



# crisis states programme

development research centre



Working Paper no.9

**GOVERNANCE AND CONFLICT  
MANAGEMENT:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR DONOR  
INTERVENTION**

**Benedict Latto**  
Governance Department  
Department for International  
Development (DFID)

February 2002

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## **Crisis States Programme Working papers series no.1**

**English version:**  
**ISSN 1740-5807 (print)**  
**ISSN 1740-5815 (on-line)**

**Spanish version:**  
**ISSN 1740-5823 (print)**  
**ISSN 1740-5831 (on-line)**

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## Crisis States Programme

### Governance and Conflict Management: Implications for donor intervention

#### Introduction

Conflict, a state of opposition between ideas or interests, is unavoidable. Indeed, conflict is can be a desirable generator of positive change and improvement. However, when conflict is expressed through violence, it can lead to massive civilian casualties, displacement, economic hardship and state collapse – with the poor invariably being hit hardest. The premise of this paper is that it is possible to *manage* difference and divergence constructively and without resort to violence.

It is axiomatic to say that where there is good governance, there is a greater likelihood that conflict will be managed peaceably. The paper explores the impact of a number of key governance capabilities<sup>1</sup> on the effectiveness with which intra-societal conflict is managed. Although the opportunities for intervention will differ according to whether a state is in-conflict, pre-, or post-conflict, similar principles of conflict management are applicable.

Transitions from war to peace...are more usefully seen as involving a realignment of political interests and a readjustment of economic strategies rather than a clean break from violence to consent, from theft to production, or from repression to democracy<sup>2</sup>.

The causes of violent conflict are multifarious. The traditional view is that conflict is caused by grievance resulting from social, economic and political inequality between groups. Historical patterns of violence make it more likely that these grievances lead to violent conflict. Recent work has emphasised the need to understand economic motivations for conflict. War is not a chaotic process involving only costs. Individual benefits also accrue and economic agendas (or 'greed') can be as strong a motivating factor as 'grievance' in initiating and sustaining conflict<sup>3</sup>. This is particularly so in countries with valuable reserves of natural resources. Causes of conflict which are more macro-economic in nature have also been identified: there is a correlation between economic shocks or decline and increased conflict; whilst GDP per capita is systematically related to ethnic conflict<sup>4</sup>.

These 'primary' causes can generate heightened group identity around ethnicity or religion – often at the instigation of political elites – and the resulting tensions can become causes of conflict in their own right.

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<sup>1</sup> As outlined in DFID, *Making Government Work for Poor People: Building State Capacity*, London, 2001a.

<sup>2</sup> M. Berdal, & D. M. Malone (eds.), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Ottawa: IDRC, 2000, p. 9; quoting an earlier study.

<sup>3</sup> “[I]nternal forms of war are now better understood as the continuation of *economics* by other means”, (M. Duffield, ‘Globalisation and War Economies: Promoting Order or the Return of History’, *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, special issue on ‘The Geography of Confidence’, Vol 23, no. 2 (Fall 1999), pp.19-36 (drawing on David Keen’s work).

<sup>4</sup> Zeric K. Smith, ‘The Impact of Political Liberalisation and Democratisation on Ethnic Conflict in Africa: An empirical test of common assumptions’, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 38, no. 1 (2000), pp.29-39.

This paper takes the view that the causes of conflict identified above are less likely to lead to violence where the governance structures of the state provide political redress and generate compromise, moderation and inclusion; that, at least to a certain degree, “politics is the prosecution of war by other means”<sup>5</sup>. It focuses on elements of constitutional design, political and justice systems, and various non-constitutional governance capabilities that play a role in the peaceful management of conflict. It also looks at the role that international governance plays in promoting and preventing violent conflict. In conclusion, it draws out some implications for donor intervention in the governance field at national and international levels.

This paper, which draws on readings, interviews with researchers and DFID experience, was written under the guidance of Jeremy Clarke, Deputy Chief Governance Adviser. Its objective is to initiate a debate on governance and conflict management within the Governance Network. Comments are therefore welcome and should be sent to either [j-clarke@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:j-clarke@dfid.gov.uk) or [b-latto@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:b-latto@dfid.gov.uk).

### **Constitutional conflict management**

The design of a state’s political institutions is a key factor in the peaceful management of conflict. This has sometimes been ignored, particularly in a post-conflict context where the emphasis has been on reassembling pre-war institutions rather than rethinking them. Without suggesting that there is an institutional blueprint, this section tries to understand how a constitutional system can generate compromise, moderation and inclusion. Opportunities for radical constitutional rethinking are rare and when they do occur, room for manoeuvre is constrained by political considerations. Furthermore, the extent to which external parties should attempt to influence institutional design is debatable. These points are taken up in the final section.

### ***Democracy or not?***

There are grounds for arguing that liberal democracy is not the best form of government for managing conflict. The non-negotiable nature of the issues dividing a society – such as religion and ethnicity – can become politicised by democracy and thereby reinforced. Democracy provides space for strongly opposed groups to generate conflict that risks destabilising the state. In Fiji and Sri Lanka, for example, multi-party democracy exposed and hardened divisions and led to conflict even where democratic institutions were carefully designed<sup>6</sup>.

However, the majority of writers agree that democratic systems have, on the whole, proved more successful than oligarchy or authoritarianism at managing (rather than suppressing) conflict<sup>7</sup>. Democratic societies tend to develop the institutions, resources and flexibility, in

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<sup>5</sup> G. Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*, New Jersey: Chatham House, 1987. For an alternative view that violence is not caused by frustrations with the political system, but rather “micro-mechanisms” such as personal safety, see Lemann, N., ‘What Terrorists Want’, *The New Yorker*, 29 October 2001, pp.36-41 (quoting David Laitin).

<sup>6</sup> See F. Stewart & M. O’Sullivan, ‘Democracy, Conflict and Development – Three Cases’, *QEH Working Paper Series 15*, Oxford: Queen Elizabeth House, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, R. Luckham, A.M. Goetz & M. Kaldor, *Democratic Institutions and Politics in Contexts of Inequality, Poverty and Conflict: A Conceptual Framework*, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University, Working Paper 104, 2000; A. Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; P. Harris & B.

the long term, to manage conflict peacefully. This view partly accounts for the increasing emphasis that has been placed on democratic governance by international and bi-lateral donors. But, most proponents of democracy as an effective system for conflict management emphasise that formal democratic institutions alone are not enough and that to manage conflict a state must have genuine legitimacy based on democratic politics. This is taken up in section 3.

