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# Global Patterns of Conflict and the Role of Third Parties

*Peter Wallensteen* \*

## I. THE ENDING OF THE COLD WAR

A common belief is that the end of the Cold War will mean the beginning of an entirely new pattern of conflict. The end of the Cold War, the 1991 Gulf War, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union all have meant dramatic and significant changes in the global system. How fundamental are these changes? How will they affect global conflict patterns, conflict resolution in general, and the role of third parties in particular?

Major changes are occurring at this very moment, making predictions difficult. However, even revolutionary changes have a history, and might, in retrospect, appear to be a continuation of already established patterns rather than the formation of entirely new ones. A retrospective look might illuminate such developments. With this idea in mind, some possibilities for the near future can be discussed by observing the trends in conflicts and conflict resolution during the last few years. For this, detailed data collection is available.<sup>1</sup>

A comprehensive study would require more data. For instance, the study would have to account for the fact that every year there are more than 100 armed conflicts involving at least 70 governments and more than 130 nongovernmental armed organizations.<sup>2</sup> A study of the goals and origins of these 200 armed actors (and the many more which are not armed but still have a political impact) would enable future predictions to be more reliable. Even without such a study, some trends can be seen and can be expect-

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\* Dag Hammarskjöld Professor of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University. This Article reports two on-going projects of the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University: conflict data collection; and the solutions to ethnic conflicts.

1 This is an on-going project reported in publications from the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, and in S.I.P.R.I. Yearbooks.

2 STATES IN ARMED CONFLICT 1988 (Peter Wallensteen ed., 1990); STATES IN ARMED CONFLICT 1989 (Karin Lindgren ed., 1991). In such an analysis, the finances, training, arms supply, and goals of the actors would need to be studied.

ed to draw the attention of decision-makers and scholars during the rest of this decade.<sup>3</sup>

The data shows a paradox: in general, the number of major armed conflicts is gradually declining, while at the same time smaller armed conflicts are increasing. Being more specific, the following analysis illustrates three trends in conflict patterns, as well as three developments for conflict resolution.

## II. GLOBAL PATTERNS OF CONFLICT

The global conflict patterns are discussed in three categories: conflicts *over* the state (state formation wars), conflicts *within* states (internal wars); and conflicts *between* states (international wars). This trichotomy allows the analysis to focus on the state/government as one actor that is in conflict with another government, or, more often, with an armed movement desiring changes in the government or territory. The focus is on the incompatibility of the armed parties involved.

### A. *State Formation Conflicts Intensify*

The available data clearly shows that conflicts *over* the state are increasing. In 1988, out of forty major armed conflicts thirty-five percent were of this character. In 1991, out of thirty-five major armed conflicts forty-five percent were of this type.<sup>4</sup> As has been noted, the overall number of armed conflicts with more than one thousand battle-related deaths is declining slightly, but the share and absolute number of conflicts over the state are growing. This same shift can be found when studying conflicts with less than one thousand battle-related deaths.

A plausible prediction is that the end of the Cold War will intensify this trend, because the superpowers of the Cold War (the United States and the Soviet Union) were both strongly against the dissolution of existing states.<sup>5</sup> This attitude has been shared by most countries when viewing such ambitions in other countries.

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3 Cf. KARIN LINDGREN ET AL., MAJOR ARMED CONFLICTS IN 1990 (1991), which contains a section on conflict trends in the 1980s.

4 Peter Wallensteen, *The Security Council in Armed Conflicts, 1986-1991*, in STATES IN ARMED CONFLICT 1990-1991 (Birger Heldt ed., 1992).

5 The confrontational periods of the Cold War resulted in the division of states along lines imposed by the leading powers (Germany, Korea, Vietnam, and China). See ROBERT K. SCHAFER, WARPATHS: THE POLITICS OF PARTITION (1990). In detente periods reunification became possible (e.g., Austria 1955, Germany 1990).

