



Conflict Prevention Models

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Question

What are the leading conflict prevention models deployed by donors, international institutions (e.g. AU, UN)? How are they monitored? What evidence exists for the effectiveness of one over another?

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The K4D helpdesk service provides brief summaries of current research, evidence, and lessons learned. Helpdesk reports are not rigorous or systematic reviews; they are intended to provide an introduction to the most important evidence related to a research question. They draw on a rapid desk-based review of published literature and consultation with subject specialists.

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1. Summary

This rapid literature review finds that conflict prevention is a broad concept that is undertaken through a number of methods and instruments. Prevention models and strategies agree that prevention should address both long- and short-term causes of conflict. The literature notes that because of the large variety of programmes and the complex causes of conflict, it has been difficult to collate and compare evidence on what works in a systematic manner.

Large donors and institutions such as the UN and US conceive of conflict prevention as broad and multi-faceted. Most distinguish between structural prevention, focusing on the long-term causes of grievances and disputes in inequality, marginalisation, injustice, poor governance etc.; direct prevention, focused on early warning systems, diplomacy, mediation and other measures in situations deemed likely to turn into conflict; and systemic prevention, which also considers the transnational influences on conflict such as arms sales.

There are a number of methodological difficulties in measuring and evaluating conflict prevention models. Many authors acknowledge the inherent difficulties in attributing the causal role of actions to conflict prevention, given the range of factors involved, the need to consider counterfactuals, and the need for long-term monitoring and evaluation. It may be easier to discern the effect of direct protection on the escalatory dynamics of conflict, than the effect of structural prevention programmes, however. The range of conflict prevention measures used by different actors, and uneven implementation, makes comparison and synthesis difficult. Many argue that broader evaluations looking at multiple factors and interventions over a long time period, rather than individual programmes, are required. Despite these difficulties, the literature highlights a number of lessons including the importance of integrated approaches, inclusive practices and national ownership, among others.

This rapid literature review focused on recent summaries and assessments of conflict prevention models from the academic and grey literature. It also highlights frameworks used by states and international organisations. Much of the literature focuses on problems of implementation and co-ordination, rather than assessing the validity of models themselves. The review is gender- and disability-blind, although all conflict models highlight the importance of inclusivity in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and make reference to the women, peace and security agenda. Section 2 defines conflict prevention. Section 3 outlines the findings of recent summaries of the evidence and discussions of ways to assess conflict prevention. Section 4 looks at several conflict prevention models as described in policy documents. Given time constraints, it is not a comprehensive survey.

2. Definitions

The United Nations (UN), European Union (EU) and African Union (AU) were all founded with conflict prevention as an aim, often with inter-state conflict in mind (Ott & Luhe, 2018, p. 14). Recent approaches and definitions are focused on a wide range of activities, from development to diplomacy, often undertaken in fragile or low-income contexts.

The UN and World Bank define conflict prevention as ‘activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation and moving towards recovery,

reconstruction and development' (UN CPR, 2018; United Nations & World Bank, 2018, p. 2). The practice of conflict prevention is usually focused on preventing civil wars and mass violence rather than great power conflict (Kurtz & Meyer, 2019). It is often focused on 'fragile states'.

Peace Insight defines it as 'a diplomatic approach that refers to a variety of activities and strategies within peacebuilding fields that are deployed to pre-empt and subsequently neutralise potential triggers to widespread violent conflict'.¹ It may take two broad forms:

- Direct/operational prevention – Reactive and often short-term interventions taken to prevent an imminent outbreak of violence, i.e. the use of mediators.
- Structural prevention – Long-term institutional or grass roots changes designed to help create sustainable peace, whilst addressing the underlying causes of violence within a community, i.e. development assistance.

Some further distinguish **systemic prevention**, meaning prevention aimed at transnational phenomena, e.g. the illicit arms trade, drug trafficking, HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, conflict goods, and, similarly, the prosecution of war crimes and human rights violations, for example through the institutionalisation of the International Criminal Court.² Addressing transnational drivers such as arms sales also means moving away from a sole focus on fragile states (Igarape Institute, 2018, p. 8).

Structural conflict prevention overlaps with peacebuilding and development work. SIDA states that 'international conflict prevention initiatives are often distinguished from other peacebuilding concepts and approaches mainly by when it comes into play in the conflict cycle, and to some extent by the specific tools and approaches applied' (SIDA, 2017, p. 2). Some states seek to use development work as an entry point for prevention (Väyrynen et al., 2018).

Elements of conflict prevention are therefore diverse. Kurtz & Meyer (2019) divide prevention into three main elements:

- forecasting and early warning;
- organisational processes and decision-making structures
- diplomatic engagement and intervention

The UN Centre for Policy Research notes that 'there is no consensus on precisely what activities constitute preventive diplomacy, from mediation to provision of good offices, to the various other ways in which the UN can engage politically to prevent violent conflict', as well as diplomatic efforts undertaken by humanitarian and development actors (UN CPR, 2018, p. 3). Activities that may fall under conflict prevention include mediation, diplomacy, changes to governance structures, support for civil society, and other development-focused work. Conflict prevention may be undertaken by states and NGOs, as well as local organisations.

¹ <https://www.peaceinsight.org/en/themes/conflict-prevention-early-warning/?location&theme=conflict-prevention-early-warning>

² <https://peaceoperationsreview.org/conflict-prevention/>

3. Assessment

Evidence summaries

There is consensus that 'large-scale violence is an outcome of three causally connected elements: structural problems create the potential for violence; political actors respond to these problems in ways that generate and heighten conflict; and the ensuing conflict dynamics pose a threat of imminent violence' (Nathan, 2019, p. 47). Prevention must address both structural and short-term factors. However, there is little discussion on how to link the two types of prevention (Nathan, 2019, p. 47).

The broad nature of understandings of conflict and prevention, and the fragmentation of programmes, make it difficult to compile systematic evidence. Many academics and policy-makers claim that conflict prevention 'is difficult to define, hard to measure, and impossible to implement effectively' (Johnstone & Walton, 2021). As a result it can be difficult to find convincing evidence of what works – a 2021 review of UK conflict prevention efforts during 2010-15 concludes that 'it remains difficult if not impossible to provide clear evidence of the success of conflict prevention measures' (Johnstone & Walton, 2021). The review is critical of failures to implement structural conflict prevention. It argues that 'concepts of structural and upstream conflict prevention remained poorly defined and communicated'. Moreover, it finds a 'failure to turn a rhetorical commitment to "structural" conflict prevention into reality, focusing on attempts to operationalise 'upstream' efforts to tackle conflict before it turns violent' (Johnstone & Walton, 2021).

The article highlights the lack of institutionalisation of structural prevention. It notes that 'in the recent Pathways for Peace report, for example, the chapter on the International Architecture for Prevention focuses mainly on operational conflict prevention. Insofar as structural conflict prevention (SCP) is addressed, the focus is on broader questions of aid allocation and volatility, with no detailed scrutiny of how processes of institutionalisation or organisational capacities may affect the implementation of this agenda' (Johnstone & Walton, 2021). This is partly the result of broad concepts and a diverse range of conflict prevention measures undertaken by numerous actors.

There is evidence on the efficacy of early warning systems (Halkia et al., 2020). Early warning systems take data from local sources and increasingly technology, open-source data and crowd-based information (Ott & Luhe, 2018, p. 22). Regional and national early warning systems may be linked, but care should be taken that 'data collection is streamlined and coordinated, responsibilities are clarified, reporting lines are well established across borders, and that response capacities exist for the different levels of potential conflict' (Otte & Luhe, p. 22).

There is evidence on United Nations Security Council (UNSC) preventative diplomacy in situations where armed actors are pushing for self-determination. One study found that UNSC 'diplomatic actions that directly address disputes reduce the likelihood of armed conflict, and that military force and sanctions have more indirect preventive effects' (Beardsley et al., 2017).

Continuous preventative action through institutionalised operational prevention: 'a standing mechanism that aims to prevent a conflict from becoming violent and prevent low-level violence from escalating into large-scale violence' (Nathan, 2019). An article finds that they are an

effective mechanism in protracted conflict situations, by analysing the National Peace Committee (NPC) in Nigeria; the National Peace Accord (NPA) in South Africa; the African Union High Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan (AUHIP); and the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL). Nathan (2019) attributes their success to: their long-term presence, allowing them to understand the conflict; their ability to move swiftly and have reliable channels of communication with the conflict parties; and some degree of trust and acceptance with the conflict parties.

A 2016 review points to poor-quality evidence. After reviewing 149 studies, it finds that ‘there is no consensus on the impacts of either international peace operations or community level peacebuilding on armed violence prevention or mitigation – positive and negative impacts on armed violence were found in both cases’ (Cramer et al., 2016). Using DFID’s quality assessment criteria, **it argues that the evidence base is fragmented and weak. In some cases the evaluations are not methodologically robust; in others they are unsuited to measuring the impact of the interventions** (Cramer et al, 2016, iii). Includes suggestions on how to improve evaluation methodology/research design (Cramer et al, 2016, iv).

As well as poor-quality research, it also points to **inherent difficulties in assessing peace interventions**: ‘Some of the problems are inherent to the subject. There are long and complex causal chains from interventions to impacts; especially in assessing conflict prevention there are fundamental challenges in addressing the attribution problem because of the lack of clear counter-factual knowledge; there are often security risks to carrying out high quality field research and where there are not then there are still problems with access to evidence and with the quality of available data; and evidence is often especially politicised in contexts affected by armed conflict’ (Cramer et al., 2016, p. 45).

It provides a summary of evidence on different interventions: **peace mechanisms (intervention and prevention)**, mediation, economic, governance, security and policing, justice and reconciliation, media and communications, and other measures. On peace mechanisms, it finds that ‘there are no conclusive findings about the effectiveness of peace mechanisms on preventing or mitigating armed violence’ (Cramer et al, 2018, p. 13). The literature ‘pays insufficient attention to the effectiveness and impact of peace mechanisms as a distinct type of intervention’ (Cramer et al, 2018, p. 16).

The ways of approaching and measuring conflict prevention can also be criticised. A recent article distinguishes between conflict prevention as a ‘science’, a craft and an art (Kurtz, 2019). It complains that ‘official documents and parts of the literature are too often confined to a technocratic understanding of conflict prevention drawing on positivist conflict forecasting (science) and toolbox approaches to “what works” (craft)’ (Kurtz and Meyer, 2019, p. 23). They instead highlight the importance of conflict prevention as an ‘art’, which has been neglected by contemporary theory and practice: “reflexive, intuitive form of knowledge as a practical achievement’ and includes ‘creating solutions amidst difficult trade-offs, moral dilemmas and entrenched opposition among conflict parties’ (Kurtz and Meyer, 2019, p. 27).