### *State structure*

#### **1. Power-sharing: a consociational versus an integrative approach**

The introduction of power-sharing political systems can prevent identity-based conflicts from turning or returning into violence. Power-sharing systems, in contrast to majoritarian systems (discussed further in section 2.4), place an emphasis on decision making through a consensus of the different groups and can help produce a stable government with broad support.

There are two approaches to power-sharing. **Consociationalism** accepts that there is a need for group or ethnic building blocks. The common features of the consociational approach are: a central executive in the form of a 'grand coalition' made up of representatives of all major groups; proportional electoral representation and proportional allocation of public funds and employment; devolution of considerable power to ethnic groups; and constitutional vetoes for minorities. The Dayton Accord for Bosnia is a good example.

The alternative to consociationalism is an **integrative approach** to power-sharing. This seeks to foster cross-ethnic political coalitions and to create incentives for political leaders to be moderate on divisive ethnic themes. Elements of this approach include electoral systems that encourage "vote pooling" (pre-election pacts across ethnic lines) and non-ethnic federalism<sup>8</sup>. In an integrative approach, initial power-sharing arrangements are not enshrined in the constitution, but are rather designed to be self-terminating. South Africa's post-apartheid interim constitution is a good example. The power-sharing Government of National Unity was dissolved once a new constitution had been produced.

The consociational form of power-sharing is an attractive solution where the alternative would be the break-up of a multi-ethnic country. For it to work, there needs to be a sufficiently strong core of moderates at the political centre that seek pragmatic coexistence in a multi-ethnic society. This core of elites needs to be able to guarantee to each other that they are fully supported by their communities. South Africa, Malaysia and possibly Bosnia would seem to have such a core; Rwanda does not. This would suggest that it is not suitable for deeply divided societies. Indeed, in Rwanda, an incipient power-sharing pact was scuttled by the 1994 genocide.

Even where consociationalism does provide a solution, it should be seen as a temporary one, to "keep the lid on the pressure cooker of a divided society that is about to blow"<sup>9</sup>. It runs the risk of defining all politics in divisive, ethnic terms. Consociationalism should have built into it a strategy for moving towards a more integrative or, eventually, majoritarian form of democracy in which minority inclusion is guaranteed, not through quotas, but through

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Reilly, 'Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiators', *IDEA Handbook Series*, Stockholm, 1998.

<sup>8</sup> See D. L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> B. Reilly & A. Reynolds, *Electoral Systems and Conflict in Divided Societies*, Committee on International Conflict Resolution, Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999.

universal human rights and constitutional checks and balances.<sup>10</sup> This difficult transition should prove easier where the deliberate nurturing of public support for peace has preceded the consociational agreement, as it did in Northern Ireland.

## **2. Devolution: autonomy, federalism and decentralisation**

Many conflicts are over control of the state and the resulting control of economic power. One approach to managing this conflict is to re-structure the state through devolution of power via federalism, autonomy or decentralisation. A good example of this is the post-Franco constitution in Spain which succeeded in reducing violent demands for secession by establishing “autonomous communities”. This is a complex area with many different possible models. This paper simply identifies some generic principles about devolution and conflict management.

### *Some advantages of devolution are:*

Where minorities stand little chance of influence through parliamentary representation, it gives them a measure of state power and can help them preserve their culture.

It may allow for a compromise that avoids secession.

Plural arenas can increase the overall level of political competition; this in turn can increase differences within ethnic groups and lead to their fragmentation. Similarly positioned splinter groups from different ethnicities can then form cross-ethnic coalitions.

Escalation of crises to the national level can be avoided where a devolved entity can deal with the problem itself.

The very negotiations to devolve power can contribute to the legitimacy of the state.

Even if not sustainable, devolution can provide a breathing space in hostilities.

### *Some possible risks of devolution are:*

If configured in ethnic terms, it can, as in Bosnia, reinforce cleavages created by political violence and ethnic cleansing.

Weak decentralised entities may be ill-equipped to manage conflict<sup>11</sup>.

It can exacerbate tensions between richer and poorer regions.

Destabilisation may result from national majority leaders losing electoral support or the ‘losers’ in the new power balance resorting to violence.

The devolution can provide regions with the necessary institutions on which to base secession, as happened in the former Yugoslavia.

Other minorities – including newly created minorities within devolved entities – might mobilise to demand further devolution.

In the reverse of the devolution process, but often linked to it, there is also the possibility of managing national conflict through the transfer of power upwards to broader regional organisations. The European Union provides a good example of competences that were traditionally seen as issues of national sovereignty being transferred upwards in return for shared decision-making. This has a particular effect on the relationship between a national state and its regions. States feel less threatened by independence-minded regions; regions, in

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<sup>10</sup> For more detail see G. McAllister, *Power-Sharing and Post-Conflict Transition: A Comparative Study*, paper prepared for DFID, May 2001; and Harris and Reilly (1998).

<sup>11</sup> As in Cambodia: D. Hendrickson, ‘Globalisation, Insecurity and Post-war Reconstruction: Cambodia’s Precarious Transition’, in *Structural Conflict in the New Global Disorder: Insecurity and Development*, IDS Bulletin, vol. 32, no. 2 (April 2001).

their turn, become more willing to accept a diluted national sovereignty. However, a high level of development may be a pre-condition for this type of arrangement to be successful.

### *Parliamentary versus presidential systems*

The power balance between a country's legislature and executive is an important factor in the management of conflict. Huge variations exist in the systems used to balance this power and it is rare to find 'pure' versions of either parliamentary or presidential systems. This section, therefore, rather than trying to compare these two systems directly, aims to draw out key characteristics that can affect the management of conflict.

#### *Parliamentary systems*

Parliamentary systems can facilitate the inclusion of minorities within the executive as cabinets are often drawn from the legislature.

In most parliamentary systems, the executive requires at least the confidence of the legislature which provides a check on executive abuse of power.