In fact, since 1947, this particular attitude has had a surprising international consensus.<sup>6</sup> It can be expressed as a slogan: "Don't touch the states that exist!" This view has meant that the international community has been unwilling to accept forcefully implemented changes of borders or dissolution of states. Thus, very few borders changed during the Cold War. The confrontations between the superpowers concerned the control over entire states and their governments, rather than particular pieces of territory.

The exception to the rule has, of course, been the decolonization *problematique*: the dismantling of the colonial empires of Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal was accepted—or even actively promoted—by the United States, the Soviet Union, and other members of the U.N. system, with the exception of the colonial states and some closer allies. By defining those empires as "colonial" (a concept in itself hard to define) the "colonization" made by the U.S. and U.S.S.R. was left outside the discourse.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it should be noted that the decolonization process largely took place without border changes. The units created by the colonial powers were also those units that became independent states. The only internationally accepted partitions that took place, such as between India and Pakistan, were also those that the parties agreed to and thus were not forcefully imposed by the international community of states.

There are some other exceptions to this rule, notably the recognition of Bangladesh following the 1971 India-Pakistan War. However, a number of unrecognized forced annexations testify to the reluctance of other countries to recognize such changes. Examples of such nonrecognition are Turkey's occupation of Cyprus, Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and incorporation of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, Indonesia's occupation of East Timor, Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara, and Iraq's annexation of Kuwait.<sup>8</sup>

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6 The partition of British India in 1947, as well as the redrawing of borders in Europe in 1944-47, marked the end of a period of such territorial changes. This has not halted subsequent border conflicts, but forceful changes have found less international acceptance.

7 The United States conquered half of Mexico in the first half of the 19th century, acquired possessions in the Pacific later, and also ruled Cuba and the Philippines following "decolonization" of those territories from Spain. Russia acquired large possessions in Caucasus and central Asia through the end of the 19th century, and again occupied, incorporated, and kept territories in Eastern Europe in 1940-44. None of this activity was, however, part of the decolonization agenda.

8 There were almost no international protests to the incorporation of Eritrea into

The status quo attitude has meant that a number of situations have been frozen, as the international community during the Cold War (i.e. the United States and the Soviet Union) could not agree to restore the *status quo ante bellum*. In this respect, the end of the Cold War has opened new opportunities for conflict resolution. The 1991 Gulf War was seen as a reaction to a forceful occupation and change of borders of a state. Clearly, the international community reacted strongly to this. Even governments sympathetic to Iraq criticized the actions of August 2, 1990. This, then, is one effect of the end of the Cold War; it says that blatant occupation of neighbors still is forbidden.

As the data suggests, there is an entire set of other state formation conflicts stemming from inside the states themselves. More than before, groups desiring to create their own states are taking up arms. The near future might see a softening of the status quo attitude on border issues and state-making. The breakup of the Soviet Union itself might mean that Russia and other new states will take a different, less forceful attitude toward such developments. Thus, the dissolution of the Soviet empire illustrates and intensifies an important contemporary trend.<sup>9</sup> This means that a number of movements and regions will find it more possible to arrive at their own state.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the international support for maintaining central government control may have weakened. This phenomenon suggests that the issue of state-building is likely to be pertinent. Furthermore, the issue involves not only the creation of new states, but also the construction of a completely functioning state, probably with some welfare ambitions separate from the goal of national security. State management also becomes a difficult task when states are created following a devastating war.

An important aspect of many of the state formation conflicts is that they relate largely, but not completely, to ethnic identity issues. Groups are searching for their identity and security in a

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Ethiopia in 1960-61, although Eritrea was internationally defined as in union with its neighbor and not a province.

9 GARY GOERTZ & PAUL F. DIEHL, TERRITORIAL CHANGES AND INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS 54, 87 (1992) (noting the low degree of secessions and unifications in data covering 1816-1980). In other words, what has happened since 1980 is a break from the previous patterns, involving secession as well as reunification.

