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UN Preventive Diplomacy

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Assessment Framework for UN Preventive Diplomacy: An Approach for UN Mediators and International Policymakers*

About this paper

The following paper was developed as part of a UK-funded project led by the Centre for Policy Research entitled What Works in Conflict Prevention? Building on Good Practice. It contains two parts. First, the Overview Note lays out the current policy context for conflict prevention, the demands within the UN and among Member States for a more rigorous way to assess the impact of interventions, and the key methodological challenges in developing an approach to assessing preventive diplomacy. Second, the Assessment Framework itself provides an easy-to-use tool for practitioners asked to evaluate preventive diplomacy interventions. Taken together, this approach can be adopted by the UN Department of Political Affairs and other international policymakers, and should inform future planning processes for conflict prevention.

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Overview Note: The Need for An Adaptive Approach to Assessing Preventive Diplomacy

Context and Goals

Upon taking office, Secretary-General Guterres called for a “surge in diplomacy for peace,” pointing to the comparative value of preventive diplomacy in addressing the risks of violent conflict worldwide.¹ This builds on efforts by previous Secretaries-General to strengthen preventive diplomacy, including in recent years the creation of the Mediation Support Unit, the Stand-By Team, three regional political offices, and dedicated reporting on preventive diplomacy.

While there is general agreement on the effectiveness and importance of preventive diplomacy, in practice it is often difficult to prove that a political intervention has succeeded.² This is in part due to the complexity of conflict settings, where empirical data is often difficult to acquire, but also to the nature of the question itself: How can one describe the violent conflict that was avoided?³ Even in cases where a strong argument can be made that conflict was prevented, assessing the UN’s contribution is often murky and inconclusive. But at a time when Member States are looking to reduce spending and focus on what clearly works, the need is especially high for compelling, evidence-based assessments of the role of diplomacy in preventing conflict.

The present Assessment Framework does not constitute the UN’s first effort to develop tools to describe and evaluate the impact of political engagement to prevent conflict. Indeed, it owes a particular debt to the 2011 assessment approach developed by the Center on International Cooperation,⁴ and draws too on the more recent proposal on valuing mediation by Humanitarian Dialogue Centre.⁵ However, there is consensus within the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) that UN assessment approaches to date have proven overly onerous to be carried out internally, requiring more time and resources than DPA is currently able to provide, and insufficiently geared toward producing convincing narratives of the UN’s contribution to de-escalating major risks of violent conflict across the world.

This Assessment Framework therefore is driven by the overarching goal of providing the UN with a light, easy to implement approach to assessing preventive diplomacy, responding to two vital questions: *Why did key conflict actors decide to move away from an imminent risk of violent conflict or escalation of violence, and how did the UN contribute to this decision?* It is necessarily focused on imminent crises, but also asks whether the diplomatic intervention was linked to longer-term conflict prevention capacities that will lead to sustained peace.⁶ And it recognizes that in many cases the UN is only one player amongst a multitude of other actors, both domestic and international. Identifying the UN’s contribution to prevention in this often crowded playing field is a major challenge.

The purpose of the Assessment Framework is to provide DPA with an analytic approach to (1) evaluate the impact of its preventive diplomacy interventions, and (2) build a rigorous knowledge base of practice to inform future engagements.⁷ It was developed inductively, through a series of case studies that examined different instances where the UN played a positive role in preventing conflict, and via a thorough review of existing approaches to evaluation across different disciplines. As such, it should complement existing UN assessment and accountability tools—such as after-action reviews and end-of-assignment reports—and can in fact be integrated into these activities where useful. It can also be part of DPA’s communication strategy with Member States and external actors, providing evidence that demonstrates the value and effectiveness of preventive diplomacy. This overview note describes the key challenges in assessing preventive diplomacy, the rationale for the approach taken, and illustrative examples to help assessors use the Framework itself.

It proposes that (1) the Assessment Framework be incorporated into DPA’s knowledge-sharing toolkit; (2) further assessments be carried on a range of cases, including so-called failures; and (3) DPA develop an iterative planning tool for preventive diplomacy.

Challenges in Assessing Preventive Diplomacy

Defining Preventive Diplomacy and Its Objectives

There is no consensus on precisely what activities constitute preventive diplomacy, from mediation to provision of good offices, to the various other ways in which the UN can engage politically to prevent violent conflict. Often, humanitarian and development officials also pursue activities that would be considered diplomacy, further blurring the definition. And while there is utility in allowing the UN’s good offices mandate to be “almost anything,” it presents a challenge for those seeking to evaluate whether preventive diplomacy is accomplishing its essential tasks.⁸

In part due to this amorphous definition, UN envoys are often mandated with extremely broad goals, such as helping to bridge differences between opposing sides, or the even more imprecise tasks of “supporting,” “encouraging,” or “assisting” conflict parties. It can be difficult to know when these goals have been achieved, and especially tricky to identify the appropriate time-frame for measuring success (e.g. two parties could agree on a peace process one week and then reject it the next). Furthermore, diplomacy lacks any form of universally-agreed measurements for success, unlike peacekeeping,⁹ the Sustainable Development Goals,¹⁰ or much of the work in the humanitarian sphere.¹¹

This in turn leads to a problem of comparability: How can the UN’s efforts to broker a peace deal be compared to very different interventions in support of a contested elections process, or to quiet encouragement for a dictator to step

aside? Moreover, many prevention efforts take place below the visible surface, behind closed doors, and necessarily without a public record. As Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar acknowledged, “No one will ever know how many conflicts have been prevented or limited through contacts which have taken place in the famous glass mansion, which can become fairly opaque when necessary.”¹² Getting behind that darkened glass to tell the story how UN envoys helped shift key decision-making away from war is one of the major challenges of this assessment process.

Establishing the Facts

Evaluating any intervention in conflict settings presents inherent challenges. To acquire first-hand data in conflict-affected areas can be dangerous, complicating information-gathering, while the situation on the ground can change quickly without warning. Measuring change in conflict settings is especially difficult given that fragile countries often have poor national-level data, and conflict actors themselves may control access to information.¹³ Even where relevant data does exist—e.g. related to socio-economic conditions, violence levels, access to arms, or other drivers of conflict¹⁴—crucial indicators of political mood, dissatisfaction amongst certain populations, and risks of imminent violence often are unknown.

In the realm of preventive diplomacy, these nebulous matters of mood, perception and group sentiment are crucial.¹⁵ In fact, envoys and other diplomats are often deployed into situations where a key objective will be to help reduce tensions between groups, the success of which would require some understanding of the levels of tension before and after an intervention. Evidence that clearly shows the risk levels is thus a major challenge for any evaluation of preventive diplomacy, one that will be inherently somewhat uncertain.

Shortfalls in baseline data contribute to a dilemma that plagues all forms of conflict prevention: *How to describe the violence that did not happen?* Evaluation designs from other disciplines might help to answer this counterfactual question, but many of these involve rigorous pre-and post-intervention control group testing, and/or generation of significant amounts of new data.¹⁶ It is unrealistic to demand that DPA embarks on such time- and resource-intensive evaluation methodologies. But it is equally important that any assessment exercise take on this counterfactual question in creative and compelling ways, or it will not have utility in determining the impact of an intervention.

What Actually Prevented the Violence?

The UN’s preventive diplomacy is taking place on an increasingly crowded field. Often the UN works alongside (and sometimes in competition with) a wide range of international, regional and national actors engaged in prevention-related work. Sometimes too, the UN is a relatively minor player, helping to support regional initiatives, or alongside a major bilateral partner. When examining the broader diplomatic effort by the full range of stakeholders, it is difficult to assess the degree to which the UN may have influenced the outcome, and even harder to claim that the UN was either necessary or sufficient to the prevention of conflict. In situations like these, it may make more sense to think of the UN’s *contribution* to change, rather than attribution *per se*.

Typical UN evaluation approaches—such as the results-based budget—leave little room for this kind of thinking. Take, for example, a UN mandate to help a country build an effective police force. A UN assessment for measuring progress towards this goal would look something like this (see below table):

Input Indicator	Output Indicator	Outcome Indicator	Impact Indicator
Number of police trainings conducted by the UN	Number of police trained to international standards	Reduction in instances of criminality	Improvements in stability in the country

The underlying assumption of this approach is that the UN can conduct an activity, which will cause a result, which will in turn contribute to a desired change. This notion underlies most UN evaluations, and is the basis upon which the Organization (and aid and development agencies worldwide) usually assesses progress and allocates funds. It gets around the thorny issue of causality by presupposing it: An increased number of police trainings by the UN is assumed to contribute to a reduction in criminality, which in turn leads to improved stability.

Linear approaches to evaluation treat issues like political will of the parties, socio-economic changes and shifting public opinion as largely beyond the scope of analysis, either presumed as static, or listed as “external factors.” But these are precisely the issues at the heart of the preventive diplomacy story, and indeed all politically-driven interventions. How to capture change in complex systems, and how to persuasively make a case that at least part of the change was due to the UN, is a major challenge facing the assessment of preventive diplomacy.

Inclusivity and the Problem of Elite Pacts

There is a strong trend in the UN towards inclusivity when it comes to understanding and preventing conflict.¹⁷ Indeed, some experts have suggested that those designing and evaluating interventions in conflict should “start with a problem as defined by the society itself and then generate a theory of change for how to address the problem.”¹⁸ This view is based on the widespread understanding that the extent to which a peace agreement meets the needs of the broader population will directly impact its sustainability.¹⁹ Bargains that produce power-sharing agreements solely among warring and/or elite parties may be necessary to end a cycle of violence, but are notoriously difficult to sustain, with long-term effects for the society well beyond the immediate crisis.²⁰

Here, the cases considered in this project strongly support the findings of the World Bank/UN Prevention report, that “exclusion from access to power, opportunity and security creates fertile ground for mobilization to violence, especially in areas of weak state capacity or legitimacy.”²¹ As such, even the most crisis-driven intervention should be planned within a “comprehensive approach to sustaining peace,”²² that looks at the longer arc of governance, development and socio-economic equality for a country. At a minimum, preventive diplomacy should be sufficiently embedded in this broader analysis and strategy to ensure that the intervention does not feed or exacerbate the structural conditions. Looking to build the kind of “inclusive enough” coalitions envisioned in the World Development Report of 2011 is useful.²³ More ambitiously, the intervention should be explicitly linked to longer-term structural arrangements.²⁴

But this must be balanced with the reality that UN preventive diplomacy interventions are typically mandated with a focus

on the elite actors in conflict—government, opposition parties, military leaders—often with little time or resources allocated to broadening the participation in the process. A mandate may have an initial scoping period to assess the views of the population (and indeed reports like the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations have encouraged multi-step mandating to allow for a better sense of the situation on the ground), but most typically a UN envoy will be tasked at the elite level. This potential tension between the principle of inclusivity and the immediate prerogatives of preventive diplomacy is discussed in the Policy Paper, though there are no definitive or generalizable solutions to the problem.

