

THE TOOLS USED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR CONFLICT PREVENT

Corneliu-George, Iacob¹
Emilia, Iordache²

Abstract

As a global player, the European Union promotes conflict prevention and resolution as a means of supporting peace and prosperity throughout the world. The European Union's overall strategy combines security, development and diplomatic action in support of common goals. The European Union ensures an integrated approach to conflicts and crises by using the comprehensive tools at its disposal - at all stages of a conflict, from prevention to crisis management - to contribute to lasting peace. The European Union strives to ensure stabilization and peace, in close coordination with the Member States, combining conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding in an effective way. With regard to conflict prevention, the European Union aims to address the structural risks of violent conflict through all relevant policies, instruments and instruments, in a timely and successive manner. In addition to conducting conflict analysis, the European Union uses specific tools, such as the European Union Early Warning System and Horizontal Scanning, to identify countries at risk of instability and / or violent conflict. Systematic analyzes of conflicts in countries in danger or facing conflict or instability, in which the European Union has a significant ongoing or planned commitment, are essential to play a key role in preventing and consolidating peace.

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JEL classification: F50, F51

1. Conflict prevention - the general framework

The idea of conflict prevention is linked not only to the idea of avoiding armed conflict, but also to the prevention of violence, genocide, violent extremism and humanitarian disasters, including those in which natural phenomena play an important role.

Conflict prevention is a diplomatic approach that refers to a variety of activities and strategies within peacebuilding fields that are deployed to pre-empt and subsequently neutralise potential triggers to widespread violent conflict. Former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskiöld first articulated the concept of conflict prevention more than half a century ago (1954). Since its inception the concept has grown in popularity in fields of diplomacy as key actors and institutions have increasingly shifted from a culture of reaction of prevention in their approach to violent conflict. This shift towards a preventive approach to violent conflict has been accelerated by a number of moral, political and economic imperatives. The human suffering, destruction of communities and loss of lives that routinely occur in violent conflicts are the primary moral justifications for a preventive approach. Beyond these humanitarian considerations, the economic degradation that nations suffer whilst embroiled in violent conflict – through loss of livelihoods, destruction of property, loss of trade and foreign investment – demonstrates why a preventive approach is also an economic imperative for actors engaged in violent conflict. Furthermore, the detrimental humanitarian and economic effects of any violent conflict rarely reside within national boundaries. Once conflict has broken out the costly security and humanitarian interventions that often result cause the international community to place their citizens at risk – both directly and indirectly – as well as placing a huge financial burden upon the international community.

As early as 2016, the idea of peaceful conflict prevention and resolution was brought back to the forefront by the UN Under-Secretary-General, who urged that peace prevention and resolution be prioritized. Also in 2016 (during the presentation of the Secretary-General's

¹ PhD Candidate, University of Economic Studies, Doctoral School: Economics and International Business, Bucharest, Romania;

² PhD Lecturer, Constantin Brâncoveanu University, Pitești, Faculty of Marketing Management in Economic Affairs Râmnicu Vâlcea, Romania; emi66v1@yahoo.fr

Report on Policy Issues Concerning Special Political Missions), the President of the UN General Assembly, Peter Thomson, noted that never before in the history of the United Nations have so many forces been deployed of peace to address so many simultaneous security and humanitarian crises. The magnitude and number of crises worldwide have put unprecedented pressure on resources and increased attention has to be paid to conflict prevention, including through the use of special political missions and other diplomatic tools. On January 10, 2017, in an open ministerial debate of the UN Security Council on conflict prevention and peacekeeping, UN Secretary-General António Guterres outlined his vision for a renewed focus on prevention, and governments discussed ways to achieving the "peacekeeping" agenda.

2. The European Union's vision for conflict prevention

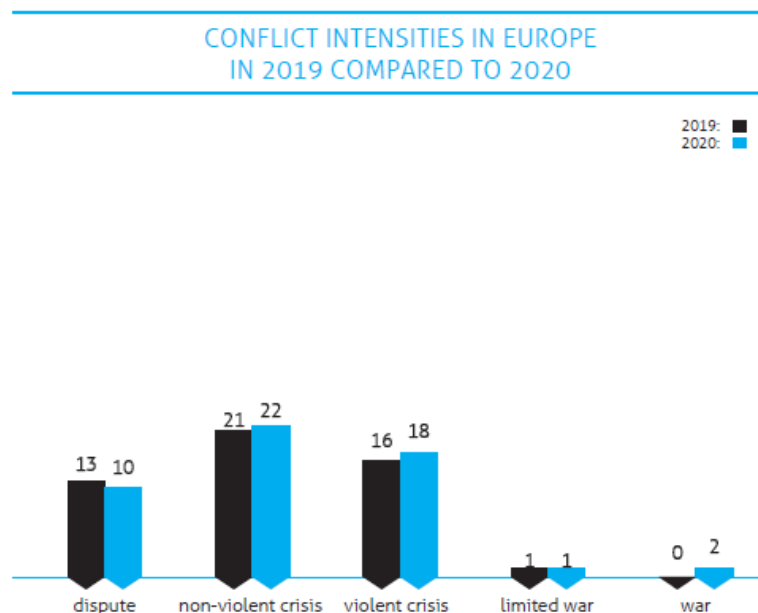
In recent years, the security environment of the European Union has changed dramatically. The main challenges to peace and stability in the EU's eastern and southern neighborhood continue to highlight the need for the Union to adapt and increase its capacity as a security provider, with a strong emphasis on the close link between external and internal security.

The Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) enables the European Union to play a leading role in peacekeeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security. It is an integral part of the EU's comprehensive approach to crisis management, building on civilian and military resources. According to Article 21(2) (c) of the Treaty on European Union, conflict prevention is one of the objectives of the European Union's foreign policy.

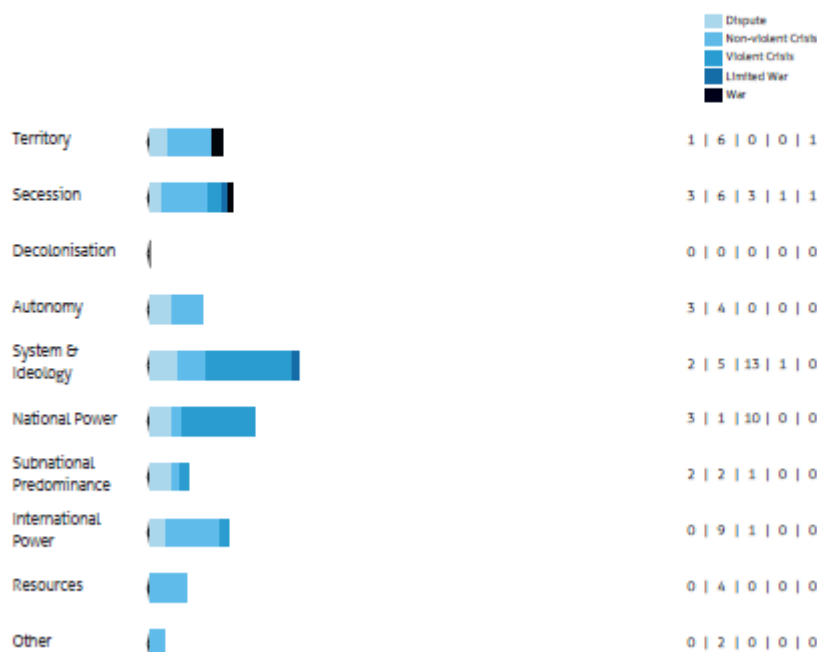
Many of today's challenges to peace, security and prosperity stem from instability in the EU's immediate neighborhood and evolving forms of threats.

According to the Conflict Barometer developed by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research for the period 01/01/2020–12/31/2020, the situation of conflicts in Europe is as follows (HIIK, 2021):

Figure no.1



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN EUROPE IN 2020



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN EUROPE IN 2020



Source: (HIIK, 2021)

An X-ray of Europe in 2020 reveals that, according to the data presented in the Conflict Barometer, there were crises or conflicts, at various levels of intensity, in the following states: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Romania, Kosovo, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Russia, Hungary, Ukraine, Turkey, United Kingdom. To these are added, most recently in 2021, the conflict situations in Poland and Belarus. It is observed that violent crises within the borders of nation-states (17) and interstate non-violent crises predominate as a frequency (10). In these circumstances, the creation and use by the European Union of tools to prevent conflicts and intervene in their dynamics is a necessity.

As early as 2014, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker stressed that we must "work to make Europe stronger in terms of security and defense" and that European and

The EU conflict EWS is an evidence-based risk management tool that **identifies, prioritises and assesses situations at risk of violent conflict** in non-EU countries, focusing on structural risk factors with a time horizon of up to four years. The EU conflict EWS seeks to identify **conflict prevention and peace building opportunities** through joint, shared analysis and to develop timely, relevant, coherent and conflict-sensitive responses to prevent the emergence, re-emergence or escalation of violence. The EU conflict EWS is unique in its initial reliance on **quantitative data and in its scientific and systematic approach**, providing an evidence-based starting point for a shared conflict risk assessment. The entry point of the system is the Global Conflict Risk Index (GCRI), which forecasts the probability and intensity of violent conflict using structural indicators related to fragility and violent conflict. The EU conflict EWS **is not a prediction tool**, as it is always difficult to pinpoint the exact triggers for violence. There are, however, certain structural factors and indicators frequently associated with an increased conflict risk that the EU conflict EWS can help identify and mitigate. The EU conflict EWS assessment methodology facilitates EU-wide discussion of those risks and of integrated actions to mitigate them. The focus is on multiplying the preventive and peacebuilding impact of EU engagement, as well as its conflict sensitivity. (European Commission, 2020)

The essential elements of the EU conflict EWS are risk scanning, prioritisation, shared assessment and follow-up and monitoring.

Risk scanning is the preparatory component and aims to compile all available risk information into a single document, which serves as a basis for further prioritization and conflict risk assessment. The main resource is a quantitative index of conflict risk (the Global Conflict Risk Index – GCRI). As a structural conflict risk model, the GCRI does not cover recent events or conflict triggers. Findings from the index are therefore complemented with intelligence-based analysis from the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) and the latest qualitative situation analysis from open sources and internal assessments across the EEAS and the Commission, including EU Delegations. The resulting global overview of conflict risk, compiled in Regional Risk Tables (RRTs), forms the starting point for prioritisation (Component 1).

Prioritisation allows the EU and Member States to focus resources and political action where the prospects for effective violence prevention are the strongest, also considering the EU's strategic interests.

The second component of the EU Early Warning System is **shared assessment and follow-up**; this brings together the country's broader teams (geographical and thematic experts from both the country and the headquarters) with the aim of identifying coherent options for conflict-sensitive preventive action, based on a common risk assessment and conflict dynamics.

In order to assess the structural risks of the conflict, a number of key factors related to human security are taken into account, covering 10 risk areas: Legitimacy; The rule of law; Security; Relationships between groups; Human rights; Civil society and the media; Society; Climate change, the environment and disasters; Economic performance and Regional stability. During this process, an assessment is made of existing and planned interventions and their impact on conflict risk factors. Such interventions include preventive or peace-building actions, as well as actions with other objectives (eg development, security, migration, policy) with a conflict-sensitive focus. As a next step, a Conflict Prevention Report (CPR) is prepared for each priority country, outlining key risks as well as options and recommendations for preventive and conflict-sensitive engagements across EU external action domains. (European Commission, 2020)

As a new component in the EWS, a follow-up mission will take place approximately one and a half years after the first in-country assessment. The follow-up mission will serve to: (1) update the structural risk factors assessment in view of changes in the risk environment of the country; (2) delve deeper into the assessment of the most relevant priority risk domains and related preventive actions by using analytical tools such as scenario planning and theory of change, and carry out conflict sensitivity assessments of specific programmes; and (3) assess the implementation of previously identified options for action, develop adjustments and pinpoint new opportunities for engagement, which can be reflected in an updated CPR or separate action plan.

The monitoring phase seeks to address the question of how the EU conflict EWS and the actions identified in the CPR have helped to address the underlying risks of conflict in priority countries. Assessing the implementation and results of the identified actions is a key component of this phase.

The EWS is designed to close the gap between early warning and early action by engaging EU staff across headquarters and in-country in a joint assessment to prepare specific recommendations and follow-up actions. Effective conflict prevention relies upon a sound understanding of conflict situations (root causes, actors and scenarios).

The EU conflict early warning process itself, with its emphasis on early action, provides a path to understanding the effectiveness of EU actions undertaken to mitigate specific conflict risks, in a variety of contexts. In this respect, the EU conflict EWS may help shape the trajectory of ongoing or future programming and interventions, and monitor them to ensure that they are conflict-sensitive. The EU conflict EWS also helps strengthen partnerships in the relevant sectors of EU operations in the country concerned, and globally. Finally, lessons learned during an EU conflict EWS cycle will benefit the system as a whole, further improving the EU conflict EWS as an effective EU tool to prevent violent conflict. (European Commission, 2020)

3.2 EU conflict analysis offers insight into the drivers of conflict using a structured approach. The EU promotes the systematic use of conflict analysis, notably in fragile and conflict-affected countries. A team of experts advises EU Delegations on conflict sensitivity in fragile contexts, on policy, programming, training, technical support and operational issues. The EU's conflict analysis methodology is robust yet flexible to accommodate different timelines and environments. Conflict analysis can usefully inform decision-making at different levels, as it facilitates a common understanding of the crises between all EU actors and enhances identification of the range of options for EU action.

