

# Follow the Money: Investing in Crisis Prevention

## **What the Spending Patterns of Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the European Union Reveal About Strategies and Priorities**

By PHILIPP ROTMANN, MELISSA LI and SOFIE LILLI STOFFEL

---

STUDY  
**October 2021**

---

Who spends what to prevent which crises? And do these investments happen early enough? Based on open-source spending data between 2004 and 2019 and a review of six crises that saw timely early warnings, this study takes stock of international investments in crisis prevention efforts. In 2017, world leaders pledged to increase prevention spending, but we have found no evidence of real change. In fact, prevention spending remains far below the UN/World Bank targets. It is also scattershot: most country portfolios are too small to matter. For most case studies, we find that even blatant warning signs triggered no or very late reactions. But there are also positive exceptions, which inform our recommendations to governments, legislators, activists, and scholars who seek to make crisis prevention more effective.

## **Acknowledgments**

This study was a long time in the making, and many of our GPPi colleagues took part in discussions around this topic years before the three of us completed the research. We owe the largest intellectual debts to our GPPi colleagues Sarah Brockmeier and Sarah Bressan, as well as Gerrit Kurtz at the German Council on Foreign Relations (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik) for invaluable conceptual discussions and advice on how to best use the available data. Ilja Sperling was a key member of our team – he helped us conceptualizing how to visualize the data and built all the charts, maps and infographics. Sarah Bressan, Julia Friedrich, Gerrit Kurtz, Anton Peez, Jens Stappenbeck, Marie Wagner, and Jonas Wolff provided enormously helpful feedback to an earlier draft of the study, as did colleagues at the German ministries of foreign affairs and economic cooperation and development with whom we discussed our key findings prior to completing the study. Jonathan Grayson provided an excellent copyedit, and Amanda Pridmore, Sonya Sugrobova and Katharina Nachbar managed the typesetting and publication process. The PeaceLab project, financially supported by the German Federal Foreign Office, allowed us to complete this study.

For an interactive summary of our findings, visit: [followthemoney.gppi.net](https://followthemoney.gppi.net).

# Executive Summary

Who spends what to prevent which crises? Are these investments timely enough? Four years after UN Secretary-General António Guterres made prevention the leitmotif of the United Nations system, this study provides an initial stocktaking of investments in crisis prevention, based on detailed analysis of open-source spending data from 2004 to 2019. In 2004, Germany was the last of the current top donors to declare crisis prevention a major policy goal. The most recent year for which comprehensive investment data is available is 2019.

We develop two new approaches to understand how and where the key actors have invested money to prevent crises. The first approach estimates preventive investment as the portion of donors' declared spending toward peacebuilding and prevention that goes to countries with lower levels of "security fragility," as indicated by OECD data. The second approach identifies preventive investment by the timing of projects in relation to early warning in six case studies: Georgia (2004–08), Mali (2004–12), Myanmar (2010–17), Iraq (2010–13), Ukraine (2004–14), and Burkina Faso (2013–19).

## **Prevention is Politics, Which Costs Money**

Of course, preventing a crisis is primarily a political challenge. Key pieces of this – ministers making phone calls and trips, multilateral organizations signaling through statements and resolutions, etc. – are not visible in OECD spending data. The targeted advocacy campaigns and technical assistance projects that are counted as "civilian crisis prevention" could be the tip of an underlying political iceberg, or they could be window dressing by donors who want to avoid the hassle of real political engagement. Either way, they paint a picture of civilian investment in crisis prevention. Thousands of data points show how the biggest donors – Germany, the European Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom – practice crisis prevention, and point to the kinds of questions we should ask to learn how effective these investments are.

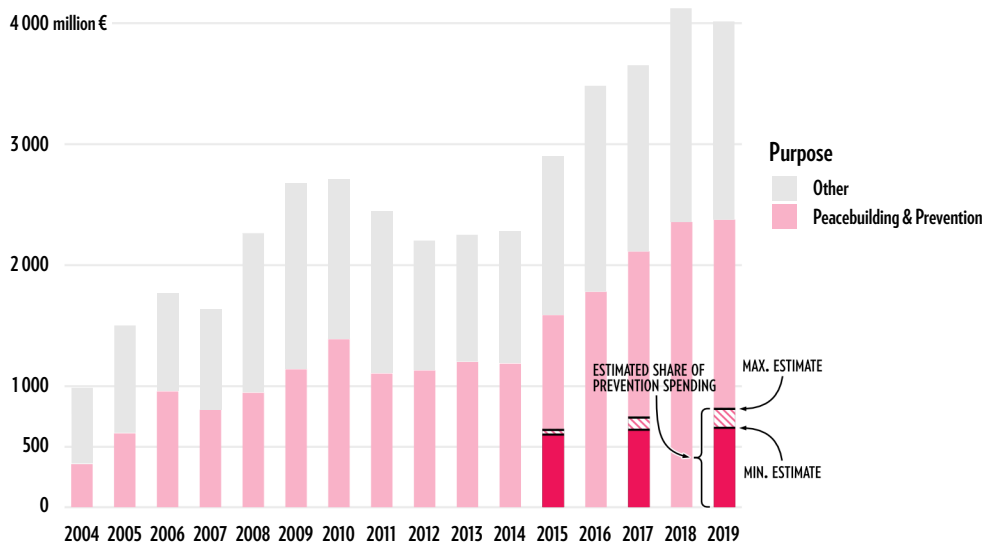
## **How We Estimate Investments in Prevention**

We use investment data from the OECD's Creditor Reporting System, which provides the most comprehensive, valid and internationally comparable dataset, despite some drawbacks: no investments are directly marked as preventive and the system is limited to "official development assistance" (ODA), which excludes the costs of diplomatic and military preventive action.

## Finding 1: No Growth in Global Preventive Investment Despite Commitments at the UN

We find no evidence that global investment in prevention has grown significantly since world leaders signed up in 2017 to support the UN Secretary-General’s pledge to make prevention the priority. According to our latest figures for 2019, investments for peacebuilding and prevention stood at €2.4 billion. For the same year, our “security fragility” proxy provides us with an estimated range of €650–820 million for global ODA-compliant investment in prevention. This is only marginally higher than our estimates for 2015 and 2017 (Figure 1). In comparison, a model used by the UN and World Bank puts the necessary amount of global preventive investment under ideal conditions – targeted at the most likely cases of success – at €2.1–4.2 billion per year.

Figure 1: Global ODA-Compliant Conflict Spending with Estimate for Investments in Prevention Alone, 2004–2019



Total amounts, in million EUR, gross disbursements, 2018 constant prices. Source: OECD’s Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

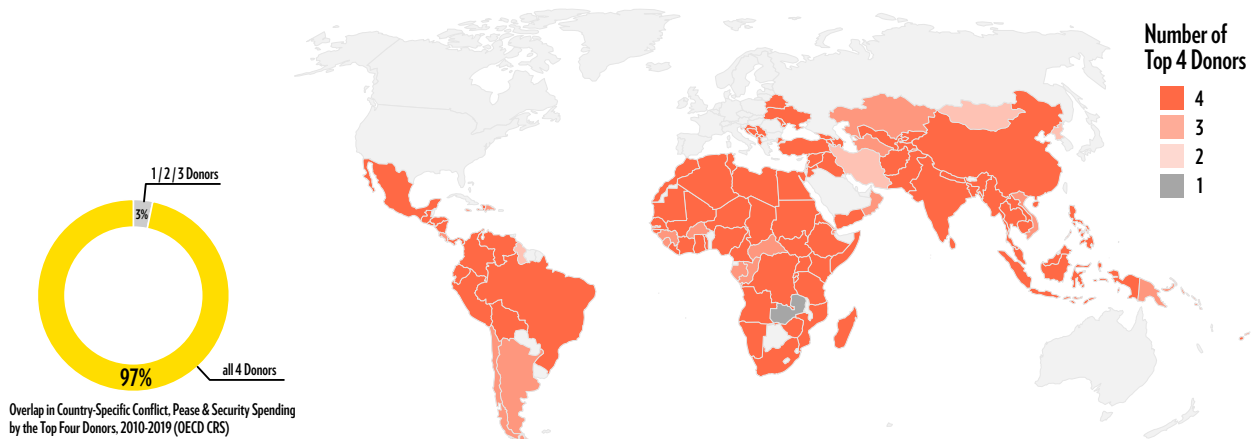
Important donors, most notably the UK, have even cut their spending in recent years, while Germany and the EU have driven a large portion of the most recent global expansion of investment. Germany is now by far the world’s largest peacebuilding and prevention donor in ODA terms. Recently, however, the relative share of investments in prevention – as opposed to acute crises – has been stable at best among the Top Four donors: in the case of the EU and US, sharply increasing investments in acute crisis management even reduced the shares of preventive investment.

## Finding 2: Most Preventive Investments are Scattershot, Unlike Recent Trends in Stabilization

We find that the Top Four donors favor breadth over depth in their preventive investments. Up to 71 partner countries per donor government are “covered” by country portfolios (Figure 2), most of which are below €1 million per donor.

This falls far short of the €85–850 million per country per year, focused on a handful of countries with good prospects for preventive success, that the UN-World Bank model finds necessary for effective prevention. Incidentally, this matches the order of magnitude we find for priority stabilization portfolios once prevention has failed. Preventive investment at the regional level is marginal in size.

Figure 2: Top Four Donors’ Country Portfolios for Peacebuilding and Prevention, Number of Donors Present per Country



Source: OECD’s Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

## Finding 3: Few Cases Show Attempts at Operational Prevention

For our case studies in early warning and preventive action, we selected crisis situations across the 2004–19 period in which early warning information was publicly available for at least a year before the main crisis, and in which externally funded political action toward prevention, including civilian crisis prevention projects covered by our investment metrics, was possible. Based on the structural risk indicators and operational warnings available at the time, for example through the publications of the International Crisis Group, we ask: did the Top Four donors react to warning information at all, as indicated by their project portfolios? Does the portfolio composition indicate that projects may have supported a less visible political strategy for crisis prevention? We found no indication of preventive action in Georgia before the 2008 war, in Mali

before the Tuareg rebellion of 2012, in Iraq before the Islamic State conquered large parts of the country in early 2014, and in Ukraine before the war that began in 2014. We do find that spending data indicates the possibility of limited preventive action in two other cases: in Myanmar in response to warnings and escalating cycles of mass atrocities between 2012 and 2017, and in Burkina Faso in response to escalating warnings and acts of violence since 2016. In these two cases, donors may have engaged in “operational prevention,” – that is, a targeted political strategy to prevent a type of crisis that was specifically anticipated based on the available warning signs. In none of our case studies, however, do we see the observable investments adding up to plausible attempts at “structural prevention,” the kind that is most consistent with most – particularly European – donors’ policy documents. Structural prevention would address the key structural risk factors comprehensively and consistently over sustainable periods of time to minimize the outbreak of crises that have not been specifically anticipated.

This study focuses solely on financial investment patterns. While we occasionally found research that established the absence of political strategies for prevention (as with Georgia, see chapter 4.1), we did not comprehensively analyze each case for whether any donor had a political strategy for prevention in place, if it was plausible based on the available risk and warning information at the time, and if the funded projects were well designed. These questions would require access to internal government information and extensive qualitative analysis beyond the scope of this study. They are best addressed by systematic evaluations.

## Recommendations

For **governments** to become more effective actors in prevention, we recommend the following actions:

1. **Invest more in at-risk situations for which governments have developed plausible political strategies whose success is decisively aided by project support.** In the stabilization of acute crises, we see that stronger prioritization is possible due to a heightened sense of urgency as well as greater investment in identifying how to make a difference.
2. **Improve early warning/early action processes to provide the information necessary to persuade decision-makers to act in the most urgent and most feasible cases for preventive action.** In addition to identifying and ranking risk factors and their likelihood or plausibility, this requires much more attention to constructing diverse scenarios that may unfold in each at-risk situation, identifying situation-specific indicators to monitor in order to pick up on accelerated escalation, and building action options – political strategies – that are flexible enough to be adjusted across the range of plausible scenarios. Prevention projects will be part of such strategies in many, if not most, cases, particularly if the lead time for early warning is sufficient for new projects to be launched or existing projects to be adjusted toward crisis prevention, which typically takes between three and 12 months. Where extensive early warning/

early action procedures are in place, a well-designed evaluation can help identify how to best improve them.

3. **Learn why some political strategies have been more successful than others, and why some projects have been more successful in supporting political strategies.** This is best achieved by professionally evaluating past political strategies for preventing crises, including but – importantly – not limited to the project portfolios themselves. In addition, transparent reporting – with delays to protect ongoing prevention efforts – about financial investments and political engagement enables academia and civil society to provide independent analysis that supports this learning effort.

