

Editorial

EARLY WARNING AND PREVENTIVE ACTION IN THE EMP

*Roberto Aliboni**

In this issue of 'Conflict in Focus', one Northern and one Southern institution - respectively the Conflict Prevention Institute of Heidelberg University and the Regional Centre for Conflict Prevention-RCCP of the Jordan Diplomacy Institute in Amman - compare their methodologies of early warning and conflict analysis. This exercise in cooperation augurs well for the future of North-South cooperation, in particular within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership-EMP, the Partnership of which both institutions - and this author - are a part.

As it is well known, conflict prevention can be regarded as a short- or long-term activity. In the past ten years, it has made important advances in both timeframes. The long-term concept of conflict prevention has been strengthened and clarified. Today, it is understood that, in the long-term, national and international policies have to contribute to changing structures so as to make stability a built-in feature of the societies involved. In this sense, conflict prevention is increasingly understood as a dimension to be embedded in any policy rather than a policy in itself. Thus, it must be mainstreamed into policies, as is the case, for instance, with the EU Euro-Med policy. On the other hand, short-term conflict prevention has become more systematic and has gone beyond diplomats' well known attempts at predicting conflict on the basis of practical experience and current information. Benchmarking has become more diffuse and analytically sophisticated; electronic capabilities have made it possible to develop predictive models; efforts to forecast events have become more widespread in governments as well as NGOs.

All these developments have had no direct impact on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. It is only indirectly and passively affected by conflict prevention activities, that is to the extent EU policy regarding the EMP include a conflict prevention dimension. As a result, the EMP - as a cooperative endeavour between Northern and Southern partners across the Mediterranean Sea distinct from the EU itself - does not embody any conflict prevention policy. This is true, first of all, in EMP intergovernmental relations. It is also true, however, in relations between Northern and Southern EMP civil societies, because there is almost no conflict prevention culture in Southern Mediterranean countries to match the very widespread familiarity with conflict prevention prevailing in the European countries today.

continued on page 02

IN THIS ISSUE

01 Editorial

Early Warning and Preventive Action in the EMP

Early Warning and Preventive Action-RCCP Methodology

03 The 'Country Conflict Profile (CCP)' Methodology

04 Islamist Opposition in Egypt

Early Warning and Preventive Action-HIIC Methodology

08 Defining Conflicts and Wars Qualitatively-the Methodology of the HIIC

12 The Conflict Panorama of the Middle East and Maghreb

The views expressed in this issue are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Regional Center on Conflict Prevention at the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy.

www.rccp-jid.org

Yet this disparity appears to be more important at the governmental than at the societal level. In fact, while governments in the South simply ignore conflict prevention, Southern Mediterranean academic spheres, think tanks and NGOs are aware of it. In particular, they are familiar with the use of predictive models related to conflict prevention. The RCCP in Jordan is a case in point. It would be high time for programmes of cooperation to be started up in the field of conflict prevention between the EMP's Northern and Southern civil societies, in particular getting into the habit of jointly using predictive models and looking at future developments with a view to forecasting conflict and shaping fitting responses to prevent it. This is why the cooperation between Heidelberg University and the RCCP in this edition of 'Conflict in Focus' is a small but remarkable event.

As mentioned, early warning methodologies have surged in recent years. Governments and, more frequently, international institutions have adopted early warning and conflict analysis models and developed the software to make them work. These models derive from the efforts of such research institutions and think tanks as, especially, Clingendael and the Conflict Prevention Network (CPN) in Europe and the Fund for Peace in the United States in the field of early warning and benchmarking. More in general, the models benefited from the important cycle of studies and analyses concerning the roots of conflict that emerged after the end of the Cold War. In fact, these studies shifted the focus of conflict from the bipolar East-West confrontation back to regional geopolitical factors. The models for early warning stemming from these experiences integrates the assessment of conflict with policy responses. Given a mission statement, the analyst can draft, first of all, a country conflict profile based on a systemic analysis of benchmarks, then a paper in which he/she brings together the formal analysis drawn from the model with their own experience and analytical knowledge. The result of these first steps provides the basis for the formulation of a number of policy options. The final outcome is not merely an early warning leaving the more important question of what to do up to policymakers, but a warning accompanied by policy recommendations. The integration of these two aspects has proven an all important aspect in that experiences show that unless warnings are supplemented by options and recommendations, policymakers may fail to take them into due consideration.

Thus, early warning must be carried out by integrating conflict analysis and policy implementation. How these two stages can be integrated is not an easy matter. The fact that analysts now provide analysis and warning accompanied by policy options is definitely contributing to policy implementation. However, mechanisms must be envisaged to allow analysts and policymakers to keep in

touch and interact. In a sense, there must be mechanisms, if not institutions, to ensure that civil societies and governments are able to integrate their respective actions. Many governments and official organizations have their own models so they just incorporate both the analytical and operational stages. However, in a sophisticated polity, the best result would be achieved through interplay between civil society and government. Only a diffuse culture of conflict prevention can make preventive action work.

In the EMP, there is such interplay among Northern partners. It is lacking among Southern partners. One way to improve the situation could be to devise an EU policy geared at fostering a culture of conflict prevention in Southern civil societies and, at the same time, encouraging civil society-government interaction in the Southern partners' countries. If this succeeds, it could work as a harbinger to allow for common North-South conflict prevention action in the EMP framework. ■

* Roberto Aliboni, Vice President, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome

THE ‘COUNTRY CONFLICT PROFILE (CCP)’ METHODOLOGY

In 2000, the Institute of International Affairs (Istituto Affari Internazionali-IAI, Rome) launched a project aimed at creating the first ever nucleus of capabilities in conflict prevention in the Euro-Mediterranean framework, with a view to contributing to the development of a conflict prevention ‘culture’ in and about the Euro-Med area, and to preparing appropriate conditions for actual preventive actions in the region. The project consisted of two interacting processes:

- The development of tools for a Euro-Med Conflict Prevention System and, in particular, an integrated model for early warning and response planning (EW&R), specifically tailored for conflict prevention in the Mediterranean countries; this includes a dedicated software, and the Country Conflict Profile (CCP), for early warning activities in the area.
- A cooperation programme between the IAI and the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy consisting of the establishment of a centre on conflict prevention with the aim of using and testing the CCP model and software.

Indeed, in January 2004, IAI and the newly established centre, the Regional Centre on Conflict Prevention, started a joint project on conflict prevention in the Euro-Med region. Among the general goals of the project was to improve the capabilities of the newly established Regional Centre on Conflict Prevention with the support of the IAI model of analysis for Early Warning in the Euro-Med area, CCP (Country Conflict Profile). Research results will be published on RCCP website with the final aim of stimulating a debate on the issue. Following is one of the recent updated reports of the centre's Conflict Profile on Islamism in Egypt.

The ‘Country Conflict Profile (CCP)’ Methodology

The CCP methodology serves as an early warning tool designed to analyze and assess potential conflicts in the Euro-Med region using standardized parameters.⁽¹⁾ It consists of two parts:

1) The Country Conflict Profile (CCP) Model of Analysis

The Country Conflict Profile model of analysis evaluates the overall proclivity to conflict of a given country in a given historical moment, according to standardized parameters. It is based on a list of indicators (conflict facilitating factors) which appear as questions in a questionnaire. The CCP model of analysis assesses five main aspects of

the conflict potential of a country: (1) the overall country conflict potential; (2) the country short term vulnerability (escalatory potential); (3) the sources of risk; (4) the actors of conflict; (5) the individual potential conflicts. The CCP model of analysis is also translated into dedicated software (CCP software).

