**The Decrease in Major Inter-state Conflicts since the End of the Cold War**

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# The Decrease in Major Inter-state Conflicts since the End of the Cold War

An inter-State conflict occurs when two or more sovereign states fight. Geography disputes, rivalry for scarce resources, ideological differences, and power rivalries are examples of the possible causes of such conflicts. In addition to the countries immediately involved, interstate conflicts can affect the international community (Ari, 2021). They could cause mortality, demographic changes, material loss, and economic disruption. As a result, the study of international relations and global governance have heavily emphasised preventing and resolving conflicts between sovereign states. Interstate conflicts were common during the Cold War because the United States and the Soviet Union competed for global supremacy (Therborn, 2020). Instead of a direct conflict, the two superpowers fought proxy conflicts such as the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Numerous interstate conflicts, like the Arab-Israeli conflict and the India-Pakistan conflict, as well as several proxy wars, were caused by territorial disputes (Singh, 2022). During the Cold War, high military expenditures, arms competitions, and the prospect of nuclear war all led to disquiet and instability in the global order.

The end of the Cold War brought about a significant shift in the international system. The bipolarity that characterised international relations during the Cold War led to a unipolar system (Singh, 2022). The decrease is linked to economic interdependence, democratisation, technological advancement, and the introduction of multilateralism. Nevertheless, it underscores the difficulties of preventing interstate conflicts and the significance of conflict resolution mechanisms in maintaining a peaceful and stable international order (Akoto, 2021). For maintaining global security and fostering healthy international relations, it is crucial to appreciate the underlying causes of this trend and the ongoing challenges associated with preventing future inter-state conflicts.

# **The Decline of Inter-State Conflicts**

There have been fewer inter-state conflicts since the conclusion of the Cold War. Less frequent, less severe, and fewer fatalities are associated with conflicts. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, there were just two inter-state conflicts in the 2010s, down from fourteen in the 1990s. Casualties have decreased in Inter-State Conflicts (Kostrzewa-Zorbas, 2019). In 1991, for example, interstate conflicts cost the lives of over 30,000 individuals, compared to just 100 in 2019 (Ramcharan & Ramcharan, 2020). With the end of the Cold War, there have been fewer inter-state conflicts. The degree to which the international order is dynamic is a major factor. Changes in domestic political systems, such as the expansion of democracy, have made state governments more accountable to their voters and less prone to engage in aggressive foreign policy.

The growth in the number of conflict prevention programs the international community implements contributes to the decline in interstate conflicts. It includes mediation, peacekeeping, and other conflict resolution strategies. The United Nations (UN) has proven particularly useful in averting inter-state conflicts by offering a forum for diplomacy and government mediation (Akoto, 2021). Since the end of the Cold War, Interstate Conflicts have largely decreased, which is good because it has enhanced world peace and security.

# **Factors Contributing to Decreased Inter-state Conflict**

## **Globalisation**

Globalisation refers to the rising movement of commodities, services, money, and ideas beyond national borders as the world becomes interconnected. Globalisation has significantly reduced inter-state conflict since the conclusion of the Cold War (Cîrdei, 2019). Due to the dissemination of ideas and cultural exchange made possible by globalisation, inter-state conflict has also significantly diminished. The expansion of international news sources and online tools has simplified the dissemination of information about diverse cultures and points of view, hence lowering comprehension barriers and increasing compassion levels among people worldwide (Cîrdei, 2019). In addition to limiting conflict and promoting peace, the free exchange of ideas has contributed to developing democratic values and human rights.

Besides, globalisation has reduced inter-state conflict by promoting closer economic relationships. The expansion of trade and investment among them has established a network of economic ties, making it more difficult for nations to engage in conflict. Since it would harm their economic interests, nations are less likely to conflict with their trading partners. Trade ties are based on mutual economic benefits (Cîrdei, 2019). Owing to the interconnectedness of the global economy, the cost of conflict is far higher than in the past, making participation in conflict less acceptable. Due to the benefits of economic interdependence, governments are now less prone to take aggressive action (Akoto, 2021). Governments are becoming more conscious of how harmful disruptions to the global economy would be to their economies, making it more prudent for them to encourage peaceful conflict resolution (Cîrdei, 2019). Due to their economic interdependence, nations are more likely to cooperate and resolve conflicts amicably.

