

I wish to thank the Jerry Fowler and Committee on Conscience at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum for inviting me to speak at this important discussion. Let me say at the outset that I am not a genocide expert or scholar and my knowledge and interest in genocide studies is framed through the lens of conflict prevention.

A decade ago we had high hopes for a different kind of world. Many of us thought that the end of the Cold War would bring with it a more peaceful international order. Instead, the 1990s were characterized by the troubling persistence of deadly conflict. In places like Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Rwanda, turmoil was unleashed and violence took hold on a shocking scale. Tragically, the victims of these conflicts were increasingly civilians, particularly women and children. New trends in conflict moved away from traditional warfare to terrorism, civil war, and genocide, raising new questions about the role that the United States and the international community should play in resolving these conflicts, and the problems of refugees, drug and gun trafficking, and weapons proliferation.

September 11 brought this violence to the United States. The threat that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to terrorists will lead to violence on an unimaginable scale is the worst-case scenario that plagues citizens and policymakers alike.

It is easy to believe that the cycle of violence will go on indefinitely, that peace cannot be realized, and that military power is the only thing that counts in international relations. Questions abound about how the United States should conduct itself as a superpower and whether there is hope for the community of nations to peacefully coexist.

The idea of conflict prevention is a simple one. Preventive medicine saves countless lives, dollars, and immeasurable human suffering by stopping disease before it can take place. Why not apply the same logic to the prevention of deadly conflict? Instead of dealing with violence after it breaks out, take measures to prevent deadly conflicts from occurring. Instead of treating symptoms, remove the cause of the disease before it can take hold.

Given our location, it hardly bears repeating that the western democracies failed to take action against Hitler when decisiveness and coordination could have stopped the German dictator's expansionist killing machine before it became an unremitting plague. World War II was a *preventable* conflict, but the western powers lacked the tools, methods, and political will to act until it was too late. Indeed today's debate on whether to go to war against Iraq focuses on that argument – that by backing down the United States and George Bush will acquiesce in the same manner as Great Britain and Neville Chamberlain did in the days leading to the second World War.

I suppose it is human nature to control our environment and although Cushman discusses Kantian idealism, he does note that violence and wickedness have always been with us. I'd say it's likely that they always will. However, war is not the weather – it's not like the DC snowstorm that we know is coming, try to prepare for it, but are ultimately at its mercy. Things are different unlike Europe in the 1930s, we have more effective tools for prevention at our disposal. We have international institutions like the UN and IMF, institutionalized alliances like NATO and the U.S.-Japan security arrangement, international legal norms, economic incentives and deterrents, extensive intelligence capabilities to anticipate conflicts, and technology that

allows for more effective diplomacy and action. In short, we have both the motivation and the means for prevention in a way that was distinctly lacking in the 1930s.

The simplicity of the idea of prevention is countered by the immensity of the challenge. Complex issues of national interest, international law, cost, method and timing inevitably arise. Kofi Annan has remarked, “For the United Nations, there is no higher goal, no deeper commitment and no greater ambition than preventing armed conflict.” Few would dispute this ideal, but the implementation of prevention is another matter.

Many people roll their eyes when they hear about conflict prevention and recent books by Samantha Powers and Alan Kuperman highlight the difficulties of acting early and forcefully to prevent genocide. Thomas Cushman is correct, and I will come back to this point later, that an assumption of conflict prevention is underpinned by social progress. And as he rightly points out in his paper, and perhaps it is precisely because I AM NOT a genocide scholar, that I don't see his essay as heresy. Modernity and globalization do serve to offer many people a better way of life. However at the same time, not everyone is benefiting from globalization and in some cases states in transition are increasingly unable to undertake the basic functions of governance. Weak states are unable to deliver basic services to a majority of their people; unable to either integrate their economies with those of their neighbors or defend their nations against external threats; and unable to provide the basic internal security required to prevent a host of transnational threats from taking root. The global impact of at-risk and weak states is devastating—populations suffer the deterioration of living standards, the spread of corruption, the abrogation of political and social freedoms, and violence, all the while missing out on any of the benefits to be gained from

joining the global economy. For the international system, the effects are potentially dangerous, as evidenced by Afghanistan, which became a breeding ground for illicit networks, regional instability, mass migration, murder, and the export of terror. Even when vulnerable states pose little immediate threat to the United States, their downward spiral and chronic crises will eventually demand a response.

