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# **THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN PREVENTING VIOLENT ETHNIC CONFLICTS**

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## **Abstract**

*Keywords:* Conflict prevention, Ethnic Conflicts, The United Nations, Structural Causes, Realpolitik.

The aim of the following study was to create a limited framework, based on normative and constructive reflections, of how the UN can work to prevent violent ethnic conflicts. The study was divided into two phases. The first phase originated from Joseph S. Nye's analytical framework and gave an overview of the theories available on the causes of ethnic conflicts. From these theories three major problems were drawn; poverty, structural inequalities and society in transition. The second phase of the study had a normative and constructive approach, using two overlapping circles of theories. The normative chapter discussed how conflict prevention ought to be in the best of worlds and which moral position the UN should have. The constructive chapter discussed which means and limitations the UN faces considering conflict prevention and how the UN can work to address the major problems outlined in the first phase. The conclusion drawn from the analysis was that the UN has the knowledge, experience and operational capacity to address these issues, but that several problems concerning the UN system and the member states of the UN makes it difficult for the organization to effectively use the potential it has to prevent violent ethnic conflicts.



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## List of Acronyms

DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DDA	Department of Disarmament Affairs
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping operations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GA	General Assembly
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
IPA	International Peace Academy
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN-habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
SC	Security Council
WHO	World Health Organization

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# 1. Introduction

This study deals with armed intra-state conflicts of ethno-political character and conflict prevention. Intra-state conflicts, whatever their nature, pose a great problem for the international community because of their global effects created from media coverage, large flows of refugees and violence spreading to neighboring states (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall 2005:106). Furthermore, intra-state conflicts have, since the end of the Cold War, far outnumbered interstate conflicts (Harbom & Wallensteen 2006:108). However, it is not commonly acknowledged that the number of intra-state conflicts, genocides and mass violence has actually declined since the 1990s (*Human Security Report* 2005:15,23). Moreover, even though it is mainly civilians who are killed in contemporary conflicts, the number of mass killings of civilians has also declined (ibid:40; Wolff 2006:95). The Human Security Report (2005:152) stresses that the decline in the number of intra-state wars and mass killings has several explanations, one of which emphasizes the decline in ethnic discrimination.

These trends show how important it is to focus on conflict prevention in the academic world as well as within politics: if it is possible to reduce the number of conflicts, which the trends imply, then it ought to be of priority to push even further in that direction. This study has chosen to focus on the prevention of ethno-political conflicts (called ethnic conflicts in this study) because when they occur they account for intense and violent violence, as the genocide in Rwanda and the mass killings in the former Yugoslavia give evidence of.

## 1.1 Background

Broadly speaking, there are two principal methods of conflict prevention: the first is often termed 'structural' or 'long-term' and the second 'operational' or 'short-term' (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall 2005:108; Peck 1998:15). Structural conflict prevention is conducted on a long-term basis. Its aim is to address the root or structural causes of conflicts and thereby create conditions for sustainable peace. Operational conflict prevention addresses the immediate threat of violent conflicts, seeking to treat the symptoms of violent conflicts instead of its root causes (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall 2005:108-9; Aggestam 2003:14).

Preventing violent ethnic conflicts might seem to be a mission impossible. However, according to some scholars, ethnic conflicts can be avoided if they are prevented early (Gen 2003:22). International organizations and states have the power to influence the direction of conflicts (ibid; Toshiya 2003:63). While different organizations take various approaches to conflict prevention, overall the interest in and implementation of conflict prevention are increasing (cf Lund 2004:121f). What ought to be specifically considered is how these organizations can prevent violent *ethnic* conflicts.

## 1.2 Aim of this study

The aim of this study is to create a limited framework that describes how the United Nations (UN) can work to prevent violent ethnic conflicts. The study does not have the intention of producing new, groundbreaking methods of conflict prevention; it merely seeks to examine possible ways of preventing violent conflicts that are both morally as well as empirically possible for the UN to perform.

The reflections will be based on the extensive literature on ethnic conflict and conflict prevention available today. Hence, the starting point of the study is the causes of ethnic conflicts based on theories available in the literature. These theories will deduce into three main problems regarding ethnic conflicts, providing the basis for a discussion about which methods of conflict prevention the UN can and ought to apply in ethnic conflicts.

Hence, the main question that the study addresses is: How can the UN work to prevent violent ethnic conflicts?

To answer this question it is necessary to consider a few sub-questions: What causes ethnic conflicts? What ought to be done regarding conflict prevention? Given the contemporary situation and the moral aspects, what can be done?

## 2 Method

Since the aim of the study is to create a limited framework based on normative and constructive reflections, several methods and techniques need to be applied. (Ejvegård 2003:32). An alternative to the methods used in this study would be a field study. Although field studies are useful in several contexts, they have significant limitations. Because they provide a deep understanding and explanation of *specific* phenomena, they are not useful in this case since it takes a more holistic approach than a field study can provide (Ejvegård 2003:33). However, this study might instead provide a conceptual framework for future field studies.

### 2.1 Choice of Method

The study is divided into two phases; hence two kinds of methods are applied. In the first phase, Kenneth Waltz' traditional levels of analysis are used in order to develop an understanding of what constitute the main problems of ethnic conflicts. The second phase, which provides a discussion of how conflict prevention ought to be approached as well as a concluding discussion about what the UN on its turn can and ought to do, uses overlapping theories.

#### *2.1.1 Three Levels of Analysis*

The first phase of the study, which considers the causes of ethnic conflicts, arises from an analytical framework supplied by Joseph S. Nye (the framework is given in figure 1

and developed further in chapter three). This framework has many similarities with the classic levels of analysis created by Waltz. Nye divides his analysis into three levels. The first level treats personalities and leaders, the second level deals with domestic conditions and the third level directs its attention towards the international system. The conditions and events described in each level together lead to conflict escalation and finally to deadly conflict (Nye 2005:75).

Although the framework is used here in a slightly different way than Nye does – he focuses on special events instead of specific theoretical explanations – it will be a useful tool to gain understanding of which problems are central in ethnic conflicts.