Globalisation has also increased the number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which have been instrumental in lowering inter-state conflict. NGOs commonly work abroad to promote social justice, democracy, and human rights (Cîrdei, 2019). Their work has promoted peace and decreased conflict by tackling the root causes of conflict, such as poverty, inequality, and breaches of human rights.

## **Spread of Democracy**

The development of democracies and the spread of democratic values have decreased the possibility of inter-state conflict. In democracies versus autocracies, Inter - State conflict is less likely to occur. Democratic governments are more transparent, accountable, and respectful of human rights, decreasing the chance of conflicts resulting from domestic repression and instability (Ari, 2021). While democratic regimes are more committed to peaceful conflict resolution through diplomacy and negotiation, the likelihood of employing military action is correspondingly lower (Ari, 2021). According to studies, democratic states are less likely to conflict with one another; hence, the expansion of democracy may result in a more peaceful world.

The growth of democracy has improved civil freedoms and the rule of law. The global development of human rights standards and institutions reflects the notion that maintaining the rights of individuals and minorities is the foundation of democracy (Ari, 2021). Extending human rights and the rule of law minimises the risk of conflicts caused by injustice and discrimination and encourages peaceful conflict resolution.

## **Technological Advancement**

The development of communication technology is one of the most important technological developments that has contributed to a reduction in inter-state conflict. Because of the proliferation of the internet and social media, people worldwide can communicate and exchange information more effectively (Ramcharan & Ramcharan, 2020). This enhanced communication has strengthened diplomatic ties and enabled individuals to understand one another's perspectives better. Social media has also made knowledge formerly restricted to the privileged more accessible (Akoto, 2021). As a result, citizens can now hold their governments more accountable, and tensions worldwide have diminished.

The development of military technology is another technological achievement that has helped to reduce inter-state conflict. During the Cold War, the armaments race between the United States and the Soviet Union generated a significant degree of competition and hostility (Kostrzewa-Zorbas, 2019). However, since the end of the Cold War, military technology has shifted toward guided weapons and uncrewed aircraft. Technology advancements have made it possible to target military assets more precisely and have considerably reduced civilian casualties during combat (Akoto, 2021). It has decreased the necessity for large-scale military operations and made it simpler for governments to resolve conflicts through diplomacy.

The conflict between states has decreased as a result of technological advancements. The development of air travel and high-speed rail has enhanced economic and cultural contact so that people may move between nations more easily (Kostrzewa-Zorbas, 2019). This increased mobility has also made it simpler for people to evacuate conflict zones and reduced resource-related tensions (Ramcharan & Ramcharan, 2020). Besides, the development of renewable energy technology has also contributed to a decline in state-to-state conflict. Competition for access to fossil resources has historically been important in fostering conflict (Akoto, 2021). Nevertheless, the proliferation of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power has decreased dependency on fossil fuels and resource-based conflicts.

Therefore, since the end of the Cold War, technical development has been crucial in reducing inter-state conflict. The evolution of communication technologies has facilitated diplomacy and enabled citizens to hold their leaders accountable (Kostrzewa-Zorbas, 2019). Fewer conventional military armaments have been substituted with precision-guided missiles and crewless aerial vehicles, reducing civilian casualties and simplifying diplomatic conflict resolution (Akoto, 2021). Advances in transportation and renewable energy have alleviated resource-related conflicts. Technical advancements have undoubtedly contributed significantly to reducing inter-state conflict, even if they cannot eliminate all of its root causes.

## **International and Regional Institutions**

Since the end of the Cold War, the inter-state conflict has decreased due to the efforts of international organisations. The United Nations has been essential in preventing and ending worldwide conflicts through peacekeeping missions and mediation efforts. The United Nations has given a forum for countries to discuss and settle conflicts peacefully, hence decreasing the likelihood of violence. Furthermore, every state is compelled to abide by a set of international norms and treaties established by the United Nations, making it more difficult to employ violence without facing repercussions (Mariotti, 2022). Nations increasingly prioritise peaceful cohabitation and conflict resolution thanks to the work of Inter National Organizations like the United Nations.