After all, policymakers are overwhelmed by crises that are already in action. I retell a story of my boss, Lee Hamilton, a number of years ago, he was in the office of the National Security Advisor Tony Lake. He asked about the large stack of files on his desk. He said, those files all deserve immediate attention, they cannot wait. Then he noticed another large stack, twice as high, behind him. Those, Lake said, are the ones that are extremely urgent.

Things have only gotten more difficult. The U.S. is now engaged in a global war against terrorists who are in over eighty countries around the globe. The prospect of a war in Iraq dominates the international and domestic debate. How can policymakers find the time to address conflicts that haven't yet taken place, or to address troubling situations in a distant corner of Indonesia, Zimbabwe, or Colombia? Many people would agree that it is a worthwhile goal to prevent these conflicts or to stop them from spreading. The problem is one of political will: why should policymakers take time off from today's more evident crises to focus on tomorrow's problems?

The simple answer is that it is in our national interest to act preventively. As we have seen, today's brush fire can be tomorrow's forest fire. The United States, as the world's richest and

most powerful nation, is the country that is looked at as both a target for angry and disaffected peoples, and as the indispensable nation that must help resolve large-scale conflicts after they take root. In a globalized world, we are inevitably drawn into conflicts – either financially or militarily – and our burdens are vast and growing. Unless a better system of conflict prevention is developed, the burden on the United States to respond to instability and conflict will be progressively greater, both financially and militarily, as could the cost in American lives.

Consider what the cost of disengagement is. The failure to remain engaged in what was clearly a failing state in Afghanistan after Soviet withdrawal led to the Taliban and a fertile ground for terrorists. The failure to act in Rwanda – where there was already a U.N. peacekeeping force – permitted a genocide that led to a long and protracted multi-state war that cost millions of lives. Apart from the human catastrophe that cannot be measured, the U.S. spent \$750 million from 1994 to 1996 on aid related to the fallout from the genocide – an amount that is roughly equal to the entire annual U.S. aid budget to Africa, and far more than preventive measures would have cost. The cold truth is that seemingly distant conflicts of today can inevitably cost the U.S. lives and treasure in the future.

The fact that we see fewer instances of interstate war is perhaps even more remarkable when we consider the number and size of states around the world in the throes of profound political, social, and economic transition. For many of these states the process is painful and protracted. Leaders have been deposed, and governments have been reconstructed from the ground up, creating a volatile political climate without the benefit of established structures that have popular confidence and the flexibility to absorb the profound changes. Economies are in disarray, and

social cohesion is severely strained. We might expect to see more traditional conflict between these states, especially where concentrations of one country's nationalities are found in another. Yet we do not. The majority of these states in transition remain free of open conflict. Indeed, of the internal conflicts begun or continued in the post-Cold War period, those that involve states in transition--for example, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, and Tajikistan--are outnumbered by those that involve established states, many with long histories of internal discord: Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Yemen, and others.

Certainly all of these "internal" conflicts have the clear potential for spillover. In fact, many outsiders have become involved in these conflicts either through participation with organized forces on the ground or by supplying weapons and support for one side. Yet it is also worth noting that there has been far less spillover than we might have expected, for example, in Bosnia.

WHY

The words "ethnic," religious, "tribal," or "factional" do not adequately explain why people use violence to achieve their goals, especially since a wide range of mechanisms exists in every region of the globe to address political and cultural grievances and offer alternatives to violence. Indeed, to label a conflict simply as an "ethnic war" can lead to misguided policy choices: It helps build a wrong impression that ethnic, cultural, or religious differences inevitably result in conflict and that the only way to avoid conflict is to suppress differences. We have seen time and time again in this century, however, that suppression itself too often leads to bloodshed.

Why, then, does mass violence break out? A number of factors help create conditions prone to warfare: political and economic legacies of colonialism or the Cold War, illegitimate governmental institutions, problematic regional relationships, social cleavages derived from poorly managed religious, cultural, or ethnic differences, widespread illiteracy, disease and disability, lack of resources such as water and arable land, and patterns of political repression, cultural discrimination, and systematic economic deprivation. New global political and economic forces exacerbate these factors. While some conflicts are new, many others are, in fact, chronic states of violence traceable to long-standing antagonisms.