To **legislators, civil society activists and academics** who would like to support governments in becoming more effective at crisis prevention, we recommend the following action:

4. **Hold governments accountable not only for budgeting or reporting the highest amount of money for prevention, but for having a robust early warning system, for turning each serious warning into the best conceivable strategies for early action,** and for making a plausible preventive effort subject to independent external evaluation.

Further research is required to improve the metrics for preventive action – from political engagement to the types of investment data used in this study – to inform independent scholarship and effective evaluation.

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	3
<b>1. Where Does All the Money Go?</b>	9
<b>2. Concepts and Methodology</b>	14
<b>3. Aggregate Investment Patterns</b>	24
<b>4. Timing and Scale of Investments: Case Studies</b>	34
<b>5. Conclusions and Recommendations</b>	66

# 1. Where Does all the Money Go?

While crisis prevention is a darling in speeches at the UN, experts continuously wonder at the extent to which governments actually put their money where their mouth is. Members of the German Bundestag have been curious, too. A group of members of parliament from the Left party asked for details, and in response to their “minor parliamentary queries” (“*Kleine Anfragen*”), the government released hundreds of pages of project lists from 2004 to mid-2017. When we scraped the data, we were in for quite a surprise: these projects add up to more than €9 billion that the German government on its own claims to have invested in civilian crisis prevention over almost a decade and a half. In 2016 alone, the last full year for which the government released data, the projects added up to a whopping €2.3 billion.<sup>1</sup> By way of comparison, a UN-World Bank model estimates that effective crisis prevention would require between \$2.5–5 billion (€2.1–4.2 billion) global spending per year.<sup>2</sup> So, if a single wealthy donor government already matches the lower end of that range with their civilian investments alone, are we done? Is crisis prevention well funded and on the road to dramatic success?

This “9-billion-euro question” question began our inquiry: How much are the top donors actually spending on crisis prevention? Where does all that money go? Even in the absence of global impact evaluations, what does the data tell us about how donors allocate their investments to situations at risk?

For this purpose, we draw on different internationally comparable data sources. We use civilian spending data reported to the OECD as a proxy for preventive political engagement, much of which is difficult to observe or quantify. While analytically imprecise and hopefully just a first step toward increasing methodological sophistication, spending data is politically central: it is the main currency with which political parties, civil society and experts express their priority expectations for prevention, and by which political leaders try to enable more effective preventive action.

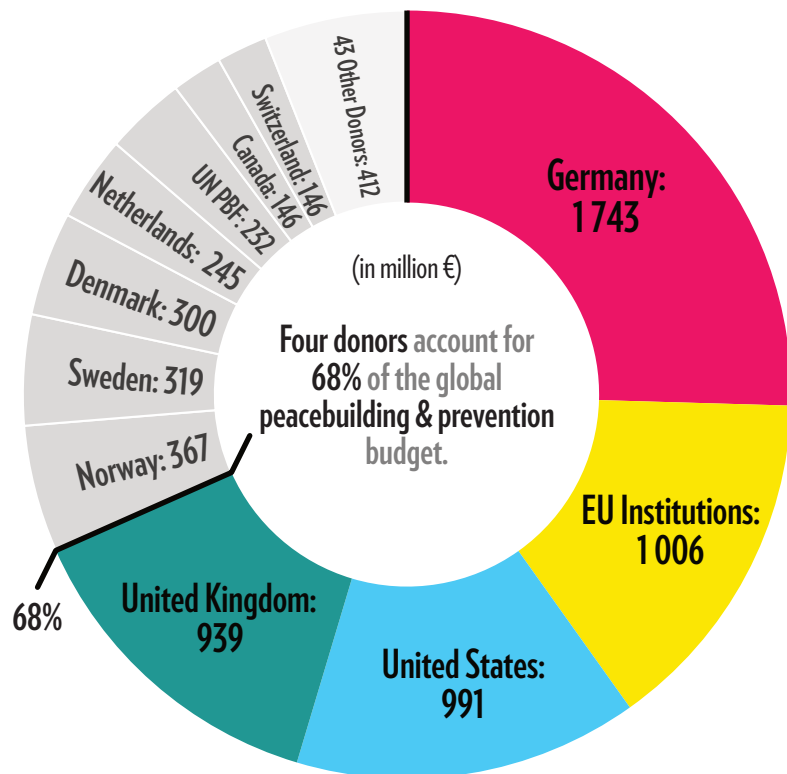
We were surprised to find no prior, similarly detailed quantitative analysis of how the money allocated to crisis prevention is spent.<sup>3</sup> After all, what began as political

- 
- 1 Deutscher Bundestag, „Drucksache 18/4626: Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Jan van Aken, Kathrin Vogler, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/4123 – Krisenprävention und Rüstungsexporte,“ 2014, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/awvaycv9>; *ibid.*, „Drucksache 18/2993, Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Jan van Aken, Kathrin Vogler, Wolfgang Gehrcke, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/2713 – Zivile Krisenprävention und Konfliktbearbeitung,“ 2014, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/h85vwzxb>; *ibid.*, „Drucksache 18/13598, Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Kathrin Vogler, Annette Groth, Andrej Hunko, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE. – Drucksache 18/13272 – Zivile Krisenprävention und Konfliktbearbeitung,“ 2017, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2k6j44tz>; figures in nominal Euros.
  - 2 United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, Washington, DC: 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/3u5zuttc>; Hannes Mueller, “How Much is Prevention Worth?,” The World Bank, September 2017, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/4ay7vz5e>.
  - 3 A rare exception of macro-level spending analysis is contained in Jonas Wolff, Antonia Witt, Jens Stappenbeck, Simone Schnabel, Anton Peez, Julian Junk, Melanie Coni-Zimmer, Ben Christian, Sophia Birchinger, and Felix Bethke, “Peace and Development 2020. An Analysis of Recent Experiences and Findings,” Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (HSFK/PRIF), 2020, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/49uuabhn>.

folklore in Sunday speeches and UN reports has become an investment portfolio worth billions of euros. Tax payers and policymakers alike should want to know where the money has gone, to what extent it has achieved the desired effect and how it could be more effective.

This study provides an initial mapping of how the largest investors in crisis prevention spend their money and serves as an invitation to conduct more research in a field that has attracted surprisingly little attention. Based on open-source data, we estimate official development assistance (ODA) spending in support of preventive action and investigate how the four largest investors – Germany, the European Union (EU), the United States (US), and the United Kingdom (UK) – allocate their portfolios. With the UK spending almost three times as much as Norway, the next on the list, the Top Four together account for two-thirds of global ODA spending for “civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution” in 2017–19 (Figure 3). While this is the most useful category for which there is cross-national, time series data available, our estimate focuses on just the prevention part of this category.

**Figure 3: Total Investment in Peacebuilding and Prevention by Donor, 2017–2019**



Total amounts, in million EUR, gross disbursements, 2018 constant prices. Source: OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

We complement this macro perspective with a series of country-level analyses of specific crises between 2004 and 2019, in which we compare the timing and scale of Top Four donor investments with available information on structural risk factors and early warning indicators: Georgia (2004–08), Mali (2004–12), Myanmar (2010–17), Iraq (2010–13), Ukraine (2004–14), and Burkina Faso (2013–19). With regard to Burkina Faso, we replace the UK with France in our analysis, because Paris played a much more relevant financial role in this case. As bookends for the study, we pick the years 2004, in which Germany was the last of the current top donors to declare crisis prevention a major policy goal,<sup>4</sup> and 2019, the most recent year for which comprehensive investment data is available.

We find that global investment in civilian, ODA-compliant support to preventive action remains far below the UN-World Bank goal. When he first took office as UN Secretary-General in 2017, António Guterres offered to steer the United Nations system toward a “whole new approach” of preventing conflicts rather than just cleaning up behind them. “Prevention is not merely a priority, it is *the* priority,” he told the UN Security Council in his first appearance on January 10, 2017.<sup>5</sup> He soon launched the landmark UN-World Bank study *Pathways for Peace* that popularized the estimate made by economist Hannes Mueller that an additional \$2.5–5 billion annual investment in conflict prevention was likely to prevent economic losses of \$150 billion per year after 15 years: “for every dollar for prevention, we’ll get \$16 in return,” as the slogan still goes in 2021.<sup>6</sup>

This prevention pledge flies in the face of most current wisdom. Violence is, in most cases, not cheap, and violent actors and their key supporters – including regional and global powers that fan the flames of conflict – do what they do in pursuit of interests more urgent to them than prevention is for policymakers in Berlin, Brussels, New York, Washington, or Beijing. Still, the UN-World Bank study makes a case that “prevention works. Many countries have successfully managed high-risk conflicts and avoided descents into violence.”<sup>7</sup> It rests its case on studies of 19 countries and territories around the world.<sup>8</sup>

For 2019, our best estimate for the grand total of investment across all donors globally is a range of €650–820 million, or between two-thirds and four-fifths of a

---

4 Deutsche Bundesregierung, „Aktionsplan Zivile Krisenprävention, Konfliktlösung und Friedenskonsolidierung,“ 2004, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/7j8ktayz>.

5 António Guterres, “Remarks to the Security Council Open Debate on ‘Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Conflict Prevention and Sustaining Peace’,” January 10, 2017, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/53ra7k7b>.

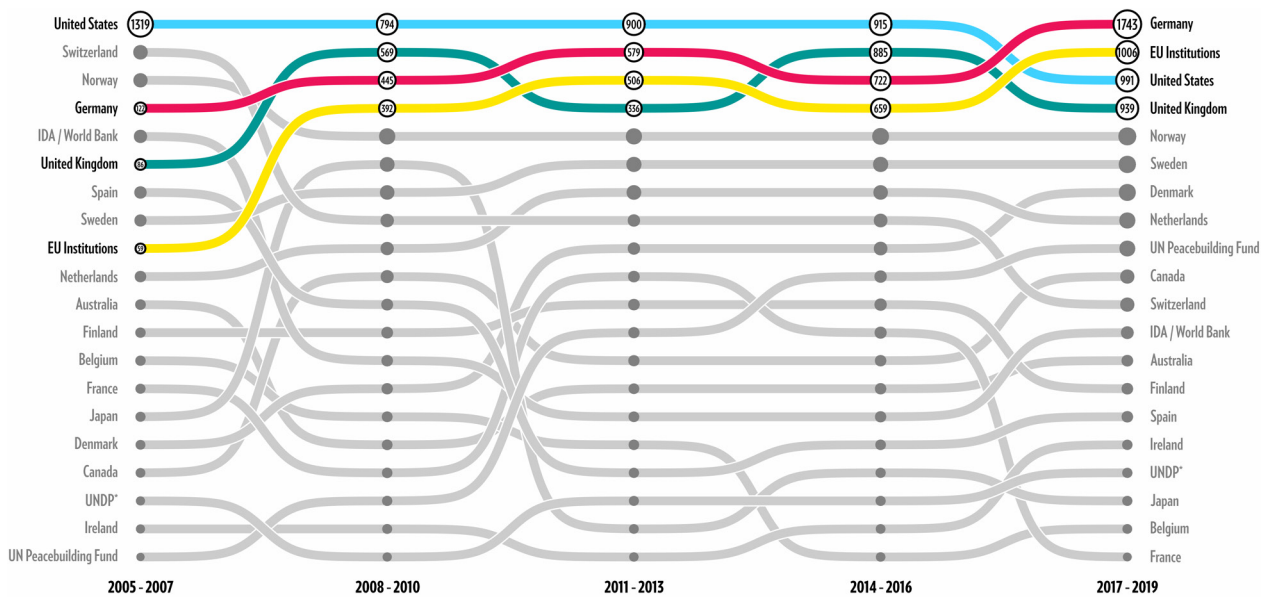
6 Heard most recently at an internal World Bank event in June 2021. For the study and Mueller’s paper, see fn. 3, above.

7 UN and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace*.

8 For the list of preventive success cases informing the *Pathways for Peace* study, see footnote 6 in the paper’s Executive Summary. For additional research on recent cases, see Sarah Brockmeier and Philipp Rotmann, *Krieg vor der Haustür: Die Gewalt in Europas Nachbarschaft und was wir dagegen tun können*, Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/5385f5s>; Philipp Rotmann and Cale Salih, “Conflict Prevention: Scoring Small Wins,” in Munich Young Leaders Anniversary Report, Munich: Körber Foundation and Munich Security Conference, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/yv62nky4>, as well as the publications from two projects at the UN University Centre for Policy Research, “Capturing UN Preventive Diplomacy Success: How and Why Does It Work?” (led by Adam Day and Rebecca Brubaker, <https://tinyurl.com/37rbprkh>) and “What Works in UN Resident Coordinator-Led Conflict Prevention: Lessons from the Field” (led by Sebastian von Einsiedel and Cale Salih, <https://tinyurl.com/33mu9ust>).

billion euros. This is about the same as in 2017, when global leaders pledged to further elevate the priority of prevention in support of Guterres’ agenda (see **Figure 1**, on page 4). This pledge has gone unfulfilled until now, except for efforts by Germany, which has massively increased its investments and taken the global lead in ODA for crisis prevention (**Figure 4**). Among the top donors, it is Germany whose civilian investments in crisis prevention and “fighting the root causes of displacement”<sup>9</sup> build on the widest super-majority across political camps, and thus the donor whose spending is most likely to keep growing regardless of electoral changes. As such, it falls to Berlin to provide global leadership on the many challenges facing the field.

**Figure 4: Top 20 Donors, Peacebuilding and Prevention, 2005–2019**



Total amounts, in million EUR, gross disbursements, 2018 constant prices. Source: OECD’s Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

The data shows that the four largest donors all invest in a scattershot way: the number of countries in which we find likely preventive spending is large, but most individual country and regional portfolios are very small. Within country portfolios, the timing and targeting of investments indicate that donors have only rarely reacted to serious warnings or tackled the issues that eventually triggered crises. Instead, they have usually acted upon the escalation of crises by pouring resources into acute crisis management and stabilization efforts. These actions come too late to prevent major violence and casualties, and is equally the case for all the top donors.

9 Commission on the Root Causes of Displacement, “Preventing Crises, Creating Prospects, Protecting People: Report by the Commission on the Root Causes of Displacement,” 2021, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/w6eavxd6>.

These findings should be understood as a serious warning sign and an urgent reason for donor governments, as well as legislators, civil society groups and academic experts, to look much more closely at the allocation of investments in crisis prevention. While more investment is needed, political leaders simply providing more funding and key investment choices to the same technical experts who are already hard-pressed in managing acute crisis response is unlikely to lead to more successful prevention.

Chapter 2 discusses the basic concepts of prevention, outlines our key methodological choices and challenges in counting prevention efforts accurately, and develops our two approaches for valid and useful estimates of preventive investment. Chapter 3 presents our findings at the macro level, using our first approach based on fragility scoring applied to global investment patterns across all donors and, in greater detail, to the portfolios of the Top Four: Germany, the EU, the US, and the UK. Chapter 4 turns to the country level and shows our second approach, based on investment timing applied to six case studies of crises in Georgia (2004–08), Mali (2004–12), Myanmar (2010–17), Iraq (2010–13), Ukraine (2004–14), and Burkina Faso (2013–19). Chapter 5 closes with recommendations for making crisis prevention more targeted and strategic.

# 2. Concepts and Methodology

Of course, it is very difficult to measure the effect of prevention on crises and violent conflict that have not broken out yet or that might have turned out even worse had preventive efforts not been made. The present project was not in a position to undertake a comprehensive impact evaluation of global crisis prevention efforts, and we know of no such mammoth endeavor.<sup>10</sup> Instead, for an initial empirical analysis of available open-source data, we develop two new approaches to understand how and where the key actors have actually invested money to prevent crises or conflict, and to invite other researchers to build on and challenge our approaches. The first approach estimates preventive action by its relation to “security fragility” based on OECD fragility data. The second approach looks closely into qualitative case studies analyzing preventive action by its timing in relation to early warning. Before we explain our approaches, we briefly conceptualize “crisis prevention” and explain the datasets we use in our analyses. At the end of this section, we assess the data quality and discuss other limitations.

## 2.1. What Are Donors Trying to Prevent?

Some governments and international organizations use the term “crisis prevention”; others use “conflict prevention.” At the level of analysis of this study, we choose to use the broader term “crisis prevention.” This directs attention to the fact that whether a situation is understood as a crisis and at which scale, how warning signs of future crises are interpreted, and whether preventive action is launched are political dynamics driven by more than just the objective nature of the risk and role of violence in the crisis. In practice, the governments and policymakers we study all maintain an understanding of “crisis” that is strongly related to violence or the threat of violence, but it is important to know that “crisis” is a political, not an analytical, category. In simple and harsh terms, the number of victims is not proportionate to the scale at which a situation is considered a crisis in Berlin, Washington, Brussels, or London.

In the German case, policymakers have gone so far as to formally enshrine this understanding in policy: in a 2017 cabinet decision, the government defined conflict as “essential for social change” and crises as emerging “when conflicts escalate to a point where violence is used or threatened. Crises are characterized by a close succession of events leading to a significant degree of human suffering and acutely threatening peace and security.”<sup>11</sup> Situations in which violence is “used or [even just] threatened” are what crisis prevention, German style, seeks to prevent.

---

10 The European Union is the only Top Four donor for whom we are aware of comprehensive evaluations in this field. For the most recent evaluation report, see Nicole Ball et al., “External Evaluation of EU’s Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (2013–2018): Final report,” Particip GmbH, 2020, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/bvv4b58x>.

11 Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, “Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace: Guidelines,” 2017, p.18, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2yaa4b8u>.

With minor differences, other key actors use similar conceptual approaches. The EU, in its *Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises* (2018), even combines the two concepts of conflict and crisis in the title and uses “conflict prevention” as an openly defined shorthand, along with a specific emphasis on atrocity prevention.<sup>12</sup> In the new US *Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability* (2020), “prevention refers to deliberate efforts to reduce fragility, strengthen institutions, and increase cohesion in states and regions to disrupt likely pathways to violent conflict, instability, or political subversion. Strategic Prevention can include efforts related to atrocity early warning and prevention, conflict prevention, and countering violent extremism.” The white paper uses “conflict” and “instability and large-scale violence” interchangeably and promises to “invest in both short-term efforts to mitigate escalating conflict risks and longer-term efforts to address underlying vulnerabilities of violent conflict and other large-scale violence.”<sup>13</sup> The UK’s recent *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (2021) uses very similar language around “conflict and instability,” but avoids the objective of prevention because it “will not be possible to prevent all conflicts through deterrence and building resilience.” It pledges, however, to place “greater emphasis on addressing the drivers of conflict (such as grievances, political marginalisation and criminal economies), atrocity prevention and strengthening fragile countries’ resilience to external interference.”<sup>14</sup>

## 2.2. Varieties of Preventive Action: Systemic, Structural and Operational

Research distinguishes three types of preventive action that go back to a study commissioned by the landmark Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict in 1997.<sup>15</sup> Its basic distinctions have organized the field ever since, despite some minor mutations of the labels used.

- **“Systemic” prevention** seeks to make the international system less likely to produce crises or violence, e.g., by strengthening international law and the multilateral order. As such, while fundamentally important, the concrete preventive impact of systemic prevention efforts is difficult, if not impossible, to identify empirically.
- **“Structural” prevention** seeks to address the root causes of conflict. Sometimes this is done very broadly, as when the reduction of global inequalities is considered

---

12 Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises*, 2018, annex to Council Document 5413/18, p.6, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/nu-jwzech>.

13 Government of the United States of America, “United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability,” 2020, p.7, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/28dy5mrn>.

14 Government of the United Kingdom, “Global Britain in a Competitive Age: Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy,” 2021, p.79, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/dneyrw7b>.

15 Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, “Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report,” 1997, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/pncv4zv6>.

part of structural, rather than systemic, prevention. But in other cases, it is done quite specifically, such as when the aim is to reduce the structural causes of conflict between farmers and herders in a particular country or region. Such disputes can be measured empirically, although the sheer scale of horizontal inequalities and social exclusion, along with the deep-seated structural incentives for maintaining them, are at an order of magnitude that dwarfs typical investment levels and time scales for expected returns.

- **“Operational” prevention** seeks to prevent imminent crises based on early warning. It is the most concrete type of action to implement and analyze, as there are specific actors whose interests in driving crises and conflict can be identified and who can be diplomatically engaged, deterred or, if necessary, fought. This all depends, of course, on the quality and timeliness of early warning and the corresponding ability to forge actionable strategies.<sup>16</sup>

Neither structural nor operational prevention are primarily understood as distinct types of action that can be broken down into “preventive activities” that fundamentally differ from peacebuilding or stabilization. The key difference is what the Carnegie Commission called a “culture of prevention.” In other words, “crisis prevention is not a collection of programmatic activities, but a matter of attitude” to intervene in the political bargaining over power, legitimacy and status with the goal of supporting some outcomes and preventing others.<sup>17</sup>

Crisis prevention is thus enormously ambitious. It will not work under every set of conditions, and it requires the largest possible set of tools to support the most constructive local actors. This means that it takes time, because many tools do not work quickly. From context analysis to project design and the deployment of staff, a civilian prevention project can easily take a year before it begins to impact the local situation. Although any kind of early warning is useful, serious efforts at operational prevention are likely to require between six and 24 months of lead time to mount preventive action against a distinct set of threats, such as violence around a planned election.<sup>18</sup> Structural prevention is likely to take much longer.

While the essential overlap between investments in systemic prevention and those in multilateralism or international law makes it impossible to distinguish between them or provide useful empirical metrics, investments in geographically specific structural and operational prevention can be reasonably independently observed and measured, at least in principle. Diplomatic engagement – including military-to-

---

16 Jane Hall and Alexander L. George, *The Warning-Response Problem and Missed Opportunities in Preventive Diplomacy*, New York: Carnegie, 1997; Alice Ackermann, “The Idea and Practice of Conflict Prevention,” *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 3 (2003): pp.339–347, doi:10.1177/0022343303040003006; Paul Stares, *Preventive Engagement: How America Can Avoid War, Stay Strong, and Keep the Peace*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2017; Charles T. Call and Susanna P. Campbell, “Is Prevention the Answer?,” *Daedalus* 147, no. 1 (2018): pp.64–77.

17 Gerrit Kurtz, “Debunking Six Myths on Conflict Prevention,” *Global Policy*, December 3, 2020, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/nf4eh4pv>.

18 See also scenario analysis to that effect summarized in Philipp Rotmann, Asena Baykal, Sarah Bressan, Johannes Gabriel, Andreas Forø Tollefsen and Siri Aas Rustad, “EU-LISTCO Deliverable 2.4 – Analysis of Cross-Cutting Findings and Lessons on Forecasting and Foresight,” unpublished paper compiled as part of the research project Europe’s External Action and the Dual Challenges of Limited Statehood and Contested Orders (EU-LISTCO), 2020, p. 19.

military and other contacts – is often difficult to observe from outside government and before internal archives are made available to historians. Military operations, in contrast, are almost impossible to hide, despite the trend among major powers to reduce transparency around their foreign deployments. Yet, we found civilian action – funding certain basic services, building capacity or critical infrastructure, facilitating dialogue, etc. – the most easily accessible type of preventive action, as donors conduct and report it openly as part of their official development assistance. This major part of structural and operational prevention is at the center of this study.

## 2.3. What to Count and How to Count It?

There are no internationally comparable datasets that track donor investments on prevention, let alone on either structural or operational prevention separately. The best available data that includes prevention spending is the OECD’s Creditor Reporting System (CRS). It collects self-reported spending data by OECD DAC members and several non-members that follow the same reporting rules to ensure comparability among donors’ efforts.<sup>19</sup> The spending data is reported on a disbursement or commitment basis. We based our analyses on disbursement data because we were interested in the specific timing of when the money was spent. Moreover, we use constant instead of current prices based on the value of the US Dollar in 2018 to make the disbursements comparable over time.<sup>20</sup>

Once the data is reported, the OECD statistical data collection team checks whether donors have played by the rules and, in this process, verifies and validates the data. This verification process reduces the risk that donors simply re-label projects according to their current political priorities to inflate the respective spending figures. Despite this process, we found some inconsistencies in the data that can most likely be traced back to different interpretations of the rule book, particularities of national data collection systems, or simple mistakes. The spending data is ODA-compliant and hence primarily focused on supporting the economic development and welfare of developing countries.<sup>21</sup> ODA money must be concessional and can only be spent in recipient countries on the DAC list, which the DAC revises every three years based on the World Bank’s list of all low- and middle-income countries and the UN’s list of Least Developed Countries.<sup>22</sup>

---

19 The list of DAC member countries is available at <https://www.oecd.org/dac/development-assistance-committee/> and non-DAC reporting countries can be found under <https://www.oecd.org/dac/dac-global-relations/non-dac-reporting.html>. For the common reporting rules, see Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Converged Statistical Reporting Directives for the Creditor Reporting System (CRS) and the Annual DAC Questionnaire*, Chapters 1-6, DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)44/FINAL, April 20, 2021, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2k55e4y6>.

20 After the data is published in the OECD’s CRS, the Secretariat can still make changes (e.g., when a data point needs to be corrected retrospectively), so the data used in this study might differ slightly from the current data in the CRS. More importantly, the Secretariat just recently updated the spending data based on 2019 constant prices. More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/nk5cwfp>.

21 In addition to ODA, the OECD’s CRS in principle also includes data on other official flows, equity investments and private development finance. All activities recorded as “civilian peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution” are ODA flows except for one equity investment of Germany in 2011. More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2wjf4mb6>.

22 “G8 members, EU members, and countries with a firm date for entry into the EU” are not eligible for ODA spending. More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/ud3ndwf4>.

