A resource package for teachers of GCE 'A' Level History, General Paper & 'O' Level Social Studies/Combined Humanities
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The Role of the UN and Regional Organisations in Conflict Management

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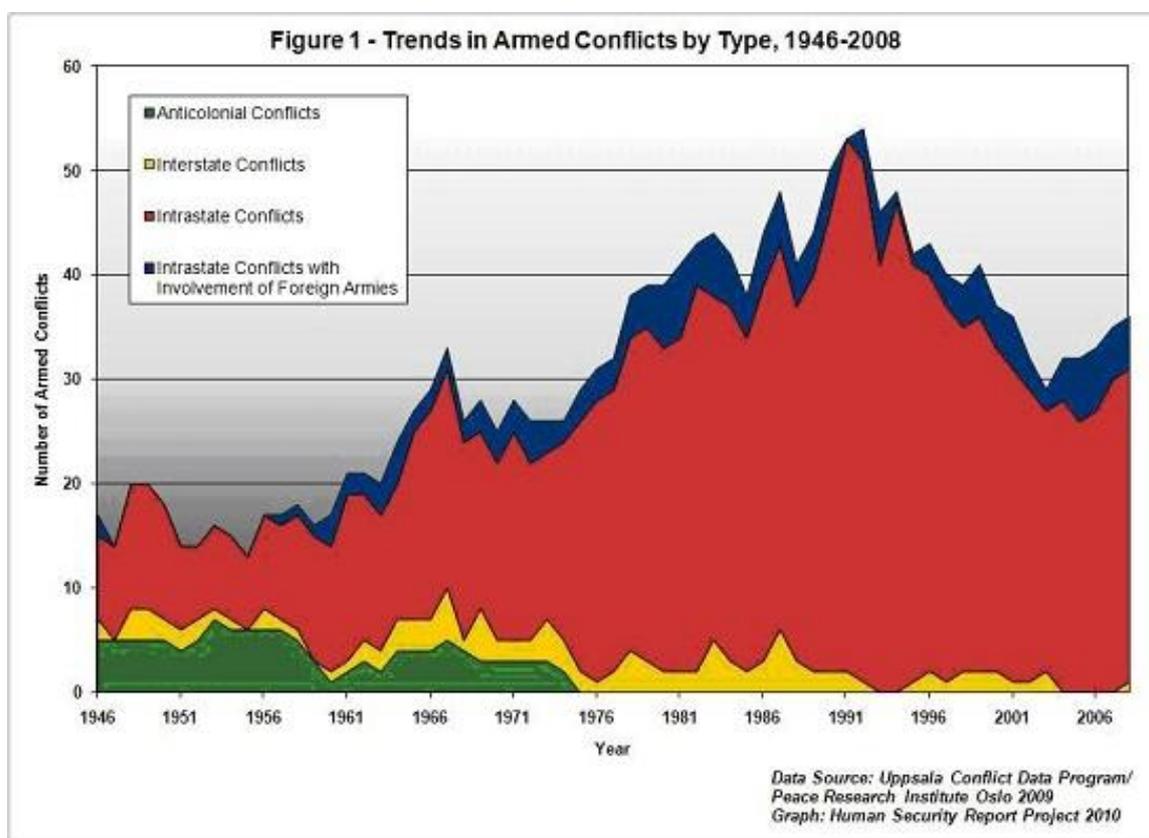## 1. INTRODUCTION: Conflicts around the world

In many regions in the world, conflicts exist between different actors. Conflicts largely occur as a result of clashes of interests between actors, and an inability to find a satisfactory resolution. Such conflicts are often armed and thus have the potential to be extremely destructive.

Conflicts across the world today can be separated into two broad categories, **inter-state conflict** and **intra-state conflict**.

Inter-state conflict refers to conflict between different countries or nation states. Such conflicts have the potential to be extremely deadly and destructive, especially when fought between the major powers. Inter-state conflicts can occur as a result of many different factors, including territorial disputes, nationalism, political aggression, the pursuit of natural resources and militarism. However, as every conflict is different, it is usually a confluence of factors that bring about inter-state conflicts. Today, inter-state conflicts account for a small proportion of ongoing conflicts in the world. Examples of inter-state conflict would include the two World Wars, the Kashmir Conflict, the Arab-Israeli Wars, the Falklands War and the Iraq War.