Methodological Approach

The above challenges point to the need for a methodological approach that imposes minimal burdens on DPA, can be done within existing resources, and complements rather than replaces existing assessment tools. The approach should see the assessment process as a dynamic tool rather than navel gazing: Providing a compelling analysis of what the UN did to help prevent violence, what worked and what did not. This should place the UN intervention in context, weighing its impact against other (often more influential) factors affecting the decision-making of the conflict actors. And it should interrogate whether the intervention helped put in place longer-term conflict prevention capacities, even if it was principally aimed at the imminent risks of violence. With these broad goals and the above challenges in mind, some basic methodological approaches for both the Framework and the related Policy Paper include:

Defining Preventive Diplomacy

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali defined preventive diplomacy as “action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.”²⁵ Recent research has indicated, however, that the focus on conflict *per se* may be misleading: many societies have a high degree of conflict, but these do not necessarily lead to violence. Similarly, there are societies suffering from serious and widespread violence that do not fall neatly into the term “conflict.”²⁶ Rather than focus solely on the term “conflict,” it is more useful to use violence as the key metric, examining where the risk of widespread violence was most acute.²⁷

This project has therefore defined preventive diplomacy as, *Diplomatic action taken to prevent conflicts from becoming violent and/or to prevent conflicts with low-level violence from spreading or escalating into large-scale violence.* Following this definition, the project focuses on settings where violence appeared imminent, or already present at a low-level, and there was a well-founded apprehension of widespread, large-scale violence.

This definition first asks a straightforward question to determine whether preventive diplomacy succeeded in its goal: *Was large-scale violence averted?* If the anticipated violence breaks out and/or spreads, then there is a case to say preventive diplomacy at least partially failed (though a case could always be made that the violence would have been worse otherwise). If the situation de-escalates and violence does not grow or spread, then an argument can be made that preventive diplomacy may have contributed to the positive outcome. The secondary questions then concern what caused the de-escalation and the extent to which the UN may have played a role.²⁸

But there is a final and equally important area of inquiry: *Was the prevention sustained beyond the immediate crisis moment?* As the Sustaining Peace resolution and subsequent World Bank/UN Prevention Study describe, long-term prevention of violent conflict is achieved by addressing root causes and building inclusive, nationally-owned peace processes.²⁹ Similarly, the General Assembly has required that UN mediation be founded on the principle of inclusivity, thus demanding an approach to preventive diplomacy focused on broader issues of political, social and economic exclusion.³⁰ In fact, the case findings from this project align with these points: Across all cases considered, risks of escalation to violence across were overwhelmingly driven by exclusion from access to power and unequal opportunities within a society.³¹

This points to an inherent tension within the definition of preventive diplomacy, and how to define success. On one hand, preventive diplomacy is typically viewed through the narrow mandate provided to the envoy, often with a short time-frame. If the immediate risk of widespread violence is reduced, the intervention can in some sense be called a success. Some of the academic literature has referred to this as “dynamic” prevention: reactive, short-term efforts in the immediate crisis moment.³² There are strong arguments, from our case studies and elsewhere, that even the most fleeting pause in the escalatory cycle can have an important impact, and even open the door to other calming efforts.³³ There is also a persuasive point that preventive diplomacy should not be burdened with the full weight of sustainable peace—envoys are often called into a growing crisis with a mandate to broker a quick way out, not necessarily build the foundations for sustained peace.³⁴

However, given the UN’s policy-level prerogatives to treat conflict prevention in a holistic and cross-pillar manner, this project insists on examining the question of *whether the immediate preventive intervention is linked to longer-term, sustainable peace*. This can take many forms. The intervention itself can work to address the more deeply-rooted societal issues driving the risk of violent conflict; the intervention can be linked to structures and capacities that persist beyond the immediate crisis; or the intervention can be considered within a broader strategy of conflict prevention aimed at structural transformation (see Policy Paper).

This approach to defining preventive diplomacy thus establishes two criteria for success: (1) prevention of the imminent risk of widespread violence, and (2) linking the intervention to longer-term sustained peace. It suggests that there are no bright lines between success and failure, that there will always be a range of other lenses through which to define an outcome. But within this definition, there is scope to draw lessons from positive outcomes, to determine approaches that work, and to identify moments where the UN has contributed to a reduction in risk of mass human suffering.

Analysing Causality

The present Assessment Framework is based on an understanding that the challenges of establishing a counterfactual and of attributing impact to the UN cannot be addressed in a purely linear fashion. There is almost never a convincing argument that posits the UN intervention as an input with conflict resolution as a direct outcome, especially as the focus of the assessment is on a dynamic decision-making process of conflict actors. This is particularly true in cases where the preventive diplomatic intervention is carried out by a wide range of national, regional and international actors, of which the UN is but one.

Instead, the present Assessment Framework takes as its starting point that *the risk of violent conflict is driven by individuals operating in complex and overlapping social, political and economic systems*.³⁵ Change in these systems happens because of shifts in political will and the core interests of those who control the power to escalate to violence. Influencing those decisions becomes the main goal of preventive diplomacy, and evaluating the UN’s contribution to conflict prevention thus becomes an exercise in understanding how the most critical decisions of conflict actors are made. Often the answer will rest well outside the UN’s scope of action.

This approach resists input-output calculations and insists upon an *analysis of relevant factors driving a decision to escalate or de-escalate*. It requires the assessor to embrace uncertainty, to accept that there will never be a perfect alignment between what is put into an intervention and what is achieved by it. There is rarely a case where an evaluation concludes “The UN delivered a peaceful outcome on its own.” Rather, assessments often find that the UN played a small but important role in the parties’ decision to accept a peace process, or that the UN was one of many who helped influence a conflict actor to adopt a stance that allowed for de-escalation. In some cases, the assessment could find that the UN did a superlative job, but the decision to walk away from violence was taken due entirely to other interventions. Such a case would not be about success or failure, but rather one about the relevance of the UN and the efficient use of resources.

The above approach places emphasis on the extent to which an explanation of causality is convincing, based upon

the most widely-accepted understanding of what is driving conflict. Those with insights into the decision-making of the conflict actors themselves are especially important in this analysis, and wherever possible, the assessment should draw directly discussions or interviews with the conflict actors themselves. The approach also places special emphasis on narrative: Rather than breaking the UN intervention into inputs and outcomes, the Assessment Framework aims to tell a persuasive analytic story about the UN's role in influencing a situation away from violent conflict, even if that role is a gentle nudge.

Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact

Most assessments are driven by the question, *Was the activity effective, did it achieve its objectives?*³⁶ As the above challenges have shown, in preventive diplomacy attribution to the UN is a slippery subject. Many assessments appear to follow poor logic to get around this problem, stating that (a) the mandate objective was achieved, and (b) the UN did a good job in various ways, therefore (c) the UN was effective.³⁷ This tends to dramatically overstate the UN's contribution to the outcome, giving it credit (or blame) for a range of events beyond its control.

The starting point for this Assessment Framework is the understanding that *the decision-making of conflict actors is influenced by a wide range of factors, only one of which may be the UN*. The fact that a mandate objective is reached—e.g. two conflicting parties reach a peace agreement—is not in itself evidence that the UN was effective. The UN might even play a distinctly positive role with the conflict actors, bridging differences, producing incentives/penalties, coordinating the collective leverage of other actors, providing face-saving measures, etc. But the analysis might conclude that these actions were not the most important factors in the parties' decision-making, especially where a major bilateral or regional mediation process has been engaged.

To evaluate the UN's effectiveness in this context, the Assessment Framework asks two related questions: (1) What might have happened absent the full range of preventive diplomacy interventions by bilateral, regional and international actors? And then (2) What role did the UN play in influencing the outcome? Together, these two questions arrive at the core issue of the UN's contribution to preventing violent conflict, with the UN intervention placed into a realistic context.³⁸

External vs. Internal Assessors: The Importance of Peer Review

There are benefits and drawbacks to the use of either external or internal evaluators.³⁹ External evaluators would provide the assessment with greater impartiality, avoid the issue of DPA congratulating itself, and could possibly engage greater monitoring/evaluation expertise than the staff within DPA. But external consultants may also require greater time

to familiarize themselves with the case, face constraints in access to confidential information or key actors, and can tend to provoke the defences of those who designed and led the intervention. The use of external evaluators may also limit the internal learning of the UN.⁴⁰

This Framework does not take a position on whether external or internal evaluators should lead assessments, and is designed for use by both. However, to avoid some of the pitfalls of either choice, this Framework suggests a process *complemented by peer-review*, where preliminary findings of the assessment are discussed amongst a group of experts in diplomacy and mediation.⁴¹ Indeed, the project that produced this Assessment Framework held one such peer review, where the early findings of the case studies and broader lessons were discussed by experts, with a view to incorporating their views into the final products.⁴²

Adaptive Assessment Approaches

Some preventive interventions deliver clear results: a signed agreement, a national dialogue, a ceasefire. Others may be nearly impossible to determine, such as building trust between parties, or defusing tensions, or scoping readiness to enter a peace process. Where there is a tangible result, generally it will be easier for the assessment to conclude that the UN contributed to a specific impact. But it is often the UN's quieter role in building trust and defusing tensions that is its real value added in many situations.

This Assessment Framework follows the Humanitarian Dialogue Centre in suggesting an adaptive approach: Where results are easily determined, greater focus should be placed on the impact of the intervention. Where results are difficult to identify, greater focus should be placed on how the intervention was conducted, whether it was appropriately designed and implemented.⁴³ Adaptation does not mean the basic structure of the assessment needs to be changed, only the emphasis within it. UNU-CPR suggests that further application of the Assessment Framework to a wide variety of cases is the best way to determine how this adaptive approach can play out.

Timing of the Assessment

There are different views concerning when an assessment should be conducted. Based on a January 2018 expert workshop and consultations with key UN officials, UNU-CPR recommends that the assessment be carried out as close as possible to the intervention itself. This will allow the evaluator to best capture the positions and mindsets of the key actors at the time of the crisis, avoiding the risk that long-term hindsight could cloud judgments. A downside of this approach is that the longer-term sustainability questions—such as whether the situation relapsed into violence—might be less visible at the time. But this could be captured by a subsequent evaluation.

UNU-CPR additionally recommends that the assessment process not be a stand-alone one. Instead, assessment should feed planning, and learning should be considered part of the intervention itself.⁴⁴ Ideally, any UN intervention should be iterative, based on an initial set of activities that are then assessed for relevance and effectiveness, with planning processes adjusting as required. This is covered in more detail in the Policy Paper, but is flagged here as a methodological consideration for the Framework.

Essential Elements of the Assessment Framework

With these challenges and methodological considerations in mind, the Assessment Framework proposes six essential elements/questions to be addressed:

1. *An evidence-based context analysis*, describing the key factors driving and inhibiting escalation, the interests of those who control the situation, the overall difficulty of resolving the crisis, and the outcome;
2. *A causal analysis*, identifying the major factors that influenced the decision of the conflict actors to engage in or refrain from violence;
3. *A counterfactual argument* describing what would have happened if there had been no outside intervention by preventive diplomatic actors, including that of the UN;
4. An analysis of the extent to which the decision(s) of the conflict actors can be *attributed to the UN's* intervention, weighed against other interventions and relevant factors;
5. An analysis of what *enabled and/or inhibited the UN's* ability to contribute to preventing escalation, including issues related to mandate, strategy, resources, coordination with other actors, and external factors. Within this, a distinction between those that are external to the UN, and those that are within the UN's control.
6. An assessment of the extent to which *the UN intervention was linked to sustainable peace*, looking at whether the intervention itself was inclusive, but also at what longer-term capacities for conflict prevention were left in place.

Together, these elements create the backbone of a story of prevention, one that describes who controlled the decision to escalate, what influenced their decision-making, and the contribution of the UN's diplomatic effort. Looking at each element in more detail and drawing from the case studies conducted for this project, the following sub-sections begin to demonstrate how a preventive diplomacy assessment would be developed.

1. Context Analysis/Risk Assessment

Conflict analyses vary, from that of the World Bank,⁴⁵ to those of major development agencies,⁴⁶ to several different approaches within UN agencies.⁴⁷ Drawing from these, a Secretariat planning cell recently identified four minimum elements to be included in all such analyses: (a) situational profile; (b) conflict drivers; (c) stakeholder analysis; and (d) overall conflict dynamics.⁴⁸ All apply when assessing a preventive diplomacy engagement, though they will need to be tailored to guide the core question, *What factors influenced the decision to escalate or de-escalate?*

This Assessment Framework suggests the term "context analysis" be used in place of "conflict analysis," in order to emphasize the broader range of socio-economic, personal and political factors to be included. Rather than look to merely establish the contours of the conflict, the context analysis should attempt to identify the fullest possible set of factors that influence the decisions around violence.⁴⁹

- a) *Situational profile*: The profile provides a snapshot of the setting in the immediate lead-up to the crisis. It describes key steps that led to the crisis point, often in the form of an abbreviated timeline that provides a mini-narrative of the escalatory period. Without going into too much detail, it identifies the basic underlying issues driving the risk and the overall context (e.g. regional dynamics, international pressures, key events).
- b) *Conflict drivers*: While the analysis should cover deeper "root causes" of conflict (e.g. longstanding grievances, socio-economic inequalities, competition over natural resources, demographic shifts), this Assessment Framework is more focused on the immediate "triggers" that led to escalation. This can often build from the underlying causes—such as protests over socio-economic conditions, or an election that pits one ethnic group against another—but tends to be an urgent event that heightens tensions quickly. In terms of the well-known iceberg metaphor, the analysis accounts for the deeply submerged elements of the conflict, but will focus on the ice immediately below sea-level, and that which spikes up rapidly into the air.⁵⁰
- c) *Stakeholder analysis*: Typical stakeholder analyses cover all those who can influence the course of the conflict, or are affected by it. This Assessment Framework suggests a focus on *those who can most directly drive the decision towards or away from violent conflict*.⁵¹ Usually these are high state officials, leaders of opposition movements, military leaders, and/or heads of large coalitions. There may be cases where undefined groups can affect the course of conflict—such as unruly mobs or displaced populations—but these are less typical.

Most important is to get into the so-called “engine room”⁵² of these actors, understand what motivates them, what inhibits their action, and what factors are most important in their decision-making around conflict.

- d) *Conflict Dynamics*: The heart of the analysis should capture the distribution of power amongst different actors, their ability to drive a situation toward or away from violence, and the forces that influence their decision-making. In terms of the UN’s intervention, this establishes the degree of difficulty in terms of prevention. There are a wide range of approaches to developing this analysis,⁵³ but the key objective should be to establish a *convincing narrative that describes why a situation reached a crisis point and how difficult it was to influence the conflict actors away from widespread violence.*

2. Causal Analysis of the Key Decisions of Conflict Actors

At the core of any conflict prevention effort is a *theory of change*,⁵⁴ a set of assumptions concerning what caused a transition from escalating risk to de-escalation. Often it will concern the need for an elite-level agreement, such as between a government and an opposition, or between warring parties. The mandate provided to an envoy reflects the theory of change: A mandate to broker an agreement, or build trust, or help to implement a set of commitments presumes that these actions will lower or eliminate the risk of violent conflict. It is crucial to identify what theory of change was driving the UN’s intervention at the time (see Measuring Failure below).⁵⁵

Of course, conflict settings are inherently complex, there may be several factors influencing the risk of escalation. Some of these might be short-term and specific—such as the transformation of the views of an individual leader, or the position of a political party. They also could be immediate to the setting on the ground, such as the removal of small arms, or the interposition of forces to prevent confrontation. Or a premise could be broader and more societal, like breaking down ethnic divisions, addressing grievances, or fostering socio-economic progress.

For the purposes of assessing preventive diplomacy, *the assessment will typically be focused on the immediate shift of the positions of conflict actors away from pro-violence positions towards peaceful ones.* But there may well be other conditions that need to be met for the effort to succeed.

The case of the 2011 southern Sudan referendum demonstrates how this causal analysis plays out. The core argument in the case study is that *agreement by Khartoum to recognize the results of the referendum was a determinative factor in preventing violent conflict between Sudan and South Sudan.*⁵⁶ Within this, the case study describes the key

conditions for Khartoum to accept the referendum process:

- *President Bashir needed to receive credible assurances of his own political future after the referendum; [individual interest]*
- *For Khartoum and Juba to agree on the referendum process, post-referendum issues needed to be addressed in an agreed forum; [confidence between the parties]*
- *For the referendum to take place peacefully, the two armies needed to be kept from confrontation in Abyei; [removal of trigger for war]*
- *Maintaining the ability for southerners and northerners living in border areas to continue to trade and retain relations was crucial for both sides to peacefully get through the CPA period; [longer-term societal premise]*

Not all conditions fall within the purview of preventive diplomacy; for example, keeping the two armies separated was largely a task for the peacekeeping mission on the ground in Sudan. But in terms of providing assurances to President Bashir, or finding a forum for the parties to talk, there was a role for the preventive diplomatic actors, including the UN envoy.

The key goal for this part of the Assessment is to develop a causal analysis that most accurately captures the moment where imminent violent conflict was averted, and the factors that influenced the most weighty decisions. Ultimately, it should answer the question, *Why did the conflict actors take the decisions they did at the crucial moment(s)?*

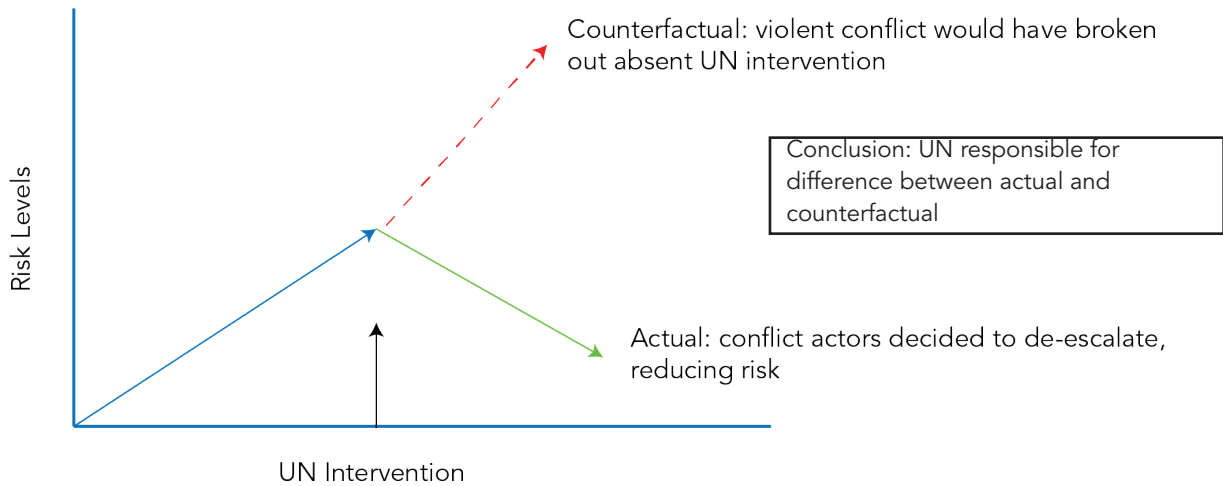
3. A Counterfactual Argument

To determine the impact of an intervention, the Assessment must attempt to establish what would have happened if a diplomatic intervention by external actors had not occurred. While this does not need to be a particularly detailed element of the assessment, a counterfactual argument should indicate the most likely course of events absent outside intervention.