International organisations such as the United Nations have been founded for countries to use as a platform to resolve conflicts amicably. The United Nations has participated in a vast number of peacekeeping missions around the world, including those in the Balkans, East Timor, and Africa (Khan Daim & Edet, 2021). The United Nations has also helped avoid the escalation of inter-state conflicts, such as the 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia (Mariotti, 2022). To prevent conflict, the UN has successfully brought nations together to resolve conflicts through negotiations and mediation.

The conflict has been prevented to varied degrees by national institutions. Some scholars assert that international institutions need to improve, including a lack of enforcement tools and an incapacity to address concerns such as cyber conflict. In addition, when powerful nations are engaged, international institutions may need help to enforce their decisions (Mariotti, 2022). As demonstrated by the United States' decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement, certain governments may choose to disregard the decisions of international bodies.

On the other hand, regional organisations such as the European Union (EU) and the African Union have also prevented inter-state conflict (AU). The European Union has participated in several peacekeeping and conflict prevention missions, including those in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The EU has also participated in conflict resolution throughout Africa, particularly in Somalia and Mali (Khan Daim & Edet, 2021). The African Union (AU) has also helped to avoid and terminate conflicts in places like Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the African continent.

Because they are more aware of the political and economic processes inside their respective regions, regional organisations may be better able to prevent inter-state conflicts. However, regional organisations may have better political and economic ties with their member states, making it easier for them to implement their policies (Kostrzewa-Zorbas, 2019). However, regional organisations may occasionally need help resolving conflicts due to a lack of financing and political will by member governments.

## **Civil Society**

Peacemaking and inter-state conflict reduction are major concerns for civil society. Civil society comprises non-governmental groups, neighbourhood associations, and individuals working to achieve social reform, justice, and peace. Civil society can lessen inter-state conflict in numerous ways (Mamokhere & Mabila, 2022). In order to prevent and resolve conflict, Civil Society Organizations can take action. By serving as mediators, they can assist warring parties in communicating, negotiating, and achieving peace. The understanding and trust between communities can be improved with the aid of civil society organisations (Ari, 2021). During the conflict in Northern Ireland, peacebuilding organisations were vital in lowering violence and establishing community contact.

Civil society organisations can monitor and hold governments accountable for their actions. They can push for laws and rules that promote justice, equality, and peace. Civil society organisations that aim to strengthen human rights and democratic values can help to reduce inter-state conflicts (Mamokhere & Mabila, 2022). Human rights organisations, for example, can highlight human rights abuses and advocate for measures to prevent them. Besides, civil society's efforts to foster social and economic development can reduce inter-state conflict (Ramcharan & Ramcharan, 2020). The likelihood of conflict can be reduced by civil society organisations working to end poverty, provide access to education, and expand economic possibilities (Mamokhere & Mabila, 2022). Economic development policies can increase employment and alleviate poverty, lessening inter-state conflict.

# **The Challenges to Preventing Inter-State Conflict**

Although the frequency of inter-state conflicts has dropped since the conclusion of the Cold War, numerous ongoing conflicts and possible flashpoints could still lead to inter-state conflicts. Territorial conflicts, such as the current dispute over the South China Sea between China and various Southeast Asian governments, are a major source of conflict (Ramcharan & Ramcharan, 2020). Another example is the conflict between India and Pakistan over the disputed area of Kashmir.

Another element that may lead to inter-state conflict is resource rivalry. Conflict can arise when countries compete for precious resources such as water, gas, and oil (Therborn, 2020). For instance, there is an ongoing conflict between Egypt and Ethiopia over constructing the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which Egypt fears may cut off its water supply (Ramcharan & Ramcharan, 2020). Ideological conflicts have the potential to cause Inter-State Conflict. One such conflict is the ongoing conflict between the United States and North Korea over the latter's pursuit of nuclear weapons (Ari, 2021). North Korea views its nuclear weapons as a necessary deterrent against American invasion, whereas the United States views them as a threat to global security.

## **Limitations of Conflict Prevention Measures**

Despite their best efforts, conflict avoidance strategies have certain drawbacks. Diplomatic efforts may fail, for example, if the parties are unwilling to talk or make concessions. It was seen in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as successive diplomatic initiatives to address the conflict failed to produce sustainable peace. Sanctions are another conflict avoidance strategy with questionable efficacy. Sanctions can exert pressure on a government to alter its behavior (Ari, 2021). However, they also risk causing economic suffering for the public and weakening international support for the sanctions. For example, sanctions against Iran have had little effect on the country's nuclear program but have placed the Iranian people in dire economic straits (Ramcharan & Ramcharan, 2020). When preventing inter-state conflict, military action is typically considered a last resort. Nevertheless, it may have unintended repercussions and exacerbate insecurity (Therborn, 2020). The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 illustrates how military involvement can backfire and exacerbate a conflict.