Assessment frameworks

The Handbook on Conflict Prevention (Igarapé Institute, 2018)

The handbook points to a lack of evidence on what works, and argues that available evidence is fragmented. It argues that one reason for this is that the concept and practice of conflict prevention 'has become excessively broad, making it difficult to translate it into concrete and coherent policies, recommendations, and approaches in the field' (Igarape Institute, 2018, p. 7).

It therefore attempts to make a coherent conceptual framework that can help measure and respond to the drivers of conflict. It suggests a typology of prevention. Noting that most analyses focus on a division between structural and short-term prevention, but downplay transnational causes, it includes a transnational prevention dimension (Igarape Institute, 2018, p. 23).

Table 1: A typology of conflict prevention

Source: Igarape Institute, 2018, p. 23. This table has been removed for copyright reasons. The table can be viewed at <https://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/The-Handbook-of-Conflict-Prevention.pdf>

The report has also generated a conflict prevention database, which assigns a code to each type of conflict prevention, to help map conflict prevention efforts and results for the sake of comparison and learning lessons in the sector (Igarape Institute, 2018, pp. 25-26).

Assessment Framework for UN Preventive Diplomacy: An Approach for UN Mediators and International Policymakers (2018)

A UN report notes several difficulties with assessing prevention efforts:

- that conflict prevention has broad goals, such as 'supporting' conflict parties, which can be hard to measure. There are no universal agreement measurements of diplomatic success. Moreover, much diplomacy happens behind closed doors and so cannot be assessed (UN CPR, 2018, p. 3).
- The lack of good quality data in fragile contexts, especially data regarding 'mood, perception and group sentiment', presents further difficulties (UN CPR, 2018, p. 4).
- Counterfactuals are required to assess the effect of a prevention effort, but it is often unrealistic to do 'pre-and post-intervention control group testing, and/or generation of significant amounts of new data' because of resource costs (UN CPR, 2018, p. 4).
- In most contexts, the UN is one of many actors, making it hard to assess their role. 'There is almost never a convincing argument that posits the UN intervention as an input with conflict resolution as a direct outcome, especially as the focus of the assessment is on a dynamic decision-making process of conflict actors' (UN CPR, 2018, p. 6).
- 'External factors' like socio-economic change, public opinion, and politics are integral - they should not be seen as separate to evaluations that focus on what the UN or other organisation did.

The UN is usually one of many actors, carrying out many types of programme that may contribute to conflict prevention. The report agrees that 'even the most crisis-driven intervention should be planned within a "comprehensive approach to sustaining peace,' that looks at the longer arc of governance, development and socio-economic equality for a country',

but notes that most UN preventative diplomacy is focused on elite actors: 'this can take many forms. The intervention itself can work to address the more deeply-rooted societal issues driving the risk of violent conflict; the intervention can be linked to structures and capacities that persist beyond the immediate crisis; or the intervention can be considered within a broader strategy of conflict prevention aimed at structural transformation' (UN CPR, 2018, p. 5).

The UN influences decisions of actors in complex structures. In assessing its role, one therefore needs to know what critical decisions were, and how they were made, and how influential they were based on 'the most widely-accepted understanding of what is driving conflict' (UN CPR, 2018, p. 6).

Because it is easier to prove the impact of some actions than others, **an adaptive approach to evaluation is required**: 'Where results are easily determined, greater focus should be placed on the impact of the intervention. Where results are difficult to identify, greater focus should be placed on how the intervention was conducted, whether it was appropriately designed and implemented' (UN CPR, 2018, p. 7).

An assessment framework should include: context analysis; causal analysis; counterfactual; analysis of the effect of UN actions; enablers/inhibitors of UN actions; and links to 'sustainable peace'. However, 'each conflict setting has its own unique conditions, risks and trajectory. Attempts to establish a set of fixed criteria by which to compare UN preventive diplomatic efforts across different conflict settings is unrealistic and will tend to lead to overly broad conclusions (e.g. escalation was prevented in both Malawi and Yemen by adept mediation)' (UN CPR, 2018, p.13).

Conflict prevention in fragile contexts (OECD, 2020)

An OECD analysis based on the results of an International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) Survey on Strategic Approaches to Conflict Prevention in fragile context has a number of findings on measuring conflict prevention (Harsh, 2020).

According to the OECD report, '**while there is robust evidence on what works to prevent violent conflict, what is missing is how to apply this evidence systematically**, especially as the nature and scale of violent conflict have shifted since the UN was founded 75 years ago. The result is a lack of funding for and prioritisation of prevention' (Harsh, 2020, p. 9). There are some absolute evidence gaps in 'extremely fragile contexts such as the Central African Republic, Syria and Yemen' (Harsh, 2020, p. 24)

Despite gaps and context-specificity, evaluation can generate useful lessons that can be applied to different contexts. It suggests that 'researchers are increasingly moving away from strict programme evaluation and are instead striving **to test broader hypotheses about how programmes work (i.e. what key components drive changes in their outcomes of interest) and to generate insights into human behaviour (i.e. why individuals may be motivated to act in certain ways)**' (Harsh, 2020, p. 25).

It is difficult to evaluate the success of conflict prevention efforts because it is difficult to prove the causal role of any action in preventing a conflict. 'violent conflict is a multidimensional phenomenon with multiple, intersecting root causes and varying definitions' (Harsh, 2020, p. 23). Relatedly, 'prevention is hard to measure. It involves intangible concepts such as trust, cohesion and community engagement. Donors need to be adaptable in their

monitoring and evaluation. While the evidence base on what works for conflict prevention and peacebuilding is growing, sustained investments in evaluations are needed to fill evidence gaps' (Harsh, 2020, p. 30). Moreover, conflict prevention is not just the result of programmes. Therefore, there is a need for broader evaluations that analyse multiple factors.

