.

IMF and World Bank policy conditionality is 'blind' to these issues, i.e. they take no account of horizontal equity in their policy prescriptions (and also pay little attention to vertical inequality), nor do they allow for the possible undermining of the state resulting from cutbacks in government expenditure and powers following their recommendations. As lead institutions, it is essential that they incorporate these considerations into their conditionality, not only with respect to project allocation but also in the policy conditionality applied to government economic interventions and expenditures. This would require a quite marked change in their programmes for conflict-prone countries.

### *Private incentives*

The policies just sketched were all addressed to the need for inclusivity and group equity. When applied to a situation not yet affected by conflict, these policies, if effective, might be sufficient to eliminate the underlying causes of conflict, although an additional requirement is that there is a sufficiently strong state to avoid violence erupting for private benefit in a near-anarchical situation. In such a context, it may not be necessary to introduce policies to tackle the private incentives to violence of leaders or followers. But when conflict is ongoing, policies to tackle the root causes may need to be accompanied by policies to encourage particular individuals involved to stop fighting and enter more peaceful occupations, i.e. to change the private incentives.

The private incentives of leaders of major groups may best be turned round by offering them positions in government. Lower level leaders may be offered jobs in the state army or civil service, or money. This proposal may often fall on death ears, for political reasons - as with other policy proposals suggested here, only governments seriously intending to end violence and enhance national unity will follow the recommendation. Yet post-conflict governments have done so - for example, Museveni's government (and army) incorporated many of those who had previously been fighting against him; the first post-apartheid government in S.Africa likewise.

Those who had previously been active soldiers (the 'followers') need income-earning employment - finance or jobs in works schemes can be offered in exchange for arms, or, where appropriate land or agricultural credit. In some contexts the offer of a lump sum on demobilisation appears to have been quite effective (e.g. after the Ugandan and Mozambique wars - see Collier; Dolan and Schafer). Such policies can be expensive and need international support. Moreover, they are difficult to apply in less organised conflicts where large numbers move in and out of a conflict, and there is no clear demarcation between those who fought in the conflict and those who did not. Improving the income earning opportunities for the young generally, especially for males, is needed in such contexts. To some extent this would happen by itself if peace were restored, as farms can again be worked on, and other private sector activities may resume (though some other war-related activities would cease). But in most cases there is likely to be an interval when special employment schemes or financial handouts may be needed.

As with the earlier policies, what is appropriate inevitably differs among countries. The general requirement is that these issues are explicitly considered when conflict is ending.

### *General development policies*

Both general analysis and some of the econometric evidence suggests a connection between predisposition to conflict and levels and growth of per capita incomes, although the correlation is not strong (see Auvinen and Nafziger; Fitzgerald). Economic growth would be likely to reduce the propensity to conflict, if it is equitably distributed. Equitable and poverty reducing growth would normally be likely to reduce horizontal inequality, and might make persisting inequalities more tolerable. Hence policies that succeed in promoting such growth should form part of any pro-peace policy package. But it should be stressed that the growth must be widely shared. Inequitably distributed growth can re-enforce horizontal inequality and thus be conflict-promoting, as for example occurred in Rwanda..

A great deal of policy analysis has been devoted to delineating the conditions for widely shared growth. Policies include measures to promote human development especially through the spread of education; measures to increase savings and investment; price and technology policies to encourage labour-intensive technologies; new credit institutions to extend credit to the low-income; measures to encourage the informal sector; land reform and support for small farmers; international policies to improve market access and terms of trade and reduce debt burdens. Many of these policies can be designed specifically to reduce horizontal inequality as well as to promote growth and reduce poverty. There is no question that a successful development strategy of this kind would reduce conflict-propensity. However, it is difficult to envisage the success of such policies in countries with the major structural divisions which bring about major conflict. Hence, while successful development would undoubtedly contribute to our objective, it seems likely that the more specific policies discussed above concerning group differentials and individual incentives will be needed not only for themselves but also as preconditions for general development success.

This section of the paper has referred to 'conflict-prone countries' as being the targets of the preventative policies discussed above. This implies the need for some definition of 'conflict-proneness'. Conflict proneness may be identified by the following characteristics: (a) serious past conflict at some time over the previous twenty years; (b) evidence of a considerable degree of horizontal inequality; (c) low-incomes; and (d) economic stagnation. These are the conditions which predispose to conflict according to the analysis above, and statistical work. Condition (a) is itself invariably a serious sign. As noted in the introduction, the high incidence of conflict among low-income countries, suggests that they should be regarded as conflict-prone as a group. Among middle-income countries, sharp horizontal inequalities would put them into the conflict-prone category. This is also the conclusion of Stavenhagen.<sup>1</sup> The delineation of conflict-proneness is important because it would be more effective to focus conflict-prevention policies on the subset of most vulnerable countries, and also to channel aid and/or debt relief to these countries if necessary. Special care should also be taken in conflict-prone countries to avoid providing resources (in the form of aid or military assistance) which is likely to help finance conflict. This might seem an obvious point, yet the case studies show that international resources have poured into countries on the brink or in the process of conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> Writing of ethnic conflict, he concluded: 'When regional and social disparities in the distribution of economic resources also reflect differences between identified ethnic groups, then conflicts over social and economic issues readily turns into ethnic conflict'. Stavenhagen, 1996, p 294. But I believe this holds more widely to any form of differentiation among groups - religious, class, clan - not merely ethnic.

## **Conclusion**

The search for the underlying causes of civil conflicts is a on-going one. No definitive answers can be expected, especially since conflicts occur in a huge range of countries and situations. The findings of this paper must be regarded as tentative. Yet because of the ongoing nature of these crises and the heavy human costs they impose, it is important that some action is taken on the basis of current knowledge, without waiting for further confirmation. It is in this spirit that the policy conclusions have been presented above as a set of definitive recommendations.

One conclusion stands out: in every major conflict there is an interaction between economic, political and cultural factors, with group perceptions and identity (normally historically formed), being enhanced by sharp group differentiation in political participation, economic assets and income and social access and well-being. Action on any one front alone is not likely to work - e.g. addressing economic inequalities without political, or conversely; or attempting to 'educate' people to change their views of their identity and their imaginary communities without changing the underlying inequalities among groups.



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