2) The Conflict Profile Paper (CPP) Format

The Conflict Profile Paper (CPP) format is a short written document that builds on the CCP model of analysis to provide a concise analysis and a basic assessment of an individual potential conflict. The CPP format still needs to be fully developed and tested. The first examples of Conflict Profiles will be published in RCCP's website. The methodology of the CPP combines standardized inputs, mainly deriving from data provided by the CCP, with qualitative analysis provided in a narrative form. The blueprint of the CPP format is the following:

1. Identification data of the potential conflict (data from CCP)
 - name of conflict
 - stage of conflict
 - history stage (new, new phase etc.)
 - main actors
 - escalatory potential
 - victims
2. Concise history of potential conflict (narrative)
3. Synopsis of sources of risk (data from CCP)
 - by category
 - by problem area
 - by disputed issue
4. Analysis of the problem areas and disputed issues (narrative)
5. List of the actors of conflict (data from CCP)
 - by role (adversaries, allies, mediators...)
 - by issue
6. Analysis of nature, actions, and agenda of the actors of conflict (narrative).

(1) The underlying conceptual assumptions of the CCP methodology are illustrated in Aliboni, R., Guazzone, L. and Pioppi, D., Early Warning and Conflict Prevention in the Euro-Med Area, A Research Report by the Istituto Affari Internazionali, IAI Quaderni, English Series, No.2, December 2001.

ISLAMIST OPPOSITION IN EGYPT

IDENTIFICATION DATA OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT
<p>NAME OF CONFLICT Regime identifies and targets internal/external enemy: Islamist opposition in Egypt</p>
<p>STAGE OF CONFLICT Crisis</p>
<p>HISTORY STATE New phase</p>
<p>MAIN ACTORS Regime, Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Militants, US (EU)</p>
<p>ESCALATORY POTENTIAL Null</p>
<p>VICTIMS (2006) 19⁽¹⁾</p>

CONCISE HISTORY OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT

The Islamic Movement in Egypt: the Background

The Egyptian Islamic movement dates back to the late 1920s, when Hassan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood, a social organization aiming at transforming traditional Islamic frameworks such as charities and educational associations into tools for socializing the lower and middle classes in Egypt's cities, while projecting Islam as an all-inclusive and self-sufficient system (Islam din wa dawla, Islam is religion and state). In the thirties and forties, the Brotherhood rapidly became the main social and political movement in Egypt and the main rival of the Wafd, the nationalist liberal party led by Saad Zaghlul (1857-1927).

After President Nasser repression in the fifties, the movement re-emerged in the seventies thanks to President Sadat's need for allies against the left and the Nasserites and to the oil boom, which boosted Saudi Arabia conservative influence in the country and helped

the formation of an 'Islamic bourgeoisie'.⁽²⁾

In the meanwhile, the hard experience of Nassers prisons had helped the formation of a much more radical wing of the Islamist movement, inspired by the work of Sayyed Qutob and represented mainly by the Islamic student unions (al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya).⁽³⁾

The initial coincidence of intents between the Islamic movement, in its various components, and the government, terminated abruptly at the end of the seventies when the increasingly powerful jama'at started to be perceived as a threat to the regime stability.⁽⁴⁾

The New Confrontation of the Nineties

In 1981, Sadat was assassinated by a young militant of a group (al-Jihad), stemmed from the outlawed jama'at. The new President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarak, after an initial repression of the entire spectrum of the Islamist movement, inaugurated in the second half of the eighties a policy of mediation and clemency. The regime, in fact, tolerated the moderate wing, representative of the Islamic bourgeoisie, allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to unofficially participate to elections⁽⁵⁾ and released many radical militants; letting most of them leave to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan.⁽⁶⁾ However, things deteriorated again at the beginning of the nineties, when the policy of co-opting the moderates, while keeping under control the extremists, revealed its limits. The regime started to realise, in fact, that the Islamic bourgeoisie and the moderate Muslim Brotherhood could well form a political force capable of representing a legitimate alternative to their rule.⁽⁷⁾

At the same time, between 1992-1997 the regime had to face the re-emergence of violent groups, which organised themselves mainly in the Sa'eed (South Nile Valley). Those groups-strengthened by the contribution and experience of Jihad fighters returning from Afghanistan-

- (1) On the 24 of April 2006, Dahab, a seaside resort in the South Sinai, was hit by three bombs killing 19 people and injuring nearly 90 between Egyptian and foreigner tourists.
- (2) Kepel, 1984 and 2000.
- (3) Ibid. Sayyed Qutob was a Muslim brother executed in 1966.
- (4) Kepel, 1984.
- (5) The Muslim Brotherhood candidates participated in the 1984 elections in alliance with the Wafd, in 1987 with the Liberal Party and afterwards as independents.
- (6) Kepel, 2000.
- (7) At the beginning of the 1990s the Brotherhood had reached out to occupy important posts in the official religious establishment and also won the majority of the professional unions elections, most notably those of the lawyers, traditionally a liberal stronghold. See Kepel, 2000.

were responsible of a number of violent acts, of which the most famous is probably the killing of tourists in the Luxor incident in November 1997.

Again the regime reacted with a general repression, clearly abandoning the policies of compromise of the eighties. This authoritarian turn of the regime against Islamists in the nineties was successful in defeating the extremist groups, which anyway had already alienated popular support for their violence and extremism. Moreover, it gave an important setback to the growing power of the Muslim Brothers. However, it did also provoke a loss of international credibility for the regime, which was accused of using the excuse of Islamist extremism to act against the moderate Islamist movement and civil society in general.⁽⁸⁾

New Phase: 'War against terror

At the end of the nineties, many analysts agreed on the declining trend of militant Islamism,⁽⁹⁾ which was in fact, at least apparently, in retreat almost everywhere in the Islamic world. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood had consolidated the acceptance of the democratic game, acting as any other legal opposition group, but never succeeding in being formally recognized as a party. In 1996, few Muslim Brothers, together with activists of other political and ideological backgrounds, launched the Wasat Al-Islami (the Middle) Party, a moderate political grouping defining its reference to Islam in terms of Islamic civilization, rather than the Islamic faith, thus establishing the doctrinal basis for a non-sectarian party of democratic reform.⁽¹⁰⁾

The refusal of the authorities to legalize the party denied to the most liberal current in Egyptian Islamist activism a party-political outlet. This event unveils the regime's intention on preserving the political dominance of the National Democratic Party, at the expense of any serious prospect of a real change in power.

In the meanwhile, international events such as 9/11 and the war against terror launched by the US administration, opened a new phase of global confrontation, this time with a new form of militant global Islamism (Jihadism). This situation affected Egypt in two ways. On one side, the regime's strategy of using militant Islamism as a justification for repressive and authoritarian policies was reinforced by Western acceptance of tough methods against terrorism. On the other side, militant Islamism was again represented, in its violent form, as the only way to fight against Western domination and corrupt and subservient regimes, exactly when the deteriorating economic situation, the escalation in the occupied territories of Palestine and the war in Iraq, were aggravating waves of popular discontent and frustration.

