Conflict Prevention: Connecting Policy and Practice

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<u>List of Acronyms</u>

AU	African Union
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (IGAD)
CIAV	International Support and Verification Commission (Nicaragua)
CSS	Center for Security Studies, ETH Zürich
DFID	Department for International Development
EEAS	European External Action Service
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECOWARN	ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network
EU	European Union
EWER	Early Warning and Early Response
HIPPO	High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations
I4Ps	Infrastructures for Peace
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFES	International Federation for Electoral Systems
IGAD	Inter-governmental Authority on Development
LPC	Local Peace Committee
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission (Kenya)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	National Peace Accord (South Africa)
OAS	Organization of American States
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PoC	Protection of Civilians
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WSR	Women Situation Room

Abstract

This paper introduces the terminology as well as key concepts relevant to the understanding of what is referred to as 'conflict prevention'. After an overview of the evolution of the concept on the international policy level, concrete examples illustrate some efforts that are used to prevent violent conflicts in different geographical contexts, stages of conflict and levels of society. The methods introduced are early warning and early response, local peace committees, women situation rooms and infrastructures for peace. Finally, the paper provides considerations on how existing methods can be reviewed and improved based on current policy insights.

1
Introduction

Whilst the number of violent and armed conflicts had declined following the end of the Cold War,this trend has been reversed since 2010 (World Bank & United Nations (UN), 2018). This period has also been marked by a proliferation of non-state armed groups[1], whereas interstate conflicts are becoming less frequent (World Bank & UN, 2018). Additionally, climate change and environmental disasters increasingly affect conflict dynamics. Effective conflict prevention thus remains of great concern.

This paper analyses policy and practice around the term "conflict prevention" within different fields of international cooperation. In this context, "conflict prevention" is a broadly used term that covers a range of different activities and processes, which address different conflict-related dynamics. In recent months and years, the concept has regained traction in international policy debates.

Considering the many hypes and changes in focus which conflict prevention has undergone, basic terminological issues will be discussed in the first chapter. Highlighting some of the ambiguities associated with conflict prevention, this lays the ground for the policy and practice discussions in the later chapters. Conflict prevention being a highly political term, its development in international policy will then be outlined in relation to broader international developments. Subsequently, four practical conflict prevention efforts will be presented and assessed in light of recent policy developments.

This paper firstly aims to clarify how specific conflict prevention efforts relate to basic conceptual discussions. Secondly, it examines how conflict prevention efforts can be improved based on recent policy debates, in particular, the Guiding Principles established in Pathways for Peace, a flagship study published jointly by the UN and the World Bank in March 2018.

This paper is based on a desk study elaborated by the authors for the Robert Bosch Foundation in 2017.

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1   A sad record in this regard is Syria in which an estimated 1000 armed groups are active (World Bank & UN, 2018).

2
Core Concepts

Conflict prevention is a contested concept used by a variety of stakeholders in a range of situations. It can consist of a broad range of activities from alternative dispute resolution or strengthening the rule of law, to mediation and the use of force. This paper provides reflections on existing definitions of the prevention of violent conflict.[2] It is noteworthy that conflict by no means has to be a violent or negative endeavor. It can merely imply disagreement and can, in many situations, have positive and productive outcomes, both at an individual and at a societal level. The Department for International Development (DFID) has captured this binary potential of conflict in a 2007 policy paper: "Conflict is the pursuit of contrary or seemingly incompatible interests – whether between individuals, groups or countries. It can be a major force for positive social change. In states with good governance, strong civil society and robust political and social systems where human rights are protected, conflicting interests are managed and ways found for groups to pursue their goals peacefully. Where there is poor governance, however, grievances, disillusionment, competition for resources and disputes are more likely to become violent." (DFID, 2007: 6f)

2.1 Notions of "Violent" or "Armed" Conflict

Public international law and specifically international humanitarian law provide legal definitions of international and non-international "armed conflicts" – neither of which are clear-cut[3]. Additionally, a wide range of definitions of "violent conflict", "armed conflict", "violent crises" and the like are used in academia and practice.[4] Nuances often depend on the intention and mandate of a conflict prevention endeavor, which uses specific terminology in accordance with its purpose and needs.

Many of these definitions set relatively high thresholds, leading for example to the exclusion of conflicts between individual neighbors, domestic violence or street riots from the definition of "violent conflicts". As these examples of conflict can potentially constitute symptoms of underlying structural issues within a society and have the potential to trigger "conflicts" as defined in the commonly referred to definitions, this exclusion – though necessary – risks to be misleading in practice.

Whilst the different definitions offer possibilities for shaping the understanding of "armed" or "violent" conflicts and of what needs to be done to prevent them, the following criteria are present in all reviewed definitions. Violent conflicts:
- involve (the potential for) some level of violence inflicted on the conflicting parties by one another;
- involve more than two individuals or an isolated group of people or have the potential to spread horizontally to members of the same group or vertically across other groups;
- can involve state and non-state actors,
- can take place at all levels of society and have local, national, regional or international causes, implications and consequences.

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2   Reflecting on additional central and foundational terms such as peace (e.g. "positive" vs. "negative" peace) and violence (e.g. "structural" vs. "physical" violence) would be necessary to fully grasp the challenges related to the prevention of violent conflicts, but would go beyond the scope of this paper.

3   International armed conflicts involve the use of force between two or more state parties, whilst non-international armed conflicts involve governmental and non-governmental forces or only non-governmental forces and groups with a certain degree of command structure. Internal disturbances and tensions explicitly do not meet the threshold of intensity of this definition. (ICRC, 2008).
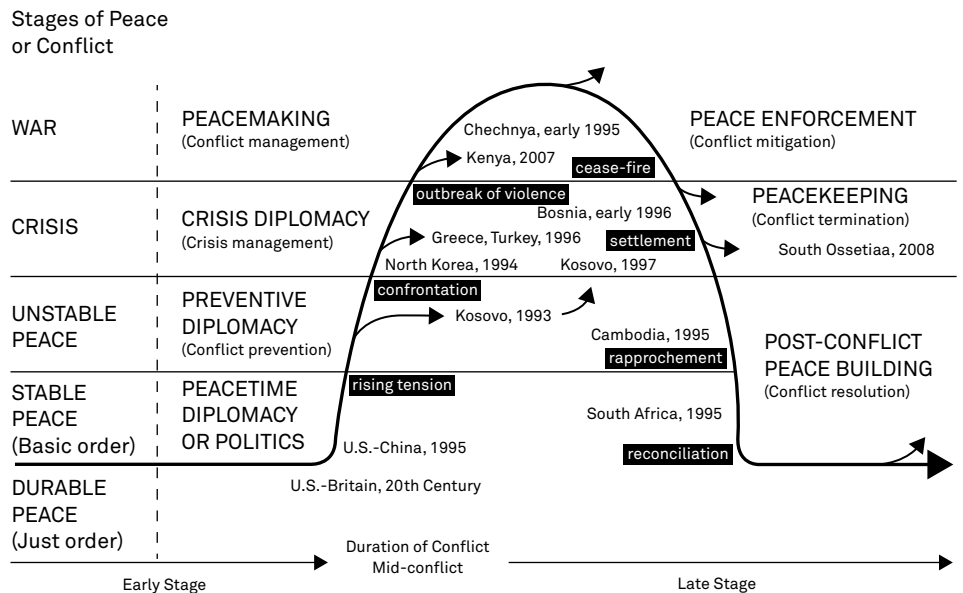
4   E.g the Uppsala Conflict Data Programm of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (UCDP/PRIO) defines armed conflict as "a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths." (UCDP & PRIO, 2013).

2.2 Conflict Cycle

Armed conflicts are not static and their frequency, duration, nature, and causes change over time. The conflict cycle (or conflict curve) is a useful concept to illustrate openings for conflict prevention and the differentiation between conflict prevention and related efforts such as conflict management, conflict resolution or conflict transformation. It was introduced by Michael Lund in 1996 (Lund, 2001: 38) and has since been adapted and refined. It depicts conflicts as cyclical and recurring and charts the evolution of a conflict on the basis of the two variables of conflict duration and conflict intensity. According to this understanding, conflicts essentially fluctuate, and more and less intense phases follow one another throughout the duration of a conflict.

Lund provides the graph below to portray the phases of a conflict (durable peace, stable peace, unstable peace, crisis and war), and relates the tools for dealing with conflict to these phases (peacetime diplomacy or politics, preventive diplomacy, crisis diplomacy, peacemaking, peace enforcement, peacekeeping, post-conflict peacebuilding).

Figure 1: Life history of a conflict according to Michael Lund (2001)

Lund (2001: 40) elaborates that "as suggested by the arrows that deviate from the line, the course of actual conflicts can exhibit many different long and short life-history trajectories, thresholds, reversals, and durations. Even conflicts that have abated can re-escalate." Conflict prevention thus ideally applies to the early phase of a conflict, also called unstable peace, which describes "a situation in which tension and suspicion among parties run high, but violence is either absent or only sporadic. A 'negative peace'[5] prevails

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5   Johan Galtung (1969) has described negative peace as the absence of personal violence, whilst structural and cultural violence tends to persist. Structural violence is a form of violence where structures and institutions harm people by keeping them from fulfilling their needs. A state in which neither forms of violence exist is considered positive peace.

because although armed force is not deployed [or employed], the parties perceive one another as enemies and maintain deterrent military capabilities (…). A balance of power may discourage aggression, but crisis and war are still possible." (Lund, 2001)

The study issued by the UN and the World Bank in 2018, Pathways for Peace – Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict, differentiates opportunities for prevention in situations of emerging risks, high-risk situations, after the outbreak of violence and in terms of recurrence. These four phases of possible intervention correspond to the phases of conflict identified by Lund: emerging risks describes phases of stable and unstable peace, high-risk situations correspond to unstable peace and the entry into crisis stage, and the outbreak of violence would describe the upward curve after first incidences of violence (crisis and war). Avoiding the recurrence of violence remains relevant at any point on the downward curve in the life cycle of a conflict.