Given that there is no universal concept of conflict prevention and the difficulties assessing conflict prevention, it proposes a 'focus on risks and resilience' as a basis from which to assess conflict prevention methods (Harsh, 2020, p. 32). Given the diversity of conflict prevention methods, and evaluation methods, such a framework can therefore help align different actors (Harsh, 2020, p. 34).

The OECD's risk and resilience framework can (Harsh, 2020, p. 34)

- Enable a mixed-methods analysis of the multidimensional causes of violent conflict and fragility. It uses quantifiable indicators that are comparable across time and context.
- Provide a common language to facilitate joint analysis across the nexus.
- Shift the focus to capacities at the national level, providing a roadmap to support co-creation between national actors and international partners.

With respect to understanding conflict and prevention, it argues based on its synthesis of the evidence that:

- Understanding of violence and fragility is key, through the OECD framework.
- International actors should support national actors.
- 'prevention tools are most effective when deployed in concert and with complementarity' (Harsh, 2020, p. 25)
- Conflict and peace are complex and context-specific, so there is a need 'to ensure that interventions are appropriate for the task at hand rather than simply adhere to best practices or broader international agendas' (Harsh, 2020, p. 25)
- It is important to understanding social and political drivers of conflict, and political settlements. Frameworks such as the World Bank's Peacebuilding and Recovery Assessments or the OECD multidimensional fragility framework can help (Harsh, 2020, p. 26).
- The need to understand systematic exclusion and repression.
- The need to adapt programmes based on local conditions.
- Building community resilience and strengthening social cohesion can work, but outcomes are highly context-specific.

4. Models

EU

EU Global Strategy (2016): Conflict prevention and early warning³

The European External Action Service (EEAS) works on the premise that violent conflicts can be prevented. It aims to address structural risks of violence, as well as the short-term drivers of conflict.⁴ Its tools relevant to conflict prevention include, among others:

- **the EU Conflict Early Warning System.** It ‘draws upon evidence-based risk factors, like an economic shock or shrinking political space, adopting a time horizon of four years’ and identified conflict prevention opportunities. It is based on the **Global Conflict Risk Index** and monitors political, security, social, economic, geographical and demographic indicators. EU staff then engage in a joint assessment to decide on any response, as well as sharing information at the UN or with other organisations.⁵
- **Conducts conflict analysis.** EU experts conduct analysis of the structural factors, relevant actors and prospects of conflict, which can help to identify measures the EU can take such as mediation, security sector reform, environmental, or social and economic programmes.⁶
- Mediation is undertaken by special envoys, ambassadors and others, supported by the **EEAS Mediation Support Team.** Mediation can be part of preventative diplomacy. It favours multi-track mediation, inclusivity, links to the EU foreign policy goals and other EU instruments, as well as partnerships with other actors. Mediation is ‘often a non-linear, time-consuming and iterative process, taking place in complex and volatile multi-stakeholder environments’ and should therefore be judged as part of the EU’s overall approach.⁷

An evaluation of EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding work includes a diagram of the latter’s intervention logic (figure 1).

Figure 1: intervention logic of the EU’s conflict prevention and peacebuilding

Source: European Union, Evaluation of EU support for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (CPPB) (2013-2018), 2020, p. 37. This figure has been removed for copyright reasons. The figure can be found at <https://prod5.assets-cdn.io/event/5842/assets/8394458309-04ce3f469b.pdf>

Evaluation of EU support for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (CPPB) (2013-2018)

³ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/conflict-prevention-peace-building-and-mediation_en

⁴ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/conflict-prevention-peace-building-and-mediation_en

⁵ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jswd_eu_early_ews_from_vista.pdf

⁶ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/guidance_note_on_eu_conflict_analysis_final_-280421.pdf

⁷ <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/st13951.en20.pdf>

The report evaluates coherence of EU approach and its links with overall strategy, alignment with local priorities, as well as impacts of the EU's work. The report is based on analysis of existing reports and interviews with EU officials and those of other organisations. It uses case studies of Afghanistan, CAR, Myanmar, Somalia, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia, Lebanon, Niger, the Philippines, Zimbabwe and the African Peace Facility focusing on South Sudan.

The EU's conflict prevention and peacebuilding (CPPB) work aims at building state and social resilience, through inclusive and participatory societies and economic resilience. It therefore identifies 'the need for a multidimensional, multi-phased, multi-lateral and multi-level approach to addressing violent conflict' (EU, 2020, p. 3). CPPB work includes several categories of intervention (EU, 2020, p. 7).

Monitoring and evaluation is difficult for a number of reasons. There is 'no agreed or single definition of either "conflict prevention" or "peacebuilding"' within the EU (EU, 2020, p. 10). The EU's 'M&E for CPPB has been consistently weak since the first CPPB evaluation...recent EU thematic and instrument evaluations relevant to CPPB found significant shortcomings in M&E in terms of the existence of systems for monitoring and evaluation, the nature and quality of indicators and anticipated results, the use of baselines to measure results and the availability of monitoring reports (including Results-Oriented Monitoring ROM) and evaluations' (EU, 2020, p. 23). Monitoring practices varied considerably across programmes.