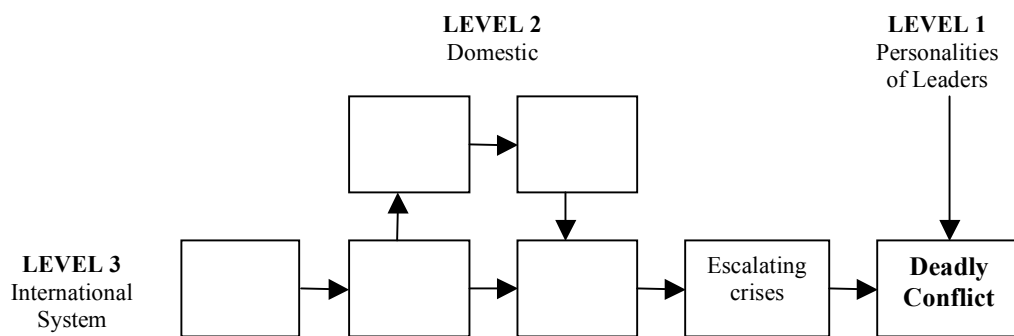
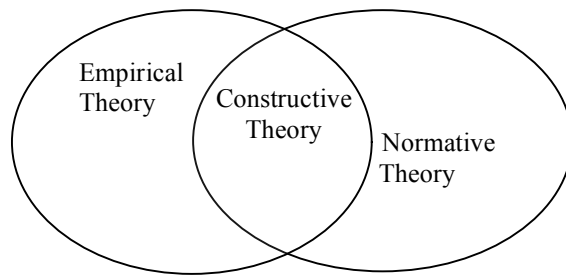


Figure 1. *Three Levels of Analysis* (Nye 2005:75).

### 2.1.2 Three Types of Scientific Theories

The second phase of the study draws on three types of scientific theories: empirical, constructive and normative. This is shown in figure 2. The empirical theory seeks to answer how something *is*, i.e. it is derived from empirical theories in order to explain and understand something. The constructive theory on the other hand aims at answering what *can* be done, given how things are and should be. Finally, the normative theory seeks to explain how something *ought* to be (Badersten 2006:38).



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Figure 2. *Empirical, constructive and normative theory* (Rothstein 2002:24).

The reason for touching upon several theories is that it would be pointless to attempt to discuss what the UN can do without discussing what is fair and morally right to do. It is also not especially wise not to consult empirical theory, since empirical results is significant for the conclusions drawn in a study (Rothstein 2002:15,17).

It should be noted that the study does not seek any empirical facts itself, it merely lean on theories created from empirical studies. Consequently, the empirical theories used are conducted from the traditional approach of empirical studies, which means collecting, treating and analyzing diverse forms of data, qualitative or quantitative. What is positive regarding theories derived from empirical data is the contribution to science it provides because it is based on reality and experiences (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 1994:7).

Normative theory, on the other hand, seeks to answer how something ought to be justified morally (Badersten 2006:33). Hence, a normative analysis tries to “on the basis of a specified and well-motivated value to clearly justify a certain action or a specific condition” (ibid:47, *author’s translation*).

Constructive theory presupposes that both the empirical ‘is-question’ and the normative ‘ought-question’ are answered. To begin with, the researcher needs to know what the reality or the specific phenomenon looks like and what is morally desirable

before he or she can find out what is possible to achieve and how this is to be achieved (Badersten 2006:38).

Finally, it should also be ascertained that this method has its limitations and sources of error. As mentioned above, several methods could be of use in order to give a well-analyzed answer to the problem of this study. However, the method described might cause a structuring problem, i.e. it can be difficult to organize the study in a distinct way.

## 2.2 Sources and delimitations

In this study both primary and secondary sources are used. Primary sources consist of original documents such as minutes and official statistics. Secondary sources contain, for example, scientific work, such as articles and dissertations. The sources mentioned are usually considered trustworthy, since they are generally reviewed before published (Ejvegård 2006:18).

The secondary sources of the study are books and articles written by academics or organizations working with or researching about ethnic conflicts and/or conflict prevention. The first phase of the study is based on secondary sources only. The second phase of the study is based on both secondary and primary sources. The primary sources are foremost official documents, such as reports and resolutions.

In research it is always important to pay attention to the trustworthiness of the sources used. Ejvegård (2006:62ff) emphasizes four requirements which should be taken into consideration: (1) authenticity, (2) independence, (3) time of publication and (4) time between event and documentation. He also points out that it is of use to apply certain rules when estimating the information's correctness: (a) is it from an accepted

authority, (b) does it contain accepted facts, (c) is it written by an expert who does not profit from information given, and (d) can it be verified (ibid:65-6).

The sources used in this study are mainly written by academics or experts within the respective fields of ethnic conflicts and conflict prevention. Because of the extensive scope of literature in both these fields, the requirements and rules outlined by Ejvegård (2006) have been applied in determining which sources to use. A few sources are also collected from the Internet, but because of the difficulties Internet sources can provide, the only sources used are collected from websites of various United Nations programmes, hence sources that fulfill the requirements above.

There are no specific books or reports that have provided the study with extended knowledge, with the exception of Annika Björkdahl's dissertation on promoting conflict prevention as a norm. This book proved most useful in the normative chapter of the study, since it gives insight into the challenges which lie within norm promotion.

Because the potential scope of this study is wide it is necessary to delimit the alternatives available. This study is limited to an examination of the preventive work of the UN because of its previous role in successful or failed operations in preventing violent conflicts. The UN has been both celebrated and treated as scapegoat, and the opinions on the organization's effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) are many. Hence, it is of interest to try to find out what the UN actually can or cannot do to prevent violent ethnic conflicts. In section one the choice of ethnic conflicts is explained, and additional delimitations are made continuously throughout the study.

It should be stressed that there are always a number of questions that arises when conducting a study, but it is impossible to consider them all. Although several important questions arise that are not treated in this study, it does not make them less relevant.

## 2.4 Definitions

In the academic literature there are many different definitions of the concept *conflict*. The concept is ambiguous since it is used in innumerable contexts, for example, everything from international trade conflicts to armed conflicts between or within states. This study makes a distinction between ethnic and violent conflicts, thus it is necessary to define these concepts.

A useful approach to the problem is to break down the concept *conflict* into three parts: conflict of interest, conflict of aim and conflict behavior. When there is a conflict of interest or aim, the conflict parties have incompatible aims or interest over a particular issue (Wiberg 1975:9). When the conflict parties have incompatible goals *and* perform actions meant to harm the other party a conflict behavior has arisen (ibid:25). Further, the worst kind of conflict behavior is the attempt to inflict physical damage on the other party (ibid:27).

Given this explanation of the concept, the study considers an *ethnic* conflict as a conflict with incompatible interests or aims. The conflict is considered to be of an ethnic character when “the contending parties identify themselves or one another using ethnic criteria” (Kaufman 2006:46). A violent conflict is when the parties in an ethnic conflict have developed a conflict behavior in which they seek to physically damage the other party.

Lastly, a definition of ethnicity should be at hand. This term is very complex and depending on the theoretical approach different explanations are at hand. This study follows the social constructivist approach, hence defining ethnicity as socially constructed through lived experience (Gagnon 2004:178-9).

### 3. Causes of Ethnic Conflicts

Before giving an overview of the theories on ethnic conflicts available in the literature some remarks are appropriate.