10 In 1990-92 the following new states were declared or en route to becoming declared independent as part of more protracted conflicts: Bougainville, Somaliland, Eritrea, South Sudan, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovakia, 12 states of the former Soviet Union, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

state of their own. An increased ethnic identification, coupled with perceived or real discrimination in the existing state may have initiated these conflicts. Ethnic concentration within a particular territory may make creation of a new state an option for ethnic leaders. Thus, there are conflicts which concern the building of mono-ethnic states as well as multi-ethnic ones. Consequently, ethnic revival presents a particular challenge likely to require considerable attention in the near future. Very few of the present states are ethnically homogeneous. There is also considerable variation in the degree of heterogeneity (Japan is on one extreme end, P.N.G. is on the other).

One particularly tragic feature of the state formation conflicts driven by groups demanding a mono-ethnic state is the fate of the civilian population. These groups tend to deliberately and violently attack civilians of the "wrong" ethnicity and drive them from a particular territory, thereby forcefully creating mono-ethnic areas. However, their opponents might try to force the civilians to remain in the areas in order to maintain an ethnic presence. These developments run counter to the ambitions of international humanitarian law, which aims at shielding civilians from war and protecting the rights of refugees to return to their regions.<sup>11</sup>

### *B. Internal Conflicts Beyond the Left-Right Dichotomy*

Internal conflicts (i.e. conflicts over government within one state) have constituted the majority of all major armed conflicts. Although slightly in decline, these conflicts are likely to remain the dominant category. A shift away from a simple Left-Right continuum of politics to more complex patterns is probable.

The Cold War was a highly interventionist one. Both sides saw the war as a global struggle between two forms of government (in a broad sense), meaning that everyone would have to participate and choose a side. The struggle further implied that each superpower would be expected to support "its" side in internal conflicts. Thus, the Cold War had a strongly polarizing effect on international politics in military block-building, conventional and nuclear armaments, civil and military trade. It also affected internal politics, dividing the political spectrum into Right-Left, Anti-Comm-

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<sup>11</sup> On civilians in war, see CHRISTER AHLSTROM & KJELL-ÅKE NORDQUIST, *CASUALTIES OF CONFLICT* (1991). The wars in former Yugoslavia 1991-92 testify to these developments.

nist versus Communist, Imperialist versus Anti-Imperialist, dichotomies. The resulting global division was one where international alignments and internal politics strongly correlated.<sup>12</sup> Internal divisions became international politics, international politics became internal politics. Some of the wars and divisions along these lines remain after the Cold War (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Central America, China-Taiwan, Korea, Peru, and the Philippines are just a few examples) and will require considerable energy to settle.

The end of the Cold War, therefore, also has repercussions for internal politics and patterns of conflict, particularly in Eastern and Central Europe, but also, for instance, in Africa. The interrelation between international alignments and internal politics will, almost by definition, cease because no Communist pole of the Soviet type remains. Rather, we might witness variations of market economies and democracies, which less distinctly fall into polarized patterns. The reductionism in theory and practice that marked the Cold War will no longer be as striking. The complexities in analysis will increase. The new states, as well as the reconstruction of old ones, may result in interesting new societal configurations. Some countries are likely to retain features of state control, while others may become strongly authoritarian under market conditions. Still others might develop open and liberal societies. Thus, the 1990s should evidence an unusual set of real time experiments in market integration, democracy building, and state control. The "end result" (in a history without end) is difficult to project. If these experiments are combined with a continued high level of military expenditures and a more "commercial" international arms trade, serious conflicts may arise in some areas.

