Reflection paper

Updating the Business Model for Conflict Prevention

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> European External Action Service (EEAS). Strategic Review - The European Union in a Changing Global Environment. June 2015

This think-piece is intended to contribute to the High Level Seminar on conflict prevention of 28 October 2016, held in the framework of the Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN), by stimulating discussion and reflection on relevant issues. It is envisaged that it informs future CSDN events. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

Civil Society Dialogue Network

The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is a mechanism for dialogue between civil society and EU policy-makers on issues related to peace and conflict. It is co-financed by the European Union (Instrument for Stability) and managed by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), a civil society network, in co-operation with the European Commission (EC) and the European External Action Service (EEAS).

For more information about the CSDN, please visit the EPLO website.

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1.   A NEW GLOBAL STRATEGY IN A SHIFTING GLOBAL CONTEXT

In the EU Strategic Review of Foreign and Security Policy (2015), the EU acknowledged "a more contested world [where] fragile states and ungoverned spaces are spreading" and the diffusion of power "beyond the nation state towards a network of state, non-state, inter-state and transnational actors"[1] to encompass locally, nationally, regionally and globally-influential state and non-state actors. **This points to the need for a radical departure from business as usual in how EU actors view and engage with global partners**. It implies that EU tools and diplomatic approaches that have traditionally been top-down and centrally-focused are close to obsolete. The Human Security Study Group (2016) noted that "[c]urrent ways of addressing conflict tend to be caught up in twentieth century conceptions of war"[2]. In response, the EU will need to evolve beyond addressing peace based on twentieth century conceptions of security.

Much is made of the influence of external conflicts and dynamics on the EU's own internal security, but the reverse is equally true.[3] In a global context where the most local or individual statements and actions are publicised, translated and shared across borders, policy-makers no longer control the message or public opinion in or outside the EU. This makes **the EU's visible adherence to values at home now indivisible from its ability to engage credibly outside**. This means that, despite appearances, the role of values, such as respect for and promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law as well as ideals of "justice, solidarity, equality, non-discrimination, pluralism, and respect for diversity"[4] is becoming more relevant for the EU's external policies and actions. This most relevant for EU engagement on issues such as violent extremism, socio-economic inequality and intolerance, which rest on the EU's degree of credibility to engage as a trusted partner.[5]

Here, the EU's own blend of characteristics, though often dismissed or underexploited, gives it space to operate as a valuable global actor in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Its **wide range of engagements corresponds to more varied relationships in partner countries**, with connections across stakeholders and fields at various levels. Its representative role, if leveraged fully, would extend EU political capital.[6] A more consistent focus on values would position it as the go-to 'trusted partner' where other bilateral actors are hampered by conspicuous interests. But, as a values-based EU foreign and security policy has struggled to assert itself, it appears that EU aspirations have retreated to a focus on the immediate: geographically (on the neighbourhood) and temporally (in favour of the immediate crises, such as the migration and terrorism agendas). As EU foreign and security policy loses its confidence, there is a risk that it will fall back on imitating the foreign policy and tactics of other global actors, in particular in the areas of security, conflict and crisis.[7]

High Representative/Vice President Mogherini stated in the foreword to the Global Strategy that "[a] vast majority of our citizens understand that we need to collectively take responsibility for our role in the world."[8] But this remains contentious among Member States, within the EU electorate and even across EU services. As Saferworld (2016) noted in a recent article, "austerity and a growing scepticism of the benefits of globalisation, **fear and uncertainty have reinforced populist, ultra-nationalist and xenophobic voices in European politics and forced those in power to demonstrate their resolve in responding to domestic concerns."**[9]

The 2015 Strategic Review was clear in its guidance for a new global strategy: "An effective response depends on the Union's ability to make choices and prioritise areas where it is willing and able to make a difference."[10] But, **by trying to say everything the Global Strategy has put itself in danger of saying nothing at all; failing to make tough choices to order its priorities** or to commit to the overhaul of procedures, methods and institutional culture that would be necessary to turn strategy into reality. The language on conflict prevention and peacebuilding is positive overall, yet it would be premature to celebrate when, at sixty pages, the final product delivers an all-embracing aspirational vision[11] rather than "a clear sense of direction [...] on our priorities, our goals and the means required to achieve them."[12]

2. THE BUILDING BLOCKS

2.1 All Policy and No Practice?

There is no shortage of EU documents that establish commitments and give guidance on the EU's role in conflict prevention and/or peacebuilding. The following table presents some of the key EU policy-setting documents for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, notwithstanding EU commitments in international fora, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or the UN Secretary-General's Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism (2016)[13].