The evaluation found that 'the EU achieved short- to mid-term results in support of CPPB processes to a considerable degree, but these were generally "fragmented" successes' (EU, 2020, p. 43). It finds 'clear achievement of short- to mid-term results' in Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia, the Philippines and Zimbabwe; and 'good achievement of short-term results (outputs) but uncertain contribution to mid-term results' in Afghanistan, CAR, Lebanon, Myanmar, Niger, Somalia and South Sudan. Interviews and analysis of previous evaluations found that 'individual interventions became effective beyond their immediate sphere of influence when they were embedded in a wider EU comprehensive approach to address the conflict/crisis, including both financial and political elements of engagement' (EU, 2020, p. 47).

In terms of broader effects, 'EU support for CPPB had limited success in preventing/mitigating violence originating from nascent conflicts/crises and restoring immediate stability and in creating/restoring/consolidating structural stability and strengthened conditions for peace during the evaluation period, despite significant EU political and financial support for CPPB' (EU, 2020, p. 50).

'In terms of enhancing structural stability and strengthened conditions for peace, the EU's support for CPPB contributed to a limited degree both to tangible, visible outcomes/intermediate impacts, such as peace agreements signed, local level conflicts prevented, state security functions restored or strengthened, and to more intangible/less visible outcomes such as jump-starting mediation processes. In this regard, EU support for CPPB contributed to changing conflict dynamics' (EU, 2020, p. 50).

The report assessed the **EU's contribution to preventing/mitigating conflict/crisis and restoring immediate stability**. Splitting EU measures into four categories, it found evidence of the following results:

Table 2: **EU's contribution to preventing/mitigating conflict/crisis and restoring immediate stability**

Source: European Union, *Evaluation of EU support for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (CPPB) (2013-2018)*, 2020, p. 53. This table has been removed for copyright reasons. The table can be found at <https://prod5.assets-cdn.io/event/5842/assets/8394458309-04ce3f469b.pdf>

Germany

The German strategy aims for a comprehensive approach to foster sustainable peace and includes analysis of the broader causes of instability and conflict, such as fragile states and climate change, and therefore makes reference to the UN's sustainable development goals and agreements on fragile states (German Government, 2017). The document does not include indicators by which to measure the success of the strategy.

The document argues for integrated approaches that link the work of different departments and programmes. The German Foreign Office has 'pooled its approaches and tools regarding crisis prevention, stabilisation, peacebuilding and humanitarian assistance in a new department' (German Government, 2017, p. 39).

They conceptualise conflict in three stages: latent conflict, violent conflict and post-conflict situations. Prevention may be applied post-conflict, to prevent reoccurrence, as well as before. It notes that 'every crisis has a specific dynamic like no other. The phases of conflict are not necessarily linear' (German Government, 2017, p. 70).

It has a **broad toolkit** to deal with latent conflict, violent conflict, and post-conflict situations, but notes that which tools needed will vary from context-to-context (German Government, 2017, p. 66). These include sanctions, mediation, strengthening local peace infrastructures, help to government and administration, electoral assistance, security sector reform, among others.

It uses early warning, based on the 'observation of indicators in the areas of politics, economics, and society (e.g. the status and protection of human rights, political and social participation, the poverty rate, migratory pressure, prices and economic trends or social inequality, including ethnic, religious and gender-specific indicators). For these efforts, the Federal Government uses targeted reporting received from German missions abroad and our partners from international organisations, civil society, the media, and academia in the field, as well as from a host of other sources' (German Government, 2017, p. 110). This data is used in inter-ministerial assessments of potential crises, and with other states and organisations.

Development is understood as a conflict prevention tool. During violent conflict, it uses Transitional Development Assistance, a 'flexible development policy tool for resolving crises and building peace. It creates quickly effective and visible structures (e.g. with regard to food and nutrition security, income, infrastructure) for the people affected by crises and lays the foundations for long-term development approaches and sustainable crisis resolution strategies' (German Government, 2017, p. 70).

Evaluations are carried out by respective government departments. In conflict/fragile contexts, 'Germany's approaches are generally based on OECD DAC standards and directives, which take

into account the complexity and volatility of crisis and conflict situation' (German Government, 2017, p. 142).

US

US Government. (2020). United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2020-US-Strategy-to-Prevent-Conflict-and-Promote-Stabilit-508c-508.pdf>

The US strategy for addressing fragility is rooted in an analysis of fragility. Fragility can enable terrorism and conflict. The strategy has a number of goals relating to conflict prevention. They include (US Government, 2020, p. 2):

- Prevention: The United States will establish and support capabilities to engage in peacebuilding and anticipate and prevent violent conflict before it erupts;
- Stabilisation: The United States will support inclusive political processes to resolve ongoing violent conflicts, emphasizing meaningful participation of youth, women, and members of faith-based communities and marginalized groups, respect for human rights and environmental sustainability;
- Partnerships: The United States will promote burden-sharing and encourage and work with partners to create conditions for long-term regional stability and foster private sector-led growth

Its means and objectives include: early warning systems; addressing vulnerabilities and structural risk factors through governance reforms, protection of marginalised groups, strengthening civil society, and bolstering organisations monitoring disinformation, among others (US Government, 2020, p. 6).

The report states that these goals will have 'defined metrics', rigorous monitoring and evaluation, and periodic reviews to assess outcomes. The strategy will integrate 'policy, diplomatic and programmatic response' (US Government, 2020, p. 3). The report states that the government will develop a monitoring, evaluation and learning plan. 'Plans will include a logic model that articulates what success looks like, maps clear pathways toward reducing risks and achieving policy objectives, and align actions and inputs accordingly' (US Government, 2020, p. 21).

Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources' Strategic Prevention Project in 2019... <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Strategic-Prevention-Project.pdf>

A 2019 US government review advocates the concept of strategic prevention that bridges operational/short-term efforts and structural/long-term efforts. It argues for use of 'the full array of foreign policy tools and capabilities – across diplomacy, defence, foreign assistance, and private sector investment and trade' (US Government, 2019, p. 11). It advances 12 core principles under three categories: 1) promoting inclusive and just political systems that foster social cohesion; (2) increasing institutional resilience to shocks and threats; and (3) strengthening pro-peace constituencies and mechanisms (US Government, 2019, p. 11)

It states that assessment of previous US conflict prevention in fragile states is difficult because much assistance did not explicitly include conflict prevention as an aim.

Furthermore, some strategic prevention principles have been widely incorporated by US

assistance, such as governance, but others such as inclusive politics, have not (p. 19). More coordination on conflict risk and resilience is required across US programming (US Government, 2019, p. 17).

It states that the US government should agree on principles for strategic prevention. These can be informed by USAID's tools on conflict-sensitive programming (p. 25). Moreover, they should generate more data to measure their work. 'State and USAID should agree upon a set of country indicators that reflect the strategic prevention principles as well as indicators of societal violence' (US Government, 2019, p. 27).

A 'country scorecard' for stability trends has been developed by the project. The scorecard measures indicators based on US conflict prevention principles; US and others' spending on conflict prevention; and provides analysis on conflict trends.

The report looks at the correlation between expenditure, aims and results. For example, it finds that the 'net level of U.S. security sector assistance (SSA) to the eleven countries was not associated with net changes in violence and instability across the countries' (US Government, 2019, p. 20).

It cites evaluations that have found positive results for prevention work in Kenya and Indonesia. It finds that successful prevention has occurred when assistance was linked to diplomatic engagement: 'U.S. and international engagement in Kenya demonstrated that coordinated diplomacy at both the capital and sub-national levels can help monitor flashpoints, provide a critical link between political messaging and assistance, and support local civil society reformers' (US Government, 2019, p. 21).

Finland

A summary of Finland's conflict prevention work shows its focus on mediation, and co-operation with NGOs and local actors (Väyrynen et al., 2018). 'Finland exercises a multi-actor, multi-level and multi-functional approach to conflict resolution, mediation and conflict prevention founded on the recognition that crisis management requires multiple actors and instruments' (Väyrynen et al., 2018, p. 35). Its approach involves 'preventative mediation', often part of 'track 3' mediation, involving different parts of society and seeking to link development work to conflict prevention.

Finland understands its approach within a conflict cycle, in which 'conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution are regarded as applicable at different phases' (Väyrynen et al., 2018, p. 7). It focuses on the role of **mediation**. The report emphasises the interplay between different official and unofficial actors practising mediation (Väyrynen et al., 2018, p. 7). The value of women's participation, as shown by UNSCR 1325, is also emphasised, as part of a focus on inclusive mediation (Väyrynen et al., 2018, p. 8). Inclusive mediation is based 'on the assumption that building sustainable peace requires integrating diverse societal perspectives, those of conflicting parties and other stakeholders, into the peace process' (Väyrynen et al., 2018, p. 8). Non-official actors may be involved in mediation at the community level, or as part of official mediation through structured dialogue (Väyrynen et al., 2018, p.8). The model also draws on the concept of 'everyday peace', focusing on the 'bottom-up activities that often lie outside the institutionalised frameworks which are at the core of the international community's attention' (Väyrynen et al., 2018, p. 10).

Finland funds NGOs who work closely with the state. The ‘symbiotic relationship between the official and NGO sectors in mediation is unique in Finland’ (Väyrynen et al., 2018, p. 27). NGOs ‘seek to build a complementary role to official processes as well as aim at supporting peace processes as a whole, often by trying to engage marginalised groups in order to increase the inclusivity and legitimacy of the process’ (Väyrynen et al., 2018, p. 27).

It argues for the softening of boundaries between development work and short-term peace work, partly because the ‘reading of early warning signals requires a profound knowledge of the society that can often be found in long-term development projects’ (Väyrynen et al., 2018, p. 34). The approach of Finnish NGOs varies, but ‘They do not seek compromises in interests and power-related issues, but create alternative communication channels between the parties in conflict’ (Väyrynen et al., 2018, p. 35).

UN approach

The UN has aimed to prevent conflict since its formation. This section focuses on its conflict prevention documents from the last ten years or so. From the 1990s onwards, the UN has sought to implement a ‘culture of prevention’ among its many bodies, strengthen its capacity for prevention, and create more inclusive forms of peace and prevention (Igarape Institute, 2018, pp. 10–12).

It has a wide range of conflict prevention tools. In 2006, its prevention work could be classified into:

- early warning, information, and analysis;
- good offices and mediation;
- democracy, good governance and culture of prevention;
- disarmament and arms control;
- equitable socio-economic development;
- human rights, humanitarian law, and international justice.