In November 2005, the Muslim Brotherhood gained 88 seats in the Parliamentary elections (about 23%), a record in the history of the Brotherhood performance.⁽¹¹⁾ However, after a period of great political mobilization and unusual freedom, tensions begun to rise again in 2006. Hundreds of Muslim Brothers were arrested and the Egyptian process of reform stalled.⁽¹²⁾

Terrorism returned to Egypt in 2004, after an absence of seven years, with successive attacks and the emergence of a heretofore unknown movement in Sinai.⁽¹³⁾

Although, there are absolutely no links between the Sinai terrorist attacks and the Islamist opposition represented in the Egyptian Parliament and there is no apparent danger of an emerging national violent opposition, the situation is unlikely to endure indefinitely. In the absence of constitutional and peaceful outlet for the country's Islamists and alienated youth, the distress many Egyptian feel about the deteriorating internal and international situation will inevitably seek expression in other, more radical, forms. The ineffectiveness of institutional politics and the global war tacitly justified in terms of 'clash of civilizations' might in fact push people to sympathize more with extreme positions and methods.

Terrorism returned to Egypt in 2004, after an absence of seven years, with successive attacks and the emergence of a heretofore unknown movement in Sinai.⁽¹⁴⁾ Although, there are absolutely no links between the Sinai terrorist attacks and the Islamist opposition represented in the Egyptian Parliament and there is no apparent danger of an emerging national violent opposition, the situation is unlikely to endure indefinitely.

In the absence of constitutional and peaceful outlet for the country's Islamists and alienated youth, the distress many Egyptian feel about the deteriorating internal and international situation will inevitably seek expression in other, more radical, forms.

(8) Kienle, 1998.

(9) Roy, 1992 and Kepel, 2000

(10) See for example Stacher, 2002.

(11) El Amrani, I., 'Controlled Reform in Egypt: Neither Reformist nor Controlled', Merip, 15 December 2005

(12) Mustafa, H ; Norton, R., 'Stalled Reform: The Case of Egypt', Current History, January 2007.

(13) In 2004, 2005 and 2006 several terrorist attacks were perpetuated in the Sinai Peninsula causing numerous victims, especially Egyptians. Apparently, the attacks were carried out by a local group 'Tawhid and Jihad' with strong links to local dynamics and to what has been labeled as the 'Sinai question'. Egypt's Sinai Question, ICG, Middle East/North Africa Report n° 61, 30 January 2007

(14) In 2004, 2005 and 2006 several terrorist attacks were perpetuated in the Sinai Peninsula causing numerous victims, especially Egyptians. Apparently, the attacks were carried out by a local group 'Tawhid and Jihad' with strong links to local dynamics and to what has been labeled as the 'Sinai question'. Egypt's Sinai Question, ICG, Middle East/North Africa Report n° 61, 30 January 2007

SOURCES OF RISK AND VULNERABILITY

CATEGORY

Political Indicators (risk: **medium**; vulnerability: **high**)

PROBLEM AREA AND ISSUES

Regime (risk: **medium**; vulnerability: **null**)

Authoritarian regime

Legitimacy deficit of government/regime

Negative political rights and civil liberty index (Freedom House)

Ongoing regime transition

Detrimental political leader personality

Institutions (risk: **medium**; vulnerability: **null**)

Lacking or ineffective legal framework

Repressive or discriminatory legal system

Ineffective governance

International relations (risk: **high**; vulnerability: **high**)

Detrimental external actor political intervention

Detrimental external actor policy of mediation

Troublesome country's international political alliances

CATEGORY

Security indicators (risk: **medium**; vulnerability: **medium**)

PROBLEM AREA AND ISSUES

Internal disputes (risk: **low**; vulnerability: **null**)

Frequent use of armed violence in support of political struggles

Recent history of violent changes in regime

Role of security forces (risk: **high**; vulnerability: **null**)

Communal security forces (militias)

CATEGORY

Socio-cultural indicators (risk: **medium**; vulnerability: **medium**)

PROBLEM AREAS AND ISSUES

Culture and ideology (risk: **medium**; vulnerability: **null**)

Opposition has a religious / nationalist / racist ideology

Regime identifies and targets internal/external enemy

CATEGORY

Economic indicators (risk: **medium**; vulnerability: **medium**)

PROBLEM AREAS AND ISSUES

Economic relations (risk: **medium**; vulnerability: **medium**)

High external economic vulnerability

Living conditions (risk: **high**; vulnerability: **high**)

Economic transition

ANALYSIS OF PROBLEM AREAS AND DISPUTED ISSUES

Main disputed issues concerning the confrontation between the Islamists and the Egyptian regime are:

- The continuous repressive policies of the regime [Authoritarian regime; Negative political rights and civil liberties index; Lacking or ineffective legal framework; Repressive or discriminatory legal system]
- The detrimental policies of regime's international allies (Israel, US, but also to a lesser extent EU) both in terms of regional conflicts (i.e. Israel aggressive policies towards the Palestinians and other regional actors, US and EU failure of mediation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, US and EU failure to condemn the war in Lebanon and the US war in Iraq) and in terms of US/EU regime's repressive policies support. [Legitimacy deficit of government/regime; Detrimental external actor political intervention; Detrimental external actor policy of mediation; Troublesome country's international political alliances]
- History of violent confrontations [Frequent use of armed forces in support of political struggles; Recent history of violent changes in regime (Sadat's assassination in 1981); Communal security forces (regime-militant Islamists confrontation 1992-1997)].
- The regime exploitation of Militant Islamism for general repression [Regime identifies and targets internal/external enemy]
- Presence of discriminatory/racist attitudes inside the Islamic movement [Opposition has a religious/nationalist/racist ideology]
- The deteriorating economic situation [High external economic vulnerability; Economic transition; Ineffective governance]

Notwithstanding the fact that the disputed issues are numerous and transversal to the four country's categories (political, security, economic and socio-cultural), still the average risk factor is medium, with the only exception of the International relations problem area; Role of security forces (alleged presence of Islamist militia)⁽¹⁴⁾ and Living conditions;

At the moment, the internal security front is calm and the moderate Islamists are acting like any other legal opposition. The escalation factor (high vulnerability) is given mainly by the international situation and external actors political intervention [Political indicators - international relations] and by the rapidly deteriorating living conditions in the country [Economic indicators - living conditions].

(14) See IISS Military Balance 2006 and 2007.

LIST OF ACTORS OF CONFLICT

Muslim Brotherhood

By issue

Authoritarian regime; role: adversary
Legitimacy deficit of government/regime; role: adversary
Negative political rights and civil liberty index (Freedom House); role: adversary
On going regime transition; role: adversary
Detrimental political leaders personality; role: adversary
Lacking or ineffective legal framework; role: adversary
Repressive or discriminatory legal system; role: adversary
Ineffective governance; role: adversary
Detrimental external actor political intervention; role: adversary
Detrimental external actor policy of mediation; role: adversary
Troublesome country's international political alliances; role: adversary
Opposition has a religious/nationalist/racist ideology; role: adversary
Regime identifies and targets internal/external enemy; role: adversary
High external economic vulnerability; role: adversary
Economic transition; role: adversary

Islamic militants (i.e. violent groups: al-Jihad; al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya, etc.)