Parliamentary coalitions can change without recourse to a possibly destabilising election.

#### *But:*

The inclusivity of a cabinet can be reduced through the discipline of majority parties.

Collective cabinet decision-making can lead to a lack of accountability and possible deadlocks.

Parliamentary systems are not immune to majority tyranny – if one dominant group forms the absolute majority of a population, a parliamentary system risks being dominated by it.

#### *Presidential systems*

A president is highly identifiable and therefore has the potential to be highly accountable.

A president can offer the national appeal that parliamentarians drawn from particular localities and groups often cannot.

A president can be an important figure of national unity (Nelson Mandela, for example).

#### *But:*

If a state has few equally sized groups, there is a danger that a presidential system is seen as 'captured' by the one group that inevitably must win the office of President.

Whichever executive type, the electoral system influences the extent to which compromise, moderation and inclusion is achieved. A parliamentary system needs some form of proportional representation if minorities are to be represented in parliament and form part of coalition governments. Likewise, it may be crucial in a presidential system for the presidential elections to encourage candidates to have a moderate platform by requiring some geographic distribution of the vote or by taking into account second or third choice votes (see section 2.4).

Further work needs to examine the potential that hybrid systems have to combine the advantages of parliamentary and presidential systems. It is worth noting, from a conflict management point of view, that complicated divisions of power can contribute to a lack of accountability and reduce state legitimacy.

### *Choice of electoral system*

Different electoral systems, in the way they interact with the numbers and geographical dispersal of different groups, can provide different outcomes for divided societies. Of particular relevance to the management of conflict is the way in which the choice of electoral system influences whether co-operative or exclusionary behaviour is rewarded with political power.

There is a fairly strong consensus among academics that majoritarian systems, whilst good at assuring effective government in consolidated democracies, are rarely suitable for divided societies<sup>12</sup>. Systems such as the block vote and the two-round system have been widely experimented with in fledgling democracies and have tended to lead to single party domination of parliaments, the elimination of opposition and, eventually, to authoritarian regimes. The majoritarian system in Sri Lanka for example marginalized political and ethnic minorities, leading one commentator to conclude that institutional designs drawn from the West have “very little to contribute with regard to the problem of underdevelopment, poverty and class”<sup>13</sup>.

Four systems have been identified which have potential in divided societies. The major characteristics of these systems are:

List proportional representation (PR) – inclusive legislature with all significant groups represented; often part of package of consociationalism (see section 2.2.1)

Alternative vote (AV) – in order to attain majority thresholds in ethnically-mixed districts, parties need to cultivate the second preference votes from groups other than their own, encouraging gravitation to a moderate, multi-ethnic centre

Single Transferable vote (STV) – a quota of votes is established which a candidate must achieve to be elected; results are proportional, leading to power-sharing, but parties are also encouraged to seek votes from other groups via secondary preferences

Communal rolls or reserved seats – the ratio of ethnic groups is fixed in advance, so electors make their choice using non-ethnic criteria.

The following factors influence which system might best manage conflict in a particular society.

#### *Nature of group identity*

The more rigid conflictual identities are, the more important it is that institutions represent “groups” in close approximation to their size. Large district PR systems can provide this, as in Bosnia and South Africa. Where identities become more fluid, room develops for electoral systems that encourage multiethnic voting coalitions through preference voting, e.g. AV in Fiji in 1997.

#### *Intensity of conflict*

In practice, where conflict has been more intense and violent, list PR systems have often been employed, as in Bosnia and South Africa, while integrative systems like AV have been used in societies with more moderate divisions. (The success of list PR at managing conflict in the

<sup>12</sup> F. Stewart & V. FitzGerald (eds), *War and Underdevelopment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Coomaraswamy (2001; quoted in S. Bastian & R. Luckham, ‘The Politics of Institutional Choice in Conflict-Torn Societies – Conclusions’, draft prepared for *Strengthening Democratic Governance in Conflict-Torn Societies* Conference, Sarajevo, September 2001).

relatively moderate societies of Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland can be explained by these countries' high level of development.)

#### *Geographic distribution of groups*

AV systems work best where there are heterogeneous electoral districts, i.e. where there is a low number of geographically intermixed groups, or a high number of geographically separated groups. Where groups are geographically separated (often as a result of intense conflict), single-member electoral districts are likely to produce ethnic fiefdoms and therefore multi-member list PR systems might be more appropriate as results will remain proportional (e.g. Bosnia, Belgium).

#### *Number of groups*

List PR as part of a consociational package works best when there are only three or four groups<sup>14</sup>. Conversely, AV systems fail to produce vote-pooling where there is a limited number of groups.

#### *Relative size of groups*

List PR as part of consociationalism is more successful where there are groups of roughly equal size.

#### *State of democracy*

A state in transition or with democratic failure needs to promote the legitimacy of the electoral process with a system which allows minorities to be represented, which is simple and which minimises the risk of pre-election conflict over electoral boundaries. Such a state might be best served by large regional or national list proportional representation. By contrast, a state seeking democratic consolidation might achieve a stronger government with greater political and geographic accountability through small constituencies.

#### *Is the objective representation or influence of minority groups?*

List PR may be effective at ensuring minority representation. However, AV and STV are better at encouraging minority influence more broadly in the political process.

#### *Elite or electorate moderation*

Where elites are likely to be more moderate than the electorate, list PR enables the major parties to include candidates from various groups on their tickets. Where the electorate is seen as being a source of moderation, AV and STV systems should result in the election of more moderate leaders with more accommodative policies. STV systems might offer an intermediate solution as they encourage some vote-pooling while retaining proportionality. (It can be argued that the 1998 Northern Ireland STV system encouraged the pro-agreement, non-sectarian centre). Where neither the elite nor the electorate can be looked to for moderation, separate electoral rolls or reserved seats might provide a solution<sup>15</sup>. However these last options – referred to as *explicitist* approaches – artificially sustain ethnic divisions and should be avoided if possible.

Reilly and Reynolds<sup>16</sup> conclude that there is potential in creating a hybrid electoral system such as the 1997 Fijian constitution which mixed AV with consociational power-sharing and

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<sup>14</sup> A. Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977.

<sup>15</sup> Reilly & Reynolds (1999).