Swanström and Weissman (2005) offer a useful elaboration of the conflict curve that helps to apply the model to more complex situations. They visualize the fact that a conflict curve is not only recurring (Figure 2), but also that it is neither linear nor evenly distributed. Instead, re- and de-escalation of conflicts can occur at various points without going through all the different stages in a sequential manner. Portrayed in that way, a conflict is likely to remain at high levels of intensity for a while before evolving into a more peaceful situation (Figure 3). Neither the highest nor the lowest level of intensity will necessarily be achieved in a conflict situation, i.e. not every conflict necessarily reaches the level of war and many conflicts do not reach a level of stable peace for considerable amounts of time (Figure 4). Moreover, similar patterns can recur numerous times before a real change in the intensity and pattern can be identified (Figure 5).

Figures 2 to 7: The conflict cycle according to Swanström & Weissman
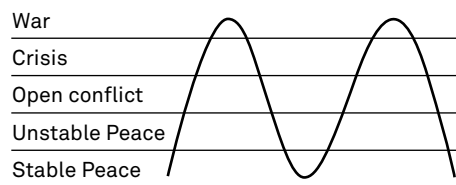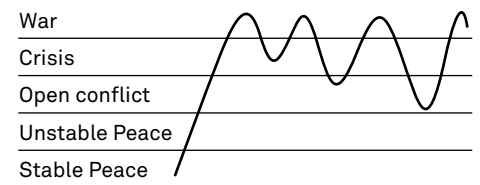(2005: 15–17)

Figure 2:

War	
Crisis	
Open conflict	
Unstable Peace	
Stable Peace	

Figure 3:

War	
Crisis	
Open conflict	
Unstable Peace	
Stable Peace	

Figure 4:

War	
Crisis	
Open conflict	
Unstable Peace	
Stable Peace	

Figure 5:

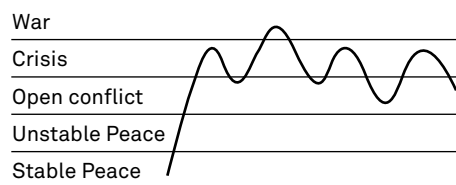|	
War	
Crisis	
Open conflict	
Unstable Peace	
Stable Peace	
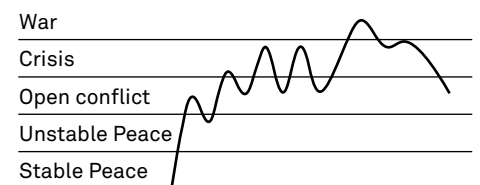
They also explore the fact that often several conflicts take place simultane-
ously (Figure 6) and in many cases, there are numerous sub-conflicts which
contribute to one overarching conflict. This is particularly relevant for the
application of the conflict curve to practice. Sub-conflicts may not only involve
different issues over which tensions prevail, but they can also be at different
stages of the curve at the same point in time (Figure 7). They thus have the
potential to influence one another's development. In this complex model then,
one or several sub-conflicts can be de-escalating whilst other sub-conflicts, or
even the overarching conflict, are re-escalating.

Figure 6:

War	
Crisis	
Open conflict	
Unstable Peace	
Stable Peace	

Figure 7:

War	
Crisis	
Open conflict	
Unstable Peace	
Stable Peace	
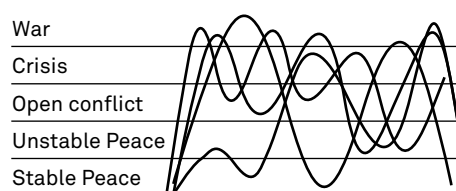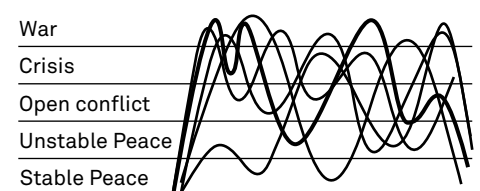
Considering this complexification and multiplication of the conflict curve,
conflict prevention efforts are ideally based on the assessment of a number of
inter-related factors:
– the stage a particular conflict is in and how the previous stages have
  developed (intensity or level of violence);
– whether the conflict is in a phase of de- or re-escalation and why
  (tendency);
– how this particular conflict relates to other sub-conflicts as well as the
  overarching conflict.

Changing the course of one conflict can have implications for other conflict lines. Consequently, at different stages of one sub-conflict, different conflict prevention efforts might be more or less suitable. Additionally, at one point in time, different conflict prevention efforts may have to be applied to different sub-conflicts to prevent escalation of the over-arching conflict. Whilst this complexity can blur the lines between interventions on the spectrum from conflict prevention to conflict resolution, it needs to be taken into account in order to not approach real-life conflict situations with a simplified, one-dimensional understanding of conflicts and their evolution.

2.3 Conflict Prevention

At the most basic level, conflict prevention means to hinder or prevent armed or violent conflict. This implies the ability to anticipate potential conflict, indicating a need for foresight and the observation of conflict dynamics. This broad view of conflict prevention can encompass immediate, short-term actions as well as longer-term, structural actions. Michael Lund (2002: 117) defined conflict prevention as: "any structural or intercessory means to keep intrastate or interstate tension and disputes from escalating into significant violence and use of armed forces, to strengthen the capabilities of potential parties to violent conflict for resolving such disputes peacefully, and to progressively reduce the underlying problems that produce these issues and disputes."

Woocher (2009: 2) writes that:"conflict prevention strategies are defined not by the specific actions involved as much as by their goals and the stage of conflict when they are implemented. A wide variety of actions can contribute to a conflict prevention strategy – for example, mediation, confidence-building measures, human rights promotion, capacity building, etc. To qualify as conflict prevention, however, these actions must include preventing large-scale violent conflict explicitly among their goals. In addition, only strategies used at the front-end of the conflict curve – that is, the phase when disputes have not yet produced large-scale violence […] – should count as conflict prevention."

Lastly, the Berghof Foundation (2012: 17) focuses on four pillars of conflict prevention: Conflict prevention lies in "identifying situations that could result in violence, reducing manifest tensions, preventing existing tensions from escalating and removing sources of danger before violence occurs."

The comprehensive study on conflict prevention jointly published by the World Bank and the UN in March 2018 defines 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." (World Bank & UN, 2018: 77)

This definition includes all phases of a conflict as indicated on the conflict curve (chapter 2.2). It also indicates that efforts to prevent conflicts are to be cross-sectoral with strong conceptual and practical linkages to developmental and environmental challenges. Silos of preventive intervention ought to be overcome through continuous albeit fluctuating developmental, security, political and humanitarian engagement, which are being adapted depending on the development of the conflict curve. Accordingly, "the prevention challenge goes well beyond conflict, encompassing all manner of avoidable artificial and natural crises that cause significant human suffering and undermine development." (World Bank & UN, 2017: 3). This expresses a broad view of conflict prevention that goes beyond some of the previous conceptualizations.

Whilst an expansion of the definition of conflict prevention can be observed in many studies[6], it brings with it a new set of challenges. Incorporating development work, humanitarian aid, conflict resolution, recovery, reconciliation and many other efforts as well as addressing all kinds of crises in the concept of conflict prevention may blur the lines between and among these concepts and approaches. Development projects, if planned and implemented in a context- and conflict-sensitive manner, can contribute to preventing violent conflict. Therefore, the concept of conflict prevention could be consciously inserted as a priority into development or humanitarian practice as a way of thinking and doing. This may require a mix of mainstreaming conflict prevention thinking and maintaining its stand-alone character in order to maximize preventive impact. This is not to imply that there is no value in applying a conflict prevention lens to other fields, concepts and mechanisms, but a certain conceptual clarity and practical distinction should be maintained.

In summary, basic common features emerge from these understandings of conflict prevention. Conflict prevention:
– can involve structural or intercessory, short-term or long-term actions;
– seeks to address immediate situations of tension as well as structural and root causes;
– can target intrastate or interstate conflicts and tensions;
– can target state and non-state actors;
– aims to avoid or hinder 1) violence from happening in the first place, and 2) the escalation of violence or 3) the recurrence of violence.

2.4 Operational and Structural Prevention

Conflict prevention can involve long- and short-term efforts and address root or immediate causes of conflict. This important differentiation is shown in figure 1 in section 2.2, which exemplifies that conflict prevention not only applies to the phase of unstable peace but is already relevant during stable peace. Different authors have thus differentiated efforts as operational and structural prevention, using varying terminology[7]. In addition, "systemic prevention" was introduced by former UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Kofi

6   See e.g. the Sustaining Peace Agenda that contrasts sustaining peace with the short-lived, exogenous character of peacebuilding: "Sustaining peace seeks to reclaim peace in its own right and detach it from the subservient affiliation with conflict that has defined it over the past four decades" (Mahmoud & Makoond, 2017: 1; see also Mahmoud et al., 2018; Mechoulan, 2016).

7   For example, the Carnegie Commission uses the terms operational and structural prevention, whilst a Saferworld report from 2016 refers to upstream conflict prevention instead of structural prevention. In some instances preventive diplomacy has been equated with operational prevention (see Muggah & White, 2013 on the UN).

Annan referring to "measures to address global risk of conflict that transcend particular states" (UN General Assembly (GA), 18 July 2006, UN Doc. A/60/891, para. 8). This includes e.g. measures on the international level to address trafficking in persons or arms.