When submitting data to the CRS, donors must assign a “purpose code” to every project. Projects with several purposes are to be reported with several purpose codes, along with a rough split between them (e.g., 50:50). Projects or shares of projects in which crisis prevention is the main goal are supposed to be assigned the purpose code “civilian peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution” (in the following, we use the shorthand “peacebuilding and prevention”),<sup>23</sup> which is part of the sector “conflict, peace and security.” However, these purpose codes are not defined in a mutually exclusive way. The other conflict-related purpose codes are “security system management and reform,” “participation in international peacekeeping operations,” “reintegration and SALW [small arms/light weapons] control,” “child soldiers (prevention and demobilization),” and “removal of land mines and explosive remnants of war.” While mine clearance – for all its preventive effect on human injury and death and provision of access to land and livelihoods – is unlikely to prevent a violent political crisis, any of the other purposes might well overlap with crisis prevention. Donors who subscribe to a broad understanding of structural prevention might even claim that almost any kind of development cooperation with countries at risk could contribute to preventing crises. However, according to donors’ own rules, the logic of the CRS is to split multi-purpose projects into shares and report a purpose code for each. Therefore, every donor singles out the respective share of a project that was designed for prevention purposes and reports it under the purpose code “civilian peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution.”

This makes the “conflict, peace and security” sector the best available way to filter for crisis-related investment, and its subordinate purpose code for “civilian peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution” – for all its limitations – the most precise off-the-shelf indicator for investments focused on the conflict cycle. Furthermore, the CRS data is openly available in a comparable way for every DAC donor, they are reasonably consistent over many years,<sup>24</sup> and they even provide basic timing data (start and end dates) and qualitative information (title, brief description) for every project, which is a good starting point for qualitative analysis.

These figures for peacebuilding and prevention have grown tremendously since 2004: from €356 million to €2.4 billion in 2019 – an increase of over 500% in 15 years. Needless to say, lumping peacebuilding and prevention together is not very precise, nor would most prevention actors agree that ODA alone provides a comprehensive measure of crisis prevention. Preventive military operations, for example, have been dramatically successful in North Macedonia (2001) and the Gambia (2017), to name

---

23 More specifically, the purpose code covers “support for civilian activities related to peace building, conflict prevention and resolution, including capacity building, monitoring, dialogue and information exchange. Bilateral participation in international civilian peace missions such as those conducted by the UN Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA) or the European Union (European Security and Defence Policy), and contributions to civilian peace funds or commissions (e.g. Peacebuilding Commission, Peacebuilding thematic window of the MDG achievement fund etc.). The contributions can take the form of financing or provision of equipment or civilian or military personnel (e.g., for training civilians).”

24 In 2016, the OECD DAC slightly changed the rules for reporting conflict, peace and security activities to allow for limited reporting on costs for military staff that undertake development-related tasks (e.g., human rights training). This change most likely did not greatly impact the spending figures for conflict, peace and security. More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/unk4jkw>.

just two important cases.<sup>25</sup> In terms of policy, even the German government, which is always strongly under pressure from pacifist groups pushing for a strict “primacy of civilian approaches,” has taken a very deliberate decision in line with a long series of UN resolutions to commit to a “primacy of politics” and a “priority of prevention” while relegating a “priority to civilian conflict resolution measures” to the very secondary category of “wherever possible.”<sup>26</sup>

Precise, internationally comparable metrics of comprehensive preventive action, however, do not exist – neither across the “three Ds” of diplomacy, development and defense, nor in purely civilian ways that would include official political engagement. At the same time, reality is imprecise: neither crises nor violent conflicts start and end neatly, nationwide, at precise dates. Outside of acute peacemaking, the available data looks quite similar regardless of whether a project aims at structural prevention or peacebuilding. To understand whether and to what extent the apparent growth of investment in civilian crisis prevention even exists and where the money in relation to warnings about crises has gone, the OECD data is not a bad starting point. For this study, we therefore develop two complementary approaches to estimate civilian investments in preventive action based on CRS data.

## 2.4. Our First Approach: Estimating Preventive Action by Its Relation to “Security Fragility”

The first approach builds on the fact that donors associate preventive action with low-violence contexts and stabilization with higher-violence contexts. Overwhelmingly, the countries and situations cited in donor publications (and by donor officials when asked about prevention) are those that do not experience massive breakdowns of security at the time at which preventive action is being considered, as the purpose is to avoid such breakdowns and the large-scale violence that usually follows them. Technically, this is a misleading simplification – it makes as much sense to prevent escalation, e.g., if there is a risk of genocide within an ongoing civil war – but the idea that prevention applies to the more “quiet” places is so powerful in policy practice that filtering recipient countries by levels of violence is a good analytical proxy for how donors practice prevention.

We operationalize this assumption by using the OECD’s “security fragility” metric, which is more precise than using only conflict-related deaths as a proxy for places where prevention has failed, as done in the prevention models for the UN-World Bank *Pathways for Peace* report.<sup>27</sup> Since 2005, the OECD has been publishing reports on fragile states and contexts on a biannual basis. In 2016, the OECD introduced a new multidimensional framework that distinguishes five dimensions of fragility: economic, environmental, political, security, and societal.<sup>28</sup> The *States of Fragility* reports classify

---

25 See, for example, Henryk J. Sokalski, *An Ounce of Prevention: Macedonia and the UN Experience in Preventive Diplomacy: Agendas, Policies, and Practices*, Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 2003; Brockmeier and Rotmann, *Krieg vor der Haustür*; Rebecca Brubaker and Dirk Druet, *Back from the Brink: A Comparative Study of UN Preventive Diplomacy in West and Central Africa*, New York: United Nations University, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/5dt9ywss>.

26 Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, “Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace: Guidelines,” pp. 57-58.

27 Mueller, “How Much is Prevention Worth?”

28 OECD, *States of Fragility*, 2016, p. 73, accessed August 17, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264267213-en>.

states in each dimension of fragility on a scale: 1 (severe), 2 (high), 3 (moderate), 4 (low), and 5 (minor).

To use this data to proxy how donors balance investments between prevention and acute crisis management, we looked at the security dimension that measures how vulnerable states are to violence, to what extent the situation is already violent, and the capacity of institutions to prevent and alleviate violence.<sup>29</sup> Since the rating of states in the security dimension only exists from 2015 onward, our analysis covers the years 2015, 2017 and 2019, using data published in reports dated 2016, 2018 and 2020, respectively. The scale of the fragility rating differed in these reports: the 2015 data is coded on a 1–7 scale, while more recent years are coded using a reduced 1–5 scale. We therefore adjusted the scale of the 2015 scoring to make the ratings comparable over time, which produced decimal numbers. With these scores, we then compiled two lists: (1) for countries with a “moderate” security situation (score = or >2.5) along with all recipient countries that are not considered fragile at all (“stable countries”); and (2) for countries with a “severe” security situation (score <2.5). The first list then covers the countries we estimate to be likely cases for prevention during that particular year, while for the second list of cases where the security situation was “severely fragile,” it would be too late for prevention and most spending is likely to focus on acute crisis management, stabilization or conflict resolution. This snapshot approach cannot distinguish prevention from recovery, so this metric is likely to overestimate donors’ civilian spending on prevention.

Also, donors do not allocate all spending to specific countries for which we can look up the level of violence: there are regional programs and contributions to global trust funds, large-scale evaluations and research programs reported only as an annual lump sum under the vague, leftover heading “bilateral, unspecified.” Here, “bilateral” is very much a misnomer: its purpose is to allow for expenditures that cannot be allocated to particular geographical areas, so their geographical targets are left “unspecified.” Germany uses this category the most among the Top Four donors. In some years, more than half of Berlin’s civilian crisis-related spending is coded in this opaque manner, and entire “global” programs – such as Germany’s “civil peace service” or the “zivik” program – are accounted for in this way, despite the fact that their activities are very clearly focused on specific countries or regions.<sup>30</sup>

To account for these two categories – “regional” and “unspecified” – in trying to isolate preventive from reactive spending, we develop two models that provide lower and higher estimates for the ratio of preventive to reactive investments. The lower estimate builds on the assumption that spending coded as regional or unspecified follows about the same distributive ratio as the same donor’s country-specific spending for the same period. Because all donors heavily favor reactive over preventive spending in country-specific allocations, this model simply extends the same ratio to their entire budget. The higher estimate builds on the alternative assumption that regional and unspecified spending is more strongly weighted toward prevention (we assume an equal, 50:50 split) than country-specific spending, mainly because there are more projects with titles mentioning prevention among the global contributions in the “unspecified” category than there are project titles that suggest a reactive purpose, such as stabilization or

---

29 OECD, *States of Fragility*, 2020, accessed August 20, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/5kxfynm2>.

30 On the civil peace service, see <https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de>; on zivik, see <https://www.ifa.de/foerderungen/zivik/>.

post-conflict recovery. As a result, the higher estimate reduces the imbalance we find in the country-specific allocations alone, but it does not counterbalance them completely since we find no basis in the data to assume that regional or unspecified funding might break radically from country allocations.

Of course, national-level data obscures important subnational dynamics. We thus acknowledge that this approach of estimating preventive investments by filtering for lower levels of violence is limited, given its lack of geographic granularity beyond state boundaries. However, this approach has the advantage of being applicable to larger datasets, which also makes it easy to test the effects of using different data. For example, rather than using only the “civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution” figures, researchers might apply the same logic to “security system management and reform,” “international peacekeeping,” or other categories that might include preventive action. Similarly, systematically testing different metrics for classifying acute crises versus prevention scenarios would help making this approach more precise.

## **2.5. Our Second Approach: Analyzing Preventive Action by Its Timing in Relation to Early Warning**

Our second approach to identifying investments in prevention is based on timing. According to donors’ own policies, preventive action seeks to achieve impact before crises break out. At the level of systemic prevention – investments into the capacity of the international legal order or the systemic impact of multilateral institutions on conflict management – there is little relation to specific conflicts. At the level of structural and operational prevention, however, donors try to address “root causes” (structural prevention) or specific threats (operational prevention) in particular places and at particular times.<sup>31</sup> Using the project-specific data of the OECD CRS, a more precise method than simply estimating country-years as being “in crisis” or “out of crisis” – as with our first approach – is possible, even if it requires case study analysis and does not scale as easily.

Based on the well-established preponderance of crisis management over crisis prevention in policy practice, especially once a place is seen to be “in crisis,” any spending directly after the breakout of a major crisis and before its resolution is very unlikely to be designed for prevention. Conversely, investments in a low-violence year or in years before a crisis breaks out are not automatically intended for prevention (since they could also address the remnants of the previous crisis), but are more likely to be intended for prevention than spending in the middle of a crisis. Using a qualitative approach to identify periods in which warning signs of future crises were present, but in which the crisis had not yet broken out, we are able to define periods in which conflict-related spending is more likely to be intended and designed for prevention than during acute crises. This helps reduce the size of the dataset and provide a starting point for a qualitative assessment of project data.

Only a detailed analysis of the particular projects that were funded in the context of diplomatic action and other instruments, such as multilateral peace operations and bilateral assistance of various kinds (including, importantly, in the security sector),

---

<sup>31</sup> See fn. 17, above.

could provide a comprehensive picture of when and to what extent international intervention in a particular country or part of a country may have been intended and/or been plausible as preventive action. In this study, we can only provide a first estimation based exclusively on civilian investments covered by OECD's CRS project data.

We conduct this analysis at the level of country cases. Among the crises that broke out between 2004 and 2019, we selected our country case studies using the following key criteria:

- There was widely available early warning information a year or more before the crisis began, so as to ensure a relevant window for early action supported by investment projects that take time to set up and achieve impact.
- Donors were able to openly support project partners in the country, which implies that partner governments were not actively hostile to donor influence in favor of peace and stability in ways that would have made influencing domestic political dynamics around crisis risks completely unfeasible. This was the case, for example, in Ethiopia before the current civil war, where the government very jealously limited donor access, and with the authoritarian regimes in Syria, Libya and Tunisia before 2011.
- There was a particular political reason for at least one of the Top Four donors to take preventive action (e.g., strong bilateral ties), mostly to exclude cases that policymakers did not see as foreign policy priorities at all.

We did not exclude successful cases of crisis prevention on purpose, and some may argue that Myanmar and Burkina Faso represent at least partial successes. More clear-cut examples of recent successes documented elsewhere, however, failed to meet at least one of the selection criteria, most often the political priority for Germany, the EU or the US. This might be an interesting observation in itself, since in the past decade, local actors along with the UN or regional multilateral organizations have contributed most effectively to preventing or quickly resolving crises in the Gambia and Bolivia, for example. They have drawn on US and European funding for the most part, but without visible political roles or visible bilateral projects on the ground.<sup>32</sup>

## 2.6. Data Quality and Other Limitations

This study is limited primarily in the level of detail at which we were able to engage with donors' investments in preventive action. The reasons for this are several limitations on the part of the available open-source data that governments report.