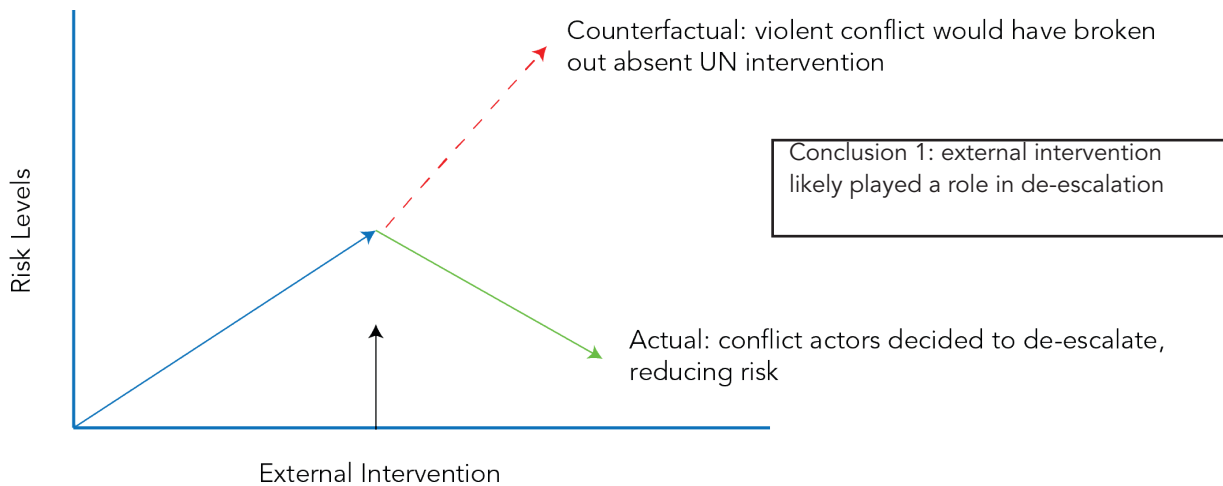
The counterfactual is not always clear-cut or easy to define.⁵⁷ In many cases, the UN will have conducted scenario planning that helpfully identifies a range of likely outcomes.⁵⁸ And often a strong case can be made based on the risk analysis and the positions of the key conflict actors at the time.⁵⁹ For example, in the southern Sudan case study, southern Sudan President Salva Kiir publicly announced he was ready to return to war if Khartoum did not accept the referendum process.

This Assessment Framework differs from previous approaches in its treatment of the counterfactual. The 2011 CIC assessment tool (drawing on the OECD and other

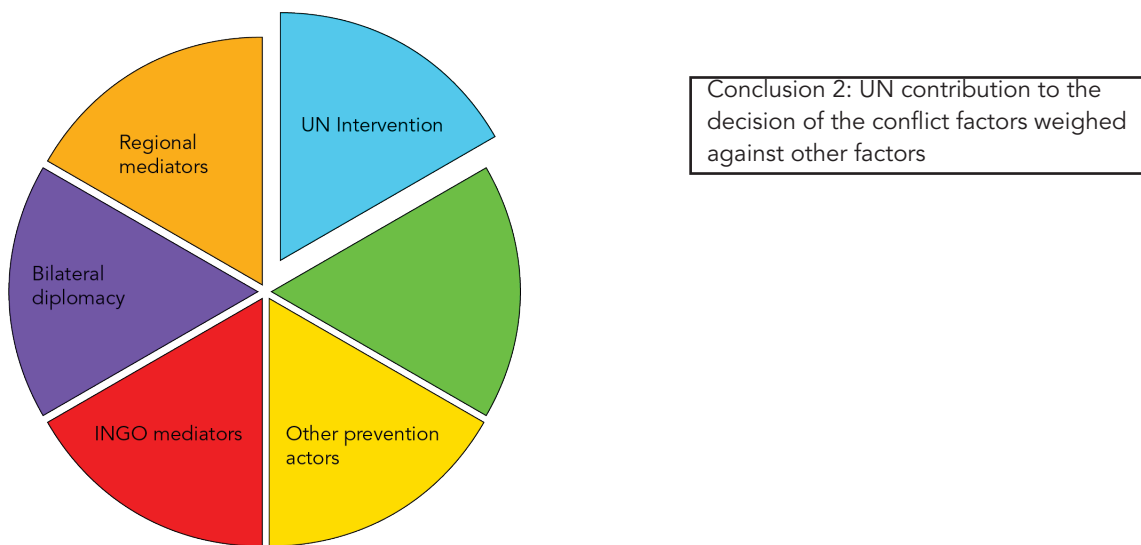
Traditional Approach: Tends to presume the UN as the catalyst for change



Two-Step Approach Used in this Assessment Framework: (1) Looks at impact of external intervention, then (2) weighs UN role in the outcome



Second step evaluates UN contribution to the decision, weighed against other factors



development-oriented approaches) asks a single question: *What would have happened if the UN had not intervened?* From the outset, this tends to place the UN intervention at the centre of the decision by the conflict actors. But the case studies developed in the project demonstrate that the UN is often more of a marginal player, meaning that the assessment should not presume the UN intervention is dispositive of change.

Instead, this Assessment Framework asks two questions: (1) what would have happened absent outside intervention by the broader range of actors (regional, international, bilateral) including the UN; and *then* (2) how much of the change can be attributed to the UN? By breaking the issue into two questions, the Assessment Framework avoids the trap of making the UN appear overly responsible for events often well beyond its control, more accurately reflecting reality. And ultimately it addresses the question of what would have happened absent UN intervention (see diagram below).

4. Attribution to the UN

As shown in the above diagram, the second step of the process describes the UN's contribution to the decision of the conflict actors, weighed against the other external interventions at the time. This approach may attribute some of the change to the UN—meaning the UN is one player among others—but does not artificially place the UN centre stage from the outset.

As described in the case studies and the Policy Paper, the UN's role in influencing a decision-making process does not take place in a vacuum where all other issues remain the same.⁶⁰ By intervening, the UN often affects the posture of the parties, the expectations of the population, the positions of the international community, and the range of carrots and sticks available. Attempting to describe a full range of impacts, and how they played out in the moment of imminent risk of violence, allows the assessment to develop a compelling analysis of the UN's role without overstating its impact.

Returning to the example of the southern Sudan referendum, the core argument was that President Bashir's acceptance of the referendum process was a key factor in preventing escalation to violent conflict. A related premise was that Bashir needed to receive credible assurances of his own political future if he was to agree to the referendum (i.e. that there would be no economic isolation, that the post-referendum arrangements would not be biased against his party, and that economic incentives like sanctions relief were realistically going to be provided). Examining the UN's contribution to these conditions would involve questions like:

- *Was the UN envoy considered a trustworthy interlocutor for Bashir to receive assurances?*
- *What role did the UN play in facilitating talks between*

Bashir and those actors who could offer assurances to his future?

- *What role did the UN play in gathering international and regional actors towards a common position that would influence Bashir's decision?*
- *What other factors beyond the UN's control were influencing Bashir's decision-making?*

From these lines of questioning, an argument emerges in the case study that the UN envoy was considered a trustworthy interlocutor, uniquely placed to act as a bridge to other stakeholders who might offer relevant assurances to President Bashir; moreover, the UN envoy played a direct role in gathering international and regional actors around a common position that appeared to positively influence Bashir's decision. While there were many other important factors influencing Bashir's decision, the assessment of the UN's role concludes that the UN was an important factor in terms of the decision to accept the referendum.

5. Enabling/Inhibiting Factors for the UN

The UN's ability to influence a given conflict setting depends upon a range of factors, which roughly fall into two categories: (a) degree of difficulty for a UN intervention (which describes factors largely outside the UN's control), and (b) effectiveness of the UN approach. Both of these should be considered alongside the "success factors" identified in the Policy Paper.

a) *Degree of Difficulty*⁶¹

Some situations are highly receptive for a UN intervention; others provide few if any entry points. Building on the Context Analysis section, this examines the kinds of issues that determine how receptive a situation was for a successful UN intervention:

- Positions/posture of the conflict actors (the extent to which they may have decided to resort to large-scale violence, versus their readiness to de-escalate);
- Willingness of the parties to accept a UN role (consent);
- The UN's perceived legitimacy amongst the population;⁶²
- Access of the UN to key conflict actors;
- Standing of the UN in a country (e.g. seen as impartial vs seen as neo-colonial);
- Relationship between the UN and regional organizations and bilateral donors.

