



BUILDING BRIDGES & PREVENTING CONFLICT

A MEMO TO THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

Long-term planning and cost-effective investments in conflict prevention can build bridges and help to stabilize communities, preventing the outbreak of disease, discontent, and violence. There are long term costs to a foreign policy guided by short-term goals, chronic under-funding of civilian agencies, and over-reliance on military responses. Too many resources go to short-term, crisis response strategies. Too few are appropriated to long term sustainable development strategies aiming at national and human security threats from terrorism, climate change, and growing inequality.

Conflict prevention is essential for U.S. foreign assistance goals to succeed. Without a safe and stable environment, all other development efforts are vulnerable. Too often they are destroyed by civil wars and regional conflicts. Tens of billions of dollars invested in development assistance have been lost due to violence. We believe a more robust commitment to and investment in conflict prevention and peacebuilding will save lives, and it will support effective long-term development and security.

Why Civil Society is Essential to U.S. Interests in Bridge Building and Preventing Conflict

We are part of a global network of civil society organizations on the front lines of conflict prevention. Civil society organizations (CSOs) play important roles in conflict prevention, stabilization, reconstruction and peacebuilding. CSOs lay foundations for development, human rights, sustainable environments, and good governance. We facilitate dialogue and promote tolerance between groups. Our networks provide early warning for impending violence and support transitional justice and security sector reform.

Currently, U.S. policymakers do not take sufficient advantage of the skills and expertise of civil society organizations in conflict prevention. Our unique perspectives on multi-stakeholder processes are rarely connected to assessment procedures and policy making. In countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, such collaboration could have helped government agencies understand local communities and anticipate what kinds of policies might lead to prevention or reduction in violent conflict rather than to escalation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 STRATEGY: Fully integrate conflict prevention into U.S. strategy. Conflict prevention addresses the root causes of threats from terrorism, climate change, disease, poverty, and economic inequality.

- **Design and integrate a sustainable development strategy** that will foster a strong smart power approach with US civilian agencies.
- **Prioritize support for sustainable and comprehensive peace processes** as a key component of U.S. global leadership to prevent and solve conflicts.

2 COORDINATION: Reorganize the U.S. government to support conflict prevention by building an interagency mechanism for allocating resources and designing coherent policies. Foster a “whole of community” approach that includes civil society in the interagency process.

- **Create a high-level Civil Society Liaison Office** for interagency efforts to interface with local and global civil society efforts at conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Currently there are no institutional mechanisms for including civil society organizations in conflict assessment and policy planning. This Liaison Officer would secure the profile of civil society efforts within the interagency security policymaking process.
- **Integrate early warning of conflict systems** and identify “trigger mechanisms” that would convene inter-agency planners to develop early response efforts.

3 FUNDING: Fund a diplomatic and development surge. U.S. security interests rest increasingly on soft and smart power approaches that rely on strong, well-resourced civilian agencies. Increase resources and budget flexibility for the civilian agencies conducting conflict prevention, stabilization and peacebuilding.

- **Establish a Conflict Prevention and Stabilization Fund** available to civilian agencies or inter-agency civil-military efforts. It could start by encouraging Congress to change the current DOD-controlled 1207 funds into ongoing funding of the State Department-led Civilian Stabilization Initiative. This could be a pilot effort for a future Unified Security Budget. An integration of the foreign assistance (150) account and military budget (050) account into a Unified Security Budget would allow greater funding for the civilian agencies and a more coherent planning process for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- **Expand USAID’s Conflict Management and Mitigation** office to allow for greater integrated programming that builds bridges while fostering sustainable development. Encourage USAID to work with small and medium-sized NGOs that have experience on the ground in conflict regions, rather than only working through large DC-based subcontractors.

4 TRAINING: Ensure broader understanding of principles of conflict prevention throughout the U.S. government.

- Require training in principled negotiation** and conflict resolution for all Foreign Service Officers, in addition to expanding their cross-cultural communication training.
- **Invest more resources** in the cost-effective educational efforts of the U.S. Institute of Peace and other U.S. academic and training centers in conflict resolution.

Who Are We?

The **Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP)** is a U.S.-based network of non-governmental organizations working in applied conflict prevention and resolution around the world. The AfP supports collaborative action among governmental, nongovernmental, and intergovernmental organizations to prevent and resolve destructive conflicts.

The **3D Security Initiative** is a policy voice for civil society organizations fostering conflict prevention and peacebuilding investments and strategies on important public and foreign policy issues.

The **Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)** is a world-wide civil society-led network aiming to build a new international consensus on peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict.