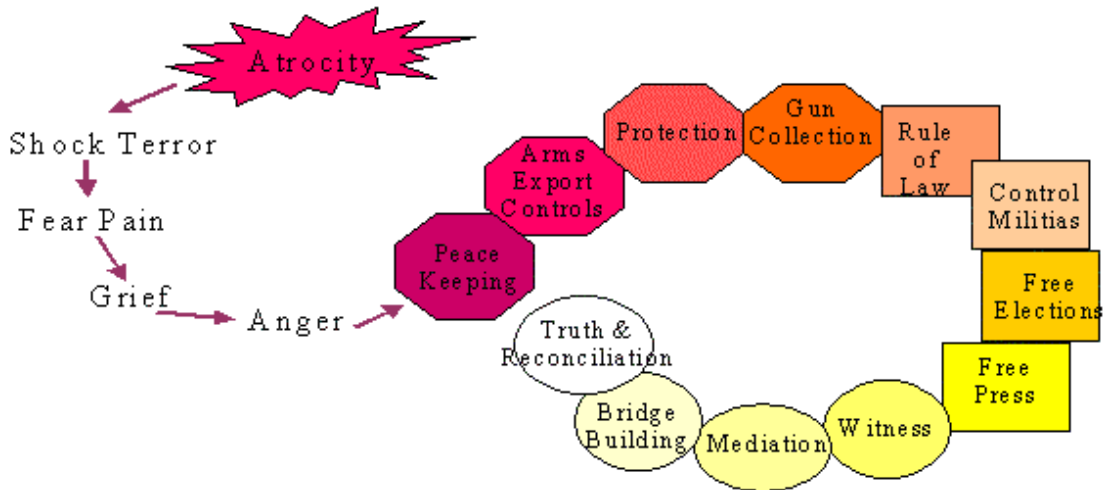


## The road not taken

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The cost effectiveness of conflict resolution measures is in little doubt relative to the cost of military interventions, which by their very nature are enormously expensive. The bombing of Serbia in 1999, for example, cost approximately \$4 billion, in addition to the \$20–30 billion needed to re-build what was destroyed. In contrast, the average cost of effective non-violent interventions in conflict in different parts of the world, researched recently, was less than \$100,000.

The issue here is that this type of non-military approach hardly receives any official funding at all. In the US, for example, this year \$38 billion will be spent on weapons research alone, while funds requested for conflict prevention, mitigation and management amount to a total of less than \$60 million (within the USAID budget for FY 2003). In the UK, the Blair government has taken the innovative step of making conflict prevention and resolution the joint responsibility of the ministries of defence, foreign affairs and international development, with a joint budget of £118 million for 2002, relative to a military budget of over £25 billion.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [1] (OSCE), an intergovernmental organisation with 55 member states whose work consists entirely in conflict prevention, management and post-conflict peace building, had a budget of approximately \$179 million for 2001. The only comparable figure for an intergovernmental organisation dealing with conflict would be that of NATO [2], a military alliance of 19 nations (including the US and Canada). NATO operates on a very different basis; most of its resources are provided by member states on an individual contribution basis, so that its central budget (approximately \$850 million) does not reflect resources allocated by member states with defence budgets totalling more than \$500 billion.

### Auditing responses to terror

The attacks of 11 September showed with appalling clarity quite how vulnerable the most powerful and heavily armed state in the world was. The reaction has been a sustained attempt to regain control of its security by means of a wide-ranging and near-global military response. It has involved a war in Afghanistan, the extension of military power to new regions and an increase in the military budget that is greater than Britain's total defence budget. The immediate prospect is for further conflict in Afghanistan and a war with Iraq, which could have devastating consequences for the region and possibly for the world. Moreover, US security policy now ignores most forms of multilateral co-operation while developing a military posture that includes pre-emption on its own terms.

This comes at a time when Britain, Sweden and other member states of the European Union are beginning to discover the effectiveness of non-violent methods of addressing the causes of conflict and political violence. In terms of the involvement of states and interstate organisations, such methods are in their very early stages of development, even if they are far better known to some non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and have been practised by citizen groups and others for very many years.