These factors play out in very different ways depending on the situation in country, and the UN can take proactive steps to make some of them more amenable to successful prevention. Looking briefly across the case studies developed in this project, examples include:

- In the Malawi crisis in 2011, the high degree of willingness of both parties to accept a UN mediator was a key enabler for successful UN intervention;
- In the 2015 crisis across the Blue Line between Lebanon and Israel, the UN's access to key conflict actors—especially Hizbullah—allowed the UN to play a more direct role in helping to prevent escalation;
- In the 2011 Southern Sudan referendum case, to play a central role the UN mediator had to (and largely did) overcome suspicions in Khartoum that the UN was pursuing a Western agenda;
- In the 2015 Nigerian electoral crisis, the UN mediator had a positive profile with the conflict actors, and had excellent access from the outset;
- In the 2009-10 Guinea crisis, the September 2009 massacre caused international outcry and increased the readiness of the junta to permit diplomatic intervention;
- In the 2011 Yemen case, constructive and relatively unified positions by GCC members contributed to the UN's ability to positively impact the key actors.

b) *Effectiveness of UN System and Approach*

Previous assessment approaches have placed emphasis on the UN's effectiveness via its use of resources, coherence across different agencies, and internal coordination.⁶³ These are important, especially as the assessment will feed the UN's broader justification for resources to be allocated for political engagement. Having a clear sense of what was an efficient use of resources plays a central role in this justification and renders the assessment useful to more system-wide, comparative evaluations.⁶⁴

At the same time, this Assessment Framework remains focused on how these efficiency concerns impact the core question of how the UN contributed to the reduction of risk of violence. Factors in this context include:

- Appropriateness of the mandate given to the UN envoy (was it conducive to influencing the decision-making of the parties?);
- Degree to which the UN strategy matched conflict prevention needs;

- Cohesion of the UN effort across different entities (did UN coordination increase the influence over the conflict actors?);
- Resourcing for the UN intervention (did particular resources provide opportunities to engage and influence the parties?);
- Leadership of UN mediator and quality of team;
- Specific steps taken to meet the immediate interests of the parties and build confidence.

Looking again at the cases from this project, these issues played out in very different ways. For example:

- The choice of envoys with strong regional standing and good knowledge of the conflict actors was seen as a key element of the success in the South Sudan, Guinea, Malawi and Nigeria cases in particular;
- In both the South Sudan and Lebanon case studies, the presence of a peacekeeping operation and massive resources on the ground helped bolster the diplomatic effort;
- The decision to play a supporting role to existing regional initiatives in the South Sudan, Guinea and Yemen cases was an important strategy that gave the UN greater leverage and influence at key moments;⁶⁵
- The broad, "scoping" mandate given to the envoys in Malawi and Yemen allowed them to build trust with the parties initially, and to calibrate subsequent interventions based on their needs.
- The use of the UN's regional office and RC system in country in the Guinea case provided the mediation with high levels of expertise and relationships necessary for effective engagement from the outset.

Each assessment will include a different blend of these factors, and in some cases a single factor could be dispositive. In Malawi for example, the major success element of the intervention was the willingness by both parties to have the UN envoy play a direct role. Issues around resourcing for his effort and coordination across other UN entities were less important.⁶⁶ In contrast, the large resources provided by the UN to the southern Sudan referendum played a crucial role. Giving the appropriate weight to each factor is an essential part of the analytic task of the assessor.

6. Sustainability: The Longer-Term View

The Assessment Framework is largely focused on the period leading up to and following a crisis point. This presupposes that the core function of preventive diplomacy is to avert an

imminent descent into violent conflict, and that the success of an intervention can be determined in this relatively narrow window. But many of the case studies underscore that conflict averted is not necessarily conflict prevented in the longer term.⁶⁷ Moreover, the Secretary-General has insisted that divisions between longer-term development and other forms of conflict prevention be broken down.⁶⁸ On this question, experts have differing views, with some arguing that preventive diplomacy is ineffective unless incorporated into institutional reform,⁶⁹ while others stress that too much focus on structural reform could create unrealistic goals for the immediate conflict prevention effort.⁷⁰

Both viewpoints have validity: In the context of imminent violence, too much focus on structural factors, root causes and institutional weaknesses may overlook the immediate interests of the political and military elites capable of driving a situation towards or away from large-scale human suffering. Preventive diplomacy does and should remain largely focused on agency and the core tasks of persuasion and political deal-making with the protagonists of the conflict. At the same time, these efforts should aim to be inclusive in themselves, and should endeavour to be linked to longer-term arrangements that can engage society more broadly in addressing underlying drivers such as inequality, relative poverty and exclusion.⁷¹

This Assessment Framework does not directly cover the longer-term arrangements that the UN might help to put in place. But it does suggest that the evaluation should include questions concerning *the extent to which diplomacy is linked to longer-term impacts and interventions*. The Policy Paper and case studies provide greater detail on how these links have been established in the past. In this regard, the following kinds of questions would be useful to include:

- Did the de-escalation last, why/why not?
- Was the intervention designed to leave national conflict-resolution capacities in place?
- Were any UN responsibilities handed over to other actors in country or the region when the engagement ended?
- Was a post-intervention monitoring plan established by the UN?
- Were any agreements reached in line with key principles of inclusivity?

This line of questioning underscores the need for the Assessment Framework to be embedded within the core UN principles and guidance on a range of issues. For example, the Framework itself includes questions concerning whether the UN intervention was aligned with UN-wide principles on inclusivity, gender, youth and the Sustainable Development

Goals.⁷²

Other Considerations

Comparing Assessments

Each conflict setting has its own unique conditions, risks and trajectory. Attempts to establish a set of fixed criteria by which to compare UN preventive diplomatic efforts across different conflict settings is unrealistic and will tend to lead to overly broad conclusions (e.g. escalation was prevented in both Malawi and Yemen by adept mediation). At the same time, it is important that this Assessment Framework facilitate comparison across different interventions if the UN system is to learn from experience and improve planning for future crises. One of the reasons for the recommendation that the assessments be peer reviewed is to ensure that learning permeates among those most likely to lead future preventive diplomatic interventions.

The six question areas listed in this Assessment Framework provide the skeleton for comparison across different cases. For example, it is possible to draw from the Context Analysis and compare the degree of difficulty between two very different conflict settings. However UNU-CPR suggests that artificial ways of “ranking” cases are not helpful in the field of diplomacy. Saying that the degree of difficulty in Yemen was 8/10 whereas it was only 6/10 in Malawi is a gross oversimplification of a complex setting, and one that ultimately does nothing for the knowledge base of the Organization. Instead, we recommend focusing on the lesson to be drawn in each context, to ask the question “what worked and what didn’t work?” when assessing a case. The Policy Paper too provides some “critical elements for success” which could be incorporated into a comparison between cases (e.g. in Malawi and Yemen the envoy had a cultural and linguistic affiliation with the conflict parties). An inductive approach, where DPA conducts or commissions a broader range of assessments, will allow for more substantive comparisons and greater institutional learning.

Assessing Failure

This Assessment Framework was developed in response to a widespread perception within the UN that there were too few clear success stories told about the UN’s preventive diplomacy efforts over recent years. Part of this shortcoming derives from the way the UN evaluates and records its own work. But there have also been many high-profile instances where the UN has not managed to prevent violent conflict, despite having a clear role to play. The war in Syria is held up as a great failure of preventive diplomacy, while continuing conflicts in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur, Iraq and elsewhere all fall at least in part on the UN’s doorstep. This Assessment Framework is built upon success stories, but it must be able to assess failures as well.

In fact, the approach described above can help the UN understand its prevention failures in two important ways. Firstly, it allows for a clear distinction between *theory failure* and *implementation failure*. Theory failure results from a flawed understanding of what would prevent violent conflict.⁷³ An example of this might be the assumption that a peace negotiation on Syria without Tehran at the table could lead to a viable political agreement. Regardless of how adept or well-resourced a peace process was for Syria, the underlying theory failure likely doomed early diplomatic efforts.⁷⁴ And in this regard, the failure thus falls largely on the key Member States who drove the flawed theory at the time. Looked at in this light, the UN diplomatic effort may appear less of a scapegoat for the failed Syria talks to date, though it may well be that the UN Secretariat suffered from the same theory failure as the international community at the time.

“Implementation failure” means the logic of the intervention was correct, but something inhibited success. This may be due to *conditions on the ground* (willingness of parties to accept the UN, timing, legitimacy of the UN, role of other actors) or the *effectiveness of the UN intervention* itself. It is possible that a UN intervention could be poorly led, under-resourced and totally uncoordinated, but could still play a crucial role in preventing conflict if other conditions allow. Conversely, a UN intervention could be flawlessly led, provided near-limitless resources, and fit neatly within a coordinated strategy, but still founder on the rocks of intransigent parties or a lack of space for UN involvement.

As the Policy Paper indicates, there are some essential conditions that tend to enable effective conflict prevention—and even some which appear to be necessary for it—but each case requires a bespoke analysis that can identify what worked in that specific moment. In cases where the UN fails, these distinctions are all the more important, as the UN tends to be blamed for a wide range of events beyond its control. Moreover, having a clearer sense of what works across a wide range of cases could enable the UN to avoid or limit involvement in situations where the likelihood of success is especially small; perhaps more importantly, it could also allow the UN to plan interventions to try to generate the conducive conditions more effectively and earlier.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The proposed Assessment Framework differs significantly in many respects from the way in which the UN currently evaluates its activities. This is in part because preventive diplomacy does not fit neatly into a log-frame approach to programming. More than anything, this Framework attempts to embrace and engage with the uncertainty of today’s conflict settings, to use the best possible sources of information and analysis to build a coherent, compelling, logical argument around the UN’s contribution to conflict prevention. It is meant to provide a baseline analysis from which lessons are easily extracted and the impact is made clear.

UNU-CPR proposes the following steps for DPA and its partners to incorporate this Assessment Framework into its current approach to preventive diplomacy:

1. **Place the Policy Paper and Assessment Framework on the DPA knowledge sharing toolkit site, which has guidance and templates for other forms of evaluation for DPA’s use;**⁷⁵
2. **Identify and commission a range of cases for testing out the Assessment Framework, including so-called “failures.”**⁷⁶
3. **Develop an iterative planning tool for preventive diplomacy, in which assessment of a broad range of cases directly informs the planning processes for future interventions.**

Preventive Diplomacy Assessment Framework: A Tool for Practitioners

I. Objectives

The purpose of the Preventive Diplomacy Assessment Framework is to provide the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) with an analytic approach to (1) record and evaluate the impact of its preventive diplomacy interventions, and (2) build a rigorous knowledge base of practice to inform future engagements. The following document provides an overall structure for the assessment, general guidance for assessors, and indicative questionnaires for conducting interviews and research. It is meant to be implemented in conjunction with the Overview Note, which provide the rationale, underlying logic, and examples drawn from prior case studies. It was developed alongside six case studies and a related policy paper, which will also be helpful in understanding the approach taken.