According to the Carnegie Commission report (1997), a cornerstone of conflict prevention policy and thinking (further detail in section 3.2), operational prevention applies "in the face of immediate crisis", relies on early engagement, and depends both on those close to the conflict and on outsiders for success.[8] Operational conflict prevention measures include early warning and early response (EWER), preventive diplomacy, economic measures and the use of force and aim at "particular actors in manifest conflicts." (Lund, 2008: 289) Structural prevention, in contrast, encompasses preventive action that helps to ensure crises do not arise in the first place. It focuses on action and seeks to address root causes and, according to the Carnegie Commission (1997), must address the three main basic needs of security, well-being and justice. Structural prevention measures aim to "shape underlying socio-economic conditions and political institutions and processes." (Lund, 2008: p. 290) It is particularly important considering that "violent conflict escalates slowly, is persistent, and path-dependent." (World Bank & UN, 2017: 14)

Michael Lund (2008: 291) applies a slightly divergent differentiation. He speaks of ad hoc and a priori conflict prevention: "A less recognized expansion of prevention extends it 'up' from actions directed at specific countries facing imminent conflicts (ad hoc prevention) to include global- and regional-level legal conventions or other normative standards, such as in human rights and democracy. These regimes seek to influence entire categories of countries or agents, where violations might contribute to conflicts although no signs of conflict have yet appeared (a priori prevention). Whereas the former actions are hands-on ways (either direct or structural) to respond to country-specific risk factors, the latter are generic international principles agreed on by global and regional organizations as guideposts that whole classes of states are expected to stay within."

Some recent studies (e.g. the 2018 Pathways for Peace published by the World Bank and UN, discussed below) refer to long-term and short-term approaches and do not use the terminology of structural and operational prevention. However, as the difference in approach is not merely a matter of timeframe, but also of a substantive nature, structural and operational prevention will be used throughout this paper. Whilst operational prevention indicates interventions, actions and processes that aim at specific (crisis) situations and aim to prevent immediate threats of violence and escalation, structural prevention, as indicated in the name, aims at preventing structural factors that can lead to violence (e.g. grievances related to service delivery or access to power). The distinction thus speaks to the thinking behind a specific intervention more than to the timeframe.

8 Four core elements are introduced as being crucial to success: a lead player, a coherent political-military approach, adequate resources and a plan for the restoration of host country authority (Carnegie Commission, 1997).

3
Conflict Prevention in International Policy: Historical Constant and Periodical Hype

The objective of preventing violent conflicts has been fundamental to the creation of many international institutions, such as the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), and the UN system (Lund, 2008; Woocher, 2009). Over time, the understanding of "conflicts" and of the responsibilities of sovereign states and the international community to prevent them further developed. These developments have often been pushed for following the international community's failure to prevent massive human rights violations, such as during the genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica in the 1990s, or today with regards to the conflict in Syria.

Elements of the understanding of conflict prevention at the international and regional policy level can be found in different, often overlapping frameworks and policy fields. The following section discusses the early beginnings and more recent international debates and policy frameworks on the notion of conflict prevention.[9] This serves as a background for the discussion of the most recent international policy document, the Pathways for Peace study in section 3.3.

3.1 Foundations in the UN Charter

The international community created the UN in 1945 in the aftermath of the historic bloodsheds caused during World Wars I and II. The prevention of violent conflicts and the creation of a system of collective security have thus been at the heart of the UN since its establishment.[10] While the UN Charter contains elements directly relevant to the prevention of interstate or international armed conflicts[11], interpretation by the competent organs and member states has expanded the notion to provide tools to address the human suffering caused by intrastate conflicts and, under certain circumstances, even internal disturbances and violence that do not reach the threshold of intensity to qualify as "armed conflicts". Nevertheless, the system is based on the principle that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention lies with states themselves as part of their sovereignty. The UN organs and the international community can only provide subsidiary assistance.[12]

The UN Charter establishes a fundamental principle of contemporary public international law, the prohibition of the use of force: "All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations" (Art. 2 UN Charter).[13] The Charter further establishes the principle that "all members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered" (Art. 2 UN Charter). Chapter VI provides a list of measures that member states should take to settle their disputes peacefully: negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement or other peaceful means. If these measures are not successful and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) determines that a threat to peace exists, it can order coercive measures

9   Developments worth studying were also achieved within regional frameworks, such as the AU, the Organisation of American States (OAS), the EU, or within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). However, a discussion of these policy frameworks exceeds the scope of this study.

10 This is e.g. illustrated explicitly in the first sentence of its preamble, stating that the Union was created by the member states with the very intention "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind (…)" (UN Charter: Preamble).

11 Such as the prohibition of the use of force, which has become a fundamental principle of public international law. Additional principles include the peaceful resolution of international disputes according to Chapter VI of the UN Charter.

12 E.g. with regards to the Responsibility to Protect, the responsibility of the concerned state itself represents the first pillar of obligations, the duty of other member states to assist the state in question represents the second pillar of obligations and the duty of the UNSC to act lies within the third pillar (UN Charter; see also Statute of the International Court of Justice).

13 Three necessary precisions: 1) the prohibition of force applies only to the threat or use of force between member states (not to non-international/intrastate conflicts); 2) "force" only refers to armed violence and not to inter-state political or economic pressure; 3) exceptions to the prohibition of force are instances of self-defense and if the UNSC determines the "existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression".

against a member state's will on the basis of Chapter VII. These measures include sanctions such as complete or partial interruption of economic relations, embargoes and the severance of diplomatic relations (Art. 41 and Art. 42 UN Charter). Together with the Chapter VI instruments these sanctions are seen as instruments for prevention available within the UN system (Report of the SG, 02 June 2001, UN Doc A/55/985-S/2001/574: para. 169) and are referred to as means of "preventive diplomacy".

3.2 The Practice of the Security Council

For many years, international policy on conflict prevention was dominated by the geopolitical framework provided by the Cold War. Several authors have argued that the UN's conflict resolution capacities were corrupted entirely by the great powers' rivalries during this time (Murithi, 2017; Romita, 2011). Due to geopolitical interests and the veto powers of its permanent members, the UNSC has repeatedly been hesitant to declare a situation as being a threat to international peace and therefore from implementing Chapter VII-measures.[14] One example is the refusal to intervene in Rwanda despite warnings of imminent violence and evidence of a genocide. The current war in Syria is another example of the failure to take a decisive stance and the complex politics of conflict prevention in practice. However, there have also been instances in which an escalation of violence was prevented. One of the most prominent examples is the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 where further escalation was avoided through diplomatic efforts (MacDonald, 2012).

In some contexts, the UNSC has expanded its interpretation of the UN Charter. As the UN framework was not designed to prevent or respond to internal conflicts or instances of massive human rights violations that occur within member states, the UNSC's interpretation of situations, which it qualifies as being a "threat to the peace", has expanded over time. In 2000, for example, the UNSC noted that "the deliberate targeting of civilian populations or other protected persons and the committing of systematic, flagrant and widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in situations of armed conflict may constitute a threat to international peace and security, and, in this regard, reaffirms its readiness to consider such situations and, where necessary, to adopt appropriate steps." (UNSC, 19 April 2000, UN Doc. S/RES/1296: para. 5)

In this context, the notion of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)[15] was developed and endorsed in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit (UNGA, 14 December 2005 UN Doc. A/60/L.40). R2P firstly states that state sovereignty includes the responsibility of member states to protect their populations from war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and ethnic cleansing (UNGA, 14 December 2005, UN Doc. A/60/L.40: para. 138). It secondly refers to the responsibility of member states to provide international assistance and capacity-building to other states. Thirdly, it envisages the responsibility of the international community to provide a timely and decisive response

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14 Authors like Tim Murithi (2017) have thus argued that the UN SC has become an inappropriate and ineffective instrument for conflict prevention.

15 At times also referred to as "prevention of mass atrocities".

in accordance with the UN Charter (Report of the SG, 12 January 2009, UN Doc. A/63/677). The Libya intervention in 2011, based on UNSC Res 1973 was "the first [and only] time that the Council authorized the use of force for the purpose of human protection against the will of the acting government of a functioning state" (Dembinski & Reinold, 2011). Given the political nature of the decision-making process within the UNSC, R2P is still disputed in academia and practice (Kälin et al, 2016).

In some cases, states have intervened with the use of force in other states without UNSC authorization, because the latter was blocked by the veto powers. They have done so claiming that such "humanitarian intervention" presented an exception from the prohibition of the use of force. Such was the case, e.g. when NATO intervened in Kosovo in 1999 (Kälin et al, 2016).

3.3 Key Policy Documents

Shortly after the end of the Cold War and the international community's failure to prevent the events in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia in the early and mid-1990s, the issue of conflict prevention regained traction at the international policy level and the debates became more nuanced and diverse. A few milestones of these post-Cold War developments will be discussed here.[16]

In 1997, the Carnegie Commission issued its report on Preventing Deadly Conflict.[17] The report is considered a cornerstone for global thinking on the need for conflict prevention and the shapes this can take in practice. It distinguishes operational from structural prevention.[18] The Commission "urges the combining of governmental and non-governmental efforts in a system of conflict prevention that takes into account the strengths, resources, and limitations of each component in the system. It cannot be emphasized enough that governments bear the greatest responsibility to prevent deadly conflict." (Carnegie Commission, 1997: XXXVI) The report furthermore introduces the idea of a culture of prevention stating that "beyond persuasion and coercion, (…) we must begin to create a culture of prevention. […] the prevention of deadly conflict must become a commonplace of daily life and part of a global cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation. Leaders must exemplify the culture of prevention. […] There is a challenge to educate, a challenge to lead, and a challenge to communicate" (Carnegie Commission, 1997: XIV).

