



PEACEBUILDING toolkit

About This Series

Working with a wide array of partners from non-governmental organizations, governments, militaries, international organizations, and the private sector, the United States Institute of Peace is helping develop common doctrine, frameworks, and methodologies in support of peacebuilding. This is part of a series of Strategic Frameworks that the Institute is helping to craft, the first of which was USIP's Framework for Success: Fragile States and Societies Emerging from Conflict.

About USIP

The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, nonpartisan, national institution established and funded by Congress. Its goals are to help prevent and resolve violent conflicts, promote post-conflict stability and development, and increase conflict management capacity and tools. The Institute does this by empowering others with knowledge, skills, and resources, as well as by directly engaging in peacebuilding efforts around the globe.



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STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

Preventing Violent Conflict

Few would contest that preventing violent conflicts is preferable to managing their consequences. Indeed, conflict prevention is now frequently affirmed as a goal in settings as diverse as the UN General Assembly, the U.S. National Security Council, and gatherings of grassroots NGOs. Accordingly, several governments, international organizations, and NGOs have taken steps to enhance their institutional capacities for prevention. Despite tangible progress, practitioners still lack common frameworks for thinking systematically about how to design and implement prevention strategies. To help fill this gap, USIP has developed the enclosed strategic framework. It is designed to be useful to a wide range of conflict prevention practitioners—from policymakers to local field workers.

This framework is organized around a desired end state, key objectives, and leadership responsibilities.

The framework describes the desired end state as “stable peace.” This does not mean the absence of disputes. The airing of differences can lead to positive change if properly handled. Thus, the goal of this framework is not the avoidance of conflict, but rather the avoidance of *violent* conflict.

The core of the framework is found in the key objectives. These are divided into three broad, potentially complementary preventive strategies—mitigate global risks, mitigate societal risks, halt and reverse escalation—and a series of objectives under each.

The critical leadership responsibilities identify several cross-cutting themes about the ingredients of successful prevention strategies. These underscore significant challenges, including the need to prepare in advance of crises, to plan and coordinate multifaceted strategies involving a diverse set of actors, and to ensure that short- and long-term strategies are complementary.

This strategic framework should not be mistaken for a checklist or a “one-size-fits-all” template for preventing conflict. For a strategy to succeed in any given circumstance, it must be tailored to the specific context and dynamics as described in a thorough conflict analysis. The relevance of each of the broad strategies and corresponding objectives must be assessed in each specific case.

This framework was informed by a wide review of scholarly literature and practitioner tools on conflict prevention including the UN Secretary-General's report on the prevention of armed conflict (2006), the UK Prime Minister's Strategy Unit's *Investing in Prevention* (2005), the OECD Development Assistance Committee's Ministerial Statement on Helping Prevent Violent Conflict (2001), the European Union's Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflict (2001), and the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict's final report (1997). Earlier drafts were refined based on comments from internal and external reviewers.



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Strategic Framework: Preventing Violent Conflict

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DESIRED END-STATE	STABLE PEACE		
	Mitigate global risks* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manage demographic change ▪ Reduce environmental pressures ▪ Ensure stability of international monetary system and markets ▪ Restrict illicit financial networks ▪ Remove incentives for illicit trafficking in narcotics ▪ Establish effective regulations on extractive industries ▪ Restrict availability of small arms and light weapons ▪ Control WMD materials ▪ Strengthen respect for universal human rights 	Mitigate societal risks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support stable security environment (e.g., reform security forces, engage in multilateral security structures) ▪ Strengthen rule of law (e.g., support legitimate legal framework; reform police, judiciary, corrections; support legal empowerment) ▪ Support effective governance (e.g., build capacity and accountability of governing institutions; support elections; support independent civil society, free and responsible media) ▪ Stimulate equitable economic growth (e.g., reduce gross economic inequalities, promote inter-communal economic ties) ▪ Promote social well being (e.g., support health services; promote human rights, non-discrimination) ▪ Promote understanding and cooperation across identity groups (e.g., help identify superordinate goals, facilitate power sharing, support peace education) 	Halt and reverse escalation of crises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate cooperative problem solving among parties (e.g., via mediation, good offices, dispute resolution mechanisms, crisis management systems) ▪ Alter parties' incentive structures in favor of peaceful solutions (e.g., via conditional incentives, threat of sanctions/force, public diplomacy/pressure, engagement of additional parties) ▪ Strengthen moderates, manage "spoilers" (e.g., via assistance, inducements, conditional integration, threats/coercion) ▪ Restrict capacity of parties to wage war (e.g., via arms embargoes, targeted economic sanctions, preventive military deployment) ▪ Protect civilians (e.g., via human rights monitoring, observer missions, effective policing)
KEY OBJECTIVES			
LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 48%;"> Institutional capacity and preparedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build preventive capacity (in domestic, regional, and global institutions) ▪ Build a "culture of prevention" (in domestic, regional, and global institutions) ▪ Obtain necessary resources Prioritization and planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor risks and provide early warning ▪ Set priorities based on likelihood and consequences of conflict ▪ Plan multifaceted preventive strategies tailored to specific locations based on (1) stage of escalation, (2) conflict dynamics, (3) interests and capabilities of the disputants, and (4) interests and capabilities of third parties </div> <div style="width: 48%;"> Timing and coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mobilize preventive action early (anytime significant risk factors are exhibited) and with greater intensity and urgency as soon as signs of escalation toward large-scale violence appear ▪ Coordinate preventive measures across types of actors (e.g., government, military, NGOs, IOs) ▪ Coordinate preventive measures vertically among local, national, regional, and international actors ▪ Coordinate preventive measures across sectors (e.g., security, governance, legal, economic, civil society, humanitarian) ▪ Ensure short- and long-term preventive measures are complementary </div> </div>		

* Global risks can also be addressed at the regional and societal/national levels