This Framework is guided by the central question, *How did the UN contribute to the decision of conflict actors to move away from an imminent risk of violent conflict or escalation of violence?* The approach focuses on the decision-making of the conflict actors themselves. The UN's intervention—and its impact on the situation—should be situated within the broader conflict context and weighed against the other external interventions by international, regional and bilateral actors. And importantly, the assessment should identify what strategies, resources and relationships enabled or inhibited an effective intervention by the UN.

While the Framework focuses on imminent risks of conflict, it is also designed to address the question of *whether the intervention was linked to sustainable conditions for peace*. Here, the Framework examines the extent to which the UN's activities helped address underlying structural causes of conflict, built national conflict prevention capacities, and/or put in place longer-term entities to address the risks of further violence.

II. Six Core Questions

The Assessment Framework is built around six core questions:

1. *Context Analysis:* What were the major factors contributing to an imminent risk of violent conflict and its de-escalation (centred on the major conflict actors)?
2. *Causal Analysis:* What influenced the decision-making of the key conflict actors at the crisis moment?
3. *Counterfactual Analysis:* What are the most likely scenarios that could have taken place absent external intervention, including by the UN?
4. *UN's Role:* To what extent can the outcome can be attributed to the UN's engagement?
5. *Enabling/Inhibiting Factors:* What factors enabled and/or inhibited the UN's capacity to contribute to preventing violence? Within this, a distinction can be drawn between those factors that are external to the UN, and those that are within the UN's control.
6. *Sustainability:* Was the prevention effort sustained, and to what extent was the intervention linked to addressing longer-term structural causes of violence?

These six areas of inquiry form the basic structure of the assessment. To answer each, the Assessment Framework here provides an illustrative questionnaire, which will need to be adapted to the specific conflict, interlocutors, and available information sources.

III. Questionnaire for Conducting the Assessment

1. *Context Analysis*—What were the major factors contributing to an imminent risk of violent conflict?

This section can cover deeper root causes of conflict, but should relate those to the more immediate risks, the triggers, and the positions of the parties.

Questions	Possible key indicators
What were the major drivers of conflict/tension in country?	Socio-economic divisions, ethnic tensions, political divisions, climatic changes.
What were the triggers that created imminent risk?	Elections, political upheaval, violent incidents, economic shocks, natural disasters.
Who were the key actors in control of the decision to escalate and de-escalate?	Political leaders, armed group commanders, civil society groups, religious figures.

2. *Causal Analysis*—What influenced the decision-making of the key conflict actors at the crisis moment?

This section should draw directly from the context analysis in terms of identifying what was driving conflict and what ultimately contributed to the decisions of key conflict actors. Importantly, this section should attempt to weight different factors, describing which of the broader range appeared to be the most important in the outcome.

Questions	Possible Key indicators
What were the interests of the conflict actors at the time of the crisis?	Political survival, military advantage, inter-personal disputes, economic incentives, inter-communal issues, legacy.
What were the most important factors influencing the conflict actors' decisions?	Pressures from within a political party or from opposition groups, sanctions/economic issues, military pressures, battle fatigue, bilateral relations, relations with regional/international entities.
Who were the most important third parties with influence over the conflict actors?	Political allies/foes, bilateral heavyweights, regional bodies, Security Council, sometimes broader international opinion.
What were the conditions critical for the situation to move from one of high risk of violence to de-escalation?	Agreement between two opposing parties, interruption of an escalatory dynamic, face-saving, political/economic assurances, reduction of personal risk.
Why did the situation play out as it did?	A culmination of the above points, analysing the key factors that influenced the decision-making of the conflict parties.

3. *Counterfactual Analysis*—What are the most likely scenarios that would have taken place absent external intervention?

This section takes the full range of external interventions by international, regional and other actors and asks what would have happened if the intervention had not occurred. This does not need to be overly detailed, and often the UN will have conducted scenario planning ahead of an event to capture likely outcomes. The analysis carried out in the earlier sections should also provide an evidence base for arguing the most likely course of events.

Questions	Possible Key indicators
What are the most likely scenarios absent external intervention by external actors?	High levels of popular discontent, mobilized armed elements, public threats of violence, recent history of violent episodes, repeated cycles of violence around events like elections.
What are the likely costs saved?	Expert estimates of costs of violence; human costs; broader regional instability.

4. *UN's Role*—What did the UN do, and to what extent can the outcome can be attributed to the UN's engagement?

This section first describes the course of action taken by the UN, the mandate provided, the strategy adopted, and the key actions. Through this it attempts to identify the extent to which the UN's intervention played a role in the outcome. In many cases, the UN is but one of many preventive actors, and it is crucial that the analysis focus on how the UN contributed without necessarily placing the UN at the centre. The analysis will almost certainly cover a wide array of difficult-to-measure issues, such as the impact of coordinated international messaging, or the role the UN as an impartial intermediary between conflict parties. Getting the views of the conflict actors themselves, or those most close to the decision-making process, is often the best way to address this question convincingly.

Questions	Possible Key Indicators
What did the UN do?	Mandate provided to the UN; strategic plans; early decisions of the SG, HQ and/or the envoy; steps taken to engage the conflict actors and other stakeholders; changes in strategy at key moments.
To what extent did the UN achieve what it was mandated to do?	Written understandings between conflict parties; reduction of tensions; statements of intent by key actors; statements by SC on continuing risk levels.
What was the UN's leverage over any of the parties? What helped/hindered leverage?	UN actions to coordinate international and regional positioning/messaging; UN role in sanctions/economic issues; UN leverage through impartiality; indications from the conflict parties that the UN had influence over their actions.
What other factors alongside the UN drove the decision-making of the conflict actors?	International, regional, national actors; bilateral sanctions; financial incentives; arrest warrants; personal relationships; external military pressures.
Were there any unintended results from the intervention?	Heightened expectations amongst population leading to greater tensions; entrenchment of positions; actual violence.
To what extent was the UN's intervention a factor in the decision-making of the conflict actors?	Statements by the conflict actors; expert opinion; views of others directly involved in the process.

5. *Enabling/Inhibiting Factors*—What enabled and/or inhibited the UN's capacity to contribute to preventing violence?

This section aims to identify the key conditions that helped or hurt the UN's chances of success through a description of the UN's role. It draws on the "critical success factors" identified in the Policy Paper and aims to create comparability across cases in terms of what works. These factors are: whether the conflict actors have not decided to resort to large-scale violence and consent to UN engagement; international and regional unity/cooperation; the presence of meaningful forms of leverage; key skills and attributes of the envoy; internal UN coordination; and links between the diplomatic intervention and longer-term conflict prevention capacities in-country.

Sometimes these conditions are outside the UN’s control, or only marginally within it. Focusing on those actions the UN took (or could have taken) to increase influence and positively affect the situation, is a goal of this section. In some cases, therefore it may be useful to disaggregate the questions into two separate areas: (1) pre-existing conditions outside the UN’s control, and (2) steps the UN took to make its engagement effective. However, this will depend on the situation, and often a so-called pre-existing condition (e.g. the willingness of the parties to accept the UN role) is something that can be affected by the UN’s approach on the ground (e.g. by conducting frequent consultations and taking a low-key approach, the willingness of the parties was increased). This Framework does not create an artificial distinction, therefore, but flags the issue as one for consideration by the assessor.

Importantly, this section should also cover the decision-making and choice of strategy by the UN (at all levels). Often, changes on the ground or elsewhere necessitate a new strategy or a shift in approach. Assessing how adaptive the UN was in shifting to meet new demands is a central inquiry in most preventive diplomacy settings.

Questions	Possible Key indicators
How receptive were the parties to the UN’s involvement?	Willingness of the parties to meet the UN; ability to enter the country in question; public statements by parties about UN role; competing mediation initiatives.
How was the UN perceived more broadly, including by the population and/or regional actors?	Statements about the UN by leaders and civil society groups, or by regional organizations; population surveys where available; history of the UN in country.
How ready were the parties to enter into a negotiated settlement?	Stated willingness of parties to avoid or end the violence; willingness to meet with UN and/or face to face; public and private statements.
How well did the UN’s approach/strategy match the needs at the time?	Security Council/other mandate; statements by the conflict parties and civil society leaders; peer review assessment of the strategy.
How well did the UN adapt to changes in the situation (either on the ground or elsewhere)?	Reports to the SC on changes in approach and/or requests for new mandates; strategic planning approaches by the UN; public announcements by the UN; public reports of changes in-country.
Was the UN sufficiently resourced for the task?	Results-based budget; comparison with other similarly placed interventions in the past; assessment of envoy as to what resources were required.
Was there unity of effort across the UN system?	Unified strategic plan across UN entities; lack of duplication of resources.

6. Sustainability—Was the prevention of violent conflict sustained and to what extent was it linked to longer-term sustainable peace?

While the Assessment Framework focuses on the intervention at the most immediate periods before and after a high risk of violent conflict, it should include an evaluation of the extent to which the intervention was linked to longer-term capacities and activities (see Overview Note on sustainability). Key questions in this regard include:

Questions	Possible Key Indicators
Did violence resume soon after the intervention, and if so, why?	Levels of violence pre- and post-intervention; statements by the conflict actors about intentions to resume violence; extent to which agreements were implemented; other factors influencing risk levels (e.g. elections, socio-economic changes, shifts in leadership).
Was the preventive diplomacy intervention linked to longer-term UN engagements?	Capacities left in place following the intervention; existence of a strategy showing handover of tasks from diplomatic intervention to other actors (UN and non UN); national conflict prevention capacities in place; processes geared at inclusivity at a national level.

How were root causes addressed by the intervention?	See root causes in Context Analysis section.
Was the UN's intervention conducted in line with key principles of the Organization, and if not, why?	Reference to key UN documents detailing the need to incorporate principles related to inclusivity, gender, youth and sustainable development into UN engagements.