We primarily used data from the OECD's CRS.<sup>33</sup> The CRS is based on what governments report against a coding system that uses the nation-state as the most

---

<sup>32</sup> Rotmann and Salih, "Conflict Prevention: Scoring Small Wins".

<sup>33</sup> We also looked at the data of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). However, the IATI standard shares these drawbacks with the CRS, since it uses the same overall approach. Since IATI is only a publishing standard according to which different institutions within the same governments publish data, there are much larger data gaps and comparability issues than with CRS.

precise geographical unit, and a set of “purpose codes” that do not fully capture a modern understanding of preventive action. We found donor reporting occasionally sloppy, including obvious typos in the spelling of project titles and descriptions, wrongly applied geographical markers, and completely missing start and end dates. The bulk of the dataset appears valid, however, which is why it formed the basis of our analysis.

At the same time, the nation-state level alone is inadequate to understand anything related to conflict: political dynamics and violence vary a lot between different parts of even small countries, and having a project coded “in the country” does not tell us whether it is even intended to reach the actors that are key to preventing escalation. Similarly, the practice of splitting projects between no more than two mutually exclusive “purpose codes” is hardly optimal to provide accountability for billions of euros of public investment.

The CRS data is not available in real-time. Among the various possible political distortions, the real-time concern with minimizing conflict with governments labelled “at risk” is thus less likely to be an issue than the ex-post interest of governments or individual government actors inflating their commitment to prevention. The nature of CRS reporting provides much smaller opportunities for this, since any inflation of prevention would come at the expense of other purpose codes. For the German case, we compared domestic reporting with OECD reporting and found such a stark contrast that it is very unlikely that the CRS prevention figures would have seen much, if any, attempt at inflation. However, irregular, one-off reporting - such as the German parliamentary queries - provides an opportunity to emphasize prevention efforts in countries that are of particular political interest at the time of compiling the responses. In this way, the government is able to portray itself as having been an important prevention actor in a country before the crisis broke out.

By working with the CRS data, we are able to analyze the key investment patterns in significant detail, and with comparatively few systematic biases. At the same time, our study does not undertake an evaluation of any kind: we do not assess whether any of the observed investments worked to prevent crises, or if they were even designed to as part of a plausible political strategy. The practical overlap between building peace and preventing the next crisis even makes it impossible to pull out a precise figure for a particular donor’s investments in prevention in general, or with regard to preventing a particular crisis. The data does, however, enable plausible ranged estimates of these investments, which in turn help us answer the key questions of this study. It thus provides a foundation for further work for governments, in terms of improving the data, and for research, in terms of analyzing and drawing insights about better targeting investments in prevention.

# 3. Aggregate Investment Patterns

In this chapter, based on OECD’s CRS data, we present our estimate for global prevention spending and dive into the spending patterns of Germany, the EU, the UK, and the US – the Top Four prevention donors. How much of the “conflict” spending is invested in prevention? Who makes the most investments in prevention? How and where are investments in prevention made?

As a starting point, we find in off-the-shelf data that investments in peacebuilding and prevention have grown massively from €356 million in 2004 to €2.4 billion in 2019, an increase of over 500% in 15 years. We estimate that only 28–35% of this was in fact invested in prevention in 2019, the most recent year for which data is available. In absolute terms, we estimate a range of €650–820 million for global, ODA-compliant prevention spending in 2019, or between two-thirds and four-fifths of a billion euros.

The Top Four contributed between 63–69% of global prevention spending. The Top Four invested more money into acute crisis management than prevention, despite being engaged in a higher number of stable countries than countries with a fragile security situation. It is striking that almost all recipient countries received less than €1 million per year and per donor. This falls far short of the \$100–1,000 million per country estimate that economist Hannes Mueller thought would be needed for the successful impact of crisis prevention efforts in a few well-selected countries.<sup>34</sup>

## 3.1. How Much Is Invested in Prevention?

The OECD category for peacebuilding and prevention spending is a useful starting point to find out how much was actually invested in prevention. As shown earlier, the global peacebuilding and prevention spending showed an over 500% increase from €356 million in 2004 to €2.4 billion in 2019 (see Figure 5). In this section, we want to go a step further and put a price tag on prevention spending alone. To estimate prevention investments more precisely, we filtered peacebuilding and prevention spending by the level of “security fragility” according to the OECD’s own assessments. Chapter 2 explains the method in greater detail.

For 2019, the most recent year for which data is available, our estimate for global, ODA-compliant prevention spending yields a range between €650 million and €820 million, or between two-thirds and four-fifths of a billion euros. In absolute terms, the

---

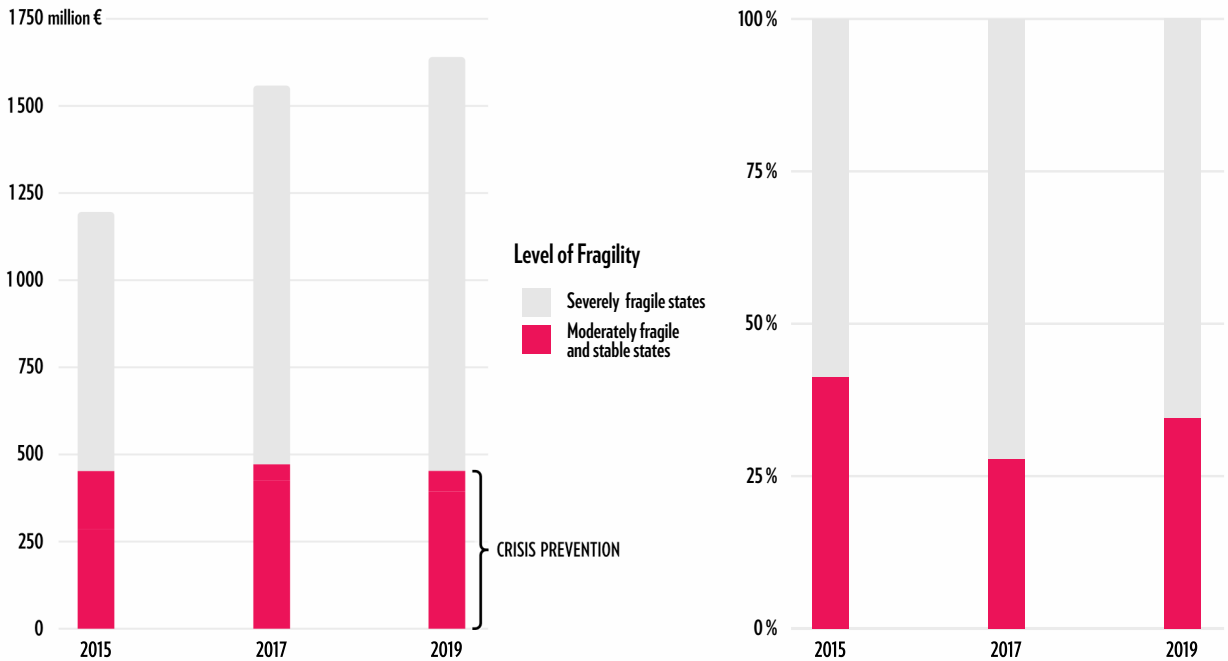
<sup>34</sup> Mueller, “How Much is Prevention Worth?”.

Figure 5: Global ODA-Compliant Conflict, Peace and Security Investment, 2004–2019



The figure shows the investments of all DAC and non-DAC donors that report to the OECD CRS. Total amounts, in million EUR, gross disbursements, 2018 constant prices. Source: OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 6: Estimated Shares of Global Prevention and Acute Crisis Spending, 2015–2019

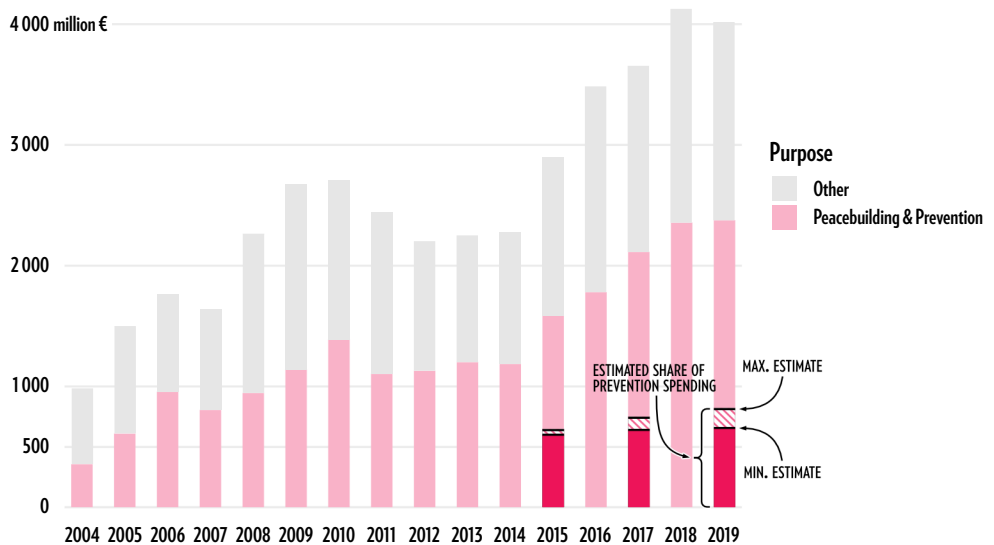


Source: OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) and our own estimation.

ranges constantly increased from 2015 to 2019. However, when we look at the share of donors’ peacebuilding and prevention budgets that they invested in prevention, we see a slight decrease over the past five years (🔗 **Figure 6** on page 25). Notably, donors consistently invested more in acute crises than in less fragile countries, and therefore more on peacebuilding, stabilization and resolution than on prevention. Our provision of ranges, rather than a single estimate, and our emphasis of the rough order of magnitude rather than the implied precision of a numerical figure, reflects the limitations of the government-reported data that our estimate is based on.

Even this estimated range allows for some useful observations, however. Our estimate for global prevention spending for 2019 amounts to between a little more than a quarter (28%) and a little more than a third (35%) of what DAC donors reported as their peacebuilding and prevention outlay altogether. In relation to their “conflict, peace and security” spending as a whole, which also covers civilian security sector assistance, mine clearance and peacekeeping contributions, our prevention estimate accounts for less than one-fifth (16–20%), as shown in **Figure 7**. The rest – the lion’s share of ODA spending on conflict, peace and security – goes toward managing acute crises, peacekeeping and other conflict-related spending.

**Figure 7: Global ODA-Compliant Conflict Spending With Estimate for Investments in Prevention Alone, 2004-2019**



Total amounts, in million EUR, gross disbursements, 2018 constant prices. Source: OECD’s Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

To provide at least a very rough sense of scale, economist Hannes Mueller cited estimates that successful prevention in a single country at risk may require between \$100 million and \$1 billion per year – his “neutral” scenario is built around a \$500 million figure – to yield a significant reduction in violence that would enable future savings after about 15 years. If he and his sources at least have their order of magnitude right, the current

global level of investment in prevention – which is scattered over dozens of countries – falls far short of what is required to achieve decisive impact.

### 3.2. Who Is Investing in Prevention?

Now that we understand how much money was actually invested in prevention, this section looks at how the contributions of the top donors have changed over time. Until 2015, the US was the biggest international investor in peacebuilding and prevention, spending consistently in the range of €200–400 million each year. Even with less than €40 million annually, representing only 5–6% of the US budget in 2005–06, Germany was the top European donor.

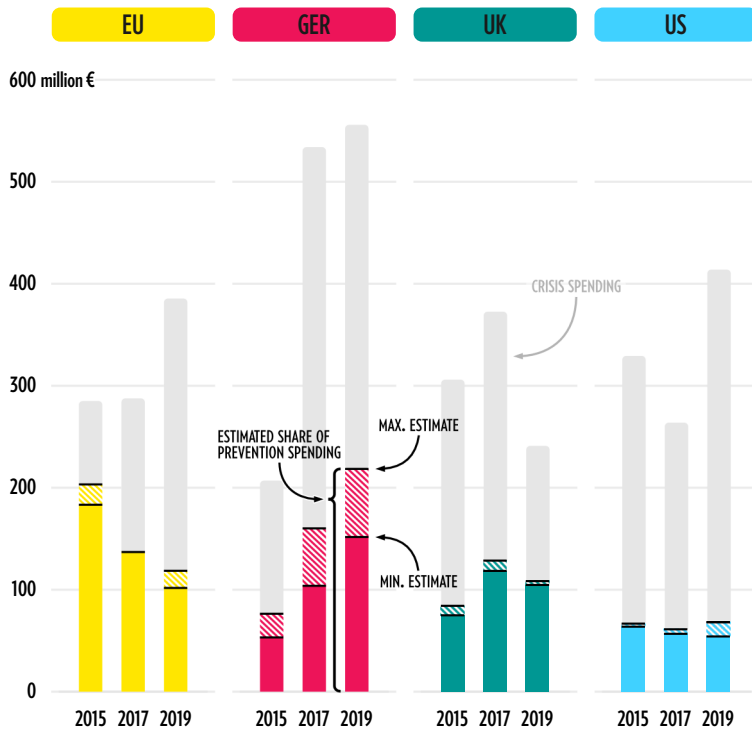
Over the decade that followed, Germany, the EU and the UK massively ramped up their investments from zero in 2004 to €130–180 million each in 2014. From 2015 on, another growth period began. Since 2017, Germany has been by far the most generous peacebuilding and prevention donor worldwide, with more than half a billion euros invested each year.