<sup>16</sup> Reilly & Reynolds (1999).

some guaranteed communal representation. They also suggest that it is better to make moderate reforms of an existing system than to jump to a completely new and unfamiliar system.

*Fiji: the perils of trying to avert potentially violent conflict by constitutional engineering alone*

Post independence electoral arrangements in Fiji were identified as responsible for exacerbating ethnic rivalry. The new preferential voting system, it was hoped, would instead pave the way towards pre-election vote pooling alliances and robust coalitions between political parties representing Fijians and Indo-Fijians. The constitution's electoral arrangements were based on a modified Alternative Vote (AV), designed to foster cross-ethnic voting and political alliances among the more moderate parties, whose representation in the legislature would be enhanced.

The new electoral system achieved none of the goals that electoral engineers expected. The 1999 election produced a legislature which was not only insufficiently representative in relation to the different parties' shares of the vote, but also gave more seats to hardliners, creating a political impasse which provided the pretext for the 2000 *putsch* by armed ethnic Fijian extremists. In contrast to the expectations of the international advisers to Fiji's electoral reforms, the new system led to the defeat of the moderates.

This would support the argument that ethnic fractions produce ethnically polarised politics and not the other way about. It questions the assumption that somehow electoral behaviour on the basis of ethnicity and ethnic identity can be made to disappear through the clever design of electoral systems. "There are no electoral-engineering-type solutions, involving neat institutional mechanisms for securing multi-ethnic parties or governments. The more modest goal is an electoral system that does not exacerbate divisions. The rest is politics."<sup>17</sup>

## **State legitimacy and conflict management**

There is a strong body of opinion that conflict management interventions have placed too much emphasis on institutional design and not enough on state legitimacy<sup>18</sup>. The key to legitimacy is that citizens are confident that the structures of the state are capable of managing their competing interests and will do so equitably. There are many factors which lead to state legitimacy; these stand out in the conflict context: the extent to which democratic practice has been internalised so that democracy is the "only game in town"; how representative, accountable and free from corruption it appears; and its ability to guarantee security and services to citizens.

### ***Competitive politics***

The kind of democratic institutions that were described in Section 2 can only flourish if they are supported by active and broadly-based competitive politics. Democratic institutions can create incentives for democratic politics. But the emphasis of interventions should be "as much on democratic politics as on institutions, as much on substantive democratisation as on

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<sup>17</sup> Source Bastian (2001)(drawing on J. Frankel, Draft paper on Fiji prepared for *Strengthening Democratic Governance in Conflict-Torn Societies* Conference, Sarajevo, September 2001).

<sup>18</sup> For example R. Luckham, I. Ahmed, R. Muggah, & S. White, *Conflict and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: an Assessment of the Issues and Evidence*, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University, Working Paper 128, 2000. For an opposing view, see L. Diamond, 'Towards Democratic Consolidation', in L. Diamond & M. F. Plattner (eds.), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

formal democratic rules, and even more on bottom-up integrative social processes than on institutional agreements artificially imposed from above”<sup>19</sup>. Africa, for instance, has many examples of formal compliance to a system of multi-party elections, but very rarely has this coincided with fundamental change in the patterns and goals of politics. Similarly, early elections in Bosnia, rather than building a unitary, self-governing, multi-ethnic state, have legitimised ethnically purged constituencies and led to a flawed international protectorate. Pugh and Cobble argue that it would have been better to concentrate on introducing notions of accountability and participation than rely on contrived electoral systems<sup>20</sup>.

A different case study comparing Mostar and Tuzla shows that with essentially the same institutional design, the decentralized authority in the former failed to manage conflict, while in the latter a multi-ethnic coalition survived throughout the war<sup>21</sup>. The difference lay in the existence in Tuzla of a democratic political culture that could effectively exploit the conflict-management potential of democratic institutions. Factors such as the structure and configuration of competitive party politics, the profile and strength of civil society and the strength of the local economy influenced the capacity of democratic decentralisation to manage conflicts effectively.

Pluralist democracies have a variety of channels through which divergent forces can communicate. The institutions of civil society – the press, social and sporting clubs, residence associations, youth groups (e.g. in Kosovo), church groups, labour unions etc. – enable communication between individuals from different cultures and perspectives<sup>22</sup>. NGOs form with a view to influencing policy outcomes and community-based groups develop collective representation. All of these groups can provide a voice outside government that can enhance the accountability of government and therefore its legitimacy. The success of democratic conflict management in India can be partly explained by an active civil society and the myriad crosscutting of social, religious, regional, caste, and linguistic loyalties<sup>23</sup>.

There is also, of course, what might be termed ‘uncivil’ society – organisations and networks whose interests are predominantly ethnic or nationalist. But even these can contribute to the peaceful management of conflict if the logic of political competition is structured in such a way as to be centripetal and coalitional rather than destructive and exclusionary<sup>24</sup>.

Political parties can be responsible for heightening conflict when they enhance differences as a way of gaining political support, as has happened in Sri Lanka and the former Yugoslavia. This might suggest that a post-conflict state should not rush into multi-party democracy. President Museveni of Uganda, for example, has banned political parties for a (rather long) transition period as a conflict-management measure. However, it is clear that political parties based around programmes rather than personalities are essential if democratic politics are to develop over the long run. They provide a means for citizens to aggregate their political preferences and participate in government, serving as an intermediary between government

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<sup>19</sup> Luckham, et al. (2000).

<sup>20</sup> M. Pugh & M. Cobble, ‘Non-Nationalist Voting in Bosnian Municipal Elections: Implications for Democracy and Peace-Building’, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 38, no. 1 (2001), pp27-47.

<sup>21</sup> Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic, ‘Managing Ethnic Conflicts: Democratic Decentralisation in Bosnia-Herzegovina’, paper prepared for *Strengthening Democratic Governance in Conflict-Torn Societies* Conference, Sarajevo, September 2001.

<sup>22</sup> Reilly & Reynolds (1999), p.4.

<sup>23</sup> Luckham, et al. (2000).

<sup>24</sup> R. Crook, *Strengthening Democratic Governance In Conflict Torn Societies: Civic Organisations, Democratic Effectiveness And Political Conflict*, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 2001.

and civil society. They have a particularly important role as critics of government action in opposition.