Religious mobilization has been noted in the media and among scholars as one new phenomenon. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 made the Western world more conscious of the issue. However, this radicalization is not an aspect of Islam as a whole, as Islam encompasses a great number of countries. Only a minority of all Moslems are found in the Middle East. Nor is the phenomenon a feature of Islam alone. Forms of political revival of religion are found in Hinduism (in India), Buddhism (in Sri Lanka), Judaism (in Israel), and Christianity (in Northern Ireland, the former Yugoslavia, and Lebanon). The religious revival sometimes

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12 See PETER WALLENSTEEN, *STRUCTURE AND WAR: ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS 1920-1968* (1973) for an analysis. This pattern was clear already in the division of Europe in the late 1940s.

conflicts with state-building ambitions, as religious arguments might be used to create political units different from existing ones. The revival may also clash with democracy because religious convictions may be more widespread than secular political ones, and could thus come to power through majority rule. This should have happened in Algeria in 1991-92 if democracy had been allowed to flourish. Conflict data trends indicate that religion will be a force of its own in the near future. Religion was part of the Cold War confrontation, where, for instance, atheism was an issue. Thus, religion is a part of life that also enters into armed conflicts.<sup>13</sup>

Military dictatorships have been a continuous plague, sometimes related to the Cold War, sometimes not. The 1960s and 1970s were marked by a series of military governments controlling South America, and all were withdrawing in the face of popular opposition, international attention, and economic mismanagement in the 1980s. Military coups have been rare in the last few years. Moreover, struggling domestic economies in new or reformed countries challenge the military government as an institution and a philosophy. New states may need to consider alternative defense structures in the face of the military government's decline.<sup>14</sup>

The new forms of government mean that international involvement takes new forms. For example, to an outside power it will no longer be so obvious which side to support in a regional or intraregional dispute. For the major countries with interventionist military capability (today only the United States, the United Kingdom, and France) the incentives for intervention differ and will relate to more narrow, particular interests. In a world where foreign troops are no longer seen as altruistic liberators, but rather are identified along national or religious lines (both by the intervenor and by those it supports) the temptations to intervene in internal conflicts are severely reduced. Furthermore, increasing isolationism of many leading states implies that interest in inter-

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13 On the difficulties of defining a "religious conflict," see Kjell-Åke Nordquist, *Religion and Armed Conflict*, in *STATES IN ARMED CONFLICT 1989* (Karin Lindgren ed., 1991).

14 Military government seems particularly common in new states, which express "national interest" doctrines. Such governments are also some of the few action-oriented institutions in new states. Thus, South America in the early 1800s, Eastern Europe in the 1920s, and Africa in the 1960s and 1970s saw a large number of military takeovers. The popular presidential rule doing away with parliamentary institutions in Peru in 1992 could be a sign of the emerging complexities.

vention in general, and in choosing sides in particular, will decline.<sup>15</sup>

### *C. Interstate Conflicts Few But Intense*

The number of interstate armed conflicts has declined in the last few years, and these conflicts have consistently constituted less than one tenth of all major armed conflicts. However, the intensity of such wars, once they escalate, strongly differentiates them from the internal conflicts discussed above, as evidenced by the Iran-Iraq Gulf War of the 1980s and the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq.

During the Cold War, although the number of interstate wars were few, the stakes were high. The presence of nuclear weapons bears testimony to that. Wars between two states can more easily and more quickly reach higher levels of intensity than other situations, regardless of whether the parties are equipped with conventional or nuclear weapons. Accordingly, the fear of a major war contributes to caution. The essence of balance of power then is not necessarily the strength of the force on the other side, but the fear of the unpredictable consequences of initiating war in general.<sup>16</sup>

The strongly polarized pattern of the Cold War might have had an impact on interstate wars. While there were a large number of military confrontations and threats between the major powers, there were no clashes of regular forces. The confrontations were localized to Third World territories or to clandestine intelligence operations. Even so, such confrontations were contained from escalating, resulting instead in partitions of countries and regions.

What then happens after the Cold War? New opportunities have been created for nuclear, chemical, and biological disarmament. The major powers have signed agreements detailing the

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15 This observation builds upon the current situation, but it will likely remain the same for the near future. For example, Russia clearly gives priority to internal economic reconstruction and relations with the new neighbors; in the United States, the political agenda (from both major parties) points in the direction of internal reform; and in China, the leadership continues to be torn between a desire for economic growth and fear of democratization.

