

At a Glance

AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL BY THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY: IMPLEMENTING THE THIRD PILLAR OF THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

Preventive diplomacy allows for the early and peaceful resolution of conflict

Within the RtoP framework, preventive diplomacy offers a set of tools to be used on a case-by-case basis by a wide range of actors to peacefully respond to threats and occurrences of mass atrocities by facilitating political solutions. **Quiet diplomacy and engagement behind the scenes** gives all parties an opportunity to participate in dialogue outside the international spotlight and on their own terms. **Mediation**, often led by appointed diplomats or special envoys, allows for encouragement from the international community to build political will for peaceful settlement if parties are reluctant to negotiate. Other important tools include **political missions**, which are civilian-led and can facilitate dialogue to prevent escalating threats or assist in rebuilding efforts such as inclusive governance or reconciliation; and **peacekeeping missions**, which incorporate preventive diplomacy into their security-based mandates and offer political support to encourage peaceful conflict resolution.

The international community has worked to strengthen prevention, devoting particular attention to diplomatic tools beginning in 1992 with a landmark report from the UN Secretary-General (UNSG), *An Agenda for Peace*. Despite some Member States' concern that measures can infringe on sovereignty, there has been increased recognition of the importance of diplomatic tools in prevention and effort to address operational challenges. Between 2007 and 2011, the UN Security Council, through debates, informal dialogues and presidential statements (S/PRST/2007/31; S/PRST/2010/14 and 18; S/PRST/2011/18), has supported preventive diplomacy as a method of minimizing the human and economic toll in protecting populations and underlined the need to strengthen the necessary tools, capacity of and coherence between all actors. The UN General Assembly made the peaceful settlement of disputes a priority area in 2011, adopting a Resolution on strengthening the role of mediation (A/RES/65/283). These discussions have increased efforts to enhance cooperation and institutionalize dialogue, share information and react rapidly to situations, and strengthen diplomatic tools and processes. In 2011, the UNSG released a Report on Preventive Diplomacy (S/2011/552) elaborating further on the role of UN, regional and civil society actors and critically assessing the operationalization of relevant tools.

Strengthening preventive diplomacy: early warning mechanisms, operational resources, sustainable solutions

Though these measures can save lives and prevent ongoing atrocities from escalating if employed early, these tools and their implementation still face challenges.

- Preventive diplomacy requires the **political will of disputing parties** to resolve conflicts through peaceful measures and to accept external assistance to facilitate these processes. This may involve building trust and creating political space for negotiation, through humanitarian assistance or preventive deployment, to reduce imminent threats of conflict.
- **Effective monitoring and early warning systems** are essential to react to situations in preventive stages. Though mechanisms exist in some regions and UN bodies, cooperation and communication between these instruments can be improved.
- Preventive diplomacy efforts must be given the **necessary financial and human resources** in a timely and predictable manner, requiring the political will of all actors to prioritize prevention and for states to coordinate in the provision of these resources.
- Diplomatic initiatives must be **sustainable**, and provide an opportunity for states to develop mechanisms to address root causes of conflict and resolve future disputes peacefully.

Diplomatic measures available to regional and international actors

Actors within the United Nations

Many UN bodies and offices contribute to preventive diplomacy by building consensus around and utilizing tools, and assessing best practices.

- **The Secretary-General** (SG) can implement his/her good offices to engage directly or appoint envoys to work with disputing parties and can pressure the Security Council to include at-risk situations in its agenda. This work is further enhanced by

THREE PILLAR FRAMEWORK OF THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon established the three-pillar framework of the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP, R2P), in his 2009 Report *Implementing the Responsibility to Protect*:

- **Pillar One:** The state bears the primary responsibility to protect their population from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.
- **Pillar Two:** The international community, i.e. the UN, regional organizations, governments and civil society, must assist states in fulfilling their protection obligations.
- **Pillar Three:** When a state manifestly fails to protect its population or is in fact the perpetrator of these crimes, the international community has a responsibility to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner to prevent or halt the commission of mass atrocities. Such action must be on a case-by-case basis using a broad range of political, economic, humanitarian, and should peaceful means prove inadequate, coercive measures, including the use of force as authorized by the Security Council and in accordance with the UN Charter.

monitoring efforts of UN officials, including the *Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect* and the *High Commissioner for Human Rights*.

- **The Department of Political Affairs (DPA)** provides technical assistance and expertise to missions through regional divisions and its *Mediation Support Unit*, established in 2008. The DPA also provides monthly “horizon-scanning” briefings to the Security Council to address at-risk situations.
- **The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC)** contributes to prevention efforts through post-conflict rebuilding.
- **The Security Council (SC)** is mandated to be ultimately responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. To effectively employ preventive diplomacy, the SC must become seized of a situation while diplomatic measures are available. The SC can also hold informal dialogues and *arria formula* meetings, and issue presidential statements to strengthen preventive efforts as well as establish working groups to address particular conflicts.
- **The General Assembly (GA)** can bring the attention of the SC to a conflict and make recommendations, including under the *Uniting for Peace* Resolution. The GA is responsible for creating an international environment conducive to prevention through normative development and can hold high-level meetings on preventive diplomacy tools.
- **Regional offices** can act as platforms for preventive diplomacy or support ongoing regional efforts to resolve a crisis. *Country teams* can assist if an office is not appropriately placed to address an emerging situation.

Regional and sub-regional arrangements

Regional and sub-regional organizations can prevent mass atrocities by providing necessary political will and operational support independently or in collaboration with the UN. The critical role of regional actors is illustrated in many cases:

- **The Pacific Island Forum** developed the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in 2003 to respond to ongoing humanitarian service failures and ethnic tensions in the country under the auspices of the *Biketawa Declaration* (2000), which outlined urgent measures to undertake in the event of an emerging crisis.
- **The High Commissioner for National Minorities in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)** is mandated to employ quiet diplomacy in a cooperative and confidential manner to prevent conflict. Amid escalating interethnic tensions in Kyrgyzstan, the High Commissioner issued an early warning in June 2010 requesting the OSCE provide urgent assistance and draw the attention of the UN Security Council.
- **The African Union (AU)** appointed former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2008 to lead the mediation process in Kenya following post-election violence with the support of the DPA’s Electoral Assistance Division. **The League of Arab States (LAS)** and UN later appointed Kofi Annan in 2012 to be their *Joint Special Envoy* to facilitate dialogue amid the ongoing crisis in Syria.
- **The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** led mediation efforts in 2009 and 2010 in Guinea, in cooperation with the AU and UN, during the country’s transition from military to constitutional rule.
- **The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** facilitated a political solution in Yemen following the government’s violent crack down on civilian protests in 2011.
- **The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)** created commissions to assist in efforts towards national unity in Bolivia and conduct an impartial investigation following the Pando Massacre in 2008.

Individual governments

Member States can work together and with civil society to develop effective national monitoring and oversight mechanisms, and can individually, or through like-minded groups (such as the Friends of Mediation), encourage relevant international and regional discourse and advocate for devoting greater resources to diplomatic initiatives.

Civil society actors

Civil society, including women’s rights and elders groups, think-tanks, media, the business community and other NGOs, can assist in facilitating early response by monitoring at-risk situations and alerting actors to potential crises. Furthermore, civil society involvement in humanitarian assistance and diplomatic processes can build trust and create political space to negotiate. Civil society, evaluating ongoing preventive efforts, can be a valuable resource for best practices and innovative tactics in peaceful prevention.

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INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

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The International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect convenes and collaborates with civil society, Member States, and regional and sub-regional organizations to continue close scrutiny of the consistent implementation of the third pillar and develop effective methods to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

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