First, it is necessary to point out that the term *root* causes, which is frequently used both in this study as well as within the literature, does not imply an everlasting truth of the causes of conflicts. Root causes should instead be considered as *structural* causes of conflicts – compared to triggering causes. Further, depending on the theoretical startingpoint, different causes are presented. For example, a Marxist and a Liberal would interpret conflicts differently, hence giving diverse explanations of what causes ethnic conflicts.

Second, all theories within this field acknowledge the many different factors present in a conflict, but each has a different starting point; some may regard the economy as the main factor, others the use of symbols and myths. Hence, the focal point will be on the prominent causes presented by each theory.

Lastly, it is of great importance to emphasize that several of the contributors point out that ethnic divisions do not always cause conflict escalation by themselves; instead they are likely to be a consequence of it (cf Collier 2007:56).

In figure 3, the different theories described in this chapter are shown. The theories are divided into three different levels that directly or indirectly lead to violent conflict.

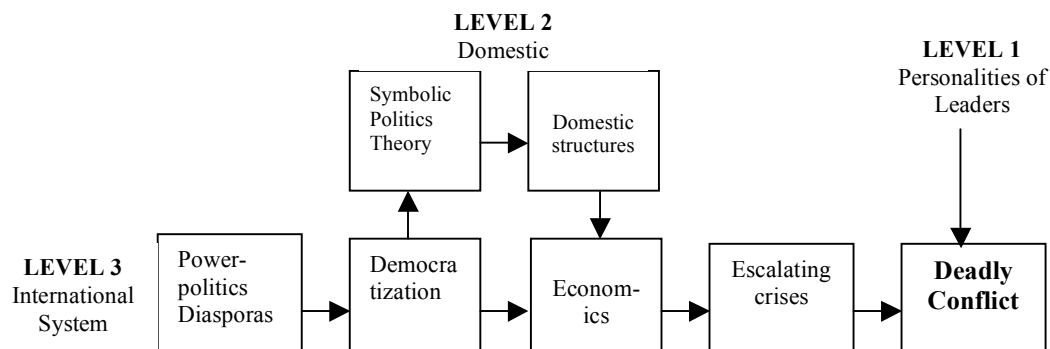


Figure 3. *Analysis of the causes of ethnic conflicts*

### 3.1 Leaders

Many theories acknowledge the vital role that leaders play in ethnic conflicts. Several of these theories provide explanations about why leaders act in specific ways. This section gives an account of two of these: rational choice and predatory/self-benefiting elites.

The rational choice explanation has an instrumentalist approach: it bases its explanation on the fact that ethnicity is first and foremost a label used by individuals, groups or elites to achieve political advantage (Kaufmann 2006:49). Accordingly, decisions are made on rational grounds, considering merits and demerits of a particular course of action (Wolff 2006:73). David Lake and Donald Rothchild (1998:4) describe three different dilemmas necessary for conflict escalation: the security dilemma, failure of information and credible commitment problems. Under these circumstances ethnic leaders and activists might take advantage of the instable environment and use the opportunity to make discriminative appeals and “thereby mobilizing members, polarizing society, and magnifying the intergroup dilemmas” (Lake & Rothchild 1998:8). Within the rhetoric used by these leaders in order to mobilize mass support lie

political memories and myths invoking historical grievances (Lake & Rothchild 1998:18).

The second explanation agrees with the reasoning regarding ethnicity as the nature, instead of the root cause, of violent conflicts (Carment 2007:63). In contrast to the previous approach it points out elites' personal benefit and fear of losing power as its major focal points (ibid:63; Kaufman 2006:50). When the society is in a state of turmoil, ethnic leaders, according to Carment (2007:62), exploit the political instability, using the uncertainty of the masses. This leads to ethnic leaders gaining ground through electoral processes. The support that ethnic leaders receive is explained by the fact that their political message is perceived as more attractive than the agenda of reform-minded leaders (ibid). Hence, although the masses in a state of upheaval do not strive for violence, this might be realised through the political elite's exploitation of fear and their forceful rhetoric about the danger posed by the other group. In sum, ethnic leaders act this way in order to achieve personal benefits or to avoid losing power (Kaufman 2006:50).

## **3.2 Domestic factors**

This study pays attention to four different explanations given within the domestic arena: using symbols and myths, structural inequalities, democratization and economic opportunities.

### ***3.2.1 Symbolic Politics Theory***

The theory of symbolic politics derives from social-psychological theories as presented by, among others, Stuart J. Kaufmann. This theory puts its main focus on the historical

and cultural roots of ethnic conflicts, directing its attention towards the “myth-symbol complex” (Kaufman 2006:50). According to this, symbols and myths are extremely powerful tools for politicians when mobilizing political support (ibid:52). This follows from the different interpretations that each group has about its cultural legacy. If one group neglects the legitimacy and worth of the other group’s symbols, the latter group feels threatened (Wolff 2006:66).

Further, Lake and Rothchild (1998:19-20) explains that when the state is weak and lack legitimacy and the masses experience collective fears for the future, myths and symbols presenting a hostile image of the other group polarize the society, consequently leading to a high risk of violence. Kaufman (2006:53) sets out a few preconditions necessary to invoke violence, such as political opportunity, space for mobilization and a territorial base of some sort. Hence, to conclude, the symbolic politics theory gives great importance to emotions such as fear and hatred towards another group, which through myths is considered to be extremely hostile and therefore constitutes a great threat towards the existence of the discriminated group. As described above, discriminative appeals made by politicians in these circumstances can create a violent situation, which can rapidly escalate into violent conflict (Kaufman 2006:53).

### ***3.2.2 Structural inequalities***

Theories within what are called ‘structural inequalities’ here are concerned with group inequalities in the field of political and economic participation, and social and cultural rights. It is believed that discrimination of groups in these areas creates the presumption for enduring inequalities (Gurr 1993:61). The structural inequalities create, on the contrary, grievances and feelings of injustice that make members of disadvantaged

groups “more self-conscious about their common bonds and interests” (Gurr 1993:3). When these premises are found, the probability of mobilization around discriminatory issues increases (ibid:71-2). According to Gurr (1993:68) these premises need to be expressed in political movements if they are to produce any attention. For the movement to escalate into a violent conflict, a neglecting government not interested in responding in an adequate way, and thus not showing willingness for problem solving, is an essential component (Peck 1998:40). Further, structural inequalities are more likely to pose a problem if they originate from historical processes such as conquest or colonization (Gurr 1993:87; Wolff 2006:58).

Wolff (2006:71) also stresses imminent causes as preludes for violence, dividing them into external and internal causes, operating at either elite, or mass level. Hence, there need to be either bad internal leaders, severe domestic problems or bad neighbors present in a violent conflict (ibid:71).