Figure 8: Top Four Donors’ Spending on Peacebuilding and Prevention, 2004–2019



Total amounts, in million EUR, gross disbursements, 2018 constant prices. Source: OECD’s Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 9: Estimated Investments for Crisis Prevention, Top Four Donors, 2015-2019



Total amounts, in million EUR, gross disbursements, 2018 constant prices. Source: OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Figure 9 shows our security fragility estimate for how much of those investments by the Top Four donors goes toward crisis prevention. For Germany, we arrive at a range of €150–220 million for prevention in 2019 – between 27% and 39% of Berlin’s ODA investments in peacebuilding and prevention. While we observe a similar split for the EU, the percentages are notably higher for the UK (43–45%) and lower for the US (13–16%).

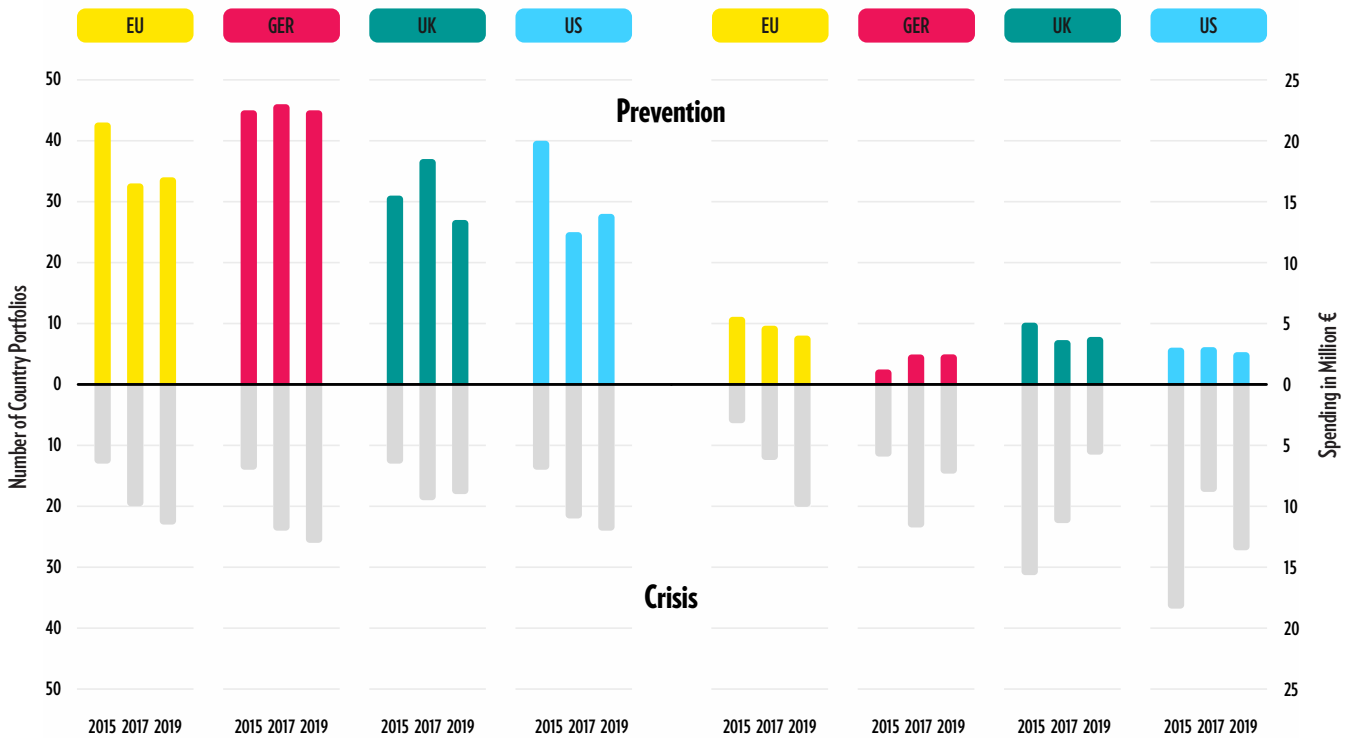
### 3.3. Donors Spend More Money on Acute Crises Than on Prevention

Using our security fragility proxy, we observe that the Top Four donors spend more of their peacebuilding and prevention funding on severely fragile states than on more stable ones. Severely fragile states are most likely to be in crisis, so spending for them is most likely for acute crisis management, stabilization or peacebuilding purposes rather than prevention. In turn, investments in less “security-fragile” countries are more

likely to be designed for prevention. We note three important observations. First, the data confirms that the Top Four donors spent significantly less on prevention than conflict resolution or peacebuilding.

Second, the EU stands out with the highest shares of peacebuilding and prevention spending that it dedicated to prevention only. However, the shares have decreased significantly in the last five years as a result of a restructuring of EU funding lines that now allow expensive civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operations such as those in Mali, Somalia and Libya to be covered by EU peacebuilding and prevention budgets. By 2019, the EU showed a similar distribution pattern as the other three donors. Third, Germany’s prevention spending is most difficult to estimate because, more often than the other donors, Germany left it unclear which recipient country benefits from its spending and reported more regional projects to the OECD.

Figure 10: Investment Portfolios in Prevention vs. Acute Crisis Countries, Top Four Donors, 2015-2019



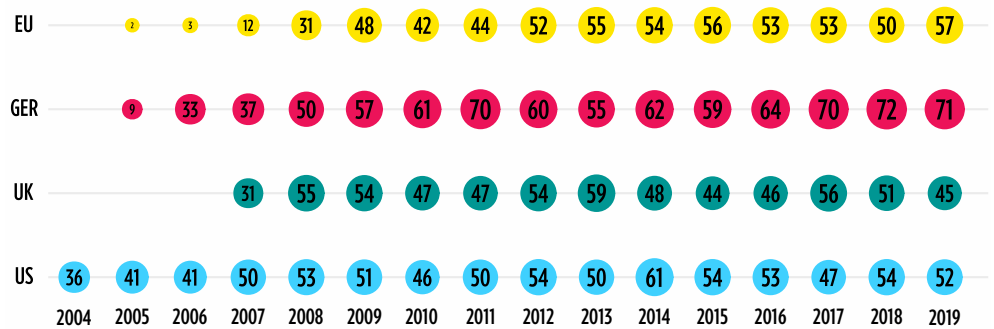
Total amounts, in million EUR, gross disbursements, 2018 constant prices. Source: OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

### 3.4. How and Where Are Investments in Prevention Made?

A government's general commitment for crisis prevention along with an overall budget poses a number of practical challenges for portfolio allocation. One of the most fundamental challenges is to find a good approach to allocating limited budgets to an unlimited supply of crisis risks. Every "fragile" country – the OECD counts 57 of these as of 2019 – holds major structural risks of crisis. In addition, there are always edge cases that do not fit such a simplified binary designation. There are also several countries classified as "stable" (such as Egypt in the 2020 edition of the OECD *States of Fragility* report) that continue to pose serious risks under a thin veneer of stability. An approach based purely on structural prevention will therefore uncover reasons to invest in up to 70-odd countries at the same time, and thus to spend projects' budgets thinly.

As a result, we find that individual projects tend to be very small, absorbing a lot of administrative effort. In 2019, 93% of peacebuilding and prevention projects globally had annual budgets of below €1 million. This is less often the case for the Top Four donors, who have larger budget lines, but more often the case for prevention than acute crisis response.

Figure 11: Number of Peacebuilding and Prevention Country Portfolios by Top Four Donor, 2004–2019



Source: OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

The same is true for multi-country projects, the number of which almost doubled between 2015 and 2019, focused overwhelmingly in Africa. In absolute terms, we estimate that this amounts, for 2019 and across all donors, to only about €70 million of likely preventive investment, split between 288 multi-country projects across Africa.

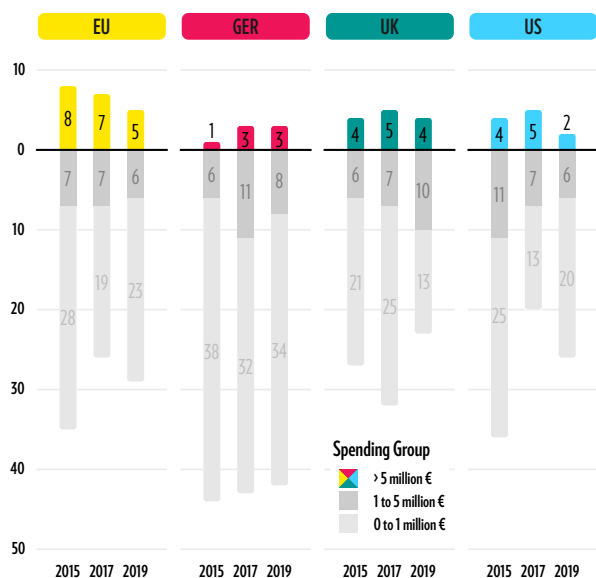
In combination with an overall budget allocation for prevention in the ranges we estimated – between €50 million and €80 million per Top Four donor – these observations make for tiny country portfolios split between many small projects that do not allow for concentration. It thus makes strategic impact unlikely, except in very specific cases where a little money goes a long way (as in some types of mediation). While size is certainly not everything, it would be implausible to assume that very small investments are likely to deliver effective prevention. In fact, conflict researchers ballpark the amount required for effective prevention at \$250–500 million per country per year, if well coordinated among donors and targeted toward the most serious risks.<sup>35</sup>

Of course, donors trying to follow that advice face the question of how to identify the most urgent risks and the best time to invest. How do the top investors in prevention navigate this allocation challenge between a narrow focus that is extremely hard to target and a broad focus that is less likely to achieve decisive impact?

Over the past decade and a half, we observed that the Top Four donors' numbers of country portfolios have converged. By 2009, Germany, the EU and the UK had increased their numbers of country portfolios to the US average of about 50. For a few years around 2011 and again since 2016, along with its massive growth of investment in peacebuilding and prevention, Germany has stood out with a larger number of country portfolios. In 2019, Germany invested in peacebuilding and prevention in 71 countries, while the other top donors engaged in around 50 countries (➔ **Figure 11** above).

35 Mueller, "How Much is Prevention Worth?".

Figure 12: Prevention Portfolios by Size, Top Four Donors, 2015–2019



Source: OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

Table 1: Large Donor Portfolios, 2019

	GERMANY	EU	UK	US			
<i>Country portfolios larger than €5 million per donor (2019)</i>							
Colombia	23	Bosnia	13	Colombia	15	Colombia	25
Ukraine	12	Colombia	9	Egypt	6	Georgia	5
Lebanon	8	El Salvador	16	Jordan	23		
		Jordan	6	Lebanon	6		
		Ukraine	12				
<i>Regional portfolios larger than €10 million per donor (2019)</i>							
Lake Chad	60						
West Africa	10						

### 3.5. While Donors Engaged in More Stable Countries Than Severely Fragile Countries, They Spent More Money in Hot Conflicts

All Top Four donors engage in a larger number of relatively stable countries (“prevention countries”) than countries in acute crisis (see **Figure 9** on page 28). However, the share of prevention countries has dropped over the past five years. In 2015, three-quarters of all countries where donors invested in peacebuilding and prevention were assessed as stable, whereas in 2019, this share had fallen to roughly 60%. Acute crises are receiving an increasing share of donor attention at the expense of possible prevention cases.