2001	Communication on Conflict Prevention
2001	EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts (Göteborg Programme)
2002	Council Conclusions on the Implementation of the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts
2003	European Security Strategy: A Secure Europe in a Better World
2006	Communication: A Concept for European Community Support for Security Sector Reform
2007	Communication: Towards an EU Response to Situations of Fragility
2007	Council Conclusions on Security and Development
2007	Council Conclusions on an EU response to Situations of Fragility
2009	Treaty of Lisbon, Article 21 *"contribute to peace, security and prevention of conflict in its external action"*
2009	Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities
2011	Council Conclusions on Conflict Prevention
2011	Communication on the Agenda for Change
2012	Council Conclusions on the Agenda for Change
2012	Communication on the EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises
2013	Joint Communication on EU Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict & Crises
2015	Joint Communication on Capacity-building in support of Security and Development
2015	Strategic Review - The European Union in a Changing Global Environment.
2016	Joint Communication: Elements for an EU wide Strategic Framework to support Security Sector Reform
2016	A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy

Despite the number of positive EU commitments over the years, there is less certainty whether implementation of conflict prevention and peacebuilding has kept pace with the proliferation of EU policy documents.[14] **Shifting to a preventive 'culture' needs more than policy** and cannot succeed without both political leadership and the corresponding resources to enable the EU to meet its own ambitions. If prevention and peacebuilding were to capture the attention of all senior EU decision-makers and Member States, there is no doubt that the commensurate resources and institutional incentives to act would quickly follow. But, "[w]hilst conflict prevention languishes behind crisis management as an EU external action priority, it will be difficult to establish the same strength of capacity and action."[15]

2.2 Chasing Definitions

In the absence of a clear steer from senior EU decision-makers or Member States, various interpretations of conflict prevention and peacebuilding have proliferated and endured. This is, in part, due to the tendency to conflate concepts with instruments (such as Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions or the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP)) and additionally

because they have been linked to so many policy areas and priorities that many are unable to identify a distinct focus. But, **despite the confusion, time investment and resources spent, pinning down a single shared EU definition is unlikely to transform the (internal) political and institutional reality.** Institutionalising an EU-wide preventive and peacebuilding approach is more likely to succeed when the concepts in iterative or even systematic processes. Nonetheless, there are core elements of an interpretation that can be easily revealed simply by asking: whose security? Who does this strategy / policy / action serve *first and foremost*?

> → If the primary aim is to assure internal EU security, *over and above* the effects on the societies of third countries, then that strategy / policy / action is not conflict prevention or peacebuilding.
>
> → If the primary aim is to respond to the public opinion of EU domestic constituencies, *in spite of potential negative effects* in societies of third countries, this is not conflict prevention or peacebuilding.
>
> → Finally, if the primary aim is to secure the survival of a government or state apparatus, *without reference to the repression of the population(s)* in that country, then again, this is not conflict prevention or peacebuilding.

There is no doubt that there is frequently an overlap between human security in third countries, state security and EU internal security, and it is also evident that EU actions will most likely have an impact on multiple dimensions at once. However, the tipping point comes when an EU action makes trade-offs in design that relegate or disregard human security for (sections of) the population. This is where concern over the possible resurgence of the 'stability paradigm' emerges. **'Stability' is often associated with realpolitik; prioritising the survival of (often repressive) regimes to avoid short- to medium-term destabilisation of the state**. The 2011 Arab Spring did much to discredit proponents of this approach that miscalculated the ability of regimes to interminably fend off challenges to their authority from within their societies.[16] In addition, the short-termism associated with stabilisation contrasts with the Global Strategy's welcome reiteration of the need for sustainable peace.[17] Given the potential consequences of backing short-term stability over sustainable peace, it is hoped that the EU will arrive at an interpretation of stabilisation that seeks to do more than postpone the next cycle of violence or refugee movements.

'Resilience' also featured prominently in the Global Strategy (2016) and, as with 'stabilisation', **there is a risk that a narrow and short-term interpretation of resilience could dominate**. The European Commission (EC)'s definition: %the ability of an individual, a community or a country to cope, adapt and quickly recover from stress and shocks caused by a disaster, violence or conflict+[18] would also need to promote resilience that acknowledges a %transformative dimension+,[19] to %tackle the root causes of recurrent crises rather than just their consequences+[20] and go beyond simply increasing investment in existing structures and capacities.

The set-up of the soon-to-be restructured and renamed Division for Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation in the European external action service (EEAS) may present a number of challenges linked to: institutional culture, EU Member States' political preferences, the pursuit of visibility for the EU as a foreign and security actor and a lack of clarity around what constitutes prevention, peacebuilding and stabilisation actions. But in this transition, **a preoccupation with definitions over approaches would waste this opportunity to breakdown the silos that have dogged EU action** in and on fragile and conflict-affected environment to instead establish a mandate focused on enhancing the sophistication of EU engagements on conflict and crisis, across services: a truly integrated approach.