Intra-state conflict refers to conflict that takes place between different actors within a nation state. In fact, most armed conflicts today take place within a country. Intra-state conflict occurs when different groups within a country are unable to resolve their differences and one or more of the different

actors attempt to resolve the disagreements through armed conflict. A common example of intra-state conflict is a civil war. However, intra-state conflicts are often extremely complex and can occur for any number of reasons. Common factors include social and economic inequality, political exclusion, ethnicity and religion. The Somali Civil War, Afghan Civil War and the Syrian Uprising are all instances of intra-state conflict.

Figure 1 - Trends in Armed Conflicts by Type, 1946-2008

Data Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program/ Peace Research Institute Oslo 2009
Graph: Human Security Report Project 2010

Trends in armed conflicts have shown that the total number of conflicts increased considerably during the Cold War years of 1945 to 1991. Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a marked decline in the number of armed conflicts around the world. The number of inter-state and intra-state conflicts has steadily decreased throughout the past two decades. Nevertheless, there continues to be considerable number of intra-state conflicts.

Given the potential for conflicts to severely damage countries and their surrounding regions, conflict-resolution by international or regional agencies

has become increasingly important. International and regional organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union have concentrated a great deal of resources and efforts in attempts to improve the situation and work towards achieving peace in troubled regions around the world.

2. The United Nations: Conflict Management and Prevention

The United Nations (UN) is an international organisation of 193 member states.[1] It was founded in 1945 by 51 countries following World War II. One of its main purposes is to keep peace throughout the world. As such, the UN plays a considerable role in conflict resolution. The UN attempts to maintain international peace and security through a range of activities. These include the following:

- Promoting the concept of **collective security**

    Collective security refers to a system of maintaining international peace. Nations involved in collective security arrangements agree not to attack each other and will defend one another should any attacks be made.

    The UN hopes to achieve international security by dissuading its 193 members from acting in ways that may threaten peace and stability. Promoting such a concept is one way to keep peace throughout the world as it helps to prevent conflicts between nations.

- Promoting **international cooperation**

    With 193 member states, the UN has an international character and can serve as a centre to achieve international cooperation, harmonising the actions of nations to achieve the goal of international peace and security.

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[1] As of May 2012.

In addition, international cooperation between Member States is demonstrated by the UN Charter, which stipulates that to assist in maintaining international peace and security, all member states should make available to the Security Council the necessary armed forces and facilities. Since 1948, almost 130 countries have contributed forces towards UN peacekeeping operations. As such, the UN clearly promotes international cooperation in peacekeeping operations and international peace is perceived as an international effort which all member states should take part in.

Beyond the sphere of peacekeeping, international cooperation between the UN and its Member States also extends to a wide array of issues, such as development and humanitarian assistance. For instance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN's development network and its partners include the governments of developing countries, global and local foundations, international financial institutions and civil society organisations. This highlights the international cooperation between Member States, non-governmental organisations and the UN.

- **Peacemaking**

UN peacemaking is to bring hostile parties to agreement through peaceful and diplomatic means. The Security Council of the UN plays an important role in this process, by recommending ways to avoid conflict so as to restore and secure peace.

The Secretary-General also plays a vital role in peacemaking. The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter that appears to threaten international peace and security and may carry out mediation or exercise quiet diplomacy behind the scenes. The Secretary-General also undertakes preventive diplomacy.

Furthermore, the UN appoints Special Envoys to troubled regions in the world to carry out mediation. These envoys represent the UN in these regions and speak on its behalf. They engage with national politicians and

authorities and attempt to resolve disputes through peaceful negotiations.

Peacemaking is aimed at resolving disputes before they escalate into full-blown armed conflicts.

- **Peacekeeping**

UN peacekeeping helps countries torn by conflict to create conditions for lasting peace.

As it is extremely difficult for countries to make the transition from conflict to peace, UN Peacekeepers provide security and peacebuilding support to help countries through this difficult transition.