What is significant is that the methods of conflict prevention and resolution are just beginning to be recognised by a few governments as potential alternatives, at precisely the time when the global response of the 'war on terror' is caught in the traditional yet highly dangerous approaches built essentially on the maintenance of military control.

Yet the amount of money allocated, nationally and internationally, to support and develop best practice in conflict resolution and related activities remains far too low – a tiny fraction of military budgets. This need not be the case. One year after the 11 September attacks, as the audit of the results of traditional military responses shows continuing tensions, the risk of further attacks and new dangers, especially in the Middle East, it is appropriate to promote alternative responses.

It is particularly important that leadership is forthcoming, not just from civil society, but from political leaderships in Europe and elsewhere. If it does come, then we may have some prospect for moving to a condition of dubious international stability dependent not on the false notion of military control with all its inherent risks, but on a condition of peace and justice achieved, in part, by non-violent approaches to conflict prevention and resolution.

### Is the 'war on terrorism' cost effective?



Let us assume that there was a political will to look at the alternatives. Of course, this is to assume a great deal, not only in terms of vested interests and powerful institutions, but in terms of the extensive presence throughout the most highly developed of our democratic societies of a cultural reliance on superior force, especially when fear prevails. But let us suppose that much could be done to change this situation, and to draw out the feelings of shared vulnerability and

common humanity, which are also not far from the surface, if only people knew that there were alternatives.

We might make a start by doing a basic good housekeeping calculation. We might start by asking ourselves if the 'war on terrorism' is cost effective.

There are still no published costings for the 'war on terrorism'. The best indicator we have is that over \$27 billion of the new (2003) budget for the US Department of Defense is reserved specifically to prosecute the war. The President plans an additional \$37.7 billion budget for increased homeland defence. What is this likely to buy?

The principal military actions so far have involved the destruction of the Taliban regime and attacks on al-Qaida forces in Afghanistan by means of a sustained air assault over several months; the involvement of special forces within Afghanistan and the use of ground forces belonging to the Northern Alliance, previously the oppositional faction in the Afghan civil war.

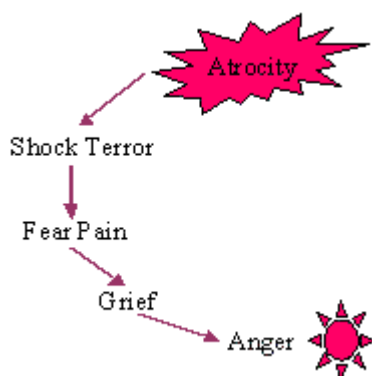
Secondary aspects of the war have been support for anti-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations in a number of countries especially the Philippines; the development of significant US bases in a number of Central Asian countries and continuing support for the Sharon government in Israel in its actions against Palestinian militants and the Palestinian population of the occupied territories. Within the US, there has been the extensive development of the concept of homeland defence.

Nevertheless, even after the withdrawal of al-Qaida from Afghanistan, US intelligence sources believe that its capability for further action is largely intact, with many instances of actual or attempted attacks in recent months. These include the bombing of a synagogue in Tunisia and the killing of a number of German tourists; an attack on a church in a diplomatic compound in Islamabad; the bombing of a bus killing French naval technicians in Karachi; the attempted destruction of the US consulate in the same city; and, most recently, the attempted assassination of the Afghan Prime Minister, which killed 22 people.

Known examples of failed actions include an attempt to shoot down a US air force plane in Saudi Arabia, planned attacks on Western naval ships in the Western Mediterranean, and plans to develop radiological weapons in the US. There are unconfirmed reports of attempts to attack US embassies in Paris and Rome. At the time of writing, there have not been further major attacks on the scale of 11 September, but it is likely that al-Qaida retains this ability.

### **Intervening in the cycle of violence**

Political violence is difficult to counteract by military means, as the British Government discovered in Northern Ireland and as the US is now finding. The deeper human reasons for resorting to terror need to be addressed, and here the concept of the cycle of violence is useful.