2.3 Team 'Conflict Prevention'

Aside from Member States, especially those who have built up their own capacity on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, such as Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, **there are no shortage of EU institutional actors that (can) contribute to the EU's prevention and peacebuilding**

impact. The 2014 decision to revive the Commissionersq Group on External Action on a more formal footing[21] and the 2016 Global Strategy's call for "an integrated approach to conflicts and crises"[22] should be seen as a signal from the highest institutional levels that better cooperation and coordination is an expectation and not just an option for senior EU decision-makers and their staff across the services.[23]

First and foremost, EU delegations are best-placed to coordinate and assess coherence of the EU's engagements in terms of their ability to contribute to conflict dynamics in the country. But **in light of security and conflict trends that challenge traditional state-centric relations, it is also clear that EU external action will increasingly rely on coordination with EU and non-EU actors that enjoy a regional, local and cross-cutting mandate**. This is where actors such as EU Special Representatives and thematic expertise at headquarters-level in the EEAS and Commission directorates for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and TRADE have a role to play in ensuring that the EU's country-level engagements are coherent from a regional and thematic perspective.

> In the **EEAS**, Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD) and Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) provide institutional support for missions and operations planning, while the soon-to-be restructured and renamed Division for Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation aims to provide analytical and operational support to services.
>
> In **DG DEVCO**, the Fragility and Resilience Unit is an obvious candidate to support operational staff engaged in development cooperation in fragile and conflict-affected environments, along with the B.5 unit responsible for Article 5 of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP).
>
> In **DG NEAR**, the newly established Centres of Excellence (COTE)[24] - in particular, for Rule of Law/Fundamental Rights & Democracy, for Crisis Reaction & Security Sector Reform, and for Civil Society Support - could also contribute expertise in support of geographic staff.
>
> **FPI**'s unit for the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace is also an obvious counterparts for funding and support, in Brussels and in Delegations.
>
> In **ECHO**, there is no dedicated thematic unit[25] though prevention and peacebuilding are inherently embedded in much of the geographic work within EU humanitarian assistance.
>
> **DG TRADE**'s Evaluation Unit that leads on ex-ante and ex-post Sustainability Impact Assessments for the EU's trade agreements, in particular with regard to human rights, is another entry point.[26]
>
> The **European Parliament** is a strong supporter of tools such as mediation capacity, "is in favour of further enhancing the EU's capacities in this field"[27] and recently launched its own mediation support service for parliamentarians.[28]
>
> Even bodies such as the **European Investment Bank (EIB)** have acknowledged the need to better reflect the EU's conflict prevention and peacebuilding mandate by embarking on an initiative to strengthen the conflict-sensitivity of their work[29].

Similarly, **a lack of progress on prevention and peacebuilding is not for the want of available knowledge and learning**. Internal expertise and the expertise of civil society organisations has been leveraged to provide inputs on what has and has not worked in prevention and peacebuilding interventions from grassroots to policy level. Yet concrete guidance, such as the products below, rarely make it into the right hands at the right moment.

> DG DEVCO and EEAS jointly published an EU staff handbook in 2015: **Operating in Situations of Conflict and Fragility**, which includes detailed guidance and comparative experiences written by staff, for staff.[30] At least four consortia are being funded under **Horizon 2020's 'Secure Societies'** to produce research, case studies, and recommendations on aspects linked to the EU's conflict prevention capacities.[31]
>
> The Commission's **2011 Thematic Evaluation of Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding** remains one of

the most complete and detailed assessments of the field, and it generated very practical recommendations that are yet to be fully adopted.[32]

Knowledge-sharing platforms, such as **Capacity4Dev**[33] exist, and the **Civil Society Dialogue Network** (CSDN)[34] is a formation that enables responsive and timely expert dialogue with civil society experts and EU policy makers.

Nevertheless, the most effective 'memory bank' for comparative experience and expertise may not be found in databases and guidelines, but in the **investment in internal expertise** (e.g. by recruiting a quota of permanent conflict expert staff) **and better resources and funding mechanisms to access external expertise** for staff across the services (e.g. flexible procedures, long-term support).

3. YES, BUT WHAT NOW?

3.1 What is the Goal?

"In crisis management, actors are dealing with a "known quantity" in that the conflict and the dynamics of the conflict are clearly visible. In contrast, prevention and especially early preventive actions have to take place in a much less concrete conflict context, where the dynamics have not yet emerged in a defined way."[35]

'Impact' has become the mantra of conflict prevention and peacebuilding sceptics in and outside the EU. Yet, **without identifying 'what success looks like' for prevention and peacebuilding, it is almost impossible to deliver on expectations**. The follow-up to the Global Strategy and the translation of its vision for conflict prevention and peacebuilding will certainly need to address this weak link. But, up to now, there has not been a clear interest by EU decision-makers to engage in a discussion on how to set realistic goals for interventions in this field.

In pursuit of stronger impact assessment for prevention and peacebuilding, it is useful to **contrast the expectations set for conflict prevention and peacebuilding with those for other EU external action tools, where there is more willingness to acknowledge the practical limitations of external interventions**. For example, no EU development programme has, on its own, eradicated poverty, fully reformed a country's public administration, or eliminated public health challenges. No EU trade agreement has single-handedly built and sustained a functioning market economy that has delivered inclusive growth and development. And, no CSDP mission has . alone - conclusively resolved the multiple and complex security challenges facing a country. On the contrary, most EU actors would stress that EU interventions are a valuable contribution among other national and international inputs and at minimum, represent an important step in creating the conditions on which reforms and progress can be built.