Based on the general principles which member states adhered to when signing the UN Charter, the UN documents relevant to conflict prevention generally emphasize that the prevention of armed conflicts is primarily a responsibility of member states, and that differences should be settled peacefully, if possible utilizing regional arrangements or bodies. They also acknowledge the important role civil society has to play in the prevention of armed conflicts. The international community and the UN, in particular, should support national efforts (e.g. UNGA, 3 July 2003, UN Doc A/RES/57/337: Preamble).

16 This section provides an overview of some international documents. Many others have been issued, including for example the 1992 Agenda for Peace, the 2004 Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, the 2008 Report of the UN SG on the Implementation of Resolution 1625 on Conflict Prevention, Particularly in Africa, or the 2012 Report on Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results.

17 The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict was established in 1994 by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. It consisted of 16 eminent international leaders as well as a range of advisors (e.g. Desmond Tutu, Mikhail Gorbachev, or Olusegun Obasanjo), practitioners and consultants. The final report was published in 1997 and continues to be a cornerstone and reference point in conflict prevention debates.

18 See chapter 2.4.

In June 2001, UNSG Kofi Annan issued a report to the UNSC entitled Prevention of Armed Conflict which elaborates the UN mandate relevant for the prevention of armed conflicts and the roles different organs play to fulfill it. It emphasizes the need for more coherence and makes recommendations to actors within and outside of the UN system to contribute to conflict prevention. It re-emphasizes that the time has come to move from a "culture of reaction" to a "culture of prevention".[19] The report was discussed within the UNSC (UNSC, 30 August 2001, UN Doc. S/RES/1366) and the UNGA, the latter emphasizing its importance in resolutions in 2001 and 2003 (UNGA, 1 August 2001, UN Document A/55/281 and UNGA, 3 July 2003, UN Doc A/RES/57/337). The UNGA also underlined the importance of a "comprehensive and coherent strategy comprising short-term operational and long-term structural measures for the prevention of armed conflict (…)" (UNGA Resolution, 3 July 2003, UN Doc A/RES/57/337: para. 2).

In 2006, UNSG Kofi Annan presented his Progress Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict, referring to an "unacceptable gap (…) between rhetoric and reality" (Report of the SG, 18 July 2006, UN Doc. A/60/891: para. 4). The report advances with regards to the concepts involved, as it focuses on improving the awareness and understanding of what should be prevented and what can be done in terms of operational, structural and systemic prevention. He also emphasizes the need "to act in concert". Referring to the "responsibility to prevent", which the international community has, the SG recommends "global, systemic actions to address sources of tension and to strengthen norms and institutions for peace" (Report of the SG, 18 July 2006, UN Doc A/60/891: para. 98). In addition, he recommends that member states take "country-specific structural", as well as "operational actions to address sources of tension and to strengthen norms and institutions for peace" (Report of the SG, 18 July 2006, UN Doc A/60/891: para. 104). The SG assesses the UN system's capacity for conflict prevention, based on six core prevention activities:
– 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.

In October 2014, upon request from the UNSC, SG Ban Ki-moon appointed the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) to review the current state of UN peace operations. Its 2015 report highlights the need to increase the resources of UN peace operations for prevention and mediation and for the UN system "to pull together in a more integrated manner in the service of conflict prevention and peace" (HIPPO, 2015: VIII). Amongst the changes the Panel proposes, it prominently emphasizes the need to "bring back prevention and mediation to the fore." (HIPPO, 2015: IX). In his reaction to the HIPPO report, the SG highlighted the need to prioritize prevention and mediation in order to break the recurrent dynamic of responding too late and too expansively (Report of the SG, 02 September 2015, UN Doc. A/70/357-S/2015/682).

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19 Report of the SG, 02 June 2001, UN Doc A/55/985-S/2001/574: para. 169. Guiding principles include the need for national ownership, the primacy of member states in preventing conflict, the need to balance short- and long-term approaches, the desire to focus on structural causes of conflict, and the need for political will.

Echoing this call for prioritizing and implementing prevention, the Agenda 2030 (UNGA, 21 October 2015, UN Doc. A/RES/70/1), containing the so-called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN member states in September 2015, includes Goal 16 on "peace, justice and strong institutions", which has the potential to become the basis for a stronger focus on conflict prevention activities (Chun, 2016). By signing the Agenda, member states commit to promote "peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".[20] A number of concrete targets and indicators make up SDG 16, including the aim to "significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere."[21] Many activities which member states are, or will be, undertaking to reach this goal can directly or indirectly contribute to conflict prevention (Chun, 2016).

Lastly, the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparations and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence, Pablo de Greiff and the Special Adviser to the UNSG on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng recently published a joint study on the contribution of transitional justice to atrocity prevention. It details how constitutional reforms and security institutions as governance institutions can contribute to atrocity prevention. It secondly also explores the contributions of civil society institutions, and lastly, "interventions in the domains of culture and of personal dispositions" (Human Rights Council, 01 March 2018, UN Doc. A/HRC/37/65). The study highlights that "weak commitment, insufficient investment in prevention measures, late interventions and the fragmentation or "siloization" of knowledge and expertise" are the main obstacles to effective atrocity prevention. In response they recommend a "framework approach" which "would include all measures that arguably contribute to the prevention of atrocities" and which places civil society contributions "at the center" (Human Rights Council, 01 March 2018, UN Doc. A/HRC/37/65, para. 90). A key recommendation is that the international convention on crimes against humanity be finalized swiftly.

In summary, accounting for the increasing interconnectedness of people and states at all levels, the international policy framework has become more nuanced with an increased understanding of the notion of conflict prevention. However, the implementation of these policies in practice is difficult, as conflict prevention, in reality, is one priority among many.

3.4 Pathways for Peace – A Paradigm Shift?

Pathways for Peace (see Chapters 2.3 and 2.4) seeks to provide a response to the changing nature of conflicts (e.g. the proliferation of non-state armed groups, the increased regionalization of conflicts or augmented risks related to environmental factors) and the perceived failures and shortcomings of current conflict prevention practice.

Whilst the study reinvigorates some principles that have been established in other policy documents, such as the primary obligation of the state

20 http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/ (last accessed 12 March 2018).
21 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16 (last accessed 11 March 2018).

for conflict prevention, the need for long- and short-term approaches and the necessity to address structural causes, it has also taken some previous insights to a new level. In this light, the study suggests that national ownership is not sufficient, but that conflict prevention efforts can strengthen national leadership and "enhances sovereignty by relying on national capacity" (World Bank & UN, 2018: 278). Similarly, whilst the idea of cooperation was previously focused on states and state-driven actors (such as regional groups) or the UN system, it now emphasizes to a stronger extent the importance of non-state actors, both at a sub- and a supranational level. Perhaps one of the most important innovations is the insight that conflict prevention needs to be people-centered. It does not only cater for and accommodate the people it seeks to protect from violence, e.g. through the inclusion of non-organized civil society, but it also strengthens the possibilities for moving conflict prevention away from security-driven notions of peace towards a more human approach and even the achievement of positive peace. Therefore, structural violence should become one of the main concerns of preventing violent conflicts as it provides fertile ground for more overt forms of violence in the medium and long-term.

Declaring this a paradigm shift, Pathways for Peace outlines three Guiding Principles, with six sub-principles, to consolidate and strengthen conflict prevention efforts. These Guiding Principles are based on an analysis of the weaknesses of current conflict approaches and an analysis of countries and cases that have addressed conflict risks somewhat successfully. The Guiding Principles propose that conflict prevention must be sustained, inclusive and targeted (World Bank & UN, 2018: 279).

The table below further explains these Guiding Principles, before the next chapter assesses their impact and potential for conflict prevention efforts in practice.

Table 1: A new paradigm for prevention (World Bank & UN, 2018: 279)

Today's challenges		A new paradigm
Short term Aspires to be long term, but the short term dominates	Sustained	**Short and long term** Shorter-term results increase the attractiveness of sustained and strategic approaches to prevention
Slow and inflexible Lacks flexibility and agility to support windows of opportunity		**Adaptive** More agile approaches adapt in the face of changing risks and opportunities
Top down Risks identified by elites and direction set by a small group of specialists	Inclusive	**People-centered** Partnerships at all levels identify risks and develop solutions
Fragmented Highly technical, isolated in silos		**Integrated** Solutions increase resilience to multiple forms of risk, with effective prevention tools often in the hands of actors for whom conflict is not a primary focus
Delayed Dominated by crisis response, with prevention focused only on the most immediate risks	Targeted	**Proactive** Early and urgent action is taken to tackle and manage directly the full range of risks that could lead to violent conflict
Weakens leadership Prevention is seen as undermining national sovereignty		**Strengthens leadership** Prevention enhances national sovereignty and expands the scope of action for governments

4
Conflict Prevention in Local Practice

Conflict prevention efforts can take a perhaps infinite number of shapes since each potential conflict situation is different and multiple factors have to be considered when supporting conflict prevention. Available options also differ depending on the political situation and capacities of the implementing actor. On the spectrum between operational and structural prevention, efforts can, e.g. include preventive and multi-track diplomacy, strengthening of national human rights institutions, security sector reform, EWER, or even decentralization. Conflict is not prevented through one intervention at a single point in time, but rather through a process of interlinked structural and operational efforts involving multiple stakeholders (see e.g. World Bank & UN, 2018; UNGA, 27 April 2016, UN Doc. A/RES/70/262).

Whilst the early understanding of conflict prevention was based on interstate conflicts and state-centered conceptualizations of security, the attention has shifted towards intrastate conflicts and a more nationally driven and people-centered approach. This development is part of the broader "local turn" in peacebuilding.[22] With this shift, a multitude of locally focused and community-based or nationally driven methods for conflict prevention have emerged or previously existing methods have been included in conflict prevention practice[23]. Some of these include:
– Infrastructures for peace (I4Ps);
– community-based EWER systems;
– local peace committees (LPCs);
– local conflict resolution mechanisms;
– locally driven reconciliation efforts;
– fostering of intergroup contact;
– multi-stakeholder dialogue;
– local or "insider" mediators;
– local ombudspersons;
– women's situation rooms (WSRs).