### ***3.2.3 Democratization***

In big parts of the Western system there is a great belief in democracy. Democratic governance and institutions are considered the best way to promote peaceful societies, as well as peaceful neighbors – since the conviction is that democratic states do not initiate war with each other (Toshiya 2003:71-2). Although democracy is considered the best solution, and Western countries encourage some weak, and non-democratic states to democratize their societies, democratization can, in fact, cause violent conflicts. Modernizing societies can be very turbulent, putting extreme pressure on both the masses and elites in a society. Thus, as Peck (1998:53) explains it, “the problem is not democracy *per se*, but the turbulent transition to democracy”.

### 3.2.4 Economics

Paul Collier provides another theory about the causes of ethnic conflicts. Collier has a rather different approach to the subject than the previous theories. He rejects the idea of historical grievances and focuses mainly on rebellion and economic development (Collier 2007:60). This theory implies that poverty and the likelihood of rebellion are connected. Countries with stagnant economies and poor inhabitants (i.e. with low-income rates) suffer more often from rebellion than countries with stable or growing economies (ibid:58). When violence occurs, it does so along ethnic lines, hence giving the conflict a political label. Further, the theory points out a vital aspect of violent conflict: the profit made by rebels. Violent conflicts can be lucrative business for many of the parties involved, and from this follows the assumption that rebellions<sup>1</sup> only occur where they are profitable (ibid:56-8). Carment also points out this by ascertaining that “material benefits are essential to attracting participants and supporters of ethnic conflicts; without sufficient incentives it is unlikely that ethnic tensions will ever devolve into violence” (2007:63).

### 3.3 The International system

Two different theories are described in this section, namely, power politics and diasporas.

The theory of power politics is drawn from Johan Galtung’s theory of imperialism. Power politics means that a nation dominates another nation, and thereby has great influence in the dominated nation’s business, such as in political, economic

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<sup>1</sup> Collier (2007:56) distinguishes between three types of public disorder, where rebellion is considered to be the most violent and protracted and has the most possibility to result in civil war.

and cultural arenas (Galtung 1971:92,94). This supremacy does not necessarily mean that the dominated country totally rejects the dominating country: the elites in the dominated country might well benefit and identify themselves with the elites of the dominating country (Galtung 1971:96).

The dangerousness of this domination is the fact that the people in the dominating countries feel that they have interests at stake in the dominated country because of the influence they possess there. Hence, the supremacy might well turn from structural violence imbedded in the relation to direct violence or the threat of violence (Galtung 1971:100-1). The conclusion possible to draw from this unequal relationship is that dominating countries might well, if they have interests in another state, influence or exploit it in a way that enhances the risk of violence between ethnic groups, or violence directed from elites towards a specific ethnic group within the nation.

Another issue is the support gained from diasporas. Many conflict parties have diasporas, which finance their movements. In some cases conflict parties rely on these funds in order to continue fighting (Collier 2007:58). Apart from the funding, diasporas constitute a major hindrance to peaceful solutions, since they commonly holds extreme positions regarding ethnic survival as well as ethnic prejudices. For these reasons it is believed that diasporas are a vital component for the continuance of fighting (Carment 2007:62-3). It should be noted, that this is not true in all cases, the support from diasporas can go in both ways, hence, they could also promote peace.

### 3.4 Concluding Analysis

Considering the theories described above, it is easy to come to the conclusion that the causes of ethnic conflicts are very diverse and complex. Even though there are some

general aspects that might be applied to the majority of ethnic conflicts, each and every conflict needs to be analyzed within its specific context (Aggestam 2003:14). Given the focal points presented above, the question about which is to be considered the major problem needs to be asked. Self-evidently there cannot be one single cause since many of them are directly or indirectly connected. Thus, the question is what the major problems are that need to be addressed when preventing violent ethnic conflicts. To answer this question this study takes an eclectic approach, which means that the best components of the theories described above are selected, in order to come to a conclusion of which are the major problems. It should be noted that there are many theorists who would not agree with the point of departure chosen in this study.

Analyzing the theories described, this study concludes that some factors have more probability of triggering conflict than of being one of the structural causes. One of these factors is myths and symbols invoking historical grievances towards other ethnic groups. Myths and symbols are thereby an effective tool exploited by leaders or elites to reach their political goal. Since myths are based on historical events, interpreted in different ways, they are probably less likely to trigger violent conflict if the ethnic groups are satisfied and the society provides them with a safe environment. These factors will therefore be left aside.

What also can be concluded when analyzing the theories is how structural inequalities and economics comprise major problems in ethnic conflicts. Domestic components such as political and economic participation and social and cultural rights are focal points the masses mobilize around, as well as discriminatory factors exploited by self-benefiting or predatory leaders. A weak or stagnant economy not only plays a significant role for grievances experienced by disadvantaged groups, it also provides the

basis for rebellions, which profit from the situation. Hence, directing attention towards issues related to poverty and underdevelopment as well as structural inequalities ought to be significant when dealing with ethnic conflicts.

Societies in transition from one political rule to another or in turmoil because of other factors seems to be a vital factor as well. Transition or turmoil create fears for the future, consequently leading ethnic groups to gather around specific issues, polarizing society and thereby leaving the door wide open for violent conflict.

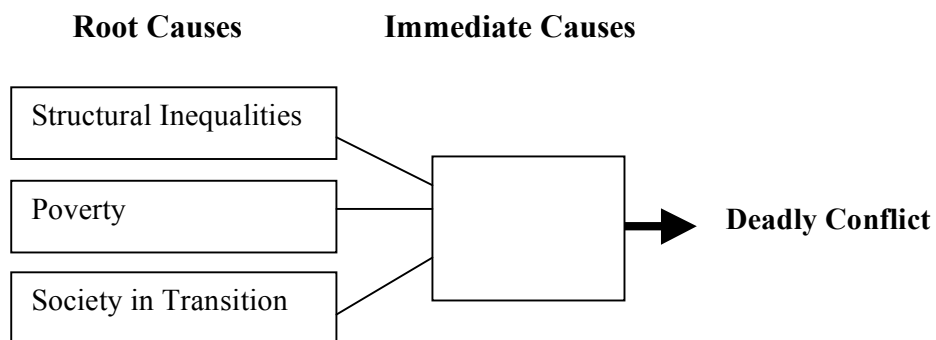
It should also be noted that through power politics and diasporas may the international system lead ethnic conflict in a violent direction. If the international system plays a vital role in the ethnic conflict it gives the conflict an international touch, and hence stops it being of domestic character only. To delimit the options available in conflict prevention the study only pays attention to internal ethnic conflicts, thus excluding this variable. However, it does not make the variable less important, it is simply not within the scope of this particular study.

Structural inequalities, combined with a society in transition – often from an authoritarian regime to a democratic one – together with collective fear over an uncertain future and leaders making ethnic appeals to gain power, are all important issues. The starting point of this study is that ethnic conflicts are not impossible to prevent; on the contrary ethnic conflicts are socially constructed, and therefore also possible to avoid. Hence, the departing point in the study is that collective fears and ethnic appeals are not able to affect a society that is stabile, advancing and problem-solving rather than weak, stagnant and suppressed.