Yet, these caveats do not apply as much when it comes to conflict and peacebuilding. Despite being implemented in a similar, if not even more complex political, social, and economic contexts, decision-makers appear to be fixated on defining impact only in terms of: which conflicts were prevented or which conflicts were resolved by a particular EU intervention. **This is not to argue that prevention and peacebuilding cannot and should not be evaluated**, but rather to plead for recognition of the same operating conditions that are acknowledged and accepted in other foreign policy engagements. Therefore, how the EU and its decision-makers choose to define 'impact' for conflict prevention and peacebuilding will be key to enabling better evaluation and more effective EU interventions and support. A useful starting point would be to define and then evaluate the extent to which EU interventions or support:

- stimulate a positive change to a particular negative conflict dynamic
- seek to multiply (the effect of) positive pockets / dynamics of peace
- contribute to the preconditions for a sustainable peaceful resolution of conflict(s)

In practical terms, more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of conflict prevention and peacebuilding would first require **analysis that would allow actors to anticipate how and why an EU action is likely to positively or negatively impact specific conflict dimensions**. Understanding the specific blend of root causes, conflict dynamics and actors would make it easier for senior EU decision-makers to make a pragmatic appraisal of how and where the EU's particular mix of resources and leverage should best be directed in order to address (some of) the dynamics. And this, in turn, would enable staff at working level to deploy the 'right tool for the job' to achieve realistic objectives, all based on a solid rationale of how and why the EU is investing its financial or political capital. This is, in essence, a good 'theory-of-change'.[36]

3.2 A Step in the Right Direction

The EU appears to have made progress in refining its conflict and risk analysis capacities, for example through the conflict analysis methodology,[37] the ongoing development of a methodology for Political Frameworks for Crisis Approach (PFCAs) and the Early Warning System risk assessment tools.[38] **Comprehensive EU analysis can provide a fuller picture of the theatre of conflict, from the macro - regional, state-centric and geopolitical- to the micro - people-centred, societal and communal.** Tailored advice and operational guidance based on such analysis enjoys even more credibility.[39] Whether labelled as conflict prevention, peacebuilding, or stabilisation, actions across the EU services initiated by actors based on comprehensive analysis could significantly enhance the EU's precision and effectiveness in fragile and conflict-affected environments.

The EU's diplomatic and technical efforts in the run-up to Nigeria's 2015 presidential elections, the comprehensive political, technical and financial resources mobilised for the peace process and democratic transition in Myanmar, and the EU Special Representative's role in the Colombia peace process are all examples of high-profile, 'visible' EU positive stories in the area of prevention and peacebuilding. Yet, the opportunities for the EU to play such a high profile role are few and far between, whether due to political capital, public opinion, necessary discretion or available resources. But **the question of how and why the EU mobilised may equally be more mundane and organisational**; related to the political leadership of particular individuals or even just a circumstance of aligned institutional priorities among EU services and actors.

There are positive steps in some aspects of how the EU engages in and on fragile and conflict-affected environments. For instance, **in the area of administrative policy-setting, the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) programming instructions were relatively progressive**, acknowledging the need for comprehensive action[40] and the ENI instructions requiring "in-depth analysis of the root causes [...] as a prerequisite", as well as requiring flexibility in programming to adjust to "unforeseen / emerging needs."[41] The Review of the ENP (2015) also included useful direction to "ensure that our overall engagement is conflict sensitive" and "work on conflict prevention through early warning, coupled with early preventive measures."[42] More progressive approaches such as these are equally applicable in the context of other areas of EU external action, whether that be programming instructions for the Development Cooperation Instrument, for humanitarian aid, or negotiation mandates for EU trade agreements.

The **outcome of more systematic EU conflict analysis processes should be two-fold: increasing the EU's ability to make all its engagements more conflict-sensitive and triggering actions**

specifically labelled as conflict prevention or peacebuilding. In the public domain, not much is known about where the EU has conducted participatory internal conflict analysis processes. Nonetheless, there are some known examples of positive implementation of analysis workshops that engaged a full range of EU actors in order to develop options to increase the EU's prevention and peacebuilding impact.

Though there are some **anecdotal examples of conflict sensitivity at working level**, there is little visibility on how the EU 'does' conflict sensitivity in practice. This makes it impossible to assess from outside, and consequently also makes it difficult to provide external support, experience, or lessons learned that could support EU staff practically in implementing conflict-sensitive actions. Nonetheless, there are positive initiatives of partnerships between civil-society and EU bodies, for improved conflict sensitivity, such as the European Investment Bank and civil society experts.

3.3 Obstacles

Theories of Change

In conflict (risk) contexts, the rules of the game have changed. As noted in the Global Strategy, conflicts are now driven by influential actors, groups, and dynamics from the regional to the local. In this case, **it becomes evident that focusing EU engagement at national level and with central authorities is no longer adequate**. Conflict analysis and risk assessment are increasingly prerequisites to pinpointing effective prevention and peacebuilding actions. This also has consequences for a lingering assumption that 'neutrality' or 'objectivity' in technical support, development cooperation, trade and even humanitarian aid is a) possible, and b) able to address conflict or bring peace.[43] A belief that not differentiating is equivalent to being 'neutral' masks the reality that EU interventions may sometimes miss opportunities to address negative dynamics or worse, actually exacerbate tensions by disregarding the dynamics or root causes.