By issue

Authoritarian regime; role: adversary
Legitimacy deficit of government/regime; role: adversary
Repressive or discriminatory legal system; role: adversary
Ineffective governance; role: adversary
Detrimental external actor political intervention; role: adversary
Detrimental external actor policy of mediation; role: adversary
Troublesome country's international political alliances; role: adversary
Opposition has a religious/nationalist/racist ideology; role: adversary
Regime identifies and targets internal/external enemy; role: adversary
Frequent use of armed violence in support of political struggles; role: adversary
Recent history of violent changes in regime; role: adversary
Communal security forces (militia); role: adversary

US

By issue

Detrimental external actor political intervention
Detrimental external actor policy of mediation
Troublesome country's international political alliances

ISRAEL

By issue

Detrimental external actor political intervention
Troublesome country's international political alliances
History of external conflictuality
History of national military defeat

EU

By issue

Detrimental external actor political intervention
Detrimental external actor policy of mediation
Troublesome country's international political alliances

ANALYSIS OF NATURE, ACTIONS AND AGENDA OF THE ACTORS OF CONFLICT

The main actor in the Egyptian Islamist movement is the Muslim Brotherhood, which disavowed political violence as a mean to attain power long time ago.⁽¹⁵⁾ At present, analysts speak about an internal divergence between the old guard, more faithful to the thoughts of the founder Hassan al-Banna and willing to limit the organization activities to the social realm, and a new guard prepared to transform the Brotherhood into a real political party operating in the formal political system. From this last group are the founders of the al-Wasat party in 1996.⁽¹⁶⁾

Notwithstanding this internal conflict, the Brotherhood has accepted quite clearly the rule of the democratic game. In 2004, in the wake of the debate on political reform sparked by the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative of the US administration, the Brotherhood exposed a political programme for democracy and political reform very similar to those of the secular opposition.⁽¹⁷⁾ This rapprochement is also confirmed by the increased cooperation between the secular opposition parties and the Brotherhood for common causes, such as opposition to the Iraq war, solidarity with Palestine or for constitutional reform. At the moment, the major distinction between the Muslim Brotherhood and secular opposition is the Brotherhood call for the full application of the Islamic law in Egypt.

As far as extremist groups are concerned, they were successfully repressed during the 1992-1997 confrontation. Moreover, albeit their spectacular acts, they probably never represented a grassroots political force capable of overthrowing the regime and forming a real alternative. More than established organizations, extremist Islamist groups in Egypt are organised around few charismatic figures counting on small clandestine cells. Although few names are recurrent (such as al-Jihad, al-Jama'at al-Islamiyya), it is also difficult to establish whether those groups have a real political continuity. ■

(15) Although there were certainly links (mostly personal) between the Brotherhood and the more radical Jama'at of the seventies, which were commonly perceived as the youth section of the same organization, the Supreme Guide of the Brotherhood has since the seventies taken the distance from the kind of more radical thought and action proposed in the work of Said al-Qutb. See Kepel, 1984 and 2000.

(16) See also ICG Middle East and North Africa Briefing, 20 April 2004.

(17) al-Ghobashy, 'The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers', International Journal of Middle East Studies, 37, 3, July 2005.

DEFINING CONFLICTS AND WARS QUALITATIVELY - THE METHODOLOGY OF THE HIIK

Lotta Mayer*

The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK) aims at describing and analysing all inter- and intrastate political conflicts worldwide and collecting data on them.⁽¹⁾ Since 1992, the HIIK has annually published the Conflict Barometer, in which most important measures taken in ongoing political conflicts worldwide are described shortly in an analytical way. Moreover, all conflicts are classified by intensity, items and further data (see below), and statistical analysis is drawn from this data. This way, the HIIK tries to make comparable the current findings and those of the previous year, as well as the development in the different regions. A further aim is to identify global long-term trends. The following article strives to give you a brief introduction to the methodology developed and used by the HIIK. The main focus is on the definition of political conflicts as well as the different levels of intensity and their definition and operationalisation.

Definition of Conflict

I. Definition. The HIIK defines conflicts as *‘the clashing of interests (positional differences) over national values of some duration and magnitude between at least two parties (organised groups, states, groups of states, state organizations) that are determined to pursue their interests and win their cases.’*⁽²⁾

II. Explanation. This definition needs some short specifications and explanations.

1. Types of Conflict. The differentiation between different types of conflict parties points to the distinction between different types of conflict. Regarding types of conflict, the HIIK adheres to the usual distinction between interstate and intrastate conflicts. In 2006, the new category of transnational conflicts was introduced in the Conflict Barometer.

2. Differentiation of Conflicts. In the Conflict Barometer, the HIIK tries to ‘disentangle’ complex conflict situations, as e.g. in the Middle East. They analysed as different conflicts - characterized by different constellations of conflict parties and different items - that are connected but nevertheless have to be separated for the sake of a clear analysis of causes and processes. Therefore, we distinguish the secession conflict between the Palestinians and the Israeli government both from the conflict over regional predominance between Fatah and Hamas and from the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. Further distinct conflicts in this region are the territorial conflicts between Israel and Lebanon (a conflict that also centres on the alleged support of Hezbollah), Israel and Jordan, and the water conflicts between Israel and Lebanon as well as Israel and Jordan.

3. National Values. By national values, we mean goods that are of great importance to the state or the society as a whole, e.g. the state’s territory and borders, the orientation of the political system, or the question of who is in control of the government. Therefore, the HIIK distinguishes the following conflict items: territory, resources, international power, national power, regional predominance, autonomy, secession, system/ideology and decolonization. According to the methodology of the HIIK, a conflict can have more than one item. In fact, many conflicts have two or three items, frequent combinations being territory and resources, national power and resources, or national power and system/ideology.

4. Types of Actors 1: State and Non-State Actors. The HIIK considers non-state actors conflict parties. This is quite usual nowadays, as intrastate conflicts outnumber interstate ones by far (see below). The HIIK’s definition was the first one to allow all conflict parties to be non-state actors,⁽³⁾ as it is e.g. the case in the power struggle between Fatah and Hamas in Palestine. These non-state conflicts⁽⁴⁾ are neglected by most common conflict definitions, as those require at least one party to be a state.

It is important to be able to grasp the phenomenon of non-state conflicts for the sake of its inner relation to failed or

* Researcher at the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research

(1) The HIIK emerged from a research project led by Prof. Frank R. Pfetsch at the Department of Political Science of the University of Heidelberg in 1991. This project aimed to create a database called Conflict Simulation Model 1 (Cosimo 1), containing data on national and international conflicts reaching back to 1945. This database has been completely overworked and restructured in two research projects at the University of Heidelberg from 2003 to 2005, funded by the European Union. The working title of this new database was COSIMO 2. It has recently been renamed Conflict Information System (CONIS). CONIS has not yet been published. Therefore, its data is currently not available to the public. In the Conflict Barometers, you can find some of the analyses drawn from the database. For a detailed reflection on the methodology as well as a presentation and interpretation of the data cf. the doctoral thesis of Nikolas Schwank, that will be published in 2007.

(2) Cf. Conflict Barometer 2006, p. 1.