When exploited by political demagogues, criminal elements, or self-aggrandizing leaders, such conditions are "ripe" for violence. Indeed, it is possible to identify a number of factors that increase the risk of violent conflict. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), for example, uses only three to project dangerous refugee situations: (a) minority populations in (b) economically depressed areas along (c) borders with kin states. But problems giving rise to deadly conflict are more complex. Other factors that heighten the likelihood of violence include despotic leaders, weak, corrupt, or collapsed regimes, sudden economic and political shifts, acute repression of major ethnic groups or other portions of society, politically active religious elements that promote hostile and divisive messages, and large stores of weapons and ammunition.

Identifying these factors as risks for violent conflict may help us understand how to prevent the outbreak of mass violence. The health effects of cigarette smoking provide an interesting (albeit imperfect) analogy. Thirty years ago we did not know what exactly it was about cigarette

smoking that caused cancer and other heart and lung ailments, but we knew that smoking was a risk factor for these diseases. In response, behavior patterns changed toward prevention.

Similarly, we do not need to know precisely what it is about the interplay among the various risk factors to know that their conjunction holds a high probability for violence or that the greater the number of factors, the greater the likelihood of violence.

In sum, while we are not yet at a point where interstate war or war between the great powers is unthinkable, today; by far the most prevalent and least addressed challenges are posed by internal conflict. There is not likely to be an "unknown Rwanda" lurking on the international scene. These conflicts are known and knowable. It is implausible for modern governments to claim that they simply did not know that violence on a scale of Bosnia, Rwanda, or Somalia could happen. Similarly, people intuitively reject any argument, especially one put forward by such huge, wealthy, and powerful governments, that "nothing could be done" to prevent mass violence. These twin judgments--that many governments know (or should know) about incipient catastrophes and that something should (and can) be done before it is too late--lead us to examine the capacity and willingness of the international community to respond to the problem of deadly conflict.

Yet in spite of the poor record of prevention in the post-Cold War era in Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, and elsewhere, publics can be moved by vivid images of unconscionable slaughter to demand that their governments "do something" to halt the killing. But even as opinion mobilizes for action, there are few clear courses of action around which to mobilize. Policymakers

frequently improvise their strategies and could clearly benefit from a more developed sense of the options: What tools and strategies work best to arrest a degenerating crisis?

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

it would be a mistake to consider preventive diplomacy or other preventive action as strategies simply to preserve the status quo when crisis threatens. Preventive action, in part, anticipates and addresses the need for necessary or desirable changes in unstable situations; it does not simply repress change. The effectiveness of preventive actions appears to rest on three essential elements: early reaction to signs of trouble, an extended effort to resolve underlying causes of violence ("root causes"), and a comprehensive, balanced approach to alleviating pressures ("risk factors") that can trigger violent conflict.

Moreover, when thinking about preventive action, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, where I worked, distinguished between "structural" and "operational" tasks. Structural tasks address the underlying root causes of conflict and imply a long-term approach using multiple strategies to help create and maintain an environment that protects fundamental human rights and provides the circumstances in which citizens can secure a livelihood with opportunities for development and growth. Operational tasks address the risk factors and include immediate steps that could help prevent an incipient crisis from turning massively violent.

There has been a continuing disagreement about the role of the US military in preventing conflict, and some have advocated complex doctrines about when the US should get involved.

Instead, a simpler litmus test of American roles and interests would be more productive: to promote well being for all people.

Religious persuasion, ethnicity, or other traits are not the determining factor in violent conflict. It may explain why groups have disagreements, but it does not explain the slide to violence.

Instead, two variables are more valid indicators: governance--the relationship of leaders to the people they lead

direction of leadership (This means that you can foresee the slide toward autocracy, for example, when leaders cancel elections, militaries take over domestic portfolios, capital flight (all early warning indicators.)

It is the motivation and persuasiveness of leaders that turn what would otherwise be riots into full-fledged violent conflicts; this makes conflict a problem of governance, not other traits such as ethnicity or religion, as has been argued by Samuel Huntington and Robert Kaplan.