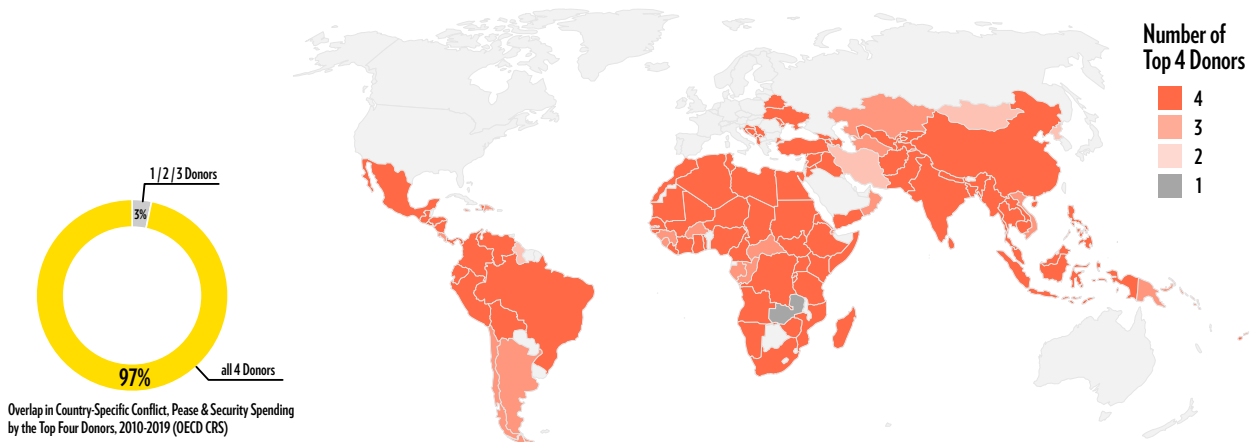
Acute crises are also dedicated much higher amounts as compared to potential prevention cases – again, as shown by **Figure 9** on page 28. On average, Top Four donors spent roughly €10 million per year on acute crises between 2015 and 2019, while investing about €3 million in prevention countries. When we look beyond averages at the actual spending per country, we find that most prevention portfolios are tiny: for the Top Four prevention portfolios, between half (UK) and three-quarters (Germany, the EU and the US) were below €1 million, and only a handful above €5 million (**Figure 11** on page 30).

Although all of the places mentioned in **Table 1** are undoubtedly at some risk of renewed or further escalation, it is striking how little these priority countries, in real financial terms, reflect the places that governments and experts most discuss as at risk,

particularly the countries of the Sahel, West Africa and North Africa, which are not in acute crisis.

Among the Top Four, the EU stands out as an exception: in 2015, it invested, on average, more in prevention countries than in acute crises, the opposite of the other top donors (see **Figure 9** on page 28). This changed gradually until the EU converged with the distribution patterns of the other three donors. In 2019, it invested €10 million per severely fragile country, while less fragile countries only accounted for €4 million on average.

**Figure 13: Top Four Donors' Country Portfolios for Peacebuilding and Prevention, Number of Donors Present per Country**



Source: OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

### 3.6. Donors Invested in the Same Regions

The Top Four donors barely engage in a geographical division of labor. On the contrary, the OECD data show a massive geographical overlap of donors' investments in peacebuilding and prevention: in the past decade, roughly 97% of conflict, peace and security investments are in places where all Top Four donors are present (see **Figure 13** above).

Even their relative priorities for different regions differ only slightly. The EU and Germany focus on Africa and Asia relatively equally; in the last 15 years, both regions have made up roughly one-third of their peacebuilding and prevention spending. The US and UK's investments in peacebuilding and prevention focus on Asia, as nearly 60% of their overall spending is done in this region, while the second priority region, Africa, accounts for a little less than one-third of the total spend. It is worth noting that, in 2004–2019, all Top Four donors invested 35% of their peacebuilding and prevention spending for Asia in Afghanistan.

In addition to bilateral investments in particular countries, the Top Four massively increased the use of regional projects for peacebuilding and prevention to a value of €260 million in 2019, which is 34 times higher than the collective amount spent

in 2004. These regional projects focused overwhelmingly on Africa (55%), Europe (19%), the Middle East (14%), and Asia (11%), with the Americas (2%) far behind. Regional investments for peacebuilding and prevention are subject to the same fragmentation we found in bilateral projects: for 2019, the OECD data shows a total of just three regional peacebuilding and prevention projects with budgets over €10 million. All three were funded by Germany, two of which focus on the Lake Chad region, and the third less specifically on West Africa.

The DAC classification system also allows for donor governments to report spending without specifying a geographical beneficiary, whether at the country or regional level. Among the Top Four, Germany uses this “unspecified” label the most, even though this practice has become less frequent in recent years. While over half of the German activities were undertaken in “unspecified” locations in 2004–2007, Germany only used this tag for one-fifth of its peacebuilding and prevention projects in 2017–2019. Among the largest items in this category are several global programs that encapsulate a lot of country-level work that is just not being disaggregated for OECD reporting, for example the €55 million per year “civil peace service” funded out of the development budget. This NGO-led program operates grassroots peacebuilding efforts in about 45 countries at a time, some of which make very relevant contributions to crisis prevention.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> More information is available at: <https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/ueber-den-zfd/zahlen-und-fakten>.

# 4. Timing and Scale of Investments: Case Studies

Beyond the Top Four donors' global spending trends, concrete risk situations in specific countries or regions are where prevention becomes tangible. Here we can see which donors invested how much and where, but also when they did so in relation to openly available warnings of impending crises and what they invested in.

We analyzed six country cases of at-risk places and the run-up to a variety of crises and wars: Georgia (2004–08), Mali (2004–12), Ukraine (2004–14), Iraq (2010–13), Myanmar (2010–17), and Burkina Faso (2013–19). These case studies offer a better picture of the relationship between the timing of warnings and crises, on the one hand, and the flow of “conflict, peace and security” investment that indicates prevention efforts on the other hand. How did donors react to widely available warning information during the “early action window” between the alarm bells ringing and the crisis breaking out? Did they appear to make targeted investments in prevention? Did they draw down their activities – possibly due to access and security restrictions on the ground – or did their activities continue unchanged until the crisis broke out? Are there differences in how different prevention actors acted around warnings?

In each of the case study sections that follow, we first introduce the country and the context of the crisis. On this basis, we provide a chronological analysis of available warning signs along with the investment patterns of the Top Four donors. By comparing the timing of warnings and projects, we establish what happened in terms of material support for potential preventive political engagement during the critical time windows in which early action would have been required: between the time at which serious warnings were available and the time at which the crisis broke out.

We select six countries in which the international community became aware of serious warnings during the 2004 to 2019 timeframe. We chose this time frame because a significant time series is important to assess any changes in donor behavior relating to the growing investments and increasing political commitments made by the Top Four governments. We operationalize “serious warnings” conservatively, based on qualitative analysis that starts with Crisis Group’s published work, primarily their *CrisisWatch* database as a proxy for internationally available knowledge.<sup>37</sup> By the time Crisis Group publishes information, we can assume that the same information is available to major prevention actors, either by directly consuming Crisis Group products, receiving dedicated briefings from Crisis Group analysts (the Top Four donors are also donors to Crisis Group), or through internal, classified channels transporting equivalent information. Therefore, the point in time at which we estimate “serious

---

37 The *CrisisWatch* database is available at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

warnings” of either structural risks or operational threats to be available is likely on the late side, leaving governments considerable reaction time. We identified the main outbreaks of crises based on a qualitative political assessment, described them in the case studies and marked them on visual timelines of events and project investments. In **Table 2**, we provide an overview of the key takeaways from each case study.

**Table 2: Overview of the Key Takeaways From the Case Studies**

	<b>OUTBREAK OF CRISIS</b>	<b>WARNING SIGNALS</b>	<b>SPENDING PATTERNS</b>	<b>TAKEAWAYS</b>
<b>Georgia (2004-08)</b>	2008: Russo-Georgian War	Monthly clashes after Saakashvili’s open declaration to restore Georgia’s territorial integrity in 2004; widely available analysis of conflict risks; imminent warning in April 2008.	We find that the Top Four donors’ spending showed no reaction to the upsurge of increasingly concrete warnings of full-blown war. Efforts were scaled up only after the war broke out in August 2008.	The Top Four donors did not react to the warnings with preventive action.
<b>Mali (2004-12)</b>	2012: Tuareg rebellion; march on Bamako	Plenty of warnings of increasing Islamist violence and clashes between government forces and Tuareg groups. In 2009–10, aid workers were evacuated; Paris and Bamako declared war with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).	We find that none of the five donors’ (including France) spending showed serious preventive efforts despite clear warnings ahead of the 2012 crisis. Efforts were scaled up only after the crisis was in full swing.	None of the five donors significantly stepped up their preventive efforts despite explicit warning signs.
<b>Ukraine (2004-14)</b>	2014: Euromaidan, Donbas War, Annexation of Crimea	Structural risks for conflict and tensions between Ukraine and Russia as well as within Ukrainian society were well known and widely discussed. By 2010, several reports warned concretely of the scenario that unfolded four years later.	Before the outbreak of the crisis in 2014, the Top Four donors invested miniscule amounts, if anything at all, in crisis prevention and peacebuilding projects in Ukraine.	None of the Top Four donors turned the knowledge of structural risks and concrete warnings into preventive action in any way that would be reflected in their investments in the country.
<b>Myanmar (2010-17)</b>	2017: Genocidal violence against the Rohingya	There were plenty of warning signs, and they were more than apparent to even the most fleeting observers: a massive outbreak of violence in October 2012, preceding the 2017 escalation, triggered all atrocity prevention sirens.	Germany: Invested below €50,000/year in 2013–2016. UK, EU, US: Started investing substantial amounts as of 2013, which peaked in 2016 in the €10 millions, and slightly decreased in 2016.	The US, EU and UK showed one of the most concerted efforts at preventive early action we could trace in the OECD’s datasets across these case studies. Germany did not react to the many alarm bells with bilateral financial investments, but contributed through the EU.
<b>Iraq (2010-13)</b>	2014: Start of Islamic State (IS) offensive and takeover of large parts of the country	Structural risks were widely analyzed and obvious at time of the US departure (2010). Imminent alarm bells rang with the July 2012 terrorist attacks.	There were no relevant material reactions to warning signs or efforts at supporting political prevention.	The Top Four donors did not react to the warnings with preventive action.
<b>Burkina Faso (2013-19)</b>	2019: Enormous surge of Islamist attacks and civilian conflict deaths	Several reports warned about the risks attached to the transition of power in 2013–2015. The large-scale jihadist attacks in January 2016 in the capital were a clear alarm bell and were well documented in international media.	Only France appears to have responded to the warnings of the risky transition of power in 2013–2015. From 2016 on, the US and EU significantly stepped up their prevention spending. Germany and France spent little to nothing, possibly bundling efforts through the EU.	Burkina Faso is one of two exceptional cases in our spot checks (the other being Myanmar), where all donors except the UK seem to have reacted to warning signs.

## 4.1. Georgia (2004–2008)

With a population of 4 million and a nominal GDP of \$16 billion (2020),<sup>38</sup> Georgia is among the smaller post-Soviet states. It ranks “very high” on the Human Development Index.<sup>39</sup> Situated at the center of the Caucasus region, Georgia has been at the intersection of rivaling great powers’ spheres of influence for centuries, and still is today.<sup>40</sup> As such, Western donors view Georgia primarily through the lens of another country – Russia – so that all political considerations concerning Georgia are tainted. Georgia is part of the Eastern Partnership that is meant to strengthen relations between the EU and its eastern neighbors.<sup>41</sup>

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, a civil war erupted in the Black Sea country over a struggle for self-determination, primarily on ethnic grounds, and eventually ended in a stalemate. The regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, backed by Russia, de-facto separated from the rest of the country and Russian, Georgian and Ossetian peacekeepers moved in to maintain the ceasefire.<sup>42</sup> In April 1991, Georgia declared its independence from the Soviet Union.<sup>43</sup> Germany was the first European country to recognize Georgia’s independence and among the first to provide humanitarian assistance after the end of the war.<sup>44</sup> Sixteen years later, in summer 2008, the conflict flared up again in what has since been known as the Russo-Georgian War, displacing nearly 200,000 and killing almost 1,000 people.<sup>45</sup> In the first one and a half years after the war, Germany spent between 6–7% of its worldwide crisis prevention and peacebuilding budget in Georgia, illustrating the importance Berlin assigned to stability in the South Caucasus and countering Russia.

Were there warning signs for this escalation in the years leading up to the 2008 war? And did Germany, the UK, the US, or the EU act upon them to try and prevent the crisis before the outbreak of the conflict? We find that the Top Four donors’ spending showed no reaction to the upsurge of increasingly concrete warnings of full-blown war in Georgia.

---

38 More information on the estimated population size is available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POPTOTL?locations=GE> and on GDP at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=GE>.

39 United Nations Development Programme, “Georgia Human Development Indicators,” accessed July 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/3kpsdyh9>.

40 Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, Second Edition, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.

41 EU Neighbours East, “The Eastern Partnership,” accessed July 1, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/e4yzww22>.

42 Marietta König, “The Georgian-South Ossetian Conflict,” in *OSCE Yearbook 2014*, ed. Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2005, pp.237–249, <https://tinyurl.com/44rt67y3>.

43 Government of Georgia, “About Georgia,” accessed June 29, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/3z7z3mfp>.