IV. Conclusions

Each assessment should include a set of conclusions based on the above analysis. These can describe what worked particularly well in an intervention, and/or what inhibited success. To the extent possible, these conclusions should be generalizable for use by envoys in other conflict settings, and for the development of policy guidance by DPA. The Policy Paper produced as part of this project synthesizes the approaches and settings that have tended to produce successful preventive diplomacy in other cases to date. Some of the most important questions to ask include:

Questions	Examples
What were the major causes of "success," "partial success" and/or "failure" in this case? How much was within the UN's control/influence?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Malawi intervention was effective in large part because the parties were willing to accept the UN mediation role. This was helped by the UN choice of envoy. 2. The southern Sudan referendum took place without violence in large part because the international community and AU were united behind it. The UN played an important role in building and maintaining that unity.
What were the key elements of the UN's strategy that worked? Which ones did not?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The UN's approach of supporting the AU in mediating the post-referendum issues in the Southern Sudan case proved effective, and likely could not have been UN-led in this case. 2. The decision to create a standing International Support Group for Lebanon worked to unify key actors at critical moments. 3. The UN's approach of conducting broad consultations before pushing for a process in Yemen was effective. 4. The inclusion of security sector reform in the Guinea 2010 mediated agreement gave reassurances to the opposition, and also began to link the intervention with longer-term governance issues.
What are the major lessons to be drawn from the case?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In cases with high sovereignty barriers, adopting a discreet approach and/or supporting other lead actors may be the most effective UN approach (e.g. southern Sudan). 2. Where the risk of miscommunication between conflict parties is very high, the UN's role in impartial messaging can be effective (e.g. Lebanon Blue Line case). 3. Building and maintaining a unified Security Council position is crucial to success (in all cases considered).
What, if any, recommendations could be considered when planning a future engagement of this kind?	See Policy Paper for a range of recommendations based on the cases considered.

Endnotes

Cover Image: Afghanistan Observes 2007 International Peace Day. UN Photo/ Helena Mulkerns.

- * This Assessment Framework was produced as part of a UK-funded project entitled What Works in Conflict Prevention: Building on Good Practice. The lead author of the Framework was Adam Day, Senior Policy Advisor with UNU-CPR. It was developed based on joint research with Dr. Rebecca Brubaker of CPR; Dr. Laurie Nathan, Visiting Fellow at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies; and Joao Honwana, former Director at the UN Department of Political Affairs.
- 1 Secretary-General, in First Address to Security Council Since Taking Office, Sets Restoring Trust, Preventing Crises as United Nations Priorities, SC/12673, 10 January 2017.
 - 2 "Preventive Diplomacy: delivering results," Report of the Secretary General, 2011 ("We know when preventive diplomacy is effective, but proving this empirically is difficult").
 - 3 See OECD "Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities," 2008, pg. 14 (noting the lack of baseline data and difficulties in attribution as challenges in measuring conflict prevention); see also World Bank, Conducting Quality Impact Evaluations Under Budget, Time and Data Constraints, 2006.
 - 4 Center on International Cooperation Assessment Tool, 2011 (on file).
 - 5 "Valuing Peace: Delivering and Demonstrating Mediation Results," HD Centre, November 2017.
 - 6 World Bank, "Conflict Assessment Framework," 2005 (noting that conflict is inherent in all societies, but the moment when conflict transitions into violence represents the key watershed for interventions).
 - 7 In the expert workshop in January 2018, participants debated whether a third function of the Assessment Framework should be as a communication tool for the UN, especially given that the overall approach of the project was to focus on and communicate the UN's successful preventive diplomacy engagements. However, within the workshop and in subsequent discussions with DPA, it became clear that the primary function of the Framework should be to guide a rigorous analysis of the UN's diplomatic interventions, to understand the impact of the actions and build a knowledge base. A second function would be to provide the material for communications (hence the focus within the Framework on compelling narrative).
 - 8 Teresa Whitfield, "Good Offices and Groups of Friends", in Secretary or General? The UN Secretary-General in World Politics, ed. Simon Chesterman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 87: "The concept of good offices is not itself mentioned in the UN Charter. It is, perhaps, implied within Article 33(1) [...], especially if read in conjunction with Article 99, which provides that the Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which, in his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. As the phrase has come to be used within the United Nations, it can, however, very helpfully mean almost anything."
 - 9 Peacekeeping missions have Security Council mandates, translated into General Assembly-approved budgets, with Results-Based Budgetary frameworks to measure progress.
 - 10 See, Indicators and a Monitoring Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals, available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=2013&menu=35>.
 - 11 See, e.g., Report of the Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) of the Response to the Crisis in South Sudan, available at https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_92844.html (pointing to agreed standards of evaluating UN humanitarian action); c.f., Ramalingam, Mitchell, Borton, & Smart, "Counting what counts: performance and effectiveness in the humanitarian sector," 2009 (arguing that a lack of universal measurements for humanitarian action impedes assessments).
 - 12 Cited in Adam Roberts and Benedict Kingsbury, eds., United Nations, Divided World: The UN's Roles in International Relations (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988).
 - 13 Cohen, Nissim, "Field research in conflict environments: Methodological challenges and snowball sampling," Journal of Peace Research, 2011; Bush, Kenneth, "Evaluation in Conflict Zones: Methodological and Ethical Challenges," Journal of Peacebuilding and Development, 2013; Corlazzoli, Vanessa, "Back to Basics A Compilation of Best Practices in Design, Monitoring & Evaluation in Fragile and Conflict-affected Environments," DFID, 2013; World Bank, Conducting Quality Impact Evaluations Under Budget, Time and Data Constraints, 2006.
 - 14 E.g., World Bank Development Reports, Small Arms Survey, SIPRI.
 - 15 See, e.g., "Monitoring and Evaluation in stabilization interventions" Technical Report, RAND Europe 2011 (underscoring the crucial importance of local perceptions in assessing interventions).
 - 16 See, e.g., World Bank, Conducting Quality Impact Evaluations Under Budget, Time and Data Constraints, 2006.
 - 17 See, e.g. Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, A/RES/68/303 (2014).
 - 18 Rachel Kleinfeld, Improving Development Aid Design and Evaluation: Plan for Sailboats, Not Trains (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015). See also the 2011 CIC assessment framework which suggests, "any claim using counterfactual arguments must be able to demonstrate that a broad range of diverse stakeholders share the proposed perspective . . . this is one area where a 'majority opinion' approach is for now the best approximation of an unknown past or future."
 - 19 See, e.g., Hartzell, Caroline. 1999. "Explaining the Stability of Negotiated Settlements to Intrastate Wars." The Journal of Conflict Resolution 43(1): 3-22; see also, Hartzell, Caroline, Matthew Hoddie and Donald Rothchild, "Stabilizing the

- Peace after Civil War: An Investigation of Some Key Variables.," International Organization (2001) 183-208; see also, Tull, Denis and Andreas Mehler., "The hidden costs of power-sharing: Reproducing insurgent violence in Africa," African Affairs 104(416): 375-398; see also, Jarstad, Anna and Desirée Nilsson, "From Words to Deeds: The Implementation of Power-Sharing Pacts in Peace Accords," Conflict Management and Peace Science 25 (2008) 206-223.
- 20 See, e.g., Walter, Barbara, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (2002) (discussing the difficulties in third-party brokering of power-sharing deals); see also, Tull, Denis and Andreas Mehler. "The hidden costs of power-sharing: Reproducing insurgent violence in Africa", African Affairs 104(416): 375-398 (warning that institutionalizing power-sharing in civil wars can create perverse incentives, including sending a message that violence is a viable route to power).
- 21 *Pathways to Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, World Bank/UN 2017. See also, Nathan, "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: The Structural Causes of Crisis and Violence in Africa," *Peace and Change*, (2002).
- 22 S/RES/2282 (2016).
- 23 World Development Report 2011, pg 120, available at https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf.
- 24 Some of the relevant literature discussing sustainable interventions includes, Wagner, Robert, "The Causes of Peace." In Roy Licklider (ed). *Stop the Killing: How Civil Wars End*. New York: New York University Press, 2003, pp. 235–268 (arguing that civil wars ending in negotiated settlements are more likely to result in renewed violent conflict than those ending in decisive victory); see also, Quinn, J Michael, T David Mason & Mehmet Gurses, "Sustaining the peace: Determinants of civil war recurrence," *International Interactions* 33 (2007) 167–193 (arguing that conflicts ending in rebel victory tend to hold more than those where rebels lose, in part because post-war stability relies on the legitimacy of the victor in the eyes of the population); see also, OECD, "From power struggles to Sustainable Peace: Understanding Political Settlements," (2011) (noting that peace negotiators "are faced with only modest incentives to adopt a long-term perspective").
- 25 "An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peace-making and peace-keeping" (A/47/277 - S/24111), 17 June 1992.
- 26 See, e.g. OECD States of Fragility Report: Understanding Violence, 2016, available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/states-of-fragility-2016-9789264267213-en.htm> (examining a range of violence that does not fall easily into the term "conflict," and describing the ways in which deeply embedded forms of violence can permeate a society).
- 27 This project recognizes that there are also a wide range of different forms of violence in the preventive diplomacy context. For example, "competitive violence" arises in disputes over political power and resources, whereas "permissive violence" tends to arise where the state is unable to monopolize control over force in a setting. While it is beyond the scope of this study to delve into these forms of violence, it is worth noting that a differentiated approach to different forms of violence will help the initial analysis of risks. See unpublished literature review by Patrick Meehan for DFID's Stabilisation Unit, "What are the key factors that affect the security and sustaining of an initial deal to reduce levels of armed conflict?"
- 28 Questions about measuring causality and attribution are also the subject of major conflict resolution debates in academia. Some pieces on this subject include: Cramer, Christopher, Jonathan Goodhand and Robert Morris, "Evidence Synthesis: What interventions have been effective in preventing or mitigating armed violence in developing and middle-income countries?" London: Department for International Development (2016); Hartzell, Caroline, Matthew Hoddie and Donald Rothchild, "Stabilizing the Peace after Civil War: An Investigation of Some Key Variables," *International Organization* 55 (2011) 183-208.
- 29 UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (2016); see also, *Pathways to Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, World Bank/UN 2017.
- 30 Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, A/RES/68/303 (2014).
- 31 *Pathways to Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, World Bank/UN 2017.
- 32 E.g. Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Preventing Deadly Conflict. Final Report*, New York: Carnegie Corporation (2007); Annan, Kofi, "Toward a Culture of Prevention: Statements by the Secretary-General of the United Nations," New York: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict (1999); Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse, 1999, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Cambridge: Polity; Lund, Michael, *Preventing Violent Conflicts: Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy*, Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace (1997).
- 33 See, Day, Adam, Alexandra Pichler Fong, *Diplomacy and Good Offices in the Prevention of Conflict*, A Thematic Paper for the World Bank/UN Study on Conflict Prevention, August 2017.
- 34 See, e.g., Richard Gowan et al., "Back to Basics: The UN and Crisis Diplomacy in an Age of Strategic Uncertainty," New York University Center on International Cooperation, July 2010 (arguing for a limited approach to preventive diplomacy because "structural prevention can risk slipping into ever more over-ambitious goals and rhetoric, becoming a reform program for states and societies at high risk of violence").
- 35 There is a growing consensus within the expert community on the need to treat conflict settings as complex. For a fuller description of the applicability of complexity theory to peace operations and other conflict-related interventions, see, Brusset, Emery, Cedric de Coning and Bryn Hughes, eds. *Complexity Thinking for Peacebuilding Practice and Evaluation*.