Intervention is needed at the point before anger hardens into bitterness, revenge and retaliation. To be effective it must address the physical, the political, and the psychological security of those trapped in violence; all are equally important, and one without the other is insufficiently strong to break the cycle. [\(1\)](#) [2], the control of arms exports [\(2\)](#) [2], protection of civilians [\(3\)](#) [2] and the collection of weapons [\(4\)](#) [2]. Interventions for political security include law enforcement [\(5\)](#) [2], promoting free elections [\(6\)](#) [2], bringing militias [\(7\)](#) [2] under political control, and ensuring a free press [\(8\)](#) [2].

Interventions for psychological security include witnessing [\(9\)](#) [2] peoples' experience of trauma, mediation [\(10\)](#) [2] and bridge building [\(11\)](#) [2] between fractured communities, and the holding of truth and reconciliation commissions [\(12\)](#) [2]. In this way the cycle of violence can be broken and reversed.

There are now thousands of documented examples from around the globe to indicate the potency of non-violence. If applied systematically, robustly and with adequate funding, they illustrate how the cycle of violence can be transformed and, concomitantly, how terrorism can be undermined.

[\(back\)](#) [2]

The principal obstacle to effective UN peacekeeping is the level of political will among the members of UN Security Council, especially the permanent five. But, where peacekeeping operations have sufficient support, they prevent bloodshed and perform the essential task of creating an environment in which peace building and reconciliation can take place, as Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, has stated innumerable times: 'If we are given the means - in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, in East Timor and Angola - we have a real opportunity to break the cycle of violence once and for all.'

[\(back\)](#) [2]

Embargoes or sanctions against the supply of arms to areas of conflict rarely work, for a number of reasons. These could effectively be addressed if:

- supplier countries agree and police a binding code not to supply to areas where conflict is imminent, and impose penalties for supposed end users who re-sell arms
- substantial funds are provided, possibly through a tax on corporate suppliers, to introduce effective boundary controls on gun-running, and severe and enforceable penalties
- the permanent five members of the Security Council cut their arms exports. Over the last five years, the United States has sold \$50bn worth of major conventional arms, Russia has sold \$16bn, China \$1.5bn, the United Kingdom \$7bn, and France \$11bn

[\(back\)](#) [2]

Peace Brigades International mobilise and provide trained units of volunteers, in areas of high tension, to help discourage violent outbreaks. This kind of intervention only works when the aggressor knows that enough of the international community supports the protectors. For example, in Columbia in 1995, where there had been 38,000 political assassinations over a four year period, PBI sent teams to provide round-the-clock unarmed protection for prominent human rights activists whose colleagues had been killed, abducted or tortured. One such activist said:

The death sentence against each and every one of us has not been carried out only because we have had Peace Brigades International accompaniment.

[\(back\)](#) [2]

In El Salvador in 1995 a group of businessmen whose trucks were being hijacked by heavily armed gangs (as a result of twelve years of civil war) copied a successful initiative from the Dominican Republic. For every gun surrendered they offered food vouchers worth \$100. By the end of the second weekend vouchers worth \$103,000 had been issued, despite the organisation having only \$19,500 available funds. In view of the success of the programme the President of El Salvador intervened to help, and in three years over 10,000 weapons were handed in.

[\(back\)](#) [2]

The UK government's approach to the security problems in Sierra Leone show that an integrated strategy can be very effective. In this case, four government departments, Department for International Development (DfID), Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) addressed different aspects security sector reform:

- DfID funded activities in support of civilian control of the security sector;
- MoD helped to develop a national security policy, including the reorganisation of Sierra Leone's defence ministry, and training the army;
- the Home Office provided personnel skilled in managing reform of police services; and
- the FCO helped to fund military education and training.

Unless the legal and coercive instruments which a citizen encounters are perceived as legitimate and independent, then the capacity of the state to implement policies intended to support reconciliation and prosecute human rights violations will be severely undermined.