The major problems in ethnic conflicts are thus, in no particular order, structural inequalities, poverty and too rapid progress towards a different political rule. Hence, it

is these problems that are addressed in the second part of the study (see figure 4).

Immediate causes will therefore be left aside.



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Figure 4. *Scheme of conflict escalation*

## **4. Normative approach**

This chapter is the first of two in the second phase of the study. Recalling the partly overlapping circles, this chapter analyzes what ought to be done morally in ethnic conflict prevention, given the major problems outlined in the previous chapter. The section starts off with some general considerations regarding what is morally right to do. It then continues into a more detailed discussion on the moral position the UN ought to have.

### **4.1 General aspects**

In the wake of World War II the founding states of the UN promoted the idea of an international society in which international peace and cooperation would be the leading norm (Björkdahl 2002:82). The understanding of peace as the normal condition in the international system has since then increased, peace is no longer seen as the cessation of violence or the state prevalent between conditions of war. Instead it is understood as the necessary environment for sustainable security and development, both considered as important elements to prevent violent conflicts (Parry 2004:57).

Another norm that has evolved since the end of World War II is the humanitarian perspective. States and the international community (such as regional and international organizations) are now considered to be responsible for the maintenance and protection of human rights (Björkdahl 2002:95). The responsibility to protect is foremost a commitment the state is suppose to undertake, but when the state fails or is unwilling to

meet its commitment the international community has a moral obligation to react (ICISS 2001:17).

Considering the moral obligation to protect, the international community should prevent violent conflicts from happening in the first place. This does not only follow from the commitment undertaken regarding human rights, it is also considered to be a moral solution to the problem of the special characteristics contemporary intra-state wars have (Björkdahl 2002:74). Hence, “the idea [conflict prevention] rests upon a range of established long-standing ethical and moral principles as well as new values of humanism” (ibid).

To summarize, the international community has a responsibility to protect ordinary people when the states in which they are living have failed or are unwilling to protect them. The most important factor of this moral obligation is the responsibility to prevent violent conflicts from arising in the first place. This is based on the evolved thinking of humanism and lessons learned from previous conflicts in which hundred thousands of lives have gone wasted although the international community had the ability to prevent it (cf Björkdahl 2002:71; ICISS 2001:27; Lund 2002:161).

Given that conflict prevention is what is morally right, it is also necessary to consider what ought to be done in ethnic conflict prevention. First and foremost it is vital to create a culture of prevention within the international community (IPA 2002:5). Thereafter it has to be translated into political agendas, policies and programs. This is essential if the norm is to be institutionalized and permeate the whole international community (Björkdahl 2002:138).

Another element that is of importance when institutionalizing a long-term culture of conflict prevention is the rhetoric of leaders. The reason for this is that, even though

there might be good reasons for incorporating a new norm and changing present attitudes, it often needs to be justified and promoted by different entrepreneurs (Björkdahl 2002:137; IPA 2002:3).

Further, the focus of conflict prevention ought to be mainly structural (IPA 2002:5). Considering the major problems pointed out in the previous chapter; domestic structures, poverty and societies in transition, structural conflict prevention has the best possibility of creating a peaceful society. This assumption is based on the fact that preventive strategies with a structural approach seek to ‘cure’ the conflict, instead of ‘treating’ it (Aggestam 2003:14). Consequently, in this study, conflict prevention will be delimited to structural conflict prevention.

What ought to be done when addressing the major problems is to put together a toolbox with strategies aiming at, especially, (1) domestic building linked to specific cultural contexts, (2) poverty reduction and (3) policies reducing group inequalities (IPA 2002:4; ICISS 2001:22; Stewart 2000:253).

## 4.2 The moral position of the UN

The moral obligations outlined in the previous section ought to be the guidelines for the UN as well. However, what do these obligations mean more specifically for the organization?

The key factors treated in the following section are, an open international environment, cooperation with local actors and, as mentioned earlier, a culture of prevention where the responsibility to prevent permeates the entire organization.

#### *4.2.1 An Open International Environment*

Many states look upon conflict prevention suspiciously, mainly because they fear institutionalizing conflict prevention simply will be another excuse for legitimizing intervention (ICISS 2001:25). Consequently, if preventive measures made by the UN are to be considered as legitimate and morally right, they ought to be conducted in a more open and transparent international environment. Thereby the states showing suspiciousness can become confident enough to turn to the UN for help without fearing loss of their sovereignty (Parry 2004:61). Hence, the UN ought to promote non-violent problem solving strategies, not only between states but also between groups, as well as encourage work in favor of a more predictable international climate (Schnabel & Carment 1999:12; IPA 2002:3).

To achieve an international climate where conflict prevention is seen as a legitimate mean to receive peace, also calls for shared willingness in the UN to tackle the root causes of ethnic conflicts, as well as willingness to act coherently within the entire organization (Parry 2004:61; ICISS 2001:27). It is necessary to have one single understanding of what conflict prevention is. As Aggestam (2003:13) puts it: “Although most scholars agree on the need to develop and enhance an international norm system of preventing conflict, they tend to avoid the fact that there exist divergent and often competing understandings of conflict prevention”. Consequently what ought to be done is to develop – or enhance the existing norm – of conflict prevention within the UN. This will not only make coherent action easier to accomplish, but also make it easier for states suffering from ethnic conflicts to predict the preventive measures undertaken by the UN and thereby feel as they have a form of ‘insurance’ towards military intervention.

#### *4.2.2 Cooperation with Local Actors*

Succeeding with conflict prevention inherently calls for cooperation with local and regional actors. This lies in the fact that actors with experience and knowledge of a specific culture have better opportunities to understand local dynamics playing significant roles in the transformation of conflicts (ICISS 2001:22). This is self-evidently of great importance considering the dynamics involved in ethnic conflicts, since they, as shown in the second chapter, can arise from historical grievances or inequalities external actors might not be aware of.

Therefore the UN ought to encourage and strengthen local or regional actors' conflict prevention efforts (IPA 2001:5). Further, it ought to offer assistance with the specific problems described earlier, thus creating stable institutions, growing economy and monitor transitions from one political order to another. This task provides the UN with a great challenge since it on one hand ought to support local actors, but on the other ought to avoid disrupting the process or impose values not compatible with the specific society (ibid; IPA 2002:4).

Finally, it also should be pointed out that for local or regional actors to succeed with their preventive measures, they might need strong support from the UN. Thus, the UN ought to officially support these actors (ICISS 2001:19). As implied before, coherent action and willingness from the organization are essential factors when creating a predictable environment, and therefore the UN also ought to be politically coherent in its support.