This way, conflict analysis can make EU diplomacy, missions and development cooperation more relevant, more effective and potentially more influential.

Key components of EU conflict analysis (EEAS, 2020)

1. **Conflict dynamics** – an overview of the historical and current conflict environment, highlighting the main contested areas, the scope and nature of ongoing violence (e.g. insurgency, extremism, post-election violence) and its overall impact (e.g. migration, humanitarian toll, economic consequences, human rights abuses, *etc.*). Particular attention should be paid to gender dynamics;

2. **Causes/drivers of conflict**, including structural causes that are resistant to immediate change, triggers that may tip a high-risk situation over the threshold of violence, correlations with climate change and environmental degradation, and patterns of resilience or local capacities for peace that allow stable high-risk areas (or bright spots) to withstand the risk of violence;

3. **Stakeholder mapping**, including parties to the conflict, people affected and those with interests and stakes in the conflict;

4. **Possible future scenarios**, including a variety of combinations of key uncertainties for the security landscape in terms of conflict scope or impact, indicating the likelihood of each scenario and what it could mean for the EU;

5. **Review of ongoing engagements** to ensure integrated and conflict-sensitive EU external action, including a mapping of prevention, peacebuilding and stabilisation activities and programming, and focussing on lessons learned;

6. **Actionable recommendations** for EU conflict prevention and resolution, to follow alone or in partnership, including short- and long-term initiatives.

The EU undertakes joint conflict analysis in order to:

- shape conflict prevention and conflict resolution efforts;
- ensure effective and conflict-sensitive engagement in countries at risk of violent conflict;
- strengthen coherence and coordination in line with the 'integrated approach to conflict and crises; and
- inform analytical processes, EU foreign policy and programming decisions relating to countries at risk of violence or ongoing violent conflict. (EEAS, 2020)

Depending on the objectives of the conflict analysis, the form it takes will vary in terms of duration and methodology. While the analytical process remains flexible and can be adapted to the available timeframe, certain standard phases can generally be identified:

- planning;
- data collection, analysis and recommendations; and
- reporting.

Overview of the conflict analysis process (EEAS, 2020)

1. Planning and design

STEP 1: Request by a Delegation, a geographic service, an EUSR, or any other part of the EU

STEP 2: Internal Scoping

STEP 3: ToR Drafting

2. Data collection, analysis and recommendations

STEP 1: Data collection

STEP 2: Conflict analysis workshops/exercises

STEP 3: Member state involvement

STEP 4: Recommendations

3. Reporting, feedback and follow-up

When to conduct a conflict analysis?

Conflict analysis is ideally initiated at the earliest signs or warning of future violent conflict or tension in third countries. The analysis is particularly opportune in countries that are in a state of unstable peace, where the risk of violence is substantial but still latent. However, conflict analysis also serves an important purpose in ongoing conflict or post-conflict situations, as it can inform efforts to prevent a violent escalation or the repeat of recent violent conflict. From 2020 to 2022, ISP.2 (as the EEAS centre of expertise on conflict prevention and mediation support, contributes to the broader EU efforts to preserve peace and prevent conflicts, in line with the **Integrated Approach to Security and Peace**) is coordinating approximately 60 EU conflict analyses in fragile and conflict-affected countries to support the new programming cycle, in close collaboration with DG INTPA/DG NEAR, and the EU Delegations.

4. Conclusion

Moral motivations and economic considerations demonstrate why a preventive approach can play an economic imperative for actors involved in violent conflicts. A characteristic feature of a violent conflict is its location; the harmful humanitarian and economic effects of any violent conflict are seldom manifested within national borders.

In Europe, the European Union is becoming increasingly visible as a major provider of stability. In the formula of NATO-EU cooperation, the European Union is the most important player in ensuring and guaranteeing security and stability at European level.

In the field of crisis management, the European security system includes structures that, having become operational, allow it to carry out successful multinational missions under a UN mandate. The system is structured on the basis of the European Security Strategy and its successive transformations will determine that, in the near future, the organization will be able to support simultaneously several operations for which military and civilian rapid response capabilities are required.

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