There are a number of strategies which can develop the role that civil society plays in competitive politics in divided societies:

Projects which have a focus on building the capacity of advocacy organisations which are more “embedded” than donor-driven service delivery NGOs.

Projects to strengthen the independent media with a view to raising awareness of human and democratic rights, including coverage of often neglected rural areas<sup>25</sup>.

Human rights bodies which can draw on strengthened international consensus on human rights.

Promoting the internal democracy of NGOs and political parties.

Projects which develop space for civil society within government processes – for example, institutionalised government consultation of civil society drawing on the experience of consultative processes like those used to generate poverty reduction strategies.

Alliances between domestic civil society and the embryonic international civil society.

Promoting political debate around issues like land reform and social services which provide the opportunity for new alliances to be formed across conflicting identities<sup>26</sup> (see section on *Justice and conflict* below for the role that rights can play in this regard).

### ***Accountability***

The legitimacy of a state, and therefore its capacity to manage conflict, can be enhanced by increasing its accountability towards its citizens and the accountability of its citizens to the rule of law. This section identifies elements of this accountability that are particularly relevant to conflict-torn societies.

## **1. Justice and conflict**

### *Sustaining legitimacy through the rule of law*

A reliable and accessible justice system plays a crucial role in conflict management. It allows disputes to be resolved without recourse to violence<sup>27</sup>. Furthermore, the protection of property rights and the enforcement of contracts provide legal security that fosters economic investment and growth. This growth, in turn, increases the opportunity costs of violence. Enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action measures can help to reduce inter-group inequalities over the longer term.

### *Judicial independence and impartiality*

Montesquieu’s prescription of complete separation of powers proves difficult to implement in practice (the Lord Chancellor in the U.K. manages magnificently to be a member of the legislature, executive and judiciary). However, a vital element of state legitimacy is a judiciary that is independent of the executive and which has the power to constrain a

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<sup>25</sup> As in the pre-genocide democratisation process in Rwanda: P. Uvin, *Aiding Violence: the Development Enterprise in Rwanda*, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1998, p.235.

<sup>26</sup> S. Unsworth, ‘Understanding Pro-Poor Change: a discussion paper’, presented at DFID Governance Department Annual Development Seminar, Kendal, October 2001.

<sup>27</sup> For a defence of the link between local grievance and larger scale violent conflict, DFID, *Conflict Prevention in the Balkans: A Strategy in the Area of Access to Justice*, Draft, 25 September, 2001b, para. 3.2.1.

president or ruling party from abusing or usurping power. Citizens should be able to seek redress through the courts for illegal or irrational decisions made by any part of the public administration. Furthermore, the accountability of state bureaucracies to the judiciary can help to protect them from being misused by majoritarian governments.

Judicial appointments should be immune from political interference. Tenure should be sufficiently long to ensure that they are not subjected to pressure from the executive on seeking re-appointment. Judicial training, and legal training generally, helps to ensure judicial impartiality.

### *Human rights protection*

Legal norms that protect human rights provide a substantive content to governance by introducing principles of fairness and social justice and placing a limit on the power of the majority. Human rights can help to emphasise communality and move divided societies away from an excessive focus on groups. They allay the fears of minority groups that they will be discriminated against or persecuted by the ruling majority.

Rights can also play a role in fostering mobilisation on the basis of interests other than 'particularist identity'. Property rights, the right to universal education, and the right to representation with taxation might all help to nurture issues-based politics<sup>28</sup>. As discussed in the section above, an active and informed civil society is required to encourage this mobilisation.

### *Policing*

National issues of safety and security are dealt with briefly in Section 3.4 below, but local issues of security are also important for conflict management. It can be argued that incidents of crime that are not justly dealt with can seed grievances which could eventually lead to violent conflict<sup>29</sup>. Police reform is therefore vital. Furthermore, there is often a role for a crime prevention strategy using local level police forces and community policing, particularly in cases, like the Balkans, where the official police are seen as tainted by their association with the state.

## **2. The particular case of transitional justice**

### *Responding to the immediate consequences of violent conflict*

During a violent conflict, states often collapse and alternative systems of economics and governance develop. Once conflict has ended, the justice system needs to respond to the legacy of increased levels of violence, organised crime, trafficking and corruption. The justice system needs to protect the rights of those made more vulnerable by the conflict – the internally displaced, refugees, women – and deal with issues such as the illegal occupation of property.

### *Dealing with human rights violations*

At the end of a violent conflict how should a new regime deal with the wrongs of the old order? The menu of responses runs from forgiveness to punishment; from amnesty through truth commissions and removal of civil rights to criminal prosecution. Often there is a tension between the desire to dispense justice and the need for political stability. This will be greater where the new regime is the product of a negotiated settlement with those pushing for change

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<sup>28</sup> Unsworth (2001).

<sup>29</sup> DFID (2001b), para. 3.2.7.

(from either inside or outside the old regime) than where there has been collapse or revolution.

#### The case for forgiveness

The new order may not be able to risk a destabilising backlash from those who might be prosecuted and their supporters.

The new regime may depend upon reconciliation which prosecution would preclude.

Forgiveness allows valuable human resources in the public, private and military sectors to continue to work.

Punishment may weaken the fragile rule of law by rushing justice, being seen to be political, and bending rules limiting liability in time and prohibiting legislation that retroactively criminalises an activity.

Deciding and implementing a just punishment can be very expensive.

#### The case for punishment

Justice must be seen to be done in order to heal past wrongs and foster a new moral order.

Two possible sources of destabilisation can be removed: through punishing criminals and giving justice to victims.

If criminals go unpunished, the new regime and the rule of law may lose legitimacy.

As a deterrent: *pour encourager les autres*.

“...the least unsatisfactory course may well be: do not prosecute, do not punish, do not forgive, and, above all, do not forget.”<sup>30</sup>

#### *Truth Commissions*

Truth Commissions are temporary bodies whose mandate is to investigate and provide a public record of human rights abuses under the previous regime. They may apportion blame (without sanction), grant amnesties in return for confession, and recommend reforms.

To function well they need independent members (possibly even foreigners), a broad mandate, sufficient investigative resources and powers, and a realistic timeframe.