- London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017; see also, Rachel Kleinfeld, "Improving Development Aid Design and Evaluation: Plan for Sailboats, Not Trains" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015).
- 36 See the CIC 2011 Assessment Framework, focusing largely on effectiveness.
- 37 The Nigeria case study flags this risk in evaluating the UN's role in the 2015 elections.
- 38 For further work on the difficulty of attribution in such settings, see World Bank, *Conducting Quality Impact Evaluations Under Budget, Time and Data Constraints*, 2006.
- 39 The 2011 CIC Assessment Framework suggested that external consultants would be ideal, but acknowledged that the most likely course of action by DPA would be to use UN staff.
- 40 Other limitations of external evaluations are discussed in "Valuing Peace: Delivering and Demonstrating Mediation Results," HD Centre, November 2017.
- 41 For a fuller description of the peer review process of HDC, see "Valuing Peace: Delivering and Demonstrating Mediation Results," HD Centre, November 2017.
- 42 On 24 January 2018, CPR and its partners convened a workshop where the preliminary findings of the case studies, a draft policy paper, and this draft assessment framework were reviewed by experts within and outside the UN.
- 43 "Valuing Peace: Delivering and Demonstrating Mediation Results," HD Centre, November 2017. See also, Cedric de Coning, "Adaptive Peacebuilding," in *International Affairs*, Oxford, February 2018, available at <https://academic.oup.com/ia/advance-article/doi/10.1093/ia/iix251/4851911>.
- 44 One expert in the January 2018 suggested that researchers and best-practice-oriented staff should be embedded in the teams supporting UN envoys engaged in preventive diplomacy.
- 45 World Bank Conflict Assessment Framework, available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INT/TCPR/214574-1112883508044/20657757/CAFApril2005.pdf>.
- 46 DFID *Conducting Conflict Assessment: Guidance Note*, 200; USAID: *Conflict Vulnerability Analysis*, available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnady739.pdf.
- 47 E.g., UNDP's *Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis Tool*, available at <https://undg.org/document/conflict-and-development-analysis-tool/>; UNSSC, *Conflict Analysis for Prioritization Tool* (2009), available at <http://www.unssc.org/home/themes/peace-and-security/e-learning-0>. For a comprehensive list of conflict assessment frameworks, see <http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/Articles/List-of-Frameworks-for-Conflict-Analysis>.
- 48 United Nations Conflict Analysis Practice Note, May 2016, available at <https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Conflict-Analysis-Practice-Note-13-May-2016-Version.pdf>.
- 49 The recommendation to use the term "context analysis" was made during the expert workshop in January 2018.
- 50 For the iceberg diagram, see, United Nations Conflict Analysis Practice Note, May 2016, available at <https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Conflict-Analysis-Practice-Note-13-May-2016-Version.pdf>.
- 51 There is a potential tension between this elite-focused approach and the widely accepted principle of inclusivity in UN mediation. However, for the purposes of this Framework, it is recognized that the bulk of UN preventive diplomatic mandates are focused on elite bargains.
- 52 The "engine room" metaphor is discussed in detail in the Policy Paper produced in this project.
- 53 E.g. USAID's *Conflict Assessment Framework*, available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnady739.pdf; SIDA's *Practice Guide to Power Analyses*, available at http://www.sida.se/contentassets/83f0232c5404440082c9762ba3107d55/pow-er-analysis-a-practical-guide_3704.pdf.
- 54 The term "theory of change" is used across a wide range of assessment approaches, including OECD's, the World Bank and the 2011 CIC assessment framework. We note that in many cases the so-called "theory of change" is less of a theory and more of a logic of causality. While we here make reference to the term "theory of change," we emphasize that it is the logic of causality—what contributed to the key decisions—that is of interest here.
- 55 See OECD "Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities," 2008 (distinguishing between theory failure and implementation failure). This is discussed in more detail in the section on assessing failure below.
- 56 Similarly, in the case of Malawi in 2011-12, a premise was the ability of moderate voices to directly influence the opposition is necessary for the parties to avoid a return to violence.
- 57 World Bank, *Conducting Quality Impact Evaluations Under Budget, Time and Data Constraints*, 2006 (noting the lack of data as a key constraint in establishing the counter-factual argument).
- 58 E.g. in the lead up to the Southern Sudan Referendum, the UN conducted extensive scenario-based planning, which offered the most likely outcomes if the referendum failed. These were used to inform the counter-factual.
- 59 See, CIC 2011 Framework ("Given the costs and complexities of purely mathematical solutions to the question, this is one area where a "majority opinion" approach is for now the best approximation of an unknown past or future").
- 60 There is a tendency within the UN to rely implicitly on the concept of *ceteris paribus*, meaning "all other things remain the same." See Bryn Hughes, "Thawing *Ceteris Paribus*: the Move to a Complex Systems Lens," in *Complexity Thinking for Peacebuilding Practice and Evaluation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. Looking at a standard UN results-based approach, the success of an intervention will be measured in terms of whether a given input achieved the related out-

come, which is assumed to have contributed to the desired result on the ground. All other factors remain the same, or are considered as “external” to the measurement. A typical RBB for a peace operation will have an “external factors” section which lists the various issues that could affect the success of the intervention. These can include political will of the actors, socio-economic shifts, willingness of rebel groups to accede to processes. The point of this assessment is to recognize that these “external” factors are anything but, they are in fact the core drivers of escalation and de-escalation, and need to be at the heart of the analysis.

- 61 The CIC Assessment Framework dedicates a large portion of itself to this analysis.
- 62 Ian Martin’s assessment of his Nepal experience is instructive here, as he places emphasis on the need for the UN to be seen as legitimate by all stakeholders. See, Martin, Ian, *The United Nations and Support to Nepal’s Peace Process: The Role of the UN Mission in Nepal*, in *Nepal in Transition: From People’s War to Fragile Peace*, ed Sebastian von Einsiedel and David M. Malone, Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- 63 CIC Assessment Framework, 2011.
- 64 See, OECD “Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities,” 2008, pg. 27 (describing the hierarchy of evaluation types, from system-wide to single agency/project).
- 65 We note that support to existing domestic initiatives can be particularly important in many cases as well.
- 66 Though the Malawi case study notes that internal UN coordination issues did play an important role in the subsequent efforts to sustain the national dialogue process.
- 67 The Yemen case is perhaps the most obvious example, where two years after a successful diplomatic effort, the country fell into violent conflict of precisely the sort that had been avoided in 2011. The Lebanon case underlines a similar issue, where short-term efforts to prevent a Hizbullah/Israel confrontation did not address the looming risks of posed by Hizbullah’s arms in the country.
- 68 <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55935#.WlcK6q6WaUk>.
- 69 See, e.g., Jane Boulden, *Responding to Conflict in Africa* (Palgrave, 2013) (“neither the well-intentioned efforts of the UN nor a propitious regional environment can substitute for meaningful domestic reforms in nation-building”).
- 70 Richard Gowan et al., “Back to Basics: The UN and Crisis Diplomacy in an Age of Strategic Uncertainty”, New York University Center on International Cooperation, July 2010 (“structural prevention can risk slipping into ever more over-ambitious goals and rhetoric, becoming a reform program for states and societies at high risk of violence”).
- 71 See, Day, Adam and Sascha Pichler-Fong, “Diplomacy and Good Offices in Prevention of Conflict,” A Thematic Paper for the United Nations - World Bank Study on Conflict Prevention, 2017, available at <https://i.unu.edu/media/cpr.unu.edu/attachment/2577/DiplomacyGoodOfficesinPreventionofConflict-Aug-2017.pdf>. See also the Nigeria case study produced as part of this project, which distinguishes between structural prevention and dynamic prevention.
- 72 E.g., *Pathways to Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, World Bank/UN 2017; UN Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediating Strategies, 2004, available at <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/1.%20English%20-GIMS.pdf>; General Assembly Declaration on the Promotion Among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples, A/RES/20/2037 (1965); Peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2012/746 (2012) (requiring that approaches to peacebuilding be guided by the principle of inclusivity, including with regard to youth and women); [Secretary-General’s 2018 report on Sustaining Peace forthcoming].
- 73 See OECD “Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities,” 2008 (distinguishing between theory failure and implementation failure).
- 74 For one view on the theory failure of the international community, see, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syrian-civil-war-five-years-on-2011-bashar-al-assad-isis-iran-conflict-a6929186.html>.
- 75 <http://dpanet.un.org/UNHQ/SitePages/knowledgesharing.aspx>.
- 76 UNU-CPR would recommend the following cases: Syria (2011-present); South Sudan (2013); Burkina Faso (2015); Comoros (2016); and potentially the ongoing political efforts in the DRC around the electoral crisis.