Over the years, peacekeeping has proven to be one of the most effective tools available to the UN to assist countries moving forward from a state of conflict. Since 1948, the UN has carried out 67 peacekeeping operations. Of these, 17 peacekeeping operations deployed on four continents are still ongoing.
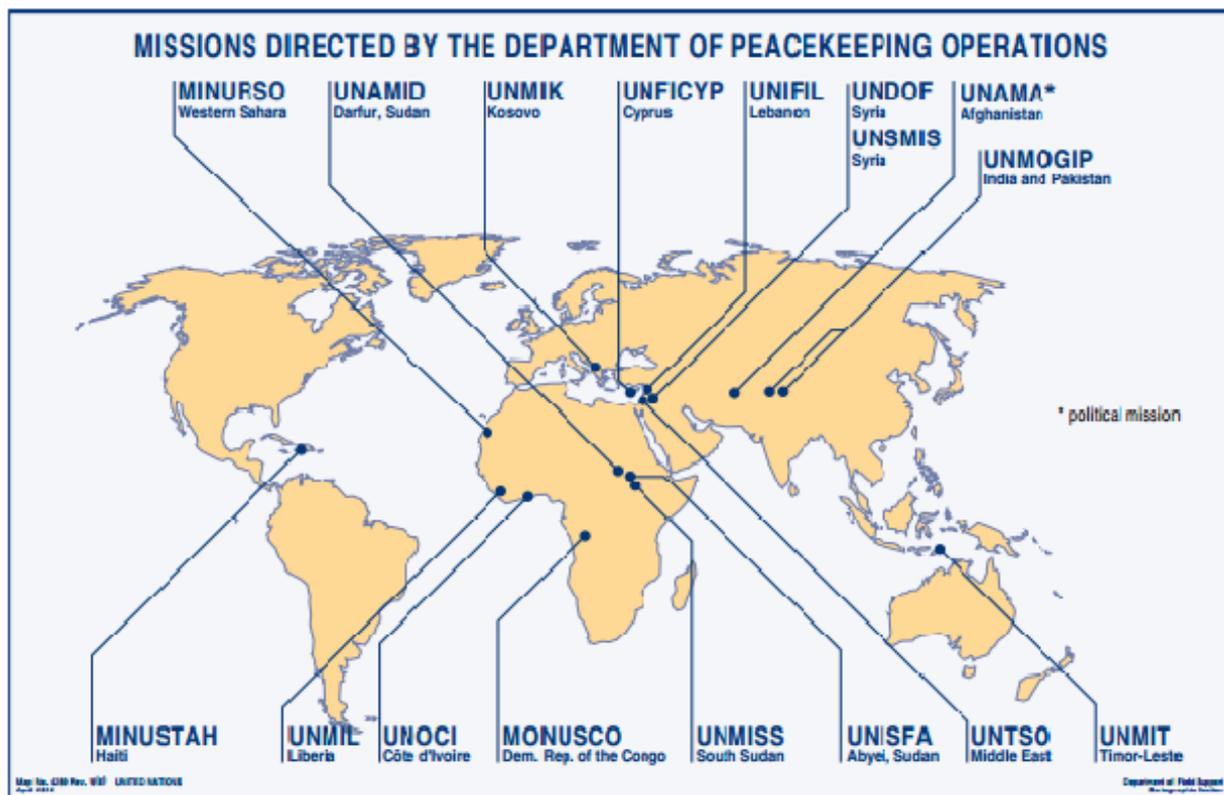
Source: UN Cartographic Website

- **Peace enforcement**

    Peace enforcement is used to restore international peace and security in face of threats to collective security, breaches of peace or acts of aggression. The Council may utilise regional organisations and agencies to carry out peace enforcement action under its authority.

    Peace enforcement involves the use of a range of coercive measures, including military action. It requires the explicit authorization of the Security Council.

    In September 1999, violence broke out in East Timor and a multinational peace enforcement force was authorized by the Security Council. The operation commenced with a force on 11, 500 soldiers from 22 countries and by March 2000, the situation in East Timor was under control. East Timor has been a success story for the UN.

    Nevertheless, because of its use of coercive measures, peace enforcement is generally avoided in favour of other methods of conflict management.

UN and Conflict Prevention

UN peacemaking and preventive diplomacy has made major contributions towards reducing armed conflict in the world. Despite these successes, many people continue to live in regions torn by conflict. As such, efforts are constantly ongoing to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the UN in preventing conflicts and escalation of conflicts.

3. **Regional Organisations and Conflict Management**

In many regions of the world, there has been a trend toward regional integration. A driving factor behind regional integration is meeting the challenges of globalisation and welfare gains from economic integration. Examples of regional organisations include the European Union (EU) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In addition to reaping economic advantages, regional organisations often work closely in managing conflicts in their region and in peacekeeping. In recent years, regional organisations have been called on to contribute more to conflict management in their respective regions.

Brahimi Report

The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping, or the Brahimi report,[2] was released in 2000. This report reviewed peace and security activities and presented a set of recommendations to assist the UN in better conducting such activities in future.

One recommendation urged regional organisations and the UN to cooperate on issues involving conflict prevention, peace-making, elections and other peace-building activities. In addition, the report called on regional organisations to establish rapid reaction forces which can respond to regional emergencies. These recommendations greatly encouraged regional organisations to play a more active role in regional security.