To demonstrate that the EU is reacting to a situation of conflict or risk, there is often pressure for a visible response by EU services, in particular, with funding. Yet, the injection of external financial resources may itself feed particular conflict dynamics. In **conflict contexts where the political economy cannot be divorced from the conflict dynamics, a rationale for EU intervention cannot be guided simply by the visible dissemination of funds**. Internal analysis of both the conflict dynamics and the EU's own opportunities for action would support the use of less resource-intensive response options (e.g. targeted statements, political visibility). Less pressure to dispense funds would free up EU services to invest time in context-adaptive management and not simply the administration of EU funding. As such, the EU's ability to enhance its preventive and peacebuilding impact would entail a) openness to more systematic analysis of the root causes and conflict dynamics and b) EU services to consistently evaluate their interventions against a fairly simple criterion:

> **Given the dynamics of this conflict (risk) context, to what extent does this EU policy / action make it more likely or less likely that (sections of) societies in third countries will experience or initiate the outbreak or escalation of violent conflict?**

Ambition

Preventing violent conflict from escalating and protecting and building on positive pockets of peace can encompass **anything and everything from traditional diplomacy, community policing and public support for civil society activists, through to conflict-sensitive education programming, mediation or strategic communications**. In many cases, effective prevention or peacebuilding hinges on the 'how' rather than the 'what'. Who in the EU has the best access to certain conflict actors? How is the EU perceived and what is our communication strategy to address and harness this? Is the EU leaving a vacuum for destructive conflict actors to fill? It is here that the breadth and

depth of EU engagements in a country, including tools such as joint programming, can realise its added value. Yet despite these opportunities, "[t]he ambition of the Commission regarding its role in conflict (-prone) and post-conflict countries and regions was not always clear" in previous years.[44]

Prevention and peacebuilding can too often be interpreted only as the tools that are explicitly labelled 'conflict prevention' or ‗peacebuilding‗ such as the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace. **When faced with obstacles to using these conventional tools, the reflex to exploit alternate entry points in other dimensions of EU engagement is not always there**. Here, the European Parliament has also called for as broadening of approaches, ‰i]n situations of crisis or severe breaches of democracy, trade and development conditionality could be used more effectively, if other methods fail. In its urgency resolutions, the EP has repeatedly asked for such conditionality to be applied.‗[45] The ability and freedom to innovate may, again, be dependent on a working culture that promotes this, for example by examining:

> **In what ways could EU Delegations and headquarters staff be better supported (by management, through results incentives and resource-wise?) to identify broader options to increase the EU's conflict prevention or peacebuilding impact?**

Finally, the question of ambition for prevention and peacebuilding is also linked to administrative incentives, and over-coming ‰unwanted competition [for] efficient division of labour.‗[46] This may simply reflect typical organisational challenges that drive staff to 'demonstrate' activity on more publicly visible priorities. However, it may also reflect the deeper 'audit' culture of many international donors, whose **pursuit of the most visible, easily quantifiable and easily presented 'results' push staff to focus on the lower threshold of efficiency over effectiveness**. The question here is also linked to a paucity of research support as well as how EU public relations are able to 'market' its external support in the areas of prevention and peacebuilding.

> **What would need to change to make it easier for EU in-country and headquarters staff to increase innovative context-specific evaluation partnerships, beyond quantitative data? (i.e. more conflict-relevant data gathered through surveys, focus groups, in partnership with community-based organisations, local governments, local and international NGOs, research institutes, survey companies, etc.)**

(Access to) Expertise

External practitioners, analysts and civil society representatives have a practical role to play in supporting EU services and Member States. Policies and strategies are often drafted in a time-poor environment where the incentives can sometimes point more towards the balance of institutional interests, rather than the evidence-base. **Partnerships with external experts should fully exploit the practical experience, lessons learned, comparative practice, theoretical expertise, and local or regional reach** in order to improve the EU's own analysis and intervention design.**[47]** A purely donor-recipient relationship does not do justice to the 'partnership' terminology espoused in project documents. External expertise is an under-used resource to address the human resource constraints that are increasingly being placed on institutions and services. There are some small examples of this through initiatives, such as the Civil Society Dialogue Network, implemented in partnership between the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), FPI and the division for Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation in the EEAS.[48] Investment in the human resources and funding mechanisms to make such partnerships more systematic would be a strong signal that is EU is ready and willing to innovate to enhance the effectiveness of its prevention and peacebuilding actions.