### *4.2.3 The Responsibility to Protect*

Recalling the general aspects outlined above, the responsibility to protect ought to be a moral position also for the UN. Hence, when the member states of the organization are unable or unwilling to protect its own population, it is the responsibility of the UN to act, and as pointed out above, the action ought to be preventive instead of reactive (ICISS 2001:17,27).

This responsibility ought to be institutionalized within the entire organization. The concept fits perfectly well within the culture of prevention discussed above. This implies that all major policy sectors within the UN (such as economic development, democracy-building, human rights, education and so forth) ought to be carried out seen through a “conflict lens” (Lund 2002:160).

To conclude, in the best of worlds, the ideal case, here described by Carment & Schnabel, would be the prevalent condition:

Critical root causes of conflict are detected, their interaction is understood, preventive measures are identified and taken, and potential violent conflicts are prevented. Conflict prevention is considered to be a wise investment in human rights and human security. Member states and regional organizations and the UN are committed to providing the necessary funds. The UN and regional organizations shift their primary attention from conflict management to conflict prevention. Moreover, most importantly, pro-action replaces re-action in the work of the UN, regional organizations and local actors (2001:18).

Hence, organizational coherency, cooperation with local actors and a culture of prevention together form the normative context from which the next section emanates.

## **5. Constructive Approach**

The following chapter is divided into two sections, the first discusses which means the UN has today that enable and justify conflict prevention and realpolitik. The means taken into consideration are the UN Charter, a couple of resolutions and the system capacity. The second section is the concluding analysis of the study, hence it reflects on how the UN can and should work to prevent violent ethnic conflicts, with the three major problems emanating from the second chapter as starting point.

### **5.1 Means of Conflict Prevention**

When studying the extensive field of literature on conflict prevention it becomes clear that different organizations and states, including the UN, have developed a wide range of policies, strategies and teams connected to preventive efforts (cf Lund 2002, Peck 1998.) Consequently, these means need to be analyzed before a decent discussion of how the UN can work can be accomplished. Further, the limitations of the UN also have to be taken into consideration; therefore the section ends with a brief discussion on realpolitik.

#### ***5.1.1 The UN Charter***

As mentioned above many states consider conflict prevention as an ambiguous way of intervening in another states' sovereignty (ICISS 2001:25; cf Peck 1998:69). The principle of sovereignty, called upon in article 2 (7) in the UN Charter, prohibit the UN

from intervening in another state's jurisdiction unless the Security Council finds that the state in question has acted in a way that threatens the maintenance of international peace and security, as stated in chapter VII.

Nevertheless, there are several articles in the Charter that underpin conflict prevention. The first of these are article one, paragraph one, which describes that the purpose of the UN is "to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace". Thus, the very foundation of the UN builds on the purpose to *prevent* future wars.

Further, article 33 describes a set of peaceful settlements of conflicts that all presupposes involvement by a third party, such as negotiation, mediation, conciliation and arbitration. Hence, it is inscribed in the Charter that conflict parties might need an external part to solve problems. Consequently, the Charter promotes the idea of conflict prevention by an external part (Björkdahl 2002:82-3).

Finally, there is also one article that justifies the idea of structural conflict prevention. In the ninth chapter treating international economic and social co-operation, article 55 states that creating stability and well-being is necessary for peaceful relations, and for this sake the United Nations shall promote higher standards of living, solutions for international economic and social problems and universal respect for human rights.

To conclude, the UN Charter justifies the idea of conflict prevention, and it could also be interpreted as justifying the idea of structural conflict prevention. As long as preventive measures are taken on early, there hopefully will not be necessary to use operational conflict prevention, which in some instances means the use of military force, and in that case might trample on a state's sovereignty.

### *5.1.2 Resolutions*

The question of preventing violent conflicts has been on both the General Assembly's as well as the Security Council's agenda for a few times since the beginning of the millennium. The resolutions, which have been adopted as a result of the discussions undertaken within these main bodies, are mainly responses to the Secretary-General's reports on the need of conflict prevention. The reports points out conflict prevention as one of the most important obligations set out in the UN Charter, and stresses the need of structural prevention (A/55/985-S/2001/574). Although the Secretary-General notify that a culture of prevention has begun to take hold at the UN, he states that there is "an unacceptable gap (...) between rhetoric and reality" (A/60/891).

Consequently, the latest resolution adopted by the General Assembly (GA) on this issue, acknowledge that conflict prevention is a responsibility of the body, and that further considerations concerning the issue will be made (A/RES/60/284). It also stresses prevention of violent conflicts as a "moral imperative and political necessity for the credibility of international cooperation, in particular the United Nations" (GA/10487). Although the GA emphasizes the value of conflict prevention, it also points out one of the main challenges deriving from the concept, to prove the utility of preventive strategies. The challenge is to verify if these strategies actually work (ibid).

The Security Council (SC), on the other hand, has adopted two essential resolutions concerning conflict prevention since 2001: 1366 and 1625. The SC also recognizes the necessity of conflict prevention, and acknowledges the role of the UN in the field. It is strongly emphasized that conflict prevention is primarily a responsibility of the member states, while the role of the UN merely is of a supportive character. What is also pointed out is the shared commitment of the UN and regional organizations has

to save people from violent conflicts (S/RES/1366). Moreover, both of the resolutions stresses the importance of addressing root causes of conflicts, and thereby promoting strategies focused on creating conditions for durable peace and sustainable development, in other words structural measures (S/RES/1366; S/RES/1625). In the recent years the SC also has stressed the establishment of preventive measures, which focus on avoiding negative developments, for example, in economic and social sectors. Although the SC continues to emphasize the necessity of conflict prevention it has, in the recent years, been most concerned about preventive measures aimed particularly towards Africa (S/RES/1625).

### ***5.1.3 System capacity***

In the Secretary-General's *Progress Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict* (A/60/891), published 2006, he presents a wide range of problems and issues necessary to deal with. This study only pays attention to those similar to the ones emphasized in the second chapter. The first issue pointed out by the Secretary-General is democracy, good governance and culture of prevention, while the second concerns equitable socio-economic development. The Secretary-General found in his report that these issues lack a system-wide strategic framework, a system-wide knowledge management for conflict prevention issues and a normative framework where Member States can address prevention issues. Instead, each of these issues were dealt with on ad hoc basis, mostly within specific institutions. The only collaboration shown in the report is joint efforts on specific strategies by DESA, DPA, UNDP and UNHCR. In *figure 4*, operational capacity, strategic leadership and programmes working with these issues within the UN are shown.