(3) This is the case since 2003, when the methodology was worked over. Cf. Conflict Barometer 2003, p. 8. Nevertheless, non-state conflicts are not used for quantitative analyses in the Conflict Barometer as of yet. The Human Security Center, which works with PRIO’s quantitative conflict data in its Human Security Report, ordered PRIO to collect this data as well, but only for the years 2002 and 2003 (cf. Human Security Report 2005, p. 21). PRIO usually requires one conflict party to be a state (cf. PRIO codebook, p. 4). The Minorities at Risk Project also collects data on non-state conflicts, called inter-communal conflicts. For definitions and findings cf. Gurr 2002, pp. 46-47. However, the MAR only counts conflicts which participants had already been entangled in conflicts with the state (cf. *ibid.* pp. 46-47). Another distortion stems from the fact that some conflicts are counted more often than once (*ibid.* p. 60 fn. 9).

failing states.⁽⁵⁾ These states are likely to experience not only intrastate conflicts involving the state (or what is left of it) but also non-state conflicts, and both often in their violent forms. Intact states are usually able to either canalise or suppress these conflicts. Failing or failed states sometimes lack the means to intervene in conflicts between non-state groups with an army of their own.

5. Types of Actors 2: Direct Actors, Supporter and Intervener. However, not all actors involved in a conflict are necessarily conflict parties. One has to draw a distinction between conflict parties in a narrow sense and other actors involved, such as foreign powers trying to settle the conflict or actors supporting one party without directly interfering in the conflict. Therefore, the HIIK distinguishes Direct Actors from Supporters, Interveners and Mediators. Direct Actors are conflict parties taking a direct interest in the conflict item, whose opposing interests define the conflict. Supporters are defined as actors that do not strive for control of the conflict item themselves but want a certain conflict party to get it. Intervening Actors and Mediators are defined as actors who try to solve or deescalate the conflict without vested interests in the conflict item and without supporting one side.

6. Number of Conflict Parties. You may have noticed that there can be more than two parties in one conflict, e.g. various political parties and other actors united in their opposition against the government, or various rebel groups that cooperate in a certain way in their fight against the current rulers.

7. Conflict Dynamics (1). The parties as well as their constellation - who against who, to put it plainly - and the items are defined as dynamic. New conflict parties can emerge, old parties can cease their struggle in the course of time while others continue fighting, some parties might change sides in the conflict, items can transform, etc., while the conflict still remains the same. For example, the signing of a peace agreement with all parties may cause only some rebel groups to stop fighting (and maybe join the government), while others continue; or unsatisfied parts of a non-state party signing a truce or peace agreement with the government may split and keep on fighting.

As well as conflict parties, the items of a conflict can change, due to various causes. A quite common change is e.g. the radicalization of autonomy demands to secession demands, or vice versa. One of the findings of COSIMO 1.0 is that the different items are not all violence-prone to the same degree. Territorial conflicts, for example, are fought out violently much more rarely than conflicts over national power. Put more abstractly, divisible items like territory or resources are less violence-prone than indivisible items like secession⁽⁶⁾ or system/ideology.⁽⁷⁾ In conflicts over divisible items, it is possible to find compromises that partially fulfill both sides' demands, whereas conflicts over indivisible items can only be solved if one side drops its demands.

Most importantly, not only actors, constellations, and items are thought to be dynamic, but also the conflict intensities, mirroring processes of escalation and de-escalation. As a prerequisite for a more detailed explanation of these dynamics, let me first give you a short introduction to the HIIK's differentiation of five intensity levels.

Conflict Intensities

I. Definition. The HIIK distinguishes five levels of intensity.⁽⁸⁾ Latent conflicts (1) are defined by one party expressing its demands on an item of national value, what is perceived by the other party. Manifest conflicts (2) are marked by measures located in a stage preliminary to violence, e.g. verbal pressure, explicit threats of violence, or sanctions. No physical violence is used, however, in either latent or manifest conflicts. If a conflict is conducted with the sporadic use of violence, e.g. single shootouts or sporadic terror attacks, it is classified as a crisis (3). If violence is used in an organised, regular way, the conflict is considered to be a severe crisis (4). Conflicts in which violence is used in an organised and systematic way, causing severe destruction, are classified as wars (5).

For the sake of simplification, the five intensity levels can be summarised into three classes: Latent and manifest conflicts can be taken together as non-violent or low intensity conflicts, crises can be called conflicts of medium intensity, and severe crises and wars can be summarised as highly-violent or high-intensity conflicts.⁽⁹⁾

II. Implications and Advantages. Let me point out the implications and advantages of these definitions.

1. Considering the Quality of Violence. As you can see, the intensities are assigned on the basis of the measures taken by the conflict parties. Conflicts are classified by the quality of the violence used, and not by mere quantitative indicators. Therefore, every level of intensity has a certain range. Manifest conflicts, for example, comprise conflicts in that one party's single threat to use violence was the highest point of escalation in the time span under review, as well as conflicts in which troops amass at the borders and sanctions or blockades are introduced. This range is unavoidable if one tries to classify the empirical phenomenon of conflicts (if war is defined by 1,000 battle-related deaths, there is also the range from 1,000 to several millions), but is not necessarily a disadvantage. It allows the flexibility of

(4) This terminology is used by the authors of the Human Security Report 2005.

(5) For the relation between weak states and intrastate conflicts cf. von Trotha.

(6) Pfetsch/Rohloff, p. 235.

(7) Pfetsch/Rohloff, p. 151.

(8) This has been the case since 2003. Before 2003, only four levels of intensity were distinguished. Cf. HIIK: Conflict Barometer 2003, p. 8.

(9) Nevertheless, the finer distinction is useful to increase the visibility of escalation and de-escalation processes.

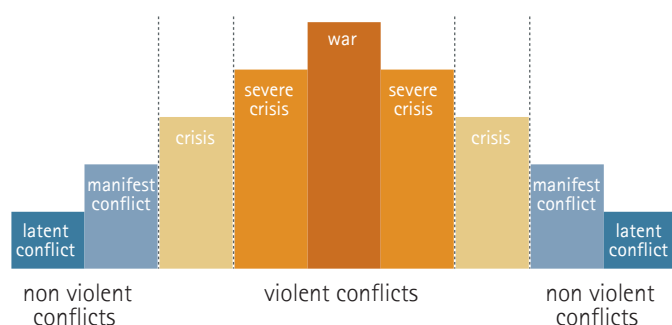
making conflicts comparable across different epochs and regions.

2. Violent and Non-Violent Conflicts: Conflict Dynamics (2). Another implication of the HIIK's conflict definition is that it does not require conflicts to be conducted violently. In contrast, the HIIK aims at also systematically collecting data on non-violent conflicts. We consider non-violent conflicts to be of great importance for several reasons.

The first reason is our assumption that violent conflicts usually begin as non-violent conflicts and intensify to violent ones later on.⁽¹⁰⁾ In an ideal-type model of escalation and de-escalation processes, we assume that conflicts start at the level of a latent conflict, i.e., that in a first step the opposing demands are articulated and rejected. In a second step, threats might be articulated in an attempt to reach the pursued goals through the use of pressure. The next phase of escalation is the sporadic use of violence, i.e. the conflict reaches the level of a crisis. If no party gives in to the other side's demands or no compromise is found, the use of violence may intensify, violence may be used in an organised way. In this case, the conflict will be classified as a severe crisis. If no solution is found or the conflict is not contained by interveners, the conflict may escalate to a war, i.e. organised violence is used continuously and systematically, causing severe damage.

De-escalation follows the same scheme: As latent conflicts do not escalate to wars in a day, wars do not turn to non-violent conflicts over night. The causes and habits of using violence in a conflict-ridden society do not vanish into thin air. Therefore, we expect wars to deescalate slowly first to a severe crisis, then to a mere crisis, and then after a certain length of time to a non-violent conflict.

Conflict Dynamics



Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research e.V.