Increased training resources for those inside the institutions, services, and especially EU delegations is a relatively easy way to institutionalise conflict prevention and peacebuilding expertise internally and address human resources gaps, for example, targeting political and operations sections in delegations. But, in the long term, even human resources **policies would need to adapt in order to**

build and sustain internal expertise and institutional memory on prevention and peacebuilding good practice. Recruitment policies could better connect internal capacity and experience on prevention and peacebuilding to job specifications and mobility opportunities. For enhancement in practice, services could embed mechanisms for peer-to-peer exchange of those working in fragile and conflict-affected environments, for example, to share knowledge on administrative flexibilities within instruments.

> **To what extent do the existing EU internal human resources policies and reporting templates create incentives (or not) for managers and staff to prioritise analysis and expertise in fragile and conflict-affected environments?**

Resources

"The Commission₢ approach to conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity and mainstreaming was not systematised or structured."[49] In the five years since the EC published this thematic evaluation, some advancement has been made with internal advocacy of conflict analysis and early warning assessments by units such as the (soon-to-be-restructured) Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Mediation Division in the EEAS and the Fragility and Resilience Unit in DEVCO, as well as civil society advocates. Yet the minimal resources and institutional location of these bodies do not correspond with the ambitions in the EU's many prevention and peacebuilding policy documents. **Small bodies with limited resources are unlikely to be able to effect the necessary shift in institutional culture towards long-term, sustainable peace**, especially when this 'institutional culture' translates as thousands of staff and hundreds of decision-makers in headquarters and delegations.

The Human Security Study Group (2016) highlighted a need for fresh approaches to EU staff profiles that engage in prevention and peacebuilding, for example with "imaginative and entrepreneurial diplomats"[50] This returns to the question of human resource policies, expertise, **administrative set-up and incentives that significantly influence the EU's ability to deliver (or not) on its policy commitments on conflict prevention and peacebuilding**. It is a question of whether the EU *as group of administrative bodies* is designed and equipped to operate effectively in and on environments where poor design, misjudgement or inconsistency has the potential to exacerbate dynamics that lead to violence.

> **Are the different EU services equipped with the appropriate skills, administrative set-up, resources and senior-level mandate to better disseminate good practice, lessons learned, comparative experience across services and in particular, EU Delegations?**

4. REFLECTIONS: A REBOOT FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION?

> *"Today the comprehensive approach is even more relevant than a decade ago. With conflicts proliferating and escalating, a proactive rather than reactive EU policy must combine early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and peacebuilding in a coherent whole."[51]*

The diffusion of power towards non-governmental spheres of economic, political and social influence noted in the Strategic Review (2015) has consequences not only for strategy but also at operational level for policy and implementation, where leadership from senior management will be crucial to turn this into a reality at working level. Here, the EU faces **challenges on two fronts: i) the complexity of the theatres of engagement for conflict, and ii) the institutional complexity of the EU stakeholders responding to this**. However, ignoring these realities will not make it any less real, and so EU actors have no choice but to adapt.

> *"Vertical and horizontal silos hamper the EU's potential global role. And in a world of mounting challenges and opportunities, it is a luxury we cannot afford."[52]*

There are signals that the **momentum to challenge the business (as usual) model in fragile and conflict-affected environments is growing** among senior EU decision-makers and more Member States. But, calls to make development policy more ‰aligned with our strategic priorities", more ‰flexible+ in the Global Strategy,[53] for example, will depend on the extent to which staff a) can dedicate the time to context analysis, b) can spend less time on reporting and c) are recognised for their efforts. The need to break down silos applies equally to fields such as trade which has traditionally lagged behind other policy areas in acknowledging the interplay between EU trade objectives and non-trade objectives in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding.[54] In many ways, this is administrative as much as political and it is here that the Commissionersq Group on External Action could play a stronger role in pressing for regular agenda points to address obstacles to the integrated approach for particular conflict contexts.

Though there is already a plethora of analysis on the EU's capacity and performance on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, many tend to concentrate on obstacles linked to the 'high politics' of Member State interests, (lack of) political will, or operational assessments of CSDP missions and operations, as the most high-profile conflict management 'tool'. Yet, **attention to the organisational and administrative capacity to deliver on EU policy commitments to build peace and prevent conflict has received comparatively less attention**. In the end, decisions are taken, and actions implemented, by people. People working within and across bureaucracies, and the extent to which those bureaucracies are equipped and geared towards supporting a preventive and peacebuilding approach is, therefore, worthy of attention. In the follow-up to the Global Strategy (2016), addressing the practical realities, hurdles, good practices and opportunities with those on the front-line of policy-making for EU external action could finally marry the aspirations for better EU prevention and peacebuilding with the institutional approaches necessary to achieve this.