#### **The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)**

The TRC was set up in 1995 with a two-year mandate, 17 members and Desmond Tutu as the Chair. It gave the opportunity for people at any level and on all sides to declare their part in human rights abuses, express regret and seek amnesty. Given the nature of the negotiated emergence of the post-Apartheid regime, its objective was reconciliation rather than revenge.

The strengths of Truth Commissions lie in promoting reform, raising the profile of human rights, buying time and legitimacy for a new regime, and providing evidence for tribunals that take longer to establish.

Their limitations are that they may eventually disappoint citizens expecting justice, their impact is dependant on sustained political will to act on their findings, they cannot deal with

<sup>30</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

human rights abuses in the present, and they can effectively be giving non-judicial guilty verdicts without respecting due process.

### *War Crimes Tribunals*

War Crimes Tribunals can be set up to punish human rights violations which occur during a violent conflict. Unlike a Truth Commission, a War Crimes Tribunal has the power to prosecute and sentence those suspected of human rights violations. A tribunal's aim is to build peace as an element of the reconciliation process and deter future violations. The focus on specific individuals rather than groups can help to diffuse ethnic tensions.

There is an international consensus on individual responsibility for war crimes and the auspices of the UN can help neutralise claims that they dispense victors' justice by establishing an international tribunal. One of the major challenges is keeping the support of governments whose help is needed to apprehend indicted individuals. International tribunals may also run the risk of weakening national governments by the implication that national institutions are not capable of dealing with national crimes. Furthermore, the time taken to set them up can limit their capacity to demonstrate the rule of law.

#### **Rwanda**

##### International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)

The UN Security Council set up the ICTR in 1994 to prosecute individuals for crimes against humanity and genocide in 1994 in Rwanda and by Rwandans in neighbouring states. It was decided it should be international to give it this wider jurisdiction and less bias. Judges are elected by the UN General Assembly. The maximum sentence it can impose is life imprisonment.

### *Justice for participants*

National Truth Commissions and national or international courts have limited capacity to deal with situations where there are large numbers of people suspected of participating in human rights abuses. Non-judicial forms of justice can provide a solution. For example, by the end of 1997 Rwanda's prison population was around 130,000 and the judicial system was no longer coping. The *Gacaca* system offered a non-judicial alternative.

### *Transparency and effectiveness*

The more transparent a state's policy making and financial management is, the easier it is to monitor the system's capacity to manage conflict and identify and react to growing tension and possible usurping of power by the executive.

Corruption can reduce the effectiveness with which a state can manage conflict. It can result in government ignoring the broader interests of society in peace-building and pursuing its own economic benefit. It can also lead to a reduction in its legitimacy in the eyes of citizens<sup>31</sup>. There is, however, a need to understand the potential for corruption to 'buy in' and neutralise groups and individuals that might otherwise destabilise a state.

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<sup>31</sup> World Bank, *Anticorruption in Transition: A Contribution to the Policy Debate*, Washington, D.C, 2000, p.22.

State incompetence will undermine a peace settlement, reduce a state's legitimacy and increase the likelihood of citizens looking outside the democratic process to settle grievances. State legitimacy is enhanced where a state can demonstrate that it is capable of transparent financial management – taxation, and managing revenues and spending. This is particularly so where natural resources such as oil, diamonds or hardwoods bring in large amounts of revenue (see the final section for the need for international responses). In the short-term, the possibility could be explored of channelling revenues generated by natural resources through 'escrow' accounts that allow for some international oversight of how the money is spent (as for the Chad/Cameroon oil pipeline proceeds)<sup>32</sup>. A state must also show results in delivering services and security to citizens; it must demonstrate that it can competently make and manage economic policy. For example, Malaysia's economic performance is one of the key factors in the success of its consociational arrangements. Furthermore, there is a need for government policies that directly address the role of differential rates of economic advancement between communities and between regions in shaping their inter-ethnic hostilities<sup>33</sup>.

There is a raft of possible institutions that can help generate this transparency: external audit commissions, effective budget offices, ombudsmen, independent broadcasting authorities, human rights commissions, anti-corruption commissions, commissions to consider land redistribution, and independent electoral commissions. Further work is needed to establish which of these should be prioritised.

### ***Inclusivity of the public sector***

It is crucial for employment in the public sector to be seen to be inclusive in a divided society. Affirmative action measures in the civil service, military and police recruitment can help to redress inter-group inequalities (with an awareness of the risk of a backlash from those groups who have previously been over-represented). One way of enticing members of rebel groups to accept state legitimacy is to offer them jobs in the public sector<sup>34</sup>. In the longer-term discrimination legislation can help to sustain this inclusivity.

### ***Democratic control of security forces***

The ability of the state to guarantee and monopolise security is a crucial element of legitimacy. Furthermore, long-term involvement of the military in politics severely depletes the capacity of civilian organisations to govern effectively post-transition (as has happened in Nigeria). Reform of the security sector is well covered elsewhere<sup>35</sup>, but it is worth noting here some of the governance initiatives that can help to keep the military in barracks<sup>36</sup>:

Some attempt to draw a line under past human rights abuses with truth and justice reports (see above, p.12).

Budgetary control of the military and weapons procurement policies.

Parliamentary and media oversight of security and intelligence services.

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<sup>32</sup> P. Le Billon, *The Conflict, Security and Development Group Bulletin*, Issue 11 (May-June 2001), Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London.

<sup>33</sup> Stewart & O'Sullivan (1998).

<sup>34</sup> As happened under Museveni in Uganda

<sup>35</sup> DFID, *Poverty and the Security Sector*, Policy Statement, 1999; and DFID, *Understanding and Supporting Security Sector Reform*, forthcoming (2001c).

<sup>36</sup> L. Whitehead, 'Transitions from Military to Civilian Regimes', paper given at DFID Governance Department Annual Development Seminar, Kendal, 4-5 October 2001.

National security councils and civilian Ministers of Defence.

Control through domestic and international courts.

Regional organisations which can apply pressure for democracy – Organisation of American States, SADC, West African States.

Participation in international peace-keeping initiatives.