Of course, this model of escalation and de-escalation is an ideal type. It is not necessary that conflicts go through this sequence. Conflicts may be conducted non-violently from their beginning to their end, or the conflict parties may return to non-violent measures or even end their dispute after the conflict once reached the level of a crisis. Sometimes, conflicts 'skip' one level in these processes. Very often, renewed violence follows

phases of relative peace.⁽¹¹⁾ This is the second reason for the great importance of collecting data on non-violent conflicts. If only violent conflicts are taken into account, situations of renewed violence may be misinterpreted as the emergence of new conflicts. The continuity of the conflict is overlooked, and processes of de-escalation to non-violent conflict conduct are confused with termination of conflicts. Furthermore, one forgoes the opportunity to quantitatively identify both structural and procedural factors that lead to the escalation of existing but former peacefully conducted conflicts to a violent level. This leads to the third reason making non-violent conflicts important. Only comparison between (highly) violent conflicts and such conflicts that remain non-violent over their complete duration allows us to identify structural and procedural variables that are causal or trigger factors of the use of violence.

3. Defining Wars. In quantitative conflict research, wars are usually defined by 1,000 battle-related deaths⁽¹²⁾ per annum and therefore purely quantitatively. From our point of view, this definition is highly problematic. Firstly, it is arbitrary to just pick a certain high number as an absolute mark - a conflict causing only exactly 999 battle-related deaths would not be classified as a war. This problem is worsened by the fact that - as is of course known to and admitted by most scholars using it - reliable exact data on the death-toll does not exist in most cases. It is almost impossible to count the victims of conflicts, as most bloody conflicts are fought out in countries that are not so easily accessible to independent journalists or international observers, mostly because it would be simply too dangerous, but sometimes also because they are inhibited by local rulers or conflict parties. Therefore, in most cases only mere estimations are available that often differ vastly. What to do if one estimation lies above but others below the mark of 1,000? These problems become worse the more one goes back in history to count wars.

The quality of violence, in contrast, is easier to identify although scarce information always poses a serious problem, of course. Secondly, defining war by 1,000 battle-related deaths tends to lead to an underestimation of highly-violent conflicts. Many violent conflicts never claim 1,000 battle-related death victims a year, despite being fought out with a considerable amount and intensity of organised violence. This may sometimes be due to structural reasons, as some very small countries as e.g. the Comoros or Sao Tomé and Príncipe only have some dozens of soldiers and very few heavy weapons. Even if they used all available means and fought as hard as they could - and maybe even if the entire army died in the fighting - the death toll would be unlikely to reach

(10) Of course, some conflicts are only noted when they have already turned violent, but in most of these cases closer research reveals a non-violent history of demands and threats etc.

(11) That is, if peace is defined as the mere absence of violence.

(12) This definition originates in the Correlates of War project of the University of Michigan.

1,000. Nevertheless, there would be some good reasons to classify this imaginary conflict as a war.

Different modes of warfare pose another problem to definitions of war. As has been noted often by many scholars, warfare has not always been the same in the course of history and in all regions of the world. The most important difference exists between the so-called classical interstate war as described by Clausewitz, and intrastate conflicts, especially the so-called new wars. Whether this often-described phenomenon is a new one or not and how often it actually occurs is contested.⁽¹³⁾ But it seems clear that certain conflicts being fought out today are characterised by the privatisation of violence, economisation of conflicts, continuous low-level fighting instead of decisive battles, and frequent targeting of civilians.

These changes in the conduct of conflicts pose a serious problem to qualitative conflict research. A great advantage of a qualitative definition of conflicts and wars lies in its higher flexibility making it more independent of concrete forms of conflict conduct. Therefore, the HIIK's definition of high-intensity conflicts avoids the risk of being orientated too narrowly at a certain type of conflict or warfare and is able to grasp and make comparable conflicts and wars transcending historical and regional differences and developments.

Flexibility, however, does not mean arbitrariness. Conflicts are classified with regard to their intensity on the base of the measures taken by the conflict parties, in comparison to their previous intensity (did the conflict escalate or deescalate?), to other current conflicts and to historical cases. Moreover, we do not deny quantitative factors, the death toll and the number of refugees or internally displaced people are taken into account. However, there are no fixed marks that function as necessary and sufficient criteria.

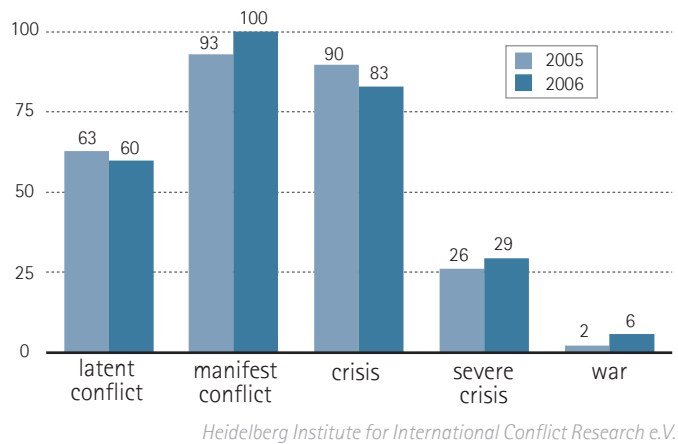
Findings

As a methodology is not a purpose in itself, but a means to a certain end, I would like very much to finally present you some of the results produced by our methodology. Therefore, I will shortly summarize the most important findings for the year 2006 - for more detailed analyses, please take a look at the Conflict Barometer 2006. In Ms. Pamela Jawad's article in this issue you will find a presentation of the HIIK's findings on conflicts in the Middle East and Maghreb.

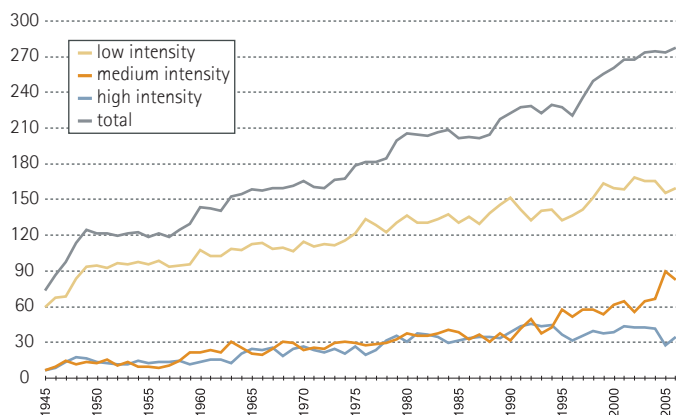
In 2006, the HIIK counted 278 political conflicts all in all - more than ever in the period under observation. The more or less continuous rise of the total number of conflicts since 1945 thus persisted. The majority (160) of the conflicts in 2006 were non-violent conflicts, but 118 were carried out violently. 83 of these were crises, which is the second-highest number of crises ever counted, and 35 were highly-violent conflicts, among them six wars.