In order to illustrate how conflict prevention approaches are implemented in practice, four approaches will be discussed: EWER, LPCs, WSRs, and I4Ps[24]. In these approaches, local stakeholders and national governments take the lead and build on local, national and sometimes regional capacities. The selected mechanisms[25] are by no means exhaustive and are not intended to imply a judgment over their effectiveness. Rather, the list is intended to shed light on a select number of prevention efforts, which seem promising, innovative, or well-established. They reflect both operational and structural approaches as well as a mix of both.

After an overview of each approach including practice examples to illustrate their functioning, their possible contribution to conflict prevention, and each mechanism's potential for improvement in line with the Guiding Principles laid out in Pathways for Peace (proactive, strengthening leadership, people-centered, integrated, short- and long-term, and adaptive) will be discussed.

22 For a discussion of the local turn in peacebuilding see e.g. Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; and Hellmüller & Santschi, 2014.

23 Distinctions between these methods and their respective mandates are not clear-cut in the different national contexts. The terms are used to describe different actors, processes or activities in different contexts, which can overlap even within one particular context. For example, community-based EWER mechanisms usually cooperate with local multi-stakeholder committees which can be named LPCs. At the same time, community-based EWER mechanisms and LPCs are part of an I4P.

24 All four of these can be seen as being interlinked between warning and response, the national and local level, and longer and shorter-term focus. For example, whilst LPCs and WSRs can stand alone, they can also be important components of a broader EWER system where LPCs would usually cover the response side in a highly localized manner.

25 In the literature, different terms are used to describe conflict prevention methods: some refer to "tools" or "activities" (e.g. local level reconciliation), whilst others refer to organizational "structures" (e.g. infrastructures for peace), and some to both. Here the term "efforts" is understood to include all three aspects.
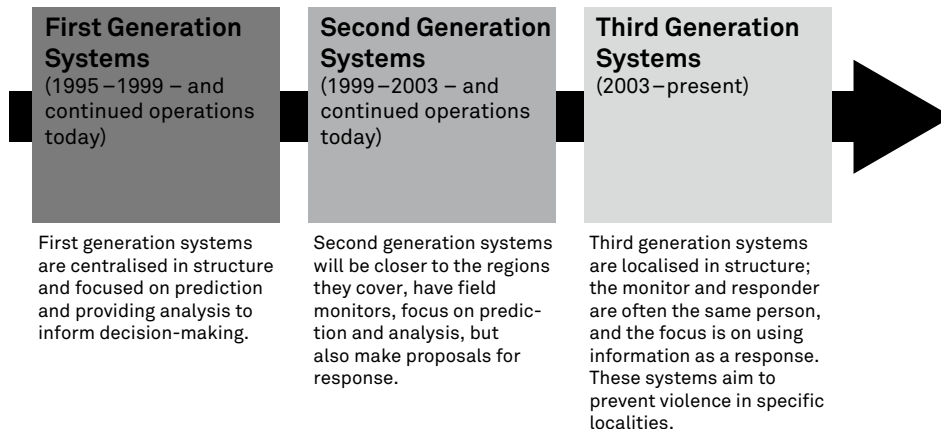
4.1 Early Warning and Early Response

4.1.1 Overview and Practice

"Early warning" and "early response" are disputed terms. The European External Action Service (EEAS) describes its own approach to early warning as "encompass[ing] the systematic collection and analysis of information coming from a variety of sources in order to identify and understand the risks for violent conflict in a country and to develop strategic responses to mitigate those risks" (EEAS, 2014: 1). According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "[e]arly warning is a process that (a) alerts decision makers to the potential outbreak, escalation and resurgence of violent conflict; and (b) promotes an understanding among decision makers of the nature and impacts of violent conflict" (Nyheim, 2009: 22).

David Nyheim describes the emergence of conflict EWER mechanisms in three generations, as illustrated in figure 10.

Figure 10: Generations of EWER mechanisms (Nyheim, 2015: 3)

First Generation Systems
(1995–1999 – and continued operations today)

First generation systems are centralised in structure and focused on prediction and providing analysis to inform decision-making.

Second Generation Systems
(1999–2003 – and continued operations today)

Second generation systems will be closer to the regions they cover, have field monitors, focus on prediction and analysis, but also make proposals for response.

Third Generation Systems
(2003–present)

Third generation systems are localised in structure; the monitor and responder are often the same person, and the focus is on using information as a response. These systems aim to prevent violence in specific localities.

Whilst systems of all three generations still exist[26], a fourth-generation has been added, which is built on third-generation mechanisms but involves a stronger focus on technology, open source data and crowd-based information gathering (UNDP & OAS, 2015).[27] Overall, there is an increasing focus on third and fourth generation systems in order to capitalize on existing local knowledge and enable quick and adequate response on the ground. As a consequence, a number of local or community-based EWER mechanisms have emerged in various countries. Some of them have grown from the bottom up (e.g. the Wajir Peace and Development Committee in Kenya or the Kibimba Peace Committee in Burundi), whilst others have been launched top-down (e.g. Belun in Timor-Leste or the EWER components within the LPC Structures in South Africa; Leach, 2016).

Nowadays, many countries have both community-based EWER systems as well as early formations of national EWER systems. Many countries are also

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26 Examples include: 1st generation: EU Situation Room, 2nd generation: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN), 3rd generation: Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) (Nyheim, 2015), or the Foundation for Co-Existence in Sri Lanka (Meier, 2009a).

27 For a more elaborate differentiation between third and fourth generation EWER see Meier, 2009b. An example of a fourth generation system is the Uwiano Platform for Peace in Kenya. See https://www.cohesion.or.ke/index.php/programmes/uwiano-platform-for-peace (last accessed 12 March 2018) for more information.

part of regional communities that have their own EWER systems.[28] In theory, these different layers work hand in hand and they function as integrated parts of one interlocked EWER mechanism. In practice, this is not always the case. In integrating national EWER mechanisms into regional mechanisms, it is crucial 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[29].

Ideally, even local mechanisms should employ a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to ensure that both structural developments are captured as well as incidences and event-based data (Leach, 2016). The collection of data should be based on an explicit model of how conflicts occur and evolve. This will enable a more comprehensive analysis of developments in long- and short-term situations (Leach, 2016; Nyheim, 2015).

The Wajir example (below) shows that the early roots of community-based EWER mechanisms do not need complex indicator systems, technology, or infrastructure. Basic analysis of information received by people who are intimately familiar with their context can be a sufficient basis for early response. However, this might only apply to a system that grows from the bottom up and is initiated by community members themselves. If an EWER system is developed from scratch, it tends to have a more top-down aspect to it and may require the setting up of infrastructure and indicator systems from the start.

Example 1: Wajir Peace and Development Committee, Kenya
"In 1992, in the District of Wajir, Kenya, a group of women met to discuss how they could address communal tensions, which were often becoming violent. They began by monitoring the market. The women's familiarity with the context meant they were sensitive to signs of tensions between clans, which was sometimes as straightforward as people refusing to do business with those from other clans. Identifying the problems before they escalated, the women were able to address certain concerns themselves. The women's group reached out to the District Commissioner, local elders, and youth, slowly building a coalition to address the broader concerns underlying the tensions and conflict [...]. By May 1995 [...] the Wajir Peace and Development Committee was created – a combination of the networks of women, youth, businesses, elders, and others. The breadth of the coalition enabled the committee to address significant communal tensions and limit the impact of violent actors. The success of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee led to a national initiative promoting district-level peace committees, some of which have been more successful than others at replicating the Wajir model. What is notable is that the formal structures evolved from the conversation and action of a group of women operating at the community level." (Leach, 2016: 11)

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28 In addition to national and continental systems there are EWER systems established by regional organizations such as the CEWARN of the IGAD established in 2002; ECOWAS' system called ECOWARN, established in 1999, or the EU Conflict Early Warning System (see for example Center for Basic Research, unknown year; http://www.wanep.org/wanep/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=59&layout=blog&Itemid=99 (last accessed 06 March 2018); ECOWAS, 2017; European Commission, 2016).

29 The CEWARN system is one of the better established and researched mechanisms. It holds important lessons especially for cross-border conflicts, which in the early stages constituted CEWARN's raison d'être. For an analysis of this case see for example Saferworld, 2015; Budapest Center for Mass Atrocity Prevention, 2016.

Example 2: Uwiano Platform for Peace, Kenya

Based on the experience of the post-election violence in 2007 and 2008, Kenyan civil society, donors and other stakeholders came together for the 2010 National Referendum on Kenya's Proposed Constitution as well as the 2012 General Election and the following elections, to try to ensure peace. They launched the UWIANO Platform for Peace ("Uwiano" is a Swahili word for cohesion). This EWER platform ran an extensive media campaign through radio and SMS, to inform all Kenyans of where they could report incidences of violence. Over time, it added new partners, such as the Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission, and expanded its strategies to include peace monitors and a free SMS-platform. "UWIANO ran a twenty-four-hour desk, where text messages were received, analyzed, verified, and disseminated for urgent action. Some of the cases required radio messages directed at specific issues or locations; others needed mediation or security measures. A rapid response grant provided funds through the mobile phone system for intra- and interethnic meetings between elders [which] addressed previously undiscussed issues, such as ethnic differences. The elders at these meetings, already highly respected in their communities, also had been trained by UWIANO as inter- and intra-ethnic mediators [...]. UWIANO insisted that women be included in the eldership" (Nderitu, 2013: 9. See also National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), 2012).