16 This is not the place for a debate on the nuclear deterrence—"long peace" issue. A number of explanations can be advanced for the absence of major power wars since 1934. See *THE LONG POSTWAR PEACE: CONTENDING EXPLANATIONS AND PROJECTIONS* (Charles W. Kegley, Jr. ed., 1991). One possibility is that the arms race itself served as a substitute for war: the one with the most weapons wins.

elimination of large amounts and entire categories of weapons. The major powers have targeted arms industries—particularly in the East—as the subjects of conversion plans. The result is a reduction of armaments designed for interstate warfare. With disarmament, new problems have to be tackled. Countries must now struggle with the technical and economic dimensions of weapons destruction, the future of competent engineers, and the dangers of proliferation. Disarmament means that fewer resources are available for the development of “sophisticated” weapons or weapons of mass destruction.

The disarmament of the major powers does not mean that the dangers of proliferation have subsided nor that the threat of interstate conflict has been eliminated. A great number of unsettled border conflicts remain. Moreover, new connections between internal politics and international affairs (through ethnicity, religion, and state formation issues) may lead to new inter-state confrontations. In a world with increasing economic difficulties and where the demands on available resources consistently accumulate (real or imagined), resources in border areas or in open waters may represent future regions of tension and conflict.

The emergence of new economic systems also represents a source of potential conflict. The integration of “new” systems (as are now under construction in Eastern Europe and Africa) with existing systems creates tensions, principally within the “new” systems. The inadequacies of market policies in producing expected goods, as well as the concomitant westernization of the East and the Third World, may give rise to hostile reactions.

Furthermore, tension between major economic actors could grow in importance. The increasing regionalization of trade and the emergence of trading blocs may lead to rivalry between leading market economies (United States, Japan, and the E.C.). However, these tensions probably will have little potential of escalating to military wars, as the integration is high, and the stakes in economic exchange (rather than arms) serve as deterrents.<sup>17</sup>

In summary, the ending of the Cold War reduces the barriers against state-formation conflicts, reduces the number of Left-Right conflicts, allows more room for ethnic and religious conflicts, increases economic rivalry, reduces major power confrontation,

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17 Historically there is little correlation between such economic tensions and major power wars. For a discussion on power transformation, see A.F.K. ORGANSKI & JACK KUGLER, *THE WAR LEDGER* (1980).

stimulates disarmament, contains the development of weapons of mass destruction, and has little effect on the absolute number of interstate conflicts.

### III. THE ROLE OF THIRD PARTIES

Conflict is not only a function of factors promoting conflict but also of factors favoring conflict resolution. The ending of the Cold War provides some new developments in this area.

#### *A. New Role for International Organizations and the United Nations*

The current trend is to solicit the aid of international organizations for conflict resolution. In the late 1980s, approximately one-fourth of all conflicts were confronted openly by global or regional organizations. In 1991 this amount had increased to approximately two-fifths.<sup>18</sup> For example, a significant number of the peace accords negotiated in 1990-1991 involved the United Nations (U.N.).

During the Cold War, the U.N. was polarized, if not paralysed, along the East-West lines. Although the Security Council did take action on some issues, any action required positive agreement among the permanent members. Action was taken on several issues, such as decolonization, the arms embargo on South Africa, the sanctions against Rhodesia, and some Middle East issues like the resolutions that followed the Arab-Israeli wars. However, with issues such as European security, Germany, and nuclear disarmament, the permanent members were known to differ and the issues were never seriously taken to the U.N. Security Council. Accordingly, the U.N. was not concerned with issues that were seen as central to the management of world affairs.