The six wars took place in Somalia, Sudan's Darfur region, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iraq and in Lebanon, where the Israeli army fought Hezbollah. In 2005, only 28 highly-violent conflicts had been counted, only two of them wars. This had been the lowest number of high-intensity conflicts for decades. But in the same year, an absolute peak of 90 crises had been reached - a record number that had been a clear warning sign against optimistic assumptions that the world would finally enter an era of relative peace. Such optimism can in certain cases be based in methodologies that only take into account conflicts with a certain high death toll, and therefore both underestimate the real amount of highly-violent conflicts and fail to recognize the risk potential posed by only sporadically violent conflicts.⁽¹⁴⁾ ■

Global Conflict Intensities 2006 compared to 2005



Ongoing global conflicts of low, medium and high intensity 1945 to 2006



(13) The debate on the changing mode of warfare has been initiated by van Creveld 1998, Holsti 1996, Kaldor 2000, and Muenkler 2002. Kaldor and Muenkler regard the observed changes as a qualitatively new phenomenon and therefore speak of 'new wars'. This has been strongly opposed by many scholars. Cf. e.g. Kahl/Teusch 2004 and Matthies 2005. For a recent summary, cf. Chojnacki 2004.

(14) For a discussion of the optimistic results of the Human Security Report and comparison with the HIIK's findings especially on highly-violent conflicts cf. Mayer 2006.

THE CONFLICT PANORAMA OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND MAGHREB

Pamela Jawad*

This article deals with political conflicts and recent trends in the region of the Middle East and Maghreb (MEM).⁽¹⁾ The following description and analysis of developments in regional conflicts will identify the major security-related challenges that this geographical area faces at present. For this purpose, first of all, some definitions are given in order to give substance to the empirical evidence presented subsequently.

Political Conflicts and the Middle East and Maghreb

Political conflicts are understood here as 'the clashing of interests (positional differences) over national values of some duration and magnitude between at least two parties (organized groups, states, groups of states, organizations) that are determined to pursue their interests and win their cases'.⁽²⁾ The disputed national values refer to the interstate conflict items territory, decolonization, system/ideology, international power, resources and others as well as to the intrastate items secession, autonomy, system/ideology, national power, regional predominance, resources and others. In contrast to quantitative approaches, e.g. defining wars as conflicts with more than 1,000 war-related deaths, conflicts are categorized here according to the actually observable degree of violence and the kind, duration and frequency of the measures of conflict conduct applied by the conflict parties. This approach differentiates five levels of intensity: two non-violent levels (latent and manifest conflicts), one medium level with sporadic violent incidents (crises) and two high intensity levels including the organized or even systematic use of violent force (severe crises and wars). Taking non-violent conflicts into account as well as the comparative advantage of systematically observing clashing interests prior to their escalation to a violent conflict conduct, thereby providing insights into dynamics of escalation and de-escalation and contributing to the early detection of potential crises.

In focus here are political conflicts in the region of the MEM. Regions are hardly ever sharply demarcated - especially if they are not defined by a continent, as is the case for the MEM that rather constitutes an overland bridge between the three continents Africa, Asia and Europe. Against the background of region-constituting factors, such as conflict interrelations and context, the self-perception and -positioning of single states as well as political, socio-cultural and economic transnational ties, the MEM is to consist of 21 states: 15 states of the Middle East (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen), five north-African states of the (Great) Maghreb (Algeria, Libya,

Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia) as well as Afghanistan that is sometimes set into a regional context with Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. It is the so defined region that has received increased public attention after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 ('9-11'). While most Arab states were rather sympathetic to the USA instantaneously after these events, the US-declared fight against international terrorism and the US plan to reorder and 'democratize' the region, starting with Iraq, resulted in rising mutual apprehension and prejudices. While in 'the West' the undifferentiated notion of the region as a shelter for militant Islamists and uncontrollably circulating WMD spread, the 'Arab-Islamic world' has increasingly perceived itself confronted with a growing alleged Western imperialism. This, once more, sparked the debate on a 'clash of civilizations' proclaimed by Samuel P. Huntington.⁽³⁾ However, not Islam as a religious community represents a threat, but Islamic fundamentalism as a political ideology poses a serious challenge for world politics⁽⁴⁾ - among other factors that will be identified in the next sections.

Conflict Panorama of the Middle East and Maghreb

Most (highly violent) conflicts per state in a global comparison

At present, the MEM represents the region with the highest conflict rate, that is the number of violent as well as non-violent conflicts per state, as well as the region with most highly violent conflicts per state in a global comparison.⁽⁵⁾ In this regard, a total of 42 political conflicts were carried out in the 21 states of the region

* Pamela Jawad, M.A. holds the position of a Research Associate at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF). In addition, she is editor-in-chief of the 'Conflict Barometer', an annual publication on global conflict developments by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK).

(1) This article is based on and represents a condensed, revised and updated version of Jawad, Pamela, 'Konflikte im Vorderen und Mittleren Orient' [Conflicts in the Middle East and Maghreb]. In: Pfetsch, Frank R., ed., *Konflikt [Conflict]*, (Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer, 2005).

(2) Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK) (ed.), *Conflict Barometer 2006*, (Heidelberg: HIIK, December 2006).

(3) See Huntington, Samuel P., 'The Clash of Civilizations?'. *Foreign Affairs*: 72, pp. 22-49, 1993.

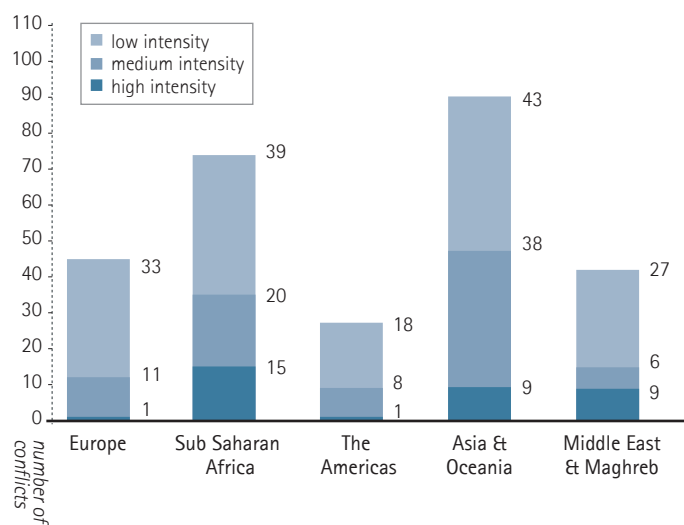
(4) See Tibi, Bassam, *The challenge of fundamentalism: political Islam and the new world disorder*, (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1998).

(5) All data refers to the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (<http://www.hiik.de>). Regarding the current state of research see 'Conflict Barometer 2006', while time series data is taken from 'Cosimo 2', a relational databank system that was developed during two research projects conducted at the Department of Political Science (University of Heidelberg) in cooperation with the HIIK. 'Cosimo 2' contains structural and process data on political conflicts between 1945 and today and represents a reconsideration, update, and extension of the HIIK dataset 'Cosimo 1'.

in 2006, 15 of which violently and nine of these even on a high intensity level (see graph 1). These numbers contrast with the conflict rates in Africa and Asia. While most high intensity conflicts, with an absolute number of 15 (out of a total of 74), were carried out in Sub-Sahara Africa, these were distributed among 48 states. In Asia and Oceania, an overall number of 90 political conflicts - one third of all conflicts worldwide - were distributed among more than sixty states.