Increased regional support would greatly aid the UN in their missions and in maintaining international peace and security.

The European Union (EU)

The EU is a regional organisation of 27 Member States and has since 1992 put in place institutions and mechanisms for achieving a Common Foreign and Security Policy.

Given the sheer size of the Union and its status as the world's largest trading power, and an important development actor, the EU plays an important role in global affairs. In its region, the EU also works to resolve conflicts. The EU is especially concerned about the stability of countries in Eastern Europe.

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[2] See http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/

With regards to regional conflict management, the EU played a significant role in the 2008 Russia-Georgia War, which ended in an EU-brokered ceasefire and the deployment of an EU monitoring mission in Georgia.

ASEAN

ASEAN is a regional organisation of 10 Member States, established in 1967.

The ASEAN Charter which was signed in 2007 called for ASEAN to become an economic, socio-cultural and political-security community. This implies that ASEAN is moving towards closer integration beyond economic issues.

ASEAN leaders have agreed to establish the **ASEAN Political Security Community** (APSC) which is aimed at ensuring that countries in the region live at peace with one another and with the world in a just, democratic and harmonious environment.

Members pledge to rely on peaceful processes in the settlement of intra-regional differences. The APSC constitutes the following:

- Political development
- Shaping and sharing of norms
- Conflict prevention
- Conflict resolution
- Post-conflict peace building

Other measures taken by ASEAN towards maintaining peace and managing conflicts include the **ASEAN Regional Forum** (ARF), aimed at fostering dialogue on political and security issues and making contributions towards preventive diplomacy.

Despite this, it would appear that ASEAN still has a long way to go before becoming an effective political-security community. The ongoing border skirmishes between Thailand and Cambodia over the Preah Vihear Temple remain a troubling situation for the region. In 2011, the UN Security Council voiced its concern over the Thai-Cambodian conflict but decided to leave the

situation to ASEAN. However, the ASEAN Summit a few months later failed to achieve any breakthrough in resolving the conflict, highlighting the organisation's weakness in regional conflict management.

Regional Organisations and Conflict Management

The prevalence of regional conflicts and the trend towards intra-state conflicts has indicated that there is a need for increased regional cooperation. While the UN continues to be committed towards international peace and security, UN peacekeeping can be much more effective when supported by regional organisations which have interest in ensuring regional stability and thus committed to conflict resolution in their regions.

4. The Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU

Despite a large degree of regional integration in the European Union, foreign policy has usually remained an inter-governmental affair, with the Member States preferring to take control of their own foreign policies.

As the Union continues to develop and become increasingly influential because of its economic might, there have been attempts to create a common foreign policy to allow a deeper degree of harmonisation in the EU's foreign affairs.

The **Common Foreign and Security Policy** (CFSP) refers to the foreign policy of the European Union. The CFSP allows the EU to speak with one voice with regards to foreign policy. It relies primarily on the use of diplomacy to resolve conflicts and bring about international understanding. When necessary, conflict management can be backed by trade, development assistance and dispatch of peacekeepers.

The CFSP allows the EU to act as one in world affairs. Recent changes made by the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 include the appointment of an EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who coordinates between

EU countries to shape and implement foreign policy. The High Representative is assisted by civilian and military staff, the European External Action Service.

The CFSP aims to:

- Preserve peace and strengthen international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter
- Promote international co-operation
- Develop and consolidate democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms

Common Security and Defence Policy

A key component of the CFSP is the **Common Security and Defence Policy** (CSDP). The CSDP covers the defence and military aspect of the CFSP.

The CSDP aims to strengthen the EU's external ability to act through the development of civilian and military capabilities in conflict prevention and crisis management.

The CSDP also aims to play a larger role in influencing policies and to prevent the violation of international law, democratic principles and human rights through diplomatic or economic sanctions.

Recent sanctions include economic sanctions against Iran over controversies surrounding Iran's nuclear program. Given the EU's global economic significance, the application of economic sanctions can be a powerful and influential tool. As such, sanctions tend to be the EU's favoured course of action when disputes concerning international security arise.

Since the EU does not have a standing army, the CSDP relies on ad hoc forces contributed by EU Member States to carry out:

- joint disarmament operations
- humanitarian and rescue tasks
- military advice and assistance
- conflict prevention and peace-keeping

- tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilisation

EU missions

Since 2003, with the release of the European Security Strategy,[3] the EU has become more active in conflict management and has deployed several missions to ensure peace and security in troubled regions. To date, there have been 28 EU and CSDP missions across three continents, of which ten are still ongoing.