List of abbreviations

CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CMPD	Crisis Management Planning Directorate (EEAS)
CPCC	Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DG DEVCO	Directorate General for Development and Cooperation in the European Commission
EC	European Commission
EEAS	European External Action Service
EIB	European Investment Bank
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
FPI	Service for Foreign Policy Instruments in the European Commission
HR/VP	High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
DG NEAR	Directorate General for the Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations in the European Commission

Endnotes

1   European External Action Service (EEAS). Strategic Review - The European Union in a Changing Global Environment. June 2015. p.1-2. https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/strategic-review-european-union-changing-global-environment

2   Human Security Study Group (HSSG). From Hybrid Peace to Human Security: Rethinking EU Strategy towards Conflict. The Berlin Report of the Human Security Study Group. February 2016. p.5

3   "Living up consistently to our values internally will determine our external credibility and influence." EEAS. Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. p.15

4   EEAS. Global Strategy. 2016. p. 15

5   "We will deepen work on education, communication, culture, youth and sport to counter violent extremism. We will work on counter-radicalisation by broadening our partnerships with civil society, social actors, the private sector and the victims of terrorism, as well as through inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue. Most crucially of all, the EU will live up to its values internally and externally: this is the strongest antidote we have against violent extremism.+EEAS. Global Strategy. 2016. p. 21

6   "Provided the EU remains united and well-coordinated, varied diplomatic constellations can also give greater visibility to our common priorities and make our collective efforts more effective." EEAS. Strategic Review. 2015. p.17

7   This is visible in the EEAS reorganisation that has been taking place in parallel with the drafting of the Global Strategy. The resurgence of 'stabilisation' terminology (in the renamed and restructured unit for Conflict Prevention, Stabilisation and Peacebuilding) may, on one hand, reflect a return to the 'familiar and comfortable' in the face of daunting complexity of contemporary conflict and security challenges. On the other, it may be an attempt to better align with (or replicate) the security-focused foreign policy of international actors, such as the U.S., Russia, Saudi Arabia and even some Member States.

8   EEAS. Global Strategy. 2016. p. 3

9   Tricot O'Farrell, K. "EU foreign policy risks fuelling displacement and terror". Saferworld. 22 August 2016. http://www.saferworld.org.uk/news-and-views/comment/218-eu-foreign-policy-will-fuel-displacement-and-terror-unless-it-focuses-on-what-is-driving-them

10   EEAS. Strategic Review. 2015. p.2

11   Though it does put forward positive language for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, such as "[w]e will therefore act promptly to prevent violent conflict, be able and ready to respond responsibly yet decisively to crises, facilitate locally owned agreements, and commit long-term.+(EEAS, Global Strategy. 2016. p.18) and %[w]e will act globally to address the root causes of conflict and poverty, and to champion the indivisibility and universality of human rights." (EEAS, Global Strategy. 2016. p.18), the Global Strategy appears more rhetorical than substantial, for example, "[p]rincipled pragmatism will guide our external action in the years ahead." EEAS, Global Strategy. 2016. p.16

12   EEAS. Strategic Review. 2015. p.3

13   This list is not comprehensive, other policy documents and internal notes are relevant to the EU's approach to conflict prevention.

14   "Conceptual orientations at policy level have generally not been appropriated at operational level [...]This concerned key concepts, such as conflict prevention, peace building, root causes, etc." EEAS. Strategic Review. 2015. p. iii

15   Beswick, T. Synthesis Report: Improving Institutional Capacity For Early Warning. Initiative for Peacebuilding. Early Warning (IfP-EW). 2012. p.5. http://www.ifp-ew.eu/pdf/201201ImprovInstitCapacityEWSynthesis.pdf (Accessed 20 September 2016)

16   "But the biggest challenge is reminding ourselves that stability is no substitute for sustainability and that the root causes of resentment [...] have deepened across the [Middle East, North Africa] region." EEAS. Strategic Review. 2015. p.11

17   EEAS, Global Strategy. 2016. p.10

18   DG ECHO. Fact Sheet: Building Resilience: The EU's Approach. 2016. p.1 http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/resilience_en.pdf (Accessed 29 September 2016)

19   See Interpeace's summary overview of a resilience approach to peacebuilding. Practice Brief. Resilience and Peacebuilding: Using Resilience to Build Peace. 2016. http://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Practice_Brief-Resilience_and_Peacebuilding-A4-v3.pdf (Accessed 29 September 2016)

20   EU. Communication on the EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises. 2012. p. 2

21   Decision of the President of the European Commission on the Creation of a Commissioners'Group on External Action, C(2014) 9003, 11 November 2014

22   EEAS, Global Strategy. 2016. p.28

23   However the EU services choose to define the Global Strategy's (2016) 'integrated approach' in contrast with the EU's Comprehensive to External Conflicts and Crises (2013), the translation in the coming months should concentrate resources on the practical means of realising these goals rather than the negotiation of policy definitions.