### **International governance and conflict**

Conflicts which appear to be internal often have an international dimension:

War economies are highly dependent on all forms of external support and trade networks. For example, UNITA's contribution to the war in Angola during the latter part of the 1990s was largely underwritten by de Beers' "no questions" diamond buying policy<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, weapons are almost invariably imported.

Collier found a correlation between the risk of conflict in a country and the size of its diaspora living in the United States of America (the assumption being that the larger the diaspora is, the greater the total remittances flowing back into the home country)<sup>38</sup>.

Neighbouring states or groups harboured within them often provide support to rebel groups. This is especially so when national frontiers do not correspond to boundaries between nationalities or ethnicities.

International security interests, for example in Bosnia, have resulted in an emphasis on security in a region as opposed to longer-term democratic management of conflict.

Civil conflict must therefore be understood within the broader global context. Kaldor and Luckham argue that globalisation has undermined nation states with the result that ethnic and cultural identities are threatened and consequently enhanced<sup>39</sup>. Some go further and argue that polarised wealth is a feature of the global economy and this unequal distribution of wealth is a source of structural violence. "What is lacking in the current reforms is the recognition that markets alone cannot redistribute wealth, enhance equality or improve human security"<sup>40</sup>.

### **Conclusions: implications for donor intervention**

"Helping to strengthen the capacity of a society to manage tensions and disputes without resort to violence is a vital part of development work"<sup>41</sup>.

### ***International level action***

As Duffield argues<sup>42</sup>, the high level of dependence of war economies on international trade networks makes them vulnerable to concerted application of compliance and regulatory

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<sup>37</sup> Duffield (1999).

<sup>38</sup> P. Collier, Paper given to CODEP Annual Conference, SOAS, London, 2001.

<sup>39</sup> M. Kaldor & R. Luckham, 'Global Transformations and New Conflicts', in *Structural Conflict in the New Global Disorder: Insecurity and Development*, IDS Bulletin, vol. 32, no. 2, April 2001.

<sup>40</sup> S. Willet, 'Introduction: Globalisation and Insecurity' and 'Insecurity, Conflict and the New Global Disorder', in *Structural Conflict in the New Global Disorder: Insecurity and Development*, IDS Bulletin, vol. 32, no. 2, April 2001.

<sup>41</sup> OECD DAC, *Guidelines on Conflict Peace and Development Co-operation*, Paris, 1997.

measures. International action is potentially very effective, and responds to the wave of opinion calling for more effort to be spent on creating the environmental conditions that encourage peaceful state-society relations and less “manipulat[ion] of state institutions of poor countries in the name of ‘good governance’”<sup>43</sup>. Options include:

Sanctions. Aid sanctions can induce a political transition, as in Malawi in 1992-93, but have also failed, for example current sanctions in Iraq.

Better regulation of commodities such as oil, diamonds, hardwoods, narcotics – through initiatives like the Kimberly Process, which involved negotiating an international certification scheme for rough diamond imports, or enhancing the transparency of oil payments.

Voluntary codes of conduct to increase the transparency of international business practice – building on initiatives like BP’s offer to publicise all payments made to the Angolan government.

Regulation of the flow of small arms through the Programme of Action emerging from the July 2001 UN conference on small arms, and through support to regional arms moratoria.

Enhanced money laundering regulations and criminalisation of bribery committed abroad, combined with enhanced co-operation between intelligence services.

Revision of development bank lending criteria to ensure that conditionality does not aggravate conflict.

Support for regional organisations with a democratic clause in membership requirements. ECOWAS, for example, has taken an increasingly assertive role in conflict prevention and management. For instance, it authorised the intervention of a West African peace-keeping force, ECOMOG, to restore the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone.

### ***National level action***

In an immensely complicated field, this section identifies some general principles and a menu of options for governance interventions in the field of conflict management.

#### **1. Some general principles:**

##### *Careful analysis of the conflict risks is needed*

There are tools available that help to identify which countries are particularly at risk of violent conflict, for example the forthcoming DFID Conflict Assessment Guidelines. A simpler test proposed by Stewart is that countries are at risk when per capita incomes are very low, when they have recently suffered conflict and when there are severe inequalities between groups<sup>44</sup>. This includes a great number of countries and it perhaps indicates that development aid in all countries should be sensitive to how it interacts with conflict management. It is self-evident to say that intervention should be based on careful analysis of the country context<sup>45</sup>. Duffield argues that this requires development agencies, which are

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<sup>42</sup> M. Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: the Merging of Development and Security*, London: Zed Books, 2001.

<sup>43</sup> M. Moore, ‘New Institutional Theory, Institutional Reform and Poverty Reduction’, paper presented at the 10th Anniversary Conference of the Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics, London, 7-8 September 2000.

<sup>44</sup> Stewart and FitzGerald (2001).

<sup>45</sup> For an analytical framework see L. Cliffe & R. Luckham, *Complex Political Emergencies and the State: Failure and the Fate of the State*, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 20, No 1 (1999), pp.27-50.

currently incapable of tackling such ‘complex’ problems, to change into radically different, adaptive, learning and networked organisations<sup>46</sup>.

*Timing is crucial*

Early intervention to pre-empt conflict from turning violent is crucial – as well as the obvious costs of war, once violent conflict has occurred, the risk of it re-emerging is very high<sup>47</sup>. The ending of violent conflict provides a rare opportunity for institutional change. Political and institutional choices that are made during periods of transition are crucial and can make all the difference between the consolidation of democracy and regression to non-democratic rule and conflict<sup>48</sup>. The risk is that divisions, which are particularly marked at that moment, become enshrined in new institutions. Where there is no opportunity for grand constitutional change, interventions should focus on conflict management through enhancing state legitimacy. But as Moore and Putzel have argued, it may be that no intervention is better than a badly informed one<sup>49</sup>.

*Sustainable solutions need to be rooted in the national context*

The Dayton Accords for Bosnia-Herzegovina were not the result of a participatory process and internal actors now have no interest in legitimising them. That experience contrasts with the relative success of South Africa’s transformation driven by strong internal political processes. Strict democratic conditionality on aid can have the effect of undermining reformers. Furthermore, an over-reliance on international financing of peace institutions can cause problems when the financing ends as happened, for example, with the electoral system in Nicaragua<sup>50</sup>.