Example 3: Colombia

Considering the internal armed conflict and the increase in violence in the late 1990s, the Colombian Ombudsman's Office (the national human rights institution) established an early warning system in 2000 to alert the government of impending human rights violations.[30] In 2012, the system had around 50 staff – many of them field monitors. Whilst the issued alerts were originally publicly available they are now issued to an inter-institutional committee, which then provides recommendations for institutional response. Although this system has become an integral and respected part of the Colombian institutional framework, it still relies heavily on funding by foreign donors. As the system and all institutions have until recently been operating in an ongoing armed conflict and are still embedded in a very volatile and violent context, it issued high numbers of risk assessments and alerts. This routine in dealing with violent conflict and flagrant human rights violations, often committed by state agents themselves, has not always been propitious ground for innovative early response and prevention. The response is often reactive and limited to the security sector. In addition, Colombia is a centralized state, in which the coordination between the national level, to which the system is directed, and local level authorities is highly inefficient. Therefore, the response by other institutions is usually inefficient, uncoordinated and slow. However, the system continues to work on its methodologies, including regarding response. For instance, it developed risk frameworks which take into account the capacities of the local communities and local institutions and which can be used by them directly.[31]

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30 http://www.defensoria.gov.co/es/delegadas/4/ (last accessed 10 March 2018).

31 A recent blog article on its risk framework by an implementing partner of USAID can be found here: http://blog.chemonics.com/predicting-human-rights-violations-before-they-happen (last accessed 12 March 2018).

4.1.2 Potential and Limitations in View of the Pathways for Peace Guiding Principles

The first Guiding Principle calls for sustained efforts, taking into account short and long-term development, and adapting in response to changing risks and opportunities. Firstly, EWER mechanisms can contribute to operational and structural conflict prevention as they ideally observe both long-term and short-term developments that have conflict potential. They are thus applicable to all phases of the conflict curve starting from stable peace. However, this phase is often not understood yet as a source of information for early warning indicators and analysis (Leach, 2016). But in order to understand conflict, one needs to understand peace and collect so-called peace indicators and information on cooperative events which indicate how peaceful relations function in a specific community, how resources are accessed peacefully, how conflicts are resolved peacefully, etc. (Leach, 2016). This will also help in identifying peace opportunities. Secondly, beyond the inclusion of peace indicators, EWER systems can be adapted and expanded in terms of the information they collect, how they collect it, who collects it and from whom. They can thus adapt comparatively easily to new and developing situations and their very success is dependent on their ability to do so in practice. The perhaps bigger challenge is adaptation and flexibility on the response side. Whilst any well-established EWER system should include response mechanisms, unforeseen situations and threats might require unforeseen responses.

The second Guiding Principle calls for inclusive prevention efforts, which are characterized by being people-centered and integrated. EWER systems can become more people-centered by working more closely with the people they aim to protect from violence and conflict. EWER systems are generally most reliable if they rely on a variety of sources, including in some cases crowd-sourced information and data. Whilst crowd-sourcing comes with its own risks (see e.g. Mancini, 2013) it has the advantage that people can contribute directly to EWER, thus potentially also having a way of sharing grievances and desires for change. Centering EWER data collection, as well as indicators and response around the people that these systems aim to protect, thus seems a promising approach to making them more reliable and feasible. Focus on more relevant and locally grounded indicators has already found increased attention over the last years under the label of "everyday peace indicators" that are rooted in everyday life of those affected (see e.g. MacGinty, 2013 and the Everyday Peace Indicators Project).

In addition, EWER systems can and should increase their integration by basing their analysis and response on diverse sources. Whilst this increases the reliability of the data based on which response actors take decisions, it also offers the opportunity to build partnerships with different institutions which can serve as sources of information, but which can also be drawn upon for response mechanisms. If EWER systems efficiently and comprehensively feed their information and analysis back to various institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, these are given the opportunity to act early and

appropriately, thus contributing to their own resilience. This should also include actors that might not be the usual suspects when it comes to conflict prevention (e.g. education departments, a national treasury, etc.).

The third Guiding Principle calls for making conflict prevention more targeted, that is pro-active and by strengthening leadership. The very aim of EWER systems is to sound an early alarm on crisis situations or, long-term structural developments that have future conflict potential. To ensure this proactivity to be effective, the warning needs to be closely interlinked with a meaningful response. This is a significant challenge in practice. Whether an EWER system can contribute to strengthening leadership and national sovereignty depends on the design of the system and its positioning within the institutional landscape, as well as its funding. EWER systems ideally provide a government with the opportunity, ability, and capacity to identify grievances and other potential conflict dynamics as early as possible. They thus create the opportunity for early, nationally or locally defined action on the side of the government or other, non-governmental stakeholders well before large-scale human rights violations occur and external intervention becomes more likely. An effective EWER system can thus very well be conducive to strengthening leadership as well as resilience.

4.2 Local Peace Committees

4.2.1 Overview and Practice

LPCs are locally based and driven response mechanisms that have been established around the world. Andries Odendaal (2010: 7) defines an LPC as: "an inclusive committee operating at sub-national level (a district, munici-pality, town or village). It includes the different community sections in conflict, and has the task of promoting peace within its own context. An LPC is appro-priate in a situation when the local community experiences, or is under threat of, violent or debilitating internal conflict. (...) An LPC includes all participants, emphasizes dialogue, promotes mutual understanding, builds trust and creates constructive problem-solving and joint action to prevent violence."

Like EWER mechanisms, LPCs can be established top-down or bottom-up, formally (with state recognition) or informally (by civil society, without formal recognition by the state) (Odendaal, 2010). They combine operational and structural prevention aspects through long-term structures that provide a response mechanism in specific conflict situations. LPCs can thus be useful in all phases of a conflict.

LPCs often use an interest-based approach to conflict resolution (as opposed to power-based or rights-based approaches). Although this can imply a weakness as they lack the power of force or coercion to enforce their work and recommendations, consensus and compromise are often the most realistic, fairest and safest options LPCs have (Odendaal, 2010).

In the following, three examples of LPCs will be presented.

Example 1: South Africa
"Under the [1991] National Peace Accord (NPA) the South African LPCs had the following mandate:

→ Create trust and reconciliation between relevant community organization leaders, including the police and the army.

→ Prevent violence and intimidation by cooperating with the local justice of the peace.

→ Resolve disputes that could lead to public violence by negotiating with relevant parties, and recording agreements.

→ Eliminate conditions detrimental to peaceful relations and peace agreements.

→ Promote compliance with peace agreements.

→ Reach agreement on the rules and conditions for marches, rallies and other public events.

→ Liaise with local police and magistrates on preventing violence [...].

→ Report and make recommendations to the regional peace committee" (Odendaal, 2010: 7).

LPCs in South Africa facilitated dialogue and mediated local-level disputes. However, "LPCs were powerless in the face of spoilers, or when political will was lacking. [M]uch of the violence was deliberately stoked by the so-called Third Force (sections of the security establishment). Local bodies that operated through facilitation and mediation were powerless in the face of deliberate planned violence." (Odendaal, 2010: p. 34ff)

Example 2: Burundi

"[P]eace committees were formed around the country as a mechanism for dialogue, conflict management, reconciliation and social rehabilitation by various Burundian and international NGOs. [...] [R]esearch estimates that through these efforts 500 to 600 [LPCs] were established at the commune, zone, and colline level [...] These unofficial, civil society peace committees lacked an official mandate but nevertheless were effective and relevant during the conflict itself (1993–1999), the transition to peace (2000–2005) and the post-conflict phase (2006–present). [...] Their approaches were [...] participatory, in which community members, after training and dialogue, were called to select representatives to a kind of 'peace observatory' that would take the lead in community-level peacebuilding. [...] The peace committees have shown clear positive impacts within communities at fostering trust, healing the hurts of the past, and rebuilding community cohesion. They also have helped to mitigate conflict and prevent further violence. Finally, the LPCs [were] springboards for new leaders to emerge and participate in the democratic process at the local level. [...] Where the Burundian peace committees face greater challenges is in the aggregation of their impact to the provincial and national levels. Lack of resources and coordination are a major shortcoming, especially as post-conflict peacebuilding assistance dries up [...]." (Niyonkuru, 2012: 6, 39 and 44)

Example 3: Nicaragua

"The [1987] Esquipulas Agreement created Nicaragua's National Reconciliation Commission; one of its main tasks was to monitor and verify the ceasefire declared in three zones of Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan Government [...] went beyond the requirements [...] by assigning the National Reconciliation Commission the task of establishing "[...] a more extensive internal structure that included region-specific commissions and an extensive network of local commissions." These local peace commissions developed different regional characteristics and impacts. [...] Peace commissions [in the South] performed communication and mediation functions. They also strengthened the efforts of religious leaders to initiate and promote dialogue between the Sandinistas and contra rebel leaders of different factions at local and higher levels. The religious character of the groups complemented and helped facilitate the commissions' neutrality. These commissions supplemented existing networks of personal contacts, enabling information exchange and continual dialogue between the Government and the contras. [...] The commissions had national-level impact through their efforts to negotiate a final truce with contra rebels following the failed disarmament and amnesty granted by the [National Opposition Union] government." (Odendaal, 2010: 29ff)

4.2.2 Potential and Limitations in View of the Pathways for Peace Guiding Principles

The first Guiding Principle calls for sustained conflict prevention efforts, emphasizing the need for long- and short-term efforts, as well as their adaptiveness. By their very nature, LPCs are meant to observe and act quickly on short-term crises and escalations. But well-established LPCs can also advocate for long-term solutions to grievances that have conflict potential. They can include new members when dynamics and contexts change and new representation is needed to remain actionable and legitimate. This ability to absorb new stakeholders is a clear indication of the adaptability of LPCs. However, this ability to adapt depends on the mandate, decision-making powers and budgetary flexibility of an LPC. If a budget is inflexible and insufficient, it can hinder rapid and appropriate response when it is needed the most. Rapid response funds have thus been proposed as one way to enhance the response capacity of these mechanisms.