The end of the Cold War might have changed the efficacy of this particular international instrument. Currently, in the Security Council a clear pattern has emerged in which the permanent members are working together on many issues or at least are not obstructing each other. This follows a re-evaluation of the U.N. that Soviet leader Gorbachev made during the detente period of the 1980s. A test came when the U.N. was used to handle the Namibia question. Its relative success led to a number of new peace-keeping operations in 1991 including those in Angola, Cam-

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18 This relates to the U.N. Security Council only. See Wallensteen, *supra* note 4.

bodia, Western Sahara, and Yugoslavia. This trend will most likely continue, particularly if the financial implications are solved in an orderly way. If so, the Secretary General would acquire a more significant role than most of his predecessors. Furthermore, the role of the U.N. could be strengthened by the inward orientation of the permanent members. For the near future, the members might be satisfied to leave a great number of issues to the organization.<sup>19</sup>

### *B. New Organizations*

A trend has emerged in which newly created organizations that have varying degrees of power all share conflict resolution as a major objective: the C.S.C.E. has a more permanent structure; the European Community ("E.C."), I.A.E.A., and the Commonwealth have enlarged functions; the N.A.C.C. has been created as an extension of NATO; and the Commonwealth of Independent States ("C.I.S.") as a replacement of the Soviet Union. Other organizations also take up security issues (e.g., UNICEF). The nongovernmental side is also developing. For instance, some organizations such as the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have taken on new functions. New organizations like the International Alert in London and the Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia, have emerged.

The creation of these organizations illustrates an international commitment to the idea of solving rather than fighting conflicts. Also, new times might require new organizations. Some of the older organizations have tried to develop new functions (Commonwealth, NATO, E.C., I.A.E.A.), while other organizations are entirely new (C.S.C.E. bodies and C.I.S.). It is likely that this institution-building will continue. For instance, issues such as disarmament and ethnic rights in Europe will require new bodies.

Other organizations of the Cold War era were also colored by the Cold War. The nonaligned movement created for building peace between the two blocks, was useful for a time, but later became an organization pressing Third World demands, particularly on the West. A debate consequently exists regarding this organization's utility.

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19 The most active Secretary General was Dag Hammarskjöld, who managed to make himself and the organization useful to both superpowers during the Cold War. The breakthrough for the U.S. public came after his tour to People's Republic of China in 1955, which led to the freeing of U.S. pilots.

As a result, a growing number of organizations are now committed to peace issues and conflict resolution. In fact, a rivalry might even develop between them as to who should do what. In some sense, then, a market is being created in which one will measure the efficacy of different organizations for conflict resolution by the results each can achieve. In former Yugoslavia, a large number of actors and organizations have worked at conflict resolution. The E.C. and the U.N. were perhaps the most active, although they still have been unable to complete the job. The case of Nagorno-Karabac may present an even more interesting test, because it is an issue for C.I.S., C.S.C.E., the U.N., and neighboring states.

### *C. New Consensus Building*

Of particular importance for issues of war and peace is the trend of increasing adherence to international conventions. For example, the nonproliferation treaty has more signatures than ever, and the Paris Treaty of 1990 currently covers most of the countries of C.I.S. Accompanying this trend is an increasing respect for human rights conventions, widespread use of democratic rules for domestic conflict resolution, and increased attention to the rights of indigenous peoples. This phenomenon suggests a consensus on norms. Nevertheless, there are less convincing results regarding the observance of these norms.

As we have seen, many of the conflicts concern internal affairs, such as repressive governments and ethnic domination. The increased adherence to principles of human rights, as well as other conventions giving internationally respected rights to inhabitants provide new inroads to these conflicts. They become early warning signals so that international actors may be alerted to arising conflicts before they have become too militarized. Human rights issues have served as an effective vehicle for discussions between opponents and governments. The emerging consensus on some principles of conduct is of utmost importance.