The UN undertakes work ‘at a variety of points along the conflict cycle, addressing issues that present long-term risks of conflict, engaging with parties that are on the brink of violence, helping to negotiate the end to conflicts, and assisting countries to achieve reconciliation and build resilient and inclusive societies’ (UN, 2018, p. 3). It has a range of tools including a standby team of mediation experts who can be deployed within 72 hours, gender expertise, electoral assistance, and human rights monitoring, among others (UN, 2018). The Security Council can take diplomatic action to prevent conflicts. One study found that UNSC ‘diplomatic actions that directly address disputes reduce the likelihood of armed conflict, and that military force and sanctions have more indirect preventive effects’ (Beardsley et al., 2017). UN development bodies such as the UNDP and World Bank also address factors seen as causing conflict (Igarape Institute, 2018). It works with regional organisations such as EU and ECOWAS, World Bank. Also works with local and national mediators (UN, 2018, p. 16).

Pathways to Peace

The UN and World Bank's Pathways to Peace report is widely cited and synthesises a large volume of evidence. The report emphasises the need for long- and short-term approaches, national ownership and leadership, and the need for people-centred notions of security and peace (Ott & Luhe, 2018, p. 19).

The report cites research showing that spending on 'high risk' countries is more cost effective than peacekeeping: 'even in the most pessimistic scenario (expensive interventions, minimally effective) the average net savings is close to \$5 billion per year' (United Nations & World Bank, 2018, pp. 3–4).

Regarding early warning systems, it highlights the 'difficulty of predicting violent conflict onset—even the most sophisticated early warning systems offer only short time frames for averting crisis' (United Nations & World Bank, 2018, p. 2). Both qualitative and quantitative predictive tools 'provide fairly accurate information of impending violent conflict in the short to medium term'. They are much less effective at predicting in the longer term, due to the 'rarity and nonlinearity of violent crises' (UN CPR, 2018, p. 23).

It argues for the integration of prevention and development, resilience, inclusion and participation, as well as regional and global dimensions to conflict. This is because 'successful conflict prevention tends to involve cross-cutting approaches that bring together security, development, and political/diplomatic tools over the long term' (United Nations & World Bank, 2018, p. 35).

Figure 2: pathways to peace and conflict

The graphic shows the Pathway through which countries go, and some of the dynamics that make the Pathway lean toward either Sustainable Peace or Violent Conflict. It singles out only some examples. Emanating from the interaction among the three

core elements, these dynamics push either toward Sustainable Peace or toward Violent Conflict. Some forces may have a positive or a negative effect depending on context (i.e., other forces, and interaction among core elements)



Source: United Nations & World Bank, 2018, p. 13. Reproduced under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO license

Figure 3: transition moments to peace or conflict

The graphic illustrates the way transition moments can shift the direction of the pathway. Here, a change in leadership provides an example of an event that can shift the pathway

toward sustainable peace, via a power-sharing agreement, or toward greater risk of conflict, via increased competition for power and grievances.



Source: United Nations & World Bank, 2018, p. 84. Reproduced under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO license

It conceptualises violence as ‘pathways’, with risks that push towards violence and opportunities that pull towards peace. It considers the dynamics within states as well as globally. Violence can be recurrent and predictable, such as around cattle migration or elections,

or can build up over longer periods of time (United Nations & World Bank, 2018, p. 13). Structural factors such as social cohesion, wealth, inclusivity, diverse economies, histories of peaceful cooperation, and location in stable regions, are all important. They interact with institutions and actors. It states that 'once violence has taken root within a society, incentives are in most cases reconfigured in ways that sustain violence' (United Nations & World Bank, 2018, p. 14).

Methods to prevent conflict can address either the sources of grievance, or the process by which they are mobilised to violence (United Nations & World Bank, 2018, p. 16). The report outlines evidence on risks of violence (e.g. backlash against changing norms), and shows **options to prevent violence at different stages of the pathway**: environments of emerging risk; high risk contexts; where violence is present; and after violence.

It discusses different interventions and provides an analysis of what works based on 20 case studies to identify patterns, including Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Northern Ireland, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Tunisia (United Nations & World Bank, 2018, pp. 20-28). It therefore focused largely on fragile states or less developed countries, 'granting less attention to transnational factors and the roles played by advanced economies' (Igarape Institute, 2018, p. 12).

From these case studies, it finds three themes (United Nations & World Bank, 2018, p. 24):

- prevention efforts were generally nationally led and addressed some critical, immediate risks';
- 'whether before or after violence, all countries addressed grievances related to power, services, security, and resources;
- effective prevention involved the formation of coalitions

OSCE

'The OSCE's comprehensive approach to security is closely tied to the concept of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation, also named the "conflict cycle." The Organization's main methods to address this cycle include its network of field operations and the Conflict Prevention Centre.' <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/conflict-prevention>

The Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) aims at (OSCE Factsheet: *The OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre*, n.d.):

- Facilitating political dialogue among states,
- Assisting with the implementation of confidence- and security-building measures,
- Supporting the daily work of field operations, providing advice and analysis on matters related to the conflict cycle,
- Supporting negotiation, mediation and dialogue facilitation efforts and processes to prevent and resolve crises and conflicts

The OSCE's conflict mechanisms address structural and direct conflict prevention. They are set out in the document *OSCE mechanisms & procedures: summary, compendium* (2011). It also

has guidance on Mediation and Dialogue facilitation,⁸ a toolkit on the Inclusion of Women and Effective Peace Processes,⁹ and a guide on structural prevention and peacebuilding in SE Europe.¹⁰

The OSCE believes its 'work is most effective if delivered in a context-specific and conflict-sensitive manner, taking into account historical and societal developments on the ground' (Raith, p. 52).