	<i>Democracy, good governance and culture of prevention</i>	<i>Equitable socio-economic development</i>
<b>Operational Capacity</b>	Policy advice, technical assistance, capacity building and programming available for governance, electoral assistance, institution building, public sector, judicial, legal and security sector reform, justice and the rule of law.  Awareness raising and capacity-building activities on culture of peace/prevention.	Social cohesion and conflict transformation programmes available, as well as research, advisory services and project support on sustainable development, social, economic, environmental issues, institutional reform and capacity building.
<b>Strategic Leadership</b>	DPA as system focal point for electoral assistance and peace building.	Isolated efforts to mainstream conflict prevention in development activities.
<b>Departments Programmes Institutions etc.</b>	DESA, DDA, DPA, DPKO, FAO, OCHA, OHCHR, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNITAR, UNODC, United Nations System Staff College, World Bank, Special advisers and other initiatives.	DESA, DPKO, FAO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, World Bank, World Food Programme, WHO, Special advisers and other initiatives.

Figure 5. *Key Findings of the Secretary-General (A/60/891)*

#### 5.1.4 'Realpolitik'

One of the major limitations facing the UN in the work of conflict prevention is the political interests of member states based on power instead of ideal, hence realpolitik. As was noted in Galtung's theory on imperialism, states have interests in various arenas in other countries (Galtung 1971:92,94). These interests can also be interpreted from a realistic perspective. States are, in this perspective, considered to pay most attention to favor their own political interests. Hence, they put their main effort in shifting the balance of power in the world to their advantage, and thereby reducing other countries'

advantages (Mearsheimer 2001:34). Consequently, in the light of realism, the member states of the UN pose a great limitation for the UN because they want political advantage and power for themselves, and therefore it is not in their interest to support efforts trying to reduce the number of weak and unstable states in the international system. Further, even though some of the 192 member states (ORG/1469) support the UN morally others have completely different interests. This is critical, since “the UN is no stronger than the collective will of the nations that support it. Of itself it can do nothing“ (Kegley & Wittkopf 1999:527).

## 5.2 Addressing major problems of ethnic conflicts

To sum up, the study began with a description of theories provided within the literature regarding the causes of ethnic conflicts. Using an eclectic approach, three major problems from these theories were drawn, laying the ground for the study. In the previous chapter a description of how conflict prevention ought be approached in “the best of worlds” was given, concluded with a discussion on the moral position the UN should have. This chapter started of with an overview of the means available for the UN in conflict prevention. Consequently, the following, and concluding section of the study provides an analysis of the methods that the UN can apply – and what also is morally right – when addressing the major problems outlined in the first chapter. In the end a few concluding reflections on the overall difficulties and feasibilities facing the UN is given.

### *5.2.1 Poverty*

Poverty reduction has been emphasized in the work of the UN since the very beginning, for example it is stressed in article 55 of the UN Charter. It was also recently stressed by the Security Council in SC Resolution 1625. Consequently, this is an area that has gained political support and will from both the GA and the SC, and thereby is acknowledged by the member states.

Poverty reduction has not only been a rhetoric tool of the UN and its member states, it is also implemented in the work of the organization. In 2000 the GA adopted resolution A/RES/55/2, also known as the United Nations Millennium Declaration. One of the eight goals set out in the declaration is to eradicate extreme poverty. According to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) report published in 2006, the UN, in collaboration with agencies and organizations both within and outside the UN system, have accomplished to reduce extreme poverty at least to some extent (UN 2006:4). The figures might not be overall positive, but there is a good indication that the development is moving in the right direction.

Presented in figure 6 are the tools this study has found to be helpful when addressing the major problems of ethnic conflicts. Apart from general poverty reduction, specific tools concerning local ownership, empowerment of women and youth training are shown. Hence, all tools are directed explicitly towards the citizens in a state. As stated in the normative chapter, the UN has a responsibility to prevent. These measures fit nicely into this moral position. These tools are also within the scope of what the UN can do empirically. The work of UNDP will state as a good example of this.

UNDP is a programme working locally to enhance the local capacity of individuals and institutions, as well as empowering women (*About UN* n.d). For instance, micro-credit projects are a tool already embraced by many of the UNDP's projects (*UN News* 2003). In addition, it also has a programme directed towards crisis prevention and recovery. The role of UNDP is to help local actors to address the structural causes of conflicts through focusing on, among others, socio-economic inequalities in a society (*Prevention and Risk Reduction* n.d). According to the report on UNDP's performance and result (DP/2006/17 p. 12), the UNDP in 2005 either fully or partially achieved the programme targets set out in crisis prevention and recovery in their country programmes. Even though it is problematic to rely on figures alone, the results provide an indication of the effectiveness of the UNDP.

Hence, this study argues that the UN has the empirical ability, because of political will, knowledge and cooperation on the ground, to focus on enhancing economic opportunities of disadvantaged ethnic groups within a society. Strengthening these groups as well as the overall economic situation could prevent the negative impact an economic crisis might have on an unstable and weak society and therefore this is a good way the UN can work to prevent violent ethnic conflicts (cf Cockell 2002:197).

### ***5.2.2 Structural Inequalities***

Compared to poverty, structural inequalities between groups are not inscribed as a problematic factor causing conflicts in the UN Charter or the resolutions mentioned. When directing attention to the MDGs the member states have adopted goals directed only towards those who are worst-off, thus attention to improve their lives, but not reducing group inequalities *per se*. The only measures concerned with inequalities are,

as described above, measures directed towards socio-economic inequalities in the Crisis Prevention and Recovery project (*Prevention and Risk Reduction*, n.d) and issues relating to gender inequalities (UN 2006:8).

Hence, work directed towards structural group equalities could be problematic for the UN since it does not have explicitly support from its member states. Looking at the toolbox in figure 6, the study has presented a few methods of use when addressing this particular issue. An explanation of why these are important and the prospects they have of being implemented within the organization are given below.

For example, encouraging education for women are vital not only in conflict prevention in general but also in ethnic conflicts. Education gives higher prospects for employment and might change socio-cultural attitudes. In ethnic conflicts women often become victims for brutal and systematic violence and therefore it is an important issue to deal with. This is also within the scope of what the UN can do empirically. In 2000 the SC adopted resolution 1325, which acknowledges the important role of women in peace work. The UN also has a programme working with gender issues only; UNIFEM.

Secondly, indigenous dispute resolution mechanisms and good governance are tools with the prospect of reducing structural group inequalities. Policies in a society need to acknowledge the differences existing between different groups and seek to accommodate those needs present (Carnegie Commission 1997:98). Consequently, governments and political leaders have to have the ability to address these issues, and solve grievances within the society in a proper way (cf Peck 1998:16,53). Dress & Rosenblum-Kumar have a good proposal of how this can be done:

“assist national ministries to undertake transformation assessments for the purpose of analyzing, within their specific historical and sociopolitical context, existing and

potential causes of destructive conflict, as well as to develop corresponding national response strategies” (2002:245)

As shown in the key findings of the Secretary-General good governance is an issue the UN and its various departments are working with. The work is done in collaboration with various NGOs and local actors, but the work is based on *consent*, hence a country must come to the UN asking for assistance or support.