*The conflict potential of radical democratisation and economic liberation must be appreciated*

The introduction of a narrow form of democracy based on a Western-style multi-party system has been identified as a major contributory factor to the political dynamics leading up to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994<sup>51</sup>. In Cambodia during the reconstruction period in the mid-1990s, rapid moves towards a market economy increased socio-economic insecurity for vulnerable groups, an emphasis on the rapid restoration of macroeconomic stability exacerbated political tensions; and civil service down-sizing undermined the post-war coalition<sup>52</sup>.

*Room for manoeuvre may be limited*

Complete freedom to design institutions is very improbable. Choices about institutions are never made rationally; they are influenced by power and interests. For example the international community’s interest might be in security (e.g. the Stability Pact in the Balkans) while national needs might be for longer-term conflict management structures. Even when rational choices have been made, there can be unintended consequences (as in Fiji – see box above). There are also strong arguments that it is better to make limited reforms of an existing system than to jump to a completely new and unfamiliar system.

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<sup>46</sup> Duffield (2001).

<sup>47</sup> Collier (2001).

<sup>48</sup> Luckham, et al. (2000).

<sup>49</sup> M. Moore & J. Putzel, *Thinking Strategically about Politics and Poverty*, Institute for Development Studies, Sussex University, Working Paper 101, 1999.

<sup>50</sup> Harris and Reilly (1998), p.357.

<sup>51</sup> D. Woodward, *The IMF, the World Bank and Economic Policy in Rwanda: Economic, Social and Political Implications*, Oxford: Oxfam, 1996.

<sup>52</sup> Hendrickson (2001).

*Processes should be iterative*

One clear lesson from South Africa's transition is the need for the institutional design process to be transparent and capable of evolving through successive iterations which can gradually reduce the importance of ethnic groups.

**2. Possible governance interventions to manage conflict peacefully**

Given all that has been said above, what governance interventions might improve a state's capacity to manage conflict?

*Constitutional conflict management:*

Consider the possibilities of integrative power-sharing arrangements. If that is unrealistic, consider temporary consociational systems.

Consider the possibilities for devolution of power, but consider the risks especially if it will occur along ethnic lines.

Understand the power balance between the legislature and the executive and look at ways of increasing mutual checks without decreasing accountability and increasing the risk of deadlock.

Consider how the electoral system interacts with the nature of the divided society and how changes to it might produce more moderate, inclusive behaviour.

*Improving conflict management through enhancing state legitimacy*

Intervene at the level of civil society to increase the role it plays in competitive politics (with sensitivity to the dangers of undermining state authority): support advocacy groups and embryonic political parties, strengthen the media to raise awareness of political rights, promote internal democracy and increase space for civil society participation in government processes.

Work with political parties to develop programmes which are not identity based.

Increase transparency and effectiveness in the public administration with improvements to public sector financial management; independent monitoring commissions; and a better understanding of the role corruption plays in both managing and generating conflict. This is particularly crucial in countries with large natural resource incomes. In such countries, explore the use of internationally monitored escrow accounts to manage natural resource revenues.

Increase government capacity to produce policies aimed at reducing economic and social inequality – particularly inequality between groups.<sup>53</sup>

Increase the opportunity costs of war by enhancing state capacity to deliver services.

Strengthen the capacity and independence of the judiciary in order to increase government accountability and better manage existing tensions in society.

Consider arrangements for delivering transitional justice: war crime tribunals, truth and reconciliation commissions and non-judicial systems.

Increase the awareness of human rights and strengthen the institutions that protect them.

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<sup>53</sup> But see Collier (2001) where he argues that economic inequality might cause political protest, but does not increase the risk of conflict.

Enhance security through policing initiatives at the local level and improved democratic control over the security forces.

Improve the inclusivity of the public sector through affirmative action and anti-discrimination legislation.

### **Acronyms**

AV	Alternative Vote
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group (Peacekeeping Mission)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee
PR	Proportional Representation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
STV	Single Transferable Vote
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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- WP30 Maria Emma Wills & Maria Teresa Pinto, 'Peru's failed search for political stability (June 2003)
- WP31 Robert Hunter Wade, 'What strategies are viable for developing countries today? The World Trade Organisation and the shrinking of 'development space' (June 2003)
- WP32 Carlos Medina & Hermes Martínez, 'Violence and drug prohibition in Colombia' (August 2003)

The aim of the Crisis States Programme (CSP) at DESTIN's Development Research Centre is to provide new understanding of the causes of crisis and breakdown in the developing world and the processes of avoiding or overcoming them. We want to know why some political systems and communities, in what can be called the "fragile states" found in many of the poor and middle income countries, have broken down even to the point of violent conflict while others have not. Our work asks whether processes of globalisation have precipitated or helped to avoid crisis and social breakdown.

### **Crisis States Programme collaborators**

#### ***In India:***

Asia Development Research Institute (Patna, Bihar)  
NEIDS, North-East Hill University (Shillong)

#### ***In South Africa:***

Wits Institute of Social & Economic Research (WISER)  
Sociology of Work Workshop (SWOP)  
Department of Sociology  
(University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg)

#### ***In Colombia:***

IEPRI, Universidad Nacional de Colombia  
Universidad de los Andes  
Universidad del Rosario

### **Research Objectives**

- We will assess how constellations of power at local, national and global levels drive processes of institutional change, collapse and reconstruction and in doing so will challenge simplistic paradigms about the beneficial effects of economic and political liberalisation.
- We will examine the effects of international interventions promoting democratic reform, human rights and market competition on the 'conflict management capacity' and production and distributional systems of existing polities.
- We will analyse how communities have responded to crisis, and the incentives and moral frameworks that have led either toward violent or non-violent outcomes.
- We will examine what kinds of formal and informal institutional arrangements poor communities have constructed to deal with economic survival and local order.



**Director: Dr James Putzel**  
**Administrator: Wendy Foulds**  
**Editorial Assistant: Jonathan Curry-Machado**

Development Research Centre,  
Development Studies Institute (DESTIN),  
LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7849 4631 Fax: +44 (0)20 7955 6844  
e-mail: [csp@lse.ac.uk](mailto:csp@lse.ac.uk)