24   COTE Rule of Law/Fundamental Rights & Democracy, COTE Crisis reaction & Security sector reform, COTE Civil Society Support, COTE Economic Governance and COTE Public Administration Reform, COTE Migration, COTE Connectivity/networks -incl. transport, energy ICT - environment and regional development. DG European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR). Organisational Chart: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/who_does_what/20160901-near-org-chart.pdf. (Accessed 18 September 2016)

25   DG Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO). Organisational Chart. http://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/echo_organigramme_16092016_en.pdf (Accessed 20 September 2016)

26   DG TRADE's (2015) Guidelines on the Analysis of Human Rights Impacts in Impact Assessments for Trade-Related Policy Initiatives make reference to the need to highlight "Pre-existing conditions of insecurity" p. 9. http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/july/tradoc_153591.pdf (Accessed 16 September 2016)

27   European Parliamentary Research Service. European Parliament Briefing: Promotion of democracy and peace in the world. July 2016. p.3

28 European Parliamentary Mediation Support Service

29 EPLO statement, The EIB and conflict sensitivity (2011) ; EPLO's comments on the EIB Guidance Note 5: Stakeholder Engagement (2012) and EPLO's Comments on EIB Environmental and Social Handbook (2013) - http://eplo.org/activities/policy-work/european-investment-bank-trade-conflict/ (Accessed on 10 October 2016)

30   http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-fragility/document/operating-situations-crisis-and-fragility-eu-staff-handbook (Accessed 28 September 2016)

31   Under the stream on Secure societies, research also aims to "support the Union's external security policies including through conflict prevention and peace building". https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/secure-societies-%E2%80%93-protecting-freedom-and-security-europe-and-its-citizens. (Accessed 23 September 2016)

32   The Executive Summary gives a good overview of key issues and recommendations, some of which may not yet have been fully taken up and implemented, *in* ADE-PARTICIP. Thematic Evaluation of European Commission Support to Conflict Prevention and Peace-building. Main Report. 2011. p. i-viii http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/documents/thematic_evaluation_of_ec_support_to_pb_and_conflict_prevention_2011_en.pdf (Accessed 17 September 2016)

33   http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/groups/conflict (Accessed 17 September 2016)

34   http://eplo.org/activities/ongoing-projects/civil-society-dialogue-network/ (Accessed 12 September 2016)

35   Beswick. IfP-EW. Synthesis Report. 2012. p.21

36   Without comprehensive conflict analysis, there is no way to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention and peacebuilding interventions, yet low take-up of conflict analysis, early warning assessments, or other analytical tools only feeds the vicious cycle where sceptics remain unconvinced and practitioners, frustrated.

37   EU Guidance Note on Conflict analysis in support of EU external action. 2013. http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/public-fragility/document/guidance-note-conflict-analysis-support-eu-external-action-0 (Accessed 12 September 2016)

38   As well the conflict analysis methodology, the EU EWS for conflict prevention also makes use of participatory internal assessment tools such as the Checklist for Structural Risks of Conflict, and the development of joint conflict prevention reports based on consultations with a relevant external action services. *Based on* Interview with EU official. 16 September 2016.

39   In this sense, the EU's Mediation Support capacity enjoys a stronger mandate for follow-on (operational) advice.

40   "The causes of instability often lie outside the security domain alone. The EU's approach will seek to comprehensively address sources of instability across sectors. Poverty, inequality, a perceived sense of injustice, corruption, weak economic and social development and lack of opportunity, particularly for young people, can be roots of instability, increasing vulnerability to radicalisation."Joint Communication on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy. 2015. p. 3-4

41   EU. Joint Instructions for the Programming of the European Neighbourhood Instrument. 2012. p.8. https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/ENI%20programming%20instructions.pdf (Accessed 19 September 2016)

42   Joint Communication on the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy. 2015. p. 3-4

43   "[Commission] support often remained wedded to a developmental perspective" ADE-PARTICIP. EC Thematic Evaluation, 2011. p.iii

44   ADE-PARTICIP. EC Thematic Evaluation. 2011. p. iii

45   European Parliamentary Research Service. European Parliament Briefing: Promotion of democracy and peace in the world. July 2016. p.3

46   Benraïs, L and Quinet, A. WOSCAP. EU Policy Briefing on Whole of Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (WOSCAP). 2016. p.12

47   Spending political capital: "human security approach to conditionality needs to be related to corruption, justice, the provision of public services, and to be shaped by engagement with civil society actors who often advocate such measures." HSSG. From Hybrid Peace to Human Security. 2016. p. 19

48   http://eplo.org/activities/ongoing-projects/civil-society-dialogue-network/ (Accessed 12 September 2016)

49   ADE-PARTICIP. EC Thematic Evaluation. 2011. p. iii

50   HSSG. From Hybrid Peace to Human Security. 2016. p.16

51   EEAS. Strategic Review. 2015. p.18

52   EEAS. Strategic Review. 2015. p.20

53   "The availability of limited sums for activities on the ground, notably for conflict prevention and civil society support, should be made more flexible." in EEAS. Global Strategy. 2016. p. 48. This was also noted in the Agenda for Change (2011) that reiterates that %he Lisbon Treaty has firmly anchored development policy within EU external action+p. 3

54   "In both the neighbourhood and the wider world, when trade policy is used as a foreign policy means, it requires a coherent pursuit of trade and non-trade objectives, which in turn calls for deeper cooperation between different stakeholders in the negotiation and implementation of trade agreements." EEAS. Strategic Review. 2015. p.18

The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) is the independent civil society platform of European NGOs, networks of NGOs and think tanks which are committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict.

www.eplo.org