Graph 1

Distribution of all Conflicts 2006 by Region and Intensity Type



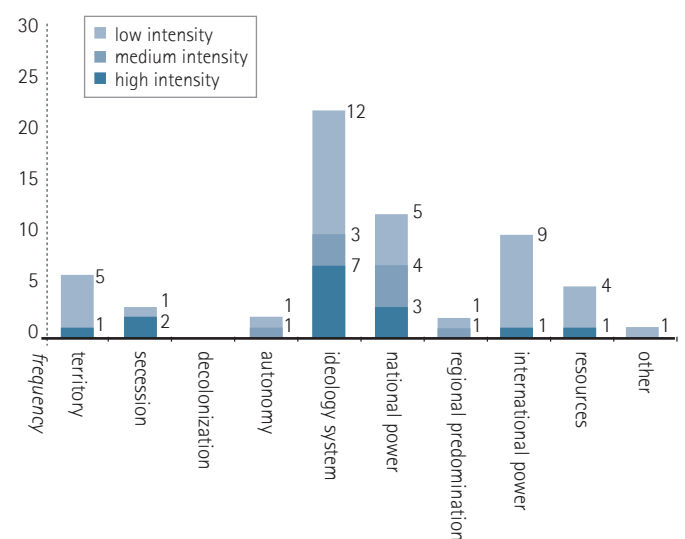
Most striking was the fact that the number of conflicts carried out on the highest intensity level tripled compared to 2005; three out of six wars worldwide were carried out on MEM soil. The conflict between insurgents and the government in Iraq was already considered a war in previous years, although violence witnessed in 2006 has not been this intense since the US-led invasion of 2003. Hostilities became increasingly sectarian and the United Nations estimated that 100 Iraqis were killed every day. The conflicts with the Taleban in Afghanistan and between the Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon and Israel escalated to wars in 2006. Afghanistan experienced the bloodiest period since the fall of the Taleban regime in 2002. More than 3,700 people were killed in 2006. Fierce battles raged especially in the southern provinces. The escalation in Israel's conflict with the Hezbollah resulted from the sparking event of two Israeli soldiers' abduction in a cross-border raid by Hezbollah in July 2006. Israel reacted with a subsequent combination of air, sea, and ground offensives. Death figures ranged from 74 to 500 on the Hezbollah side and 119 soldiers as well as 44 civilians on the Israeli side. 900,000 Lebanese and 300,000 Israelis fled the fighting.

All three wars in the region were fought out over the item of system/ideology, the overall most frequent conflict item there at present that is oftentimes pursued with

the use of violent force (see graph 2). The second most frequent disputed value was national power, followed by international power. However, the latter is hardly ever gone after violently, as most interstate conflicts are of a non-violent nature. In a historic perspective, taking all regional conflicts since 1945 into account, system/ideology ranked only third after territory and resources. This difference corresponds to the trend of a general increase of intrastate and a general decline of interstate conflicts.

Graph 2

Frequency of Conflict Items 2006 in the Middle East and Maghreb by Intensity Groups



Besides the three wars, six other conflicts were carried out on a high intensity level. Severe crises could be observed in Algeria (Islamist groups), in Iraq (al-Sadr group), in Israel (Palestinians), in Turkey (Kurds), and in Yemen (Believing Youth Movement). In the meantime, highly violent interstate conflicts have become rare. However, due to Israel's transnational war with Hezbollah, the conflict between Israel and Lebanon heavily escalated to a severe crisis.

Regional Trends

Two global trends, explaining the overall increase of highly violent conflicts from 28 in 2005 to 35 in 2006, could also be observed in the MEM. Firstly, the phenomenon of state failure resulted in the occurrence of more than one violent conflict in one country at the same time. This was true for Iraq with three violent conflicts: al-Sadr group, al-Zarqawi group and insurgents. Secondly, spillover effects of instability and violence spreading to neighboring states as well as transnational conflicts could be observed in and around Israel and the Occupied Territories: Israel's conflicts with the Palestinians, the Hezbollah, and Lebanon as well as the inner-Palestinian conflict between Fatah and Hamas. Striking in this regard was the heavy escalation of the

interstate conflict between Israel and Lebanon from a non-violent to a highly violent intensity level due to the Israel's transnational conflict with Hezbollah.

A characteristic observation regarding the region is that many if not most of the political conflicts had historic roots in long periods of external domination, like the Persian and Ottoman Empires. Another root cause was the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, with which France and the United Kingdom divided the region up among themselves. This represented a betrayal of the Arabs by the UK, who had promised them independence, and created artificial entities, constituting states like Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, or the smaller Gulf sheikdoms. This laid the cornerstone for the Arab fight against Israel, Syria's claim to Lebanon, or Iraq's conflict with Kuwait among others.

On an average, conflicts in the region had duration of more than 20 years. Worth mentioning in this regard are the conflicts in the context of Israel's foundation. These have been going on for 60 years, are in some cases still carried out violently and remain far away from a sustainable resolution. There is not even one single state in the region that has not witnessed at least one violent conflict since 1945. Iraq has the bloodiest balance with more than ten disputes that have been carried out with violent means throughout their course. Iraq is followed by Iran with ten conflicts that experienced violent phases of conflict conduct, Israel with nine, and Yemen with eight.

Against this background, present challenges still arise from Israel-related conflicts and the still growing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq, but also from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (e.g. Iran, Syria), a spread of sectarian attributes and religious fundamentalism in regional conflicts (e.g. Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia) as well as from the endeavor of Kurdish self-determination (e.g. Iraq, Iran, Turkey). This is alarming insofar as conflicts, which concern identities or are perceived by the conflict parties as affecting their existence, refer to indivisible items and are therefore not negotiable.

Prospects

So what are the prospects for this conflict-ridden region? As shown, the regional conflict panorama is rather pessimistic and especially for Afghanistan and Iraq prospects are bad. Furthermore, the inveterately unresolved Middle East conflict with newly escalated violent sites, increasing religious fundamentalism, aspiration of WMD as well as domestic tensions between the populations and their governments cause sustained instability. This is reflected in the finding that the MEM represented the region with most highly violent conflicts per state in a global comparison in 2006.

The 2003 Gulf War has changed the geopolitical order of the region. During the Cold War, the region had been an arena for the tug-of-war between the Soviet Union and the US. The latter then had followed a strategic formula 'Israel, oil, anti-communism'. With the 1991 Gulf War this formula had changed somewhat to 'Israel, oil, fight against the proliferation of WMD', and after 9-11 'the fight against international terrorism' was added. Starting in Iraq, the US aimed at rearranging the entire region. However, the US-led military operation 'Iraqi Freedom' has so far not achieved the hoped for democratic 'domino effects'. But it has directly and indirectly changed the regional power constellations.

The power triangle Saudi Arabia - Egypt - Syria of the 1990s has lost regional influence. After the USA had relocated her main military bases from Saudi Arabia to Bahrain and Qatar, the smaller Gulf States emancipated themselves from Saudi dominance. Egypt was not taken into account regarding security arrangements in the Gulf and did not play a mediating role in Libya's compromise with the US and the UK. Syria faced US and Israeli pressure due to her position in the Iraq war and her support for militant Palestinian groups. There seems to be no remaining regional hegemony in the region and the Arab League - although this has been proclaimed many times before - appears to be permanently weakened.

These dynamics and changed power constellations, however, also open up slight chances for a new order from within. Old and new conflicts and risks described above determine the environment, in which the states of the region operate. Thus, the introduction of multilateral regional security structures is advisable in order to constructively deal with present challenges. While regional cooperation and confidence-building might be designed after the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in a long-term perspective, realistic models in the short term could only be more modest institutions covering only a limited scope of topics and states. Political will and responsible leadership are needed and modesty is requisite. ■