Two variables make a certain group of people susceptible to conflict: deprivation and discrimination. These two characteristics, however, are merely inchoate feelings of frustration unless they are manipulated by leaders able to motivate the disaffected. Yet the leaders themselves can be manipulated as well. Because of increasing interdependence among states, all wars, including intrastate conflicts, have an international element. Pressure can therefore be brought to bear on leaders of conflicting groups. This ability and desire to apply pressure in crisis situations takes on more importance because civilians are adversely affected by conflict; more civilians are killed in conflict than combatants. For example in World War I, the ratio of

combatants to civilians killed was nine to one, since the end of the Cold War, the ratio has been reversed.

Many developing countries are faced with the mounting burden of losing their ability to dominate their respective polities. Specifically, control of lethality (or armed force), capital, and rule-making processes are being transferred to private sector groups or organizations. This has brought government to the local level, but is also shunting the larger state government aside.

The role of the U.S. in these military interventions is, of course, vital and controversial. Often the U.S. is forced to do the lion's share in military operations because of its capabilities and the fact that no other nation or entity can project military power abroad fast enough to resolve a conflict. The international community must develop a means of responding militarily to deteriorating situations with a multinational rapid-response capability – most likely through the U.N. or NATO. The U.S. cannot and should not intervene everywhere. A multi-national rapid-response force would take the burden off of the U.S. military, and enhance the international community's ability to take military action to prevent conflict.

International coordination and cooperation is essential to making all of these methods of prevention – diplomatic, economic, and military – work. Diplomacy is most effective when potential combatants are presented with a clear message by their neighboring states or the international community. Economic prevention only works if nations act in concert with one another – either in enforcing sanctions, delivering aid, or abiding by agreements. And military

action is far more effective and far less provocative when it is conducted with international support.

To prevent deadly conflict it is not enough to act on developing crises; we must also address the root causes of conflict around the world. We know that conflict is caused by systemic repression, alienation of groups, ethnic and religious fanaticism, and sustained poverty and lack of opportunity. We also know that good democratic governance and economic progress are the long-term solutions to these problems – the vaccines for deadly conflict. But like the very notion of prevention, fixing these problems is immensely more difficult than identifying them.

Ultimately, decisions to act become a question of political will, as Rwanda indicated. For politicians that's tied to public support. Jentleson, who has closely studied public opinion, says it's a myth that the US public has a casualty phobia and taking preventive action is more politically feasible than many assume. The public, for instance, was out in front of the president on use of ground troops in Kosovo.

Still, a natural caution and limited resources stand in the way. Political will or unwillingness, taking a wait and see approach, seeing if the violence subsides, works its way through or someone else deals with it. Rather than being the world's policeman, the United States may be faulted for its inaction, partly because short- rather than long-term thinking takes precedence in Washington. Going back to the inbox issues. Many still question how realistic a prevention strategy can be. Others point to the soaring costs, limited options, and quagmire potential of intervening after the

fact. Perhaps in the new millennium, in a shrinking world of multiplying flashpoints, prevention has simply become necessity.

The human element of deadly conflict is the hardest to predict. Sadly, we must always expect that a Hitler, a Stalin, a Pol Pot, or some other charismatic leader will emerge to harness peoples' fear, desperation or rage towards horrific ends. Many of the regimes that trouble us today are led by despots who use the power of the state to enrich themselves, their aggression, or their pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, while repressing large groups of people. Osama bin Laden joined his considerable wealth and connections with the disaffection of many people in the Muslim world in pursuit of human catastrophe and destruction. All around us is the evidence of peoples' ability to do harm to one another.

Does this mean that conflict prevention is irrelevant, that the cycle of violence is fated to proceed indefinitely into the future? To answer yes is to wager on the worst impulses of mankind. I'd like to be able to emulate David Hamburg in his recent book, *No More Killing Fields: Preventing Deadly Conflict*. At no point in Dr. Hamburg's book does he give in to this defeatism. Instead, his view is one of unbridled optimism and ferocious dedication to the idea that hard work and good thinking can achieve remarkable ends. He writes of conflict prevention, "This is difficult and prolonged work, but surely not beyond human capacity." Hamburg recalls the strategy of the Marshall Plan, when out of the absolute destruction of World War II we acted to prevent the conditions that would lead to another world war. The immensity of the challenge was huge then as it is now, but human capacity put to work built a better world out of the rubble of Europe and East Asia. Why should we not seek a better world today?