The second Guiding Principle calls for inclusive conflict prevention. As the members of LPCs should be well integrated into the communities, groups, and constituencies they represent, they can observe long-term developments and implement early action. Besides their integration into the communities they serve, LPCs should aim to be people-centered by actively including all sectors and sections of society, both horizontally and vertically. This should include national, sub-national, and where relevant supra-national stakeholders, sectoral departments, local government agencies, the business sector, women and youth groups, organized and non-organized civil society, traditional and other local leaders, and any other group or person of eminence and interest who can contribute skills and capacities to ensure peace and who have a genuine interest in doing so. This representation across sectors also contributes to advocating for action on potential conflict issues, especially some of the grievances that are at the core of many conflicts (e.g. access to water, service delivery, access to power at the local level). If an LPC achieves a large degree of representation across spheres and sectors, it can also be an effective way to diversify the types of actors involved in conflict prevention.

The third Guiding Principle calls for targeted efforts to prevent violent conflicts. LPCs are targeted in the sense of focusing on one specific, sub-national location such as a town, municipality or district. LPCs ought to be a pro-active rapid response mechanism by their very nature. They can be one of the response mechanisms linked to an EWER system. However, LPCs need to be well-established, ideally already during peacetime, in order to ensure high capacity, trust, and well-functioning response procedures. They need to have an adequate mandate, financial means and decision-making power to be able to react appropriately and timely. LPCs bring together a vast range of stakeholders and have the potential to strengthen leadership by establishing locally-rooted, cooperative leadership practices. Especially in contexts of fragile state presence or limited resilience of government institutions to respond to crises in non-violent ways, LPCs can lead with an alternative, non-violent, cooperative, trust-based and constructive leadership approaches.

4.3 Women Situation Rooms

4.3.1 Overview and Practice

The concept was first introduced by a women's organization during the 2011 elections in Liberia (Godia, 2015; Limo, 2017). The idea quickly gained traction and has since been applied in Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Tunisia and several other countries.

The African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes has described WSRs as "a women-led approach to preventing and reducing violence during the electoral cycle, and in some countries assuming a conflict management approach in the post-election period." (Limo, 2017)

They have thus far been applied to election situations to monitor developments shortly before, during and after elections, and are thus focused on trigger moments in already tense contexts, making them a means of operational prevention.

Because women are often the victims of election-related violence[32], the WSR is an attempt to give women a leading role in preventing such violence. It brings together women (and in some cases men) with different backgrounds to monitor elections. Election observers take the role that field monitors have in EWER systems: they collect information on the ground and report it to the situation room for analysis, verification and action. "[T]he structure of the WSR consists of a secretariat, election observers, a call center, a team of eminent women leaders and a pool of experts. The WSR operates from a designated location, often close to the strategic headquarters of the various first-response organizations such as the police and the electoral body in the country. [...] after receiving situation reports of real or potential trouble on the ground, the eminent persons use their status and influence with police authorities, the electoral body or political leaders to reduce brewing tensions or prevent acts of violence from getting out of control. They also conduct behind-the-scenes diplomacy, and arbitrate and mediate between rival groups and political parties." (Limo, 2017)

Not only are WSRs said to have contributed to making several elections more peaceful, but one of the reported effects of the WSRs has also been a decrease in sexual violence as a consequence of elections. This success has led to WSRs being endorsed as a best practice by the AU's 2012 Gender is My Agenda campaign as well as recognition by the UN as a best practice in conflict and violence prevention (Limo, 2017).

WSRs can exist alongside other prevention mechanisms, but they can also be an integral (formal or informal) part of a broader EWER system. Nonetheless, women's situation rooms are a rather new and understudied mechanism that so far only seems to have been applied on the African continent and in election situations.

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32 E.g., in the 2017 Kenyan election, female candidates, supporters and campaign staff have been targeted in gender specific ways (Berry et al, 2017). Similarly, International Federation for Electoral Systems (IFES) reports that women in Bangladesh experience unique forms of electoral violence including psychological and physiological violence, sexual violence and financial manipulation and intimidation (Paasilinna et al, 2017; see also World Bank & UN, 2018).

Example 1: Liberia

"With support from UNDP and in collaboration with the [Angie Brooks International Centre], a coalition of over 30 Liberian and youth organizations [sic] [...] established the [WSR] in Liberia to help galvanize women's participation and peaceful elections. The objective of the project was to enhance women's political participation by mobilizing women, youth and the media in Liberia to actively participate and ensure peaceful and democratic electoral process. [...] These trainings and media events helped to ensure that the Liberian women embrace their civil responsibilities [...]. In collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, with funds from the Elections Basket Fund managed by UNDP, 419 women representing 17 political parties were trained [...]. Women of various political parties advocated for support for their activities after an Inter-Party dialogue held in 2010." (UNDP Liberia, year unknown[33])

Example 2: Nigeria

"The WSR in Nigeria aimed at creating an [EWER] mechanism by training and deploying an all-female team of 300 election observers in [...] 10 states considered as hotspots for the March 2015 general elections [...]. The process was convened by the [Nigerian Women's Platform for Peaceful Elections] comprising of sixteen women's networks in Nigeria and was run by the WSR-Nigeria secretariat in Abuja and by State and Deputy State Coordinators in all ten states. A physical Situation Room was set up at a Hotel. Forty Incident Report Officers working in two shifts received calls from the field through a WSR Toll-Free number. The WSR provided an early response mechanism through a team of eminent women from Nigeria and Africa who made timely interventions to incidents reported to the room [...]. The [4973 received] reports included incidents such as voting complaints, malfunctioning Card Readers, violence, electoral offenses, and obstruction of observers, insecurity and spontaneous violence on announcement of results." (Onyesoh & Bangura, unknown year: 3)

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33 http://www.lr.undp.org/content/liberia/en/home/ourwork/democraticgovernance/successsstories/liberia-women-elections.html (last accessed 12 March 2018).

34 E.g. the inauguration of Raila Odinga as the "people's president" in Kenya, or the speech by Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini considered to have contributed to a wave of xenophobic attachs in South Africa (Maluleke, 2015). A WSR would also be useful in situations of sudden large-scale migration flows resulting from violence such as the Rohingya crisis and the related arrival of refugees in Bangladesh.

4.3.2 Potential and Limitations in View of the Pathways for Peace Guiding Principles

The first Guiding Principle calls for sustained prevention efforts. However, WSRs are currently characterized by a short-term focus. They are designed and established for the purpose of preventing election-related violence. Whilst elections are clearly an important moment of tension and potential escalation in all phases in which conflict prevention is relevant, they could arguably be applied to other high-risk situations or other forms of violence such as contentious speeches or sudden large-scale migration flows[34]. Violence against women is systemic in many societies, and gender inequality and high levels of gender-based violence have been shown to have complex relationships with

conflict dynamics. Whilst mortality rates for men are often higher, women experience a great variety and intensity of violence in all stages of conflict (see for example Caprioli, 2005; Caprioli & Boyer, 2001; Tushen, 2001; World Bank & UN, 2018; Sleigh, Barker, Levkov, 2014). Establishing WSRs as a long-term measure can thus also be a fruitful endeavor to prevent violent conflict. They can, potentially in combination with other mechanisms such as EWERs and LPCs, monitor the situation of women, gender equality measures, and gender-based violence on a continuing basis and engage as a rapid response mechanism in particular crisis situations. It is important that the women who are represented in a WSR are perceived as legitimate and have a positive standing in the community. This might require a sustained effort at establishing a legitimate group of women representatives well before an institutionalized WSR comes into being. Whilst this focuses on the preparation or pre-election phase, the aftermath of a short-term WSR can also have more sustainable effects if the women involved use their standing and successes from the WSR to influence decision-making on policy issues that relate to potential grievances. These aspects will also be crucial in making WSRs more pro-active.

Adaptability should be the basis for any WSR. Their very purpose is to provide adequate, quick response in highly volatile situations. Being adaptable then is a very basic requirement for success. Similar to LPCs, an adaptable approach is, however, only realistic where funding allows for it.

The second Guiding Principle calls for conflict prevention to be inclusive. WSRs are people-centered because they receive their information bottom-up, making them heavily dependent on and closely interlinked with the population and especially women. They respond directly and immediately to reports of violence or tension that affect the population and in order to be successful they need to be embedded in a network of stakeholders, including governmental, non-governmental, local and national, business and other actors, similar to the approach LPCs should take. This will also increase integration into and with other stakeholders, prevention mechanisms and specific interest groups. Horizontal and vertical integration are then also means to influence and address long-term grievances and threats to peace. Members of a WSR are usually also representatives of other stakeholders or institutions, and they can feed back their work as a WSR member to their respective institutions, thus acting as multipliers with the aim of increasing resilience.

The third Guiding Principle calls for targeted conflict prevention efforts, which are pro-active and strengthen local and national leadership. WSRs are conceived as hands-on, preemptive mechanisms, which address incidents pro-actively in order to prevent wider conflicts. They have a lot of potential to strengthen women's leadership as they bring together eminent women in a visible public space. WSRs can be usefully linked to training and other capacity building to further strengthen women's leadership role and skills at a local and national level. WSRs are thus, lastly, also a mechanism for creating visibility for the value and potential associated with women in leadership roles and

serve as platforms for bringing together different stakeholders and creating the starting point (and momentum) for long-term cooperation between women at all levels.