[\(back\)](#) [2]

Slobodan Milosevic was named by the International Crisis Group as the "single greatest cause of instability and conflict in south eastern Europe". In July 1999 the US-based East-West Institute and the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs brought together the representatives of pro-democracy forces from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including trade unions, NGOs and independent media. A task force was set up to assist all those working for change, who had been active, even against terrible odds during the war. They built a coalition eventually known as the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, which was able to build a common strategy united behind one candidate, Vojislav Kostunica. With extensive election monitoring and a wave of non-violent protest when Milosevic attempted to annul election results, the Democratic Opposition of Serbia won the Serbian elections.

[\(back\)](#) [2]

In Mozambique the Community of Saint' Egidio, supported by the Vatican, became involved in a series of meetings with leaders of FRELIMO and RENAMO, culminating in October 1992 in the signing of a comprehensive peace accord. This provided for the demobilisation and re-integration of combatants, the creation of a new Mozambican Defence Force, the creation of political parties and freedom of the press. The United Nations was given the responsibility of overseeing the transition from war to peace which led to the first free elections in October 1994.

[\(back\)](#) [2]

An independent media is essential to the prevention of war. Conversely hate radio can inflame conflict to white heat, as happened in the Rwandan genocide. In nearby Burundi in 1994

violence began to spiral; the main radio station was controlled by the state, whose army had been complicit in the violence. With the aid of the US-based NGO, Search for Common Ground, the independent 'Studio Ijambo' was launched early in 1995. In spite of one of the team members being killed by the army, they continued their balanced news coverage, proposing solutions to the crisis facing the country. In two years they produced 2500 features on peaceful co-existence and a soap opera to which after four years 85% of the entire population was listening. Studio Ijambo has received many international awards for its role in calming explosive tensions, defusing rumours, and promoting reconciliation.

[\(back\)](#) [2]

The traumas experienced by victims of atrocity need attention and, if possible, healing. One way in which this is done simply and effectively is by a technique called 'active listening', whereby an independent witness or witnesses gives the traumatised person their full attention for as long as necessary to discharge their fear, grief and anger. This simple technique takes time and care, but done well it prevents anger hardening into bitterness and retaliation. In Croatia, for example, in the midst of the war, a group of citizens set up the 'Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights' in Osijek. Today it has grown into one of the largest citizen-led peace-building organisations in the country. The centre sends 'peace teams' to towns and villages to aid the healing of trauma which has left so many people emotionally scarred. In places where Serbs still live, the peace teams have made important progress in reducing the level of animosity and tension between Serbs and Croats, thus reducing the probability of violence breaking out anew.

[\(back\)](#) [2]

In every conflict, there are those willing to risk their lives to build a non-violent solution. For example, in north eastern Kenya, the Women of Wajir adopted the motto: "You must commit yourself to continuing the peace work no matter what happens: if my clan were to kill your relatives, would you still work with me for peace? If you can't say yes, don't join our group."

Their intervention was key to ending an inter-clan war by setting up public meetings and rapid response teams. It was so successful and cost effective that it has now been copied in other parts of the country, co-ordinated by a special representative in the office of the Kenyan President.

[\(back\)](#) [2]

In India, in the slums of Ahmedabad, a small NGO called St. Xavier's Social Service Society has worked for years in fostering a climate of inter-religious understanding between the desperately poor Muslim and Hindu communities. By targeting false rumours before they spread, by setting up 'peace committees' made up of local people and by proactively addressing the root causes of the tensions between Hindus and Muslims in the slums, St. Xavier has undoubtedly made a significant contribution to inter-religious co-existence in the area.

[\(back\)](#) [2]

The lies, suspicion and betrayals which characterise war can fester for decades and erupt in further atrocity if not addressed. Truth and reconciliation commissions, held in public, can perform a vital reconstitutive function within transitional democracies, and help to break the cycle of violence. It is extremely painful for all concerned, but when the truth is really told, it can help to bring about a transformation so substantial that deep reconciliation is far more likely to be achieved.

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