By these findings this study argues that although the UN has the capacity of addressing structural inequalities the issue is problematic. The problem lies not only in the lack of support in the Charter, but also in the gap between what local actors expect from the UN and what the UN actually has a mandate to do (IPA 2001:3). Therefore the study suggests an intermediation mechanism between the UN and local actors. This can be a task of the UN offices and representatives on the ground.

Other problematic issues relating to cooperation with local actors are how to select with which local actors the UN could cooperate and also how to ensure that local actors use the support to achieve their own political objectives – instead of those objectives given by the UN. To solve these issues, although important, are not in the scope of this study, but it is vital to at least point them out.

### ***5.2.3 Society in transition***

Societies in transition are currently an issue of great importance. According to Lund “most developing countries are now in one phase or another of evolution from a relatively centralized political order to some other, uncertain political order in which power is more developed and fragmented” (2002:163-4). Several examples exist where the transition has started off massive violence between ethnic groups, such as in the former Yugoslavia (Lund 2002:164). In other cases the transition to democracy has

turned out to be an ethnocracy, where the advantaged group systematically discriminates the disadvantaged, as in the case of Israel (Lemish 2003:69).

These examples illustrate that the transition of a society from an authoritarian rule to a more democratic rule has to be patiently constructed. Thus, a few aspects need to be considered. Firstly, the transition has to be done gradually and secondly, the assistance must be context-specific. This presupposes long-term democratization assistance in collaboration with local actors.

Yet again, democratization *per se*, is not inscribed in the UN Charter. However, there are consent among the member states that it is of importance to “strengthen the capacity of all our countries to implement the principles and practices of *democracy* and respect for human rights, including minority rights” (A/RES/55/2, *author’s emphasis*).

Concerning the operational capacity, this issue is probably the one of the three major problems stressed in this study, which has the most feasibilities (cf key findings of the Secretary-General where several methods are related to democratization). Once again the UNDP is a useful example of the empirical possibility of the UN to address the problem of societies in transition. UNDP works to strengthen democratic governance through its network of 166 offices worldwide and in collaboration with on ground partners (*About the Democratic Practice*, n.d). They are already involved in the specific tools presented in figure 6, and thereby it is more likely that they also can, within the framework they have now, emphasize prevention of polarization between ethnic groups, which is necessary to prevent violent ethnic conflicts.

Finally, free media (TV, radio, news papers) is an issue necessary to deal with. Lack of information or absence of objective information might contribute to the mobilization along ethnic lines, since it provides ethnic elites or leaders with the

opportunity to create a forceful and dangerous picture of the other group (Peck 1998:33-4; cf Kaufmann 2006:50). As was the case with poverty and democratization, freedom of the media is inscribed in the millennium declaration. It states that the public has to have access to information. Again, this is an issue the UNDP already works with in connection to democratic governance (*E-governance and Access to Information for Citizens' Participation*, n.d). Besides from the UNDP, the study has not found further projects dealing with free media. Thereby, even though free media is an important factor, it might not receive the support necessary for it to be an effective tool of the UN.

<b>Toolbox of Conflict Prevention Methods</b>		
<b>Structural Inequalities<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Poverty<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Society in Transition<sup>2</sup></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structural adjustment programmes</li> <li>• Indigenous dispute resolution mechanisms</li> <li>• Support local initiatives to advance good governance</li> <li>• Intermediation mechanisms between the UN and local actors</li> <li>• National programmes encouraging education for women</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">→ Collaboration with local actors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted antipoverty programmes</li> <li>• Small enterprise, job creation and micro credit projects</li> <li>• Intergroup development projects</li> <li>• Intregroup women's cooperation</li> <li>• Youth training</li> <li>• Local ownership</li> <li>• Women-operated business</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">→ Mainly directed towards citizens</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electoral assistance</li> <li>• Election monitoring</li> <li>• Political party development</li> <li>• Civil society capacity-building</li> <li>• Executive and civil service assistance</li> <li>• Judicial and legal assistance and reform</li> <li>• Local governments assistance and reform</li> <li>• Peace media</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">→ Context specific</p> <p style="text-align: center;">→ Long term</p>

Figure 6. Toolbox of Conflict Methods

<sup>2</sup> Lund 2002:179; IPA 2001:9; Carnegie Commission 1997:84

<sup>3</sup> Lund 2002:179; Cockell 2002:187; Viñas 2004:220

### 5.3 Concluding Reflections on UN's feasibilities and difficulties

In the previous section it was discussed how the UN can work to prevent violent ethnic conflicts. This study argues that the UN has the ability to address the major problems presented more or less effectively, and pointed out that in some instances the organization already conducts projects with the help of methods this study has found to be vital in the prevention of violent ethnic conflicts. Further on, this study argues that the UN and its various departments, especially the UNDP has been in focus here, have the experience, knowledge and operational capacity to address the major problems present in ethnic conflicts. Therefore the importance of the UN is stressed as a forum of structural prevention of violent ethnic conflicts, in which the major problems can be addressed through the methods presented in the previous section. However, there are several difficulties that impede the optimistic view in this study on the UN as a key forum of structural conflict prevention. These are of both internal and external character, thus both are described below.

The internal difficulties are, as the term implies, difficulties within the UN system itself. There exists no normative framework, no strategic leadership and there is lack of cooperation and coherence between the different departments. Another difficulty is the contradiction between the state as primary actor and the responsibility to prevent described in the normative chapter.

The external difficulties concern the member states in the UN. Even though they have claimed to have moral responsibility or recognize the importance to address certain vital issues, they seldom – with very few exceptions – act in that way. As cited above, the UN is not stronger than its member states, and the member states tend to follow their own political interests. This also puts a great limit for the UN's feasibilities

to encourage an open and transparent international environment called for in the normative chapter. It also decreases the chances of a culture of prevention, because the final responsibility for implementation lies within the member states – it is they who in the end finance the organizational changes.

One optimistic progress is the fact that a culture of prevention is emerging within the UN, both the SC and the GA has shown political will to institutionalize it. A culture of prevention is self-evidently also effective in the prevention of violent ethnic conflicts, even though it is of general character. A culture of prevention is therefore a way the UN can prevent violent ethnic conflicts. As pointed out in the normative chapter, a new norm of prevention has to be promoted by the organizational leader. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphasized the need of a new preventive norm – instead of a reactive one – but the question is whether his successor Ban Ki-Moon will follow in his footsteps.

To conclude, from the discussion given, this study argues that the UN can prevent violent ethnic conflicts by addressing the major problems outlined in the second chapter with the toolbox of methods provided in this chapter. It also argues that the UN has the operational capacity through its various programmes, the knowledge and the experience necessary to perform its work effectively, but that because of the internal and external difficulties reflected upon here it does not have the opportunity to carry out its work using its full potential.

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