

THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE

Until the end of the cold war, the major threat to state security was considered to be external. Even when internal problems arose, they were frequently attributed to external agents (often as a matter of political expediency). Security was defined in terms of "state security", and problems within states were typically blamed on "communist", "capitalist" or "extremist" influence, rather than on real grievances or a government's own policies and shortcomings.

Since the end of the cold war, however, as recent data by Wallensteen and Sollenberg clearly demonstrate, the great majority of conflicts have been *within* states.¹ (In their review of conflicts since the end of the cold war, 91 of 96 conflicts have been intra-state in nature, although a number have spilled over into neighboring states). This transition from inter-state to intra-state conflict has presented a dilemma for multilateral organizations, whose instruments for the "peaceful settlement of disputes" were based on a collective security approach and designed for disputes *between* states. Even more problematic was the fact that the charters of the UN and regional organizations contained specific prohibitions against interference in the internal affairs of their members. Thus, in response to this new geopolitical environment, the UN and regional organizations were forced to undertake a major reappraisal of the causes of contemporary conflict and their institutional responses to it. Coming to terms with this new reality and trying to find a mandate and a more appropriate methodology to meet this challenge has not been easy.

Beginning with the Root Causes of Conflict

Developing a new methodology for preventing conflict within states has required a better understanding of the root causes of this type of conflict. Fortunately, the end of the cold war also brought about a shift in scholarly activity away from issues such as the nuclear threat and the superpower rivalry to a more in-depth study of conflicts within states.

This work has shown that many of these situations have their basis in perceptions of injustice which occur when individual and group needs for physical safety and well-being; access to political and economic participation; and cultural and religious expression are threatened or frustrated over long periods of time.² Grievances tend to be most acute when one's identity group is perceived to be unfairly disadvantaged in relation to other groups, especially when cleavages between groups are based on ethnic, religious or class divisions. Although many of today's conflicts have violent historical roots, it is their continued manifestation in systematic patterns of discrimination and injustice that generate contemporary grievances. Group mobilization occurs when groups begin to collectively organize to express their concern and seek redress.