4.4 Infrastructures for Peace

4.4.1 Overview and Practice

The concept of I4Ps was introduced in the 1980s by Jean Paul Lederach based on the idea that sustainable peace can only be achieved through a "transformation of the socio-economic root causes and political drivers of [...] conflict" (Giessman, 2016: 9). It has gained considerable traction in practice and I4Ps have been implemented in contexts as diverse as Ghana, Tunisia, South Africa, Lebanon, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Colombia. They exemplify a systematic effort at linking institutions, capacities, and approaches across different levels of society. The concept of peace infrastructures has been defined differently by stakeholders, practitioners and scholars.[35] Some of the most relevant definitions include the ones by UNDP (2013: 1) which describes I4Ps as "a network of interdependent systems, resources, values and skills held by government, civil society and community institutions that promote dialogue and consultation; prevent conflict and enable peaceful mediation when violence occurs in a society." Alternatively, Giessman (2016: 10) proposes to view I4Ps as "[...] a dynamic networking of skills, capacities, resources, tools and institutions that help build constructive social and political relationships and enhance sustainable resilience of societies against relapse into violence." Lastly, Paul van Tongeren, former Secretary General of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, defined I4P as "cooperative, problem-solving approaches to conflict" (2011: 45) within societies, based on dialogue and non-violence. Jeannine Suurmond and Prakash Mani Sharma as well as Kai Brand-Jacobsen, on the other hand, have drawn "an analogy between peace infrastructures and existing and proven infrastructures in health-care, education, and finance. As a systemic network designed for simultaneous prevention, curing, healing, and public education" (Giessman, 2016: 10). I4Ps are thus an expression of structural prevention to be considered and applied during all phases of the conflict curve and well before any signs of conflict emerge. They operate at the local and national level, and are consequently described by Richmond as "an encounter between the international liberal peace model and local forms of peace" (Richmond 2012, quoted in Verzat, 2014: 2). They can be established bottom-up or top-down (Giessman, 2016).

Based on these definitions, I4Ps:
– Provide a networked, institutionalized approach to building capacity and resilience;
– Aim at a culture of collaboration, dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution;
– Ideally encompass all levels and spheres of a society;
– Are based on networks, partnerships and relationships.

35 The Journal of Peacebuilding and Development dedicated an edition to the topic (see Vol. 7(3), 2012).

Example 1: South Africa
In South Africa, as part of the 1991 NPA, an institutional landscape emerged consisting of the National Peace Committee, the National Peace Secretariat, Regional Peace Committees, LPCs and Peace Monitors, interwoven with the cross-cutting components of, i.a., the Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation and the Police Board. These were complemented by a Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Organizations and one for the Security Forces.

As Giessman (2016: 25f) states, "the peace process in South Africa was coordinated at all levels, with distinct but complementary roles for each track, and a countrywide network of similar institutional structures, contributing to what is now considered [...] a success and role model for I4P. It has demonstrated that even a [s]tate and a society which was forcefully torn apart [...] can change over time if the process is based on inclusivity, participation and ownership. Over two decades later it should be noted, however, that the peace will not last if the lessons learned from the past are not preserved and continuously applied."

Example 2: Nepal

"The peace infrastructure in Nepal was established with the purpose of supporting the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006 [...] between the government and an armed insurgency led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). The government's peace efforts center on the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction [which] carries broad functions in monitoring and implementing the peace accord and is expected to support a wide range of elements, including LPCs with representatives from all societal stakeholders, a peace fund, a truth and reconciliation commission, and a commission to investigate disappearances [...]. The local peace councils were established to link the Track 1 peace process systematically to the grassroots level. However, centralization and domination by political elites limit inclusion and responsiveness to local concerns. Civil society plays a key role in engaging the government as a partner and in monitoring the conflict parties' commitment to the peace accord. Moreover, the infrastructure shows the weaknesses of an artificial design that did not grow out of the local political cultural context. Some of the elements of the infrastructure were not established [at the time of the article] yet and, as Ram Bhandari notes, the concept for the local peace infrastructure was 'never discussed with local actors, but was designed from the top down, based on political negotiation and donors' recommendations'" (Hopp-Nishanka, 2013: 8). It was further criticized that traditionally existing local dialogue and alternative dispute resolutions mechanism had not been taken into account (Giessman, 2016).

Example 3: Ghana

Ghana's I4P involves three levels of government and is considered a good practice. The infrastructure was established by the National Peace Council Act of 2011 and supported by regional organizations including ECOWAS and the AU. The I4P included a National Peace Committee, Peace Councils and Peace Promotion Officers at regional and district levels. The latter, nominated regionally and appointed by the Ministry of Interior, is responsible for coordination and communication between the different levels. Some of the regional councils also have dedicated secretariats to support their work. Contributing to the success of the I4P in Ghana were the political support and buy-in as well as the prominent involvement of civil society. Several authors have credited the NPC and the structures and networks related to it, with mediating political transitions in Ghana and ensuring smooth elections and a peaceful transfer of power (Based on Giessman, 2016; see also Hopp-Nishanka, 2012).

4.4.2 Potential and Limitations in View of the Pathways for Peace Guiding Principles

The degree to which I4Ps contribute to effective conflict prevention will very much depend on the effectiveness of the institutions involved. If these are not effective in implementing their mandates, including them in an I4Ps will not necessarily resolve those underlying problems. Nevertheless, I4Ps have the potential to contribute to effective conflict prevention in view of the Pathways for Peace Guiding Principles.

The first Guiding Principle calls for sustained prevention efforts. I4Ps as a systemic networked approach to building resilience are by their very nature – and owed to their complexity and scale – a long-term process that can only succeed if there is a long-term commitment that ensures political will, financial and practical support. Once institutions have been strengthened, though, they are also better able to respond to both short- and long-term developments and crises that have the potential to lead to violent conflict.

Institutions and systems, especially government institutions, are not per se known for being adaptive and agile in their response capacities. Often resilience and the capacity to resolve crises are seen in connection with having solid processes and procedures, accountability mechanisms, etc. These may not be prone to agile responses. In partnership with non-governmental and business and other actors, this obstacle might be overcome. The value then lies in the availability and interconnectedness of these institutions, their capacity and the opportunity to contribute their different strengths.

The second Guiding Principle envisages prevention activities to be inclusive. I4Ps are by their very nature built on inclusiveness and consultation, thus laying the groundwork for long-term, sustainable partnerships horizontally and vertically. The integration of not only those government agencies that are frequently associated with conflict prevention, such as the security or justice sectors, but also the inclusion of those who have a more indirect impact, such as line ministries that influence potential grievance issues, is crucial.

It can be assumed that a culture of peace or a networked approach to conflict prevention in which institutions and systems have the skills, resources, and values to prevent conflict should include those actors that might not have (had) an inherent interest in peace, and thus be inclusive. Related to this is the ability of domestic actors to provide and strengthen incentives for peace and inhibiting incentives for violence. The issue of incentives is frequently neglected but is at the core of successful conflict prevention as strong incentives for violence can undermine the conflict prevention process.

The third Guiding Principle calls for targeted efforts. One may assume that effective institutions that are attentive to long-term conflict potentials are well positioned to take action at an early stage in a pro-active manner, e.g.

through policy changes, the building of sustainable partnerships, open communication, and dialogue, etc. As the concept of I4P aims at strengthening institutions and structures at all levels, I4Ps have the potential to strengthen leadership, ideally, leadership styles that incorporate ideals of partnership, cooperation, and consultation.

5
Conclusions

After discussing basic concepts and terminology relating to the prevention of violent conflicts, this paper has analyzed the main policy debates that have taken place at the international level in relation to this complex and highly political topic. It can be observed that many debates are recurring, even if terminologies change and different stakeholders shift the focus at different times. However, throughout these waves of attention and recurring debates, lessons have been learnt and failures uncovered.

The Pathways for Peace study is the most recent attempt to learn from the past. Announcing the need for a paradigm shift, hopes are high that this will bring meaningful change to conflict prevention practice. By applying the Guiding Principles identified in the study to existing mechanisms, this paper contributes to the ongoing debate on how to improve conflict prevention in practice. As a result, we have proposed ways in which EWER systems, LPCs, WSRs and I4Ps can be amended, with a view to making them more sustained, inclusive and targeted. Besides these practice-oriented insights, three main conclusions can be drawn from the above discussions.

Firstly, as shown in chapter three, the concept of conflict prevention has come to include a range of activities in various sectors, from peacebuilding to development. One strategy to maintain conceptual clarity may be to consider mainstreaming conflict prevention thinking within development, peacebuilding and humanitarian work whilst also maintaining its stand-alone character in order to maximize the impact of targeted efforts to prevent violent conflicts.

Secondly, whilst international policies assign high priority to conflict prevention and offer comprehensive and innovative approaches, practice has often remained behind expectations and hopes. Many argue that already in the 1990s, when the international community witnessed the genocides in Srebrenica and Rwanda and even more so nowadays, information on conflicts, which may erupt to violence is readily available. Thus, decisive action is what is lacking.

Thirdly, the preliminary reading of the hypes of attention at the international policy level would suggest that political considerations have in certain instances led to inaction that in turn led to the need to pick up the pieces and avoid the same inertia in the future. Policy documents, however, offer a refinement of technical solutions, not a change of political imperatives to resolve political problems. The discrepancy between expectation and reality, or policy and practice, has also contributed considerably to the recurring hypes around the topic of conflict prevention. In this light, it seems pertinent that there is an increasing awareness of the political nature of many of the causes and dynamics of conflict, which will hopefully also lead to increased action at the political rather than only the technical level. The main challenge lies in consolidating political will to take sustained, inclusive and targeted action as called for in Pathways for Peace.

In summary, despite the re-energizing that the field of conflict prevention has recently experienced, this main challenge of political will (and related to that the availability of financial means) for ensuring conflict prevention remains, even with new policies in place. Acknowledging the political nature of many conflicts and conflict prevention activities is thus crucial if conflict prevention is to become more successful. Consequently, the recommendations made here in terms of adapting existing mechanisms in light of new insights can only bear fruits if issues of political will are addressed as well and, crucially, at all levels.

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