Moreover, a proliferation of new actors accompanies this new consensus. Not only will media have more access, but also nonmilitary and nongovernmental organizations and other pressure groups will come to serve an important function. When the history of the end of the Cold War is to be written, the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Act of 1975 will be important. These gave a legitimate ground for human rights actions, as was seen in

Czechoslovakia, Poland, and even the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> Formation and development of nongovernmental actors are therefore most significant in the peace-building process.<sup>21</sup>

The use of internationally supervised elections has been a successful mechanism for conflict resolution, as evidenced by their role in the peaceful ending of the Nicaragua conflict, and in the changes in Eastern Europe. The international supervision is, likewise, very important in intrastate conflict situations that involve a transition from one type of regime to another. Typically, international organizations such as the U.N. and Commonwealth, and private organizations like the Carter Center, have been responsible for arranging electoral supervision.

Overall, after the Cold War, parties other than the states play an increased role, meaning that international as well as private organizations surface in a new way. Numerous new organizations are increasingly important. An increased consensus on norms to guide conflict resolution has led to the conception that a peaceful solution is a value in itself, harmonious with other societal values. Thus, the ending of the Cold War has liberated energy for conflict resolution.

#### IV. NEW CHALLENGES: THE PARADIGMATIC ISSUES

The ending of the Cold War provides the world of the 1990s with new conflicts, and new instruments for conflict resolution. Does it also require new tasks for conflict resolution, or can the old techniques still be put to use?

Some new challenges are obvious. For example, *retraining* is essential. As issues of ethnicity and religion become more important than the left-right dichotomy, training in cultural pluralism is needed. The new conflicts involve forms of analysis quite different than the simple switch back-and-forth between the "American view" and the "Soviet view" within a largely similar rationality, centered on power and its measurement. The United States-Soviet Union conflict clearly involved the issue of global preeminence, in which a central feature was the Soviet Union's insistence on being an equal.<sup>22</sup> Other conflicts are not so easily defined intellectually.

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20 It is not far-fetched to suggest that the signs of the break-up of the Soviet empire were already present at the end of the 1970s, and possibly could have been enhanced by continued detente, rather than the confrontation that followed during the 1980s.

21 This refers to the creation of civil society as a foundation for democracy, as well as for peaceful relations between states.

22 This leads to absurd consequences, such as the Soviet ambition to own and do

There is a need to *change* from a "centralist" to a "localist" and "globalist" *perspective*. As state formation becomes an important issue, centralist solutions will no longer do. There is a tendency in conflict resolution work to suggest centralist solutions (federations and autonomy arrangements) for state formation conflicts. Often opponents and dissidents see such positions as favoring central governments, and thus resolution efforts will face severe difficulties. The record shows that there were very few peaceful solutions to state-formation conflicts in the last few years. We urgently need to find other forms for solutions. A combined localist and globalist approach might be useful. However, the need for constructive future relations between different peoples may outweigh the value of preserving a particular state at a particular time.<sup>23</sup>

Some conflicts remain dormant, and others are manifested only by gradually emerging patterns. Normal procedures of conflict resolution may suffice. However, *environmental issues* will put conflict resolution to new tests. Some consider these international consensus issues, and on a superficial level they probably are. In some cases, they might become issues that bind states or regions together. But, they also play a role in conflict formation. Environmental degradation that one actor imposes on another can become an important element in conflicts emerging for other reasons, as has been the case for the Baltic peoples in their struggle for independence from the Soviet Union. Many such issues still are not on the front pages, but might soon be there. The challenge posed is the need for foresight, early warning, and early action aimed at remedying the causes. This might sometimes mean changing the status quo.

Most *third parties* will have little power behind their actions. Yet, as the trends in this Article illustrate, these parties will be given serious attention despite their lack of power. The third parties' assets rest more in their impartiality (ability to listen to both sides and correctly transmit what is being said), ingenuity (ability to make proposals which meet the ambitions of the conflicting sides), and competence (knowledge about the circumstances). The developments since the ending of the Cold War pose new challenges to the competence of those involved in third party

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everything the United States owned or did, from accumulating nuclear weapons to participating in disastrous military interventions in Third World countries.

<sup>23</sup> These difficulties have arisen in negotiations concerning Ethiopia-Eritrea, Israel-Palestine, etc.

work. Perhaps this is also a challenge to the very framework I have suggested here.