## **The Effects of Non-State Actors on Inter-State Conflict**

Non-state actors, such as terrorist organisations, significantly influence interstate conflict. These parties operate outside the usual state structure, preventing conflict more difficult. Terrorist organisations such as Al Qaeda and ISIS have proved their capacity to undertake global strikes, and their activities have the potential to provoke retribution and further conflict (Debuch, 2022). Non-state actors may occasionally use current conflicts to achieve their interests. Extremist organisations such as ISIS and foreign nations such as Russia and Iran are the only parties involved in Syria's ongoing conflict (Ari, 2021). The existence of these parties has raised the difficulties of settling the conflict and the likelihood that it may escalate into a state-on-state conflict.

Together with terrorist organisations, non-state actors such as multinational corporations and non-governmental organisations can affect inter-state conflict. Multinational corporations can exacerbate resource competition and territorial disputes by striving to exploit resources in conflict-prone locations (Ramcharan & Ramcharan, 2020). NGOs can contribute to the prevention of conflict by encouraging peacebuilding and assisting those directly affected by it (Debuch, 2022). However, working in conflict zones' political and security difficulties may restrict their efficacy.

# **Strategies for Preventing Inter-State Conflict**

## **Cooperation and Dialogue**

Inter-State Conflicts can be avoided by cooperation and diplomacy. The Camp David Accords of 1978 between Egypt and Israel are just one instance of how diplomacy and negotiation have effectively resolved numerous conflicts throughout history (Ari, 2021). Economic interdependence, another form of collaboration, has successfully alleviated conflicts between economically linked states (Tzivaras, 2022). The European Union is a regional organisation established to foster economic cooperation and lessen the probability of inter-state conflict.

However, economic interdependence and soft power techniques may have little utility in preventing interstate conflicts. Economic sanctions, for instance, can be a potent instrument for pressuring governments to modify their behavior (Ari, 2021). However, they can also have unintended repercussions, such as affecting the inhabitants of the sanctioned country. Soft power, which entails appealing to the values and cultures of other nations in order to influence them, can also be ineffective (Tzivaras, 2022). Cooperation and communication are, therefore, crucial for preventing conflicts, but they must be utilised in conjunction with other techniques.

## **Economic Interdependence and Soft Power**

Economic interdependence and soft power may serve as powerful deterrents to state conflict. Economic interdependence between nations can reduce the likelihood of conflict. By attracting and persuading other nations, soft power can also be useful in preventing conflicts (Karki & Dhungana, 2020). However, the effectiveness of these tactics depends on several circumstances. For instance, economic interdependence necessitates a high degree of economic integration between nations. Economic interdependence may not be a useful way to prevent conflicts when nations have weak economic ties (Karki & Dhungana, 2020). The allure of a nation's principles and culture is another aspect of soft power. If a country's values and culture are not appealing to other nations, soft power may not effectively prevent conflicts.

# **Conclusion**

Since the end of the Cold War, large inter-state conflicts have grown less frequent, although they are still possible due to ongoing conflicts and potential flashpoints. Globalisation, economic interconnectedness, and the participation of international organisations have all contributed to this decline, although technological advancements present new obstacles to conflict avoidance. Fewer conventional military armaments have been substituted with precision-guided missiles and crewless aerial vehicles, reducing civilian casualties and simplifying diplomatic conflict resolution. Peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution have helped prevent inter-state conflict. Interstate conflict can be avoided by cooperation and diplomacy. Although soft power methods and economic interdependence can reduce inter-state conflict, they are not always effective. Civil society organisations monitor government actions, attempt to avert conflict, and promote social and economic progress. Besides, it supports democratic values and gives voice to underrepresented groups, both of which can lessen inter-state conflict. International relations and security, in general, are significantly impacted by the prevention of inter-state conflict. It may promote a safer and more peaceful global order, enhancing commerce and the overall quality of life. Conflict avoidance techniques will be essential to achieving this goal. The international community should continue to strengthen conflict prevention techniques.

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