Its structural activities 'aim to build lasting peace and security through comprehensive support on a wide range of topics, from combating violent radicalization and extremism, trafficking in human beings, hate crimes, and corruption to assisting the good governance and reform efforts of host countries related to elections, education, and/or the security sector' (Raith, 2020, p. 52). For shorter-term prevention, it employs a variety of measures including dialogue facilitation, confidence building and preventative diplomacy.

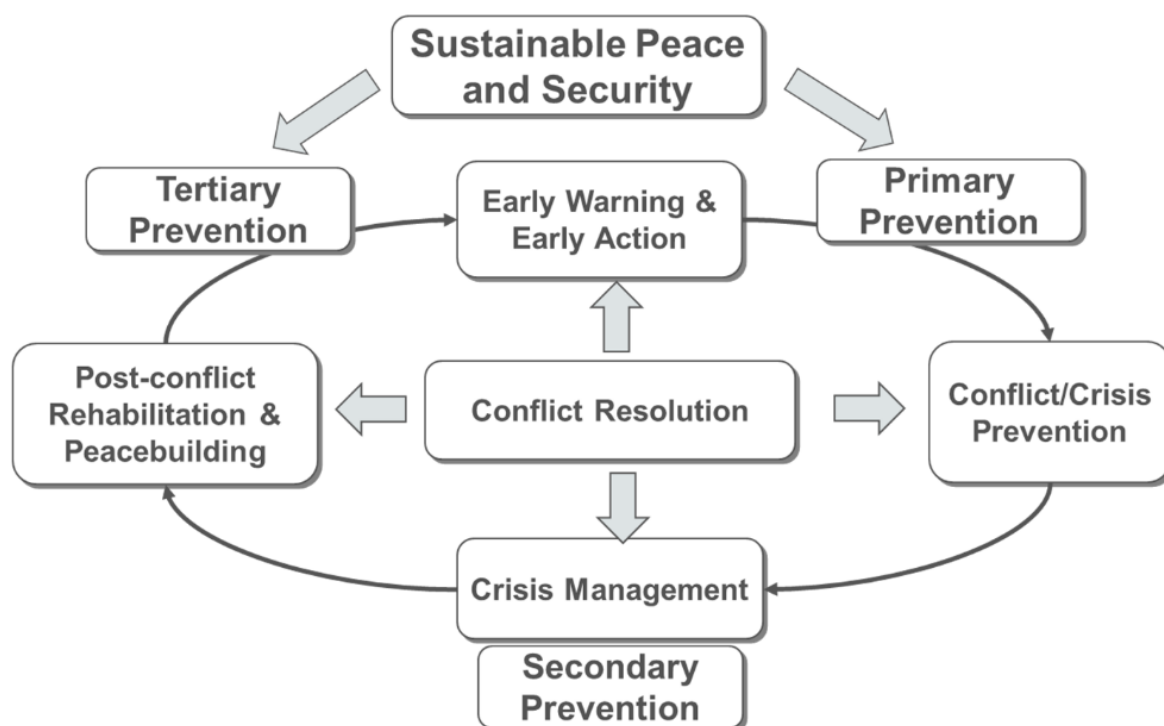
The OSCE's comprehensive approach sees the root causes in 'three dimensions', including military, socio-economic, environmental degradation and deficiencies in the rule of law (figure 4)

⁸ <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/126646> or <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/107488>

⁹ <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/440735>

¹⁰ <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/383751>

Figure 4: The OSCE's conflict model



Source: Raith, 2020, p. 44. Reproduced under Creative Commons licence

Raith highlights the value of the flexibility of this model in addressing diverse contexts and multiple conflicts within a given context (Raith, 2020, p. 46).

The OSCE has a 'tiered approach' to addressing conflict that starts with primary prevention: long-term measures against the causes of conflict, early warning and early actions (Raith, 2020, p. 44). It moves on to secondary prevention when violence begins, including crisis management. **The CPC** is a focal point for early warning and 'coordinates a network of early warning focal points in all OSCE executive structures. Based on field presence and Situation/Communications Room (SitRoom) in 57 OSCE countries and neighbouring states, monitoring media sources (Raith, 2020, p. 46).

African Union

The Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) (2003) sets out conflict prevention aims and architecture.

The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) comprises:

- a Military Staff Committee,
- the African Standby Force
- the Peace Fund
- a Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), including a monitoring centre (the Situation Room) at AU Peace and Security Department.
- a Panel of the Wise

The CEWS links with regional networks: ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN), launched in 2003, AMU (Northern Africa), CEN-SAD (Sahel and Sahara), MARAC (Central Africa), CEWARN (Horn of Africa), EACWARN (Eastern Africa), COMWARN (Eastern and Southern Africa), REWC (REWC). There is a need to better coordinate between the AU and the regional organisations (Gnanguenon, 2021).

The AU Commission has developed a Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework (CSCPF), which the PSC endorsed in 2015. It addresses structural and direct conflict prevention. It is 'is intended to serve as a template to guide the Commission (AUC) in supporting Member States in their structural conflict prevention efforts', mainstreaming conflict prevention in AU work, and coordinating better with African regional organisations' conflict prevention (AU, n.d., p. 5). It includes a number of instruments on 'human rights; governance and the fight against corruption; democratisation processes; disarmament; terrorism; and the prevention and reduction of interstate conflicts. They collectively represent a consolidated framework of commonly accepted norms and principles, whose observance would significantly reduce the risk of conflict and violence' (AU, n.d., p. 4). Its instruments include Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment (CSVRA) and Country Structural Vulnerability Mitigation Strategies (CSVMS).

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