Common objectives of CSDP missions include creating democratic and stable conditions for the countries, contributing to the security of the respective regions and promoting policies compatible with human rights and international humanitarian law.

CFSP and Decision Making

While the CFSP provides the framework for the EU to speak with a single voice on the world stage, deeper integration with regards to foreign and security policy continues to be a challenge. Foreign policy is one area where decision-making is still inter-governmental and authority remains with the respective Member States governments, even though EU institutions such as the European External Action Service are part of the process.

Furthermore, key decisions on military or defence issues continue to require unanimity and this makes coming to a consensus on policies an extremely challenging task. As such, a greater degree of integration with regards to foreign policy and conflict management continues to be a work in progress for the EU.

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[3] See http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf

EU Centre in Singapore

Source: EU External Action Website

5. EU contribution to peacekeeping in Southeast Asian region – the Aceh Monitoring Mission

The EU's contribution to regional security in Southeast Asia is best illustrated by the Aceh Monitoring Mission from September 2005 to December 2006. During this period of time, the EU successfully completed its mandate in monitoring

and supporting the peace process in Aceh. The peace process in Aceh had been preceded by decades of insurgency and regional tension.

Conflict in Aceh

Located at the northern tip of Sumatra, Aceh is a special region of Indonesia. Rich in oil and gas reserves, Aceh has a long nationalist history and consequently, it had been the venue for continuous armed conflicts.

Source: Aceh Monitoring Mission Website

Aceh's freedom fighters founded the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in 1975 and had been battling for Aceh's independence since then. In 1976, the group consisted of just 150 rebels but numbers steadily increased over the years to peak at around 3000 by 2003.

The GAM always maintained that Aceh should be an independent territory because of historical, cultural and religious reasons and struggled for the region's independence from Indonesia. GAM waged an insurgency in Aceh, fighting against Indonesian security forces from 1976 to 2005 in a bid to regain independence from Indonesia.

In 2004, after decades of fighting, both sides declared a cease-fire and reiterated the need for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The call for a peaceful resolution was motivated by the stalemate and weariness with the

long-drawn insurgency, coupled with the destruction and devastating effects of the 2004 tsunami disaster which sent a message requiring all to work together to rebuild Aceh.

Aceh Monitoring Mission

The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) was a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP, as the CSDP was formerly known) mission, and the first of its kind in Asia. The AMM was established by the EU in 2005, according to the Memorandum of Understanding signed by GAM and the Government of Indonesia.

The presence of the AMM was based on an official invitation by the Government of Indonesia and with the full support of the leadership of the GAM. The AMM was undertaking this mission so as to contribute to a peaceful, comprehensive and sustainable solution to the conflict in Aceh.

The purpose of the AMM was to monitor the implementation of the various aspects of the peace agreement set out in the Memorandum. This included the following tasks:

- investigate and rule on complaints and alleged violations of the Memorandum

- establish and maintain liaison and good cooperation with the parties

Further tasks included the decommissioning of GAM armaments and overseeing the relocation of non-organic military and police by the Government of Indonesia. In accordance with the Memorandum, both parties carried out the stated tasks.

The AMM was a joint effort of the EU, five ASEAN countries (Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand) as well as Norway and Switzerland. The mission was of a civilian nature, under the political control of the EU's Political and Security Committee. Monitors carried out their tasks by

patrolling and communicating with both parties and carrying out inspections and investigations where required.

The mission was financed from the EU's CFSP budget (9.3 million euros) and from the contributions of the member and participating states (6 million euros).

Headquartered in Banda Aceh and headed by Dutch diplomat Pieter Feith, the mission's 226 unarmed personnel hailed from a large number of EU member states (130 people total), including 28 from Finland, 13 from Sweden, 11 each from the Netherlands and Spain, and ten from the UK. The remaining 96 personnel came from the five ASEAN states.

Impact of AMM

On 15 December 2006, the EU completed its mission in Aceh. The AMM had been a significant mission, as it was the first EU-led mission in Asia and its first cooperation with ASEAN in contributing to the peaceful resolution of a regional conflict. The AMM has been a success for both the EU and ASEAN in supporting the peace process in Aceh.

Significant progress had been made in restoring peace and stability in Aceh. For the first time, on 11 December 2006, direct elections were held in Aceh and former GAM fighters were able to stand as independent candidates.

The EU continues to be committed to supporting peace in Aceh through longer term development programmes. Through the AMM, the EU demonstrated its commitment to peace and stability in the region as well as its ability to reach out to regional partners and cooperate to create conditions for lasting peace and security.

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