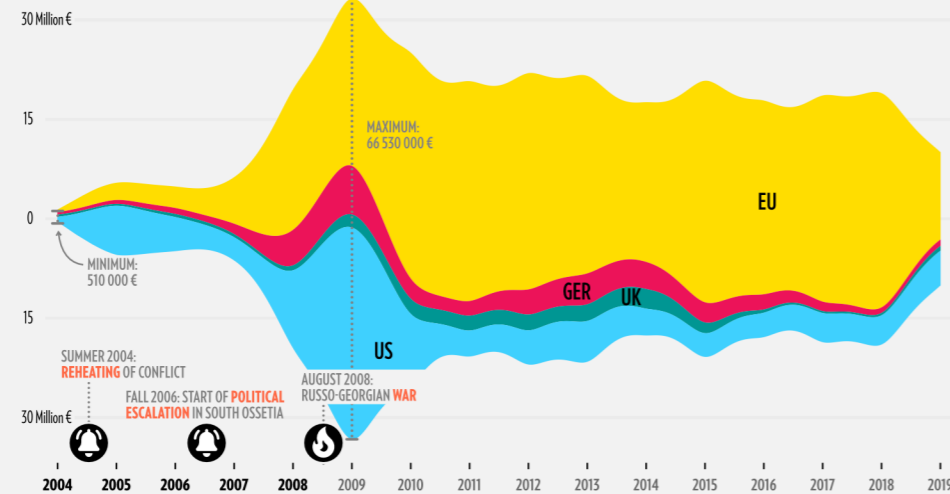
44 Kornely Kakachia, “A Reluctant Partner: Georgian-German Relations Revisited,” PONARS Eurasia, 2017, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/3jdfuupz>.

45 Amnesty International, “Civilians in the Line of Fire: The Georgia-Russia Conflict,” 2008, accessed June 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2cypfm7n>; Sergei Goryashko, “South Ossetia: Russia pushes roots deeper into Georgian land,” *BBC News*, August 8, 2018, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/3b8c2t9v>.

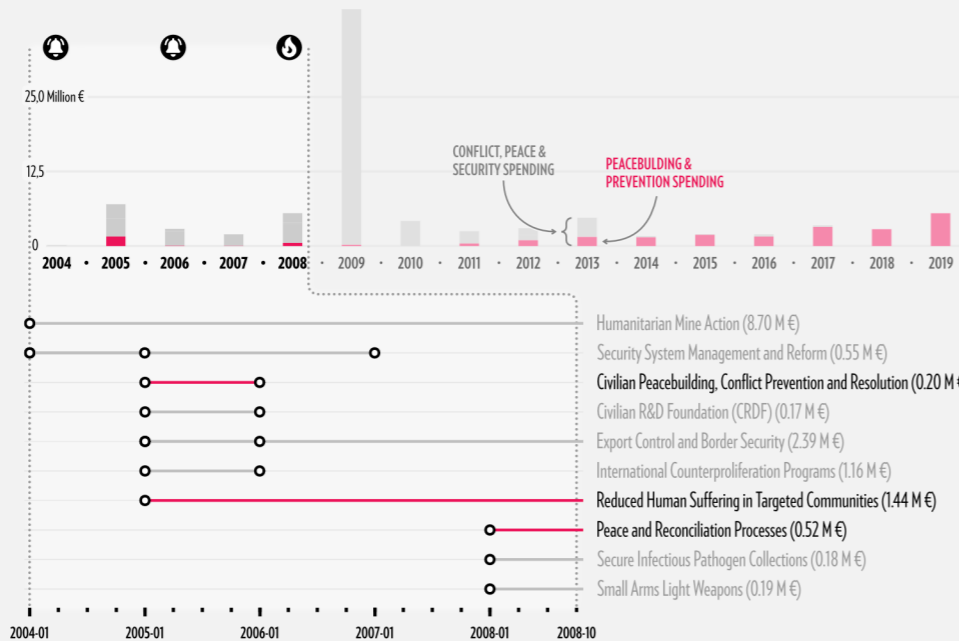
### Georgia: When Did Donors Invest in Relation to Major Warning Signals?

The first chart shows the development of donors' investments in relation to major warning signals and the outbreak of violence. The following charts below and on the opposite page provide the breakdown of spending per donor and a list of all relevant projects above €100,000 during the early warning period. If a donor only invested at a smaller scale, we also included projects below that threshold.

#### Top Donors' Conflict, Peace and Security Investments & Warning Signals, 2004-2019



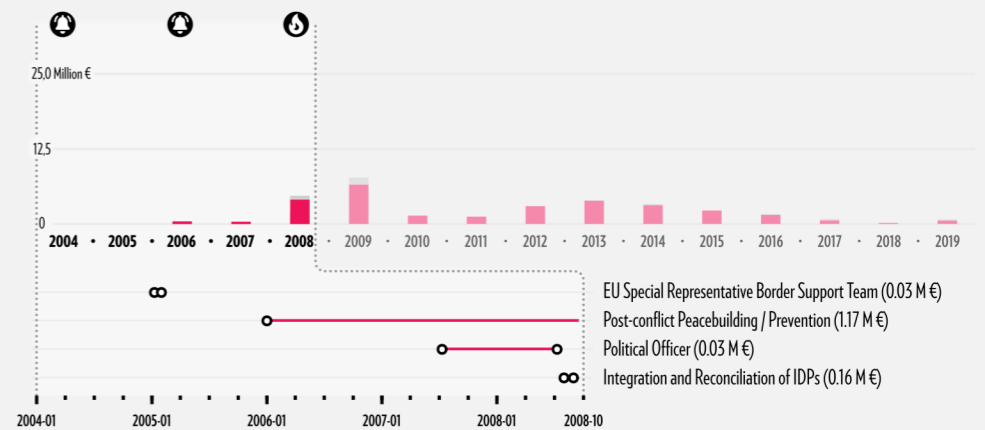
#### Conflict, Peace and Security Spending & Project Lists by Donor



#### Germany



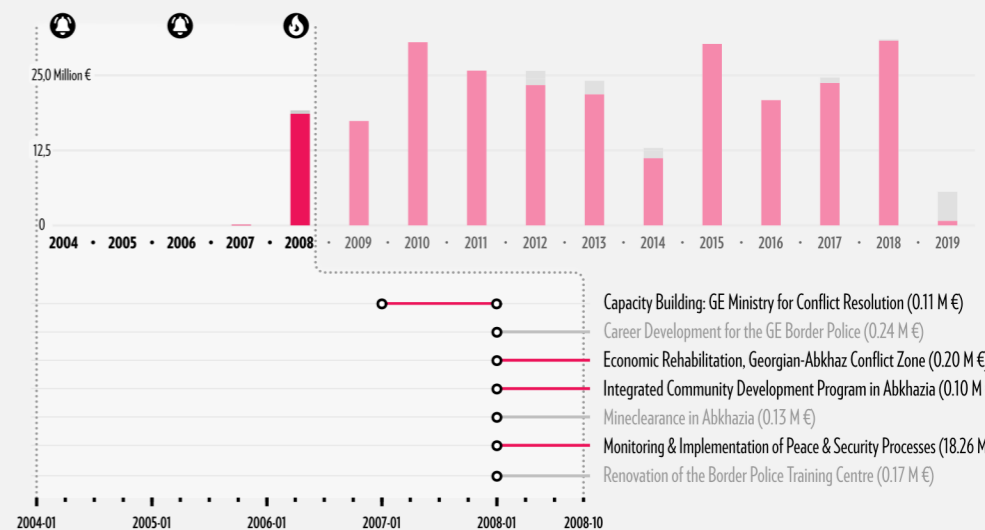
#### Early Warning Period (Jan 2004 to Aug 2008): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



#### European Union



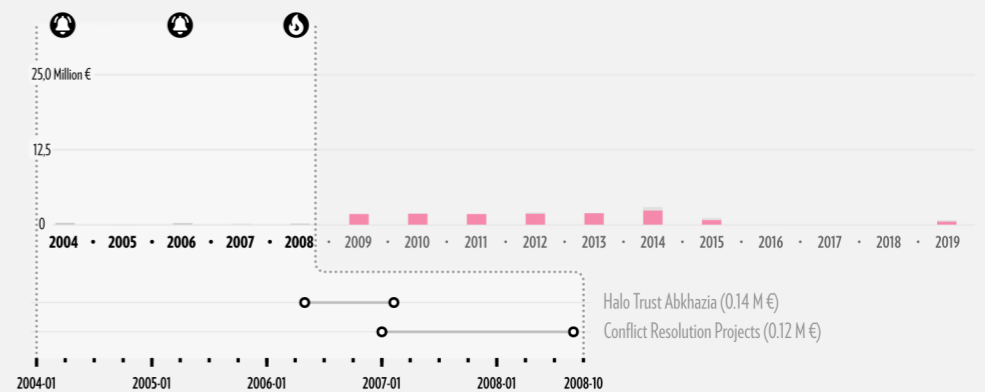
#### Early Warning Period (Jan 2004 to Aug 2008): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts




#### United Kingdom



#### Early Warning Period (Jan 2004 to Aug 2008): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



## Warning Signs and Funding Patterns

In what follows, we focus on developments between 2004, which saw the first deteriorations in the conflict after a 12-year deadlock, and the outbreak of the war in 2008. In 2004, the newly elected Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili made restoring Georgia's territorial integrity a priority of his term. In the summer of the same year, the first violent confrontation in over a decade broke out in South Ossetia, killing dozens of civilians: "the long-frozen conflict nearly became a hot war again and drew in Russia," Crisis Group warned.<sup>46</sup> On this occasion, Crisis Group first emphasized that the government's new attempts at changing the territorial realities – with the implied threat to use force in the face of recalcitrant separatists and their backers in Moscow – might easily refuel the conflict and result in war. In the following years, *CrisisWatch* reported on frequent violent clashes with both civilian and combatant casualties within the separatist regions and at the Russian border.<sup>47</sup> Tensions between Tbilisi and Moscow were constantly on the rise. Russia, for instance, banned Georgia's biggest export items. Both sides accused each other of inciting violence and exploiting the conflict in the media. Meetings of the peacekeeping mission's Joint Control Commission (JCC) were increasingly being suspended. The quarrels occurred on a monthly, sometimes weekly, basis. Yet, the OECD data show no material component to any potential efforts by Germany, the UK or the EU to try and reduce the tensions in 2004 and 2005. While discussions about preventive measures among EU states illustrate that the situation was very much on the actors' agenda, the camp "against EU involvement in the messy Caucasian affairs" eventually won the upper hand.<sup>48</sup> The only major donor active in Georgia during this time was the US. In 2005, Washington spent €1.6 million on "reducing human suffering" and addressing "political, economic and social causes and consequences of violent conflict through peaceful channels" (see  **Figure 14**: Georgia infographic, p. 37).

After fall 2006, the situation started to visibly escalate with South Ossetia planning an independence referendum and presidential elections, Saakashvili accusing Russia in the UN General Assembly of annexing Georgian conflict zones, and a guided missile of unclear origin falling near South Ossetia in summer 2007. As the situation started to deteriorate in 2006, Germany first began investing small amounts in crisis prevention and peacebuilding in Georgia. Of the only four projects to which Germany contributed in 2006 and 2007, which amounted to a total of €800,000, three are broadly described as "post-conflict peacebuilding, prevention" and one supported the "European Union Special Representative Border Support Team." The latter project was the result of an invitation by Tbilisi for the EU to replace the 150 OSCE monitors of the Georgian-Russian border after Russia had vetoed the renewal of the OSCE mission. As part of the Border Support Team, the EU sent first three and then 12 monitoring

---

46 Crisis Group, "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia," November 26, 2004, accessed May 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/ud3cedwk>.

47 More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5auy32sh>.

48 Nicu Popescu, "The EU's Conflict Prevention Failure in Georgia," *The CACI Analyst*, October 14, 2009, accessed May 20, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/5dukvak4>.

staff.<sup>49</sup> The European Union contributed to only one such project in this period: a small (€100,000) training project in 2007 for Georgia's Ministry on Conflict Resolution Issues, while the UK did not spend any money on crisis prevention and peacebuilding. The US invested only very small amounts in 2006 and 2007.

When Russia unilaterally increased the number of its peacekeeping forces in the Georgian areas of Abkhazia in April 2008, *CrisisWatch* warned of imminent conflict. Another report in June reiterated, "with the dispute between Georgia and Russia in a new, dangerously confrontational phase, the risk of war in the South Caucasus is growing."<sup>50</sup> A few weeks later on 7 August, after a series of violent clashes in South Ossetia and cyber attacks by Russia,<sup>51</sup> Georgia launched a military offensive on the Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali. This marked the start of the war. Russia responded with extensive ground, air and naval attacks soon after, its forces quickly moving deep into Georgian territory. Some 10 days later, Tbilisi eventually withdrew its military from the separatist regions and the Russian forces drew back to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, where they remain in two permanent military bases.<sup>52</sup>

Germany, the EU and the US rapidly increased their conflict management investments in Georgia in 2008, with the UK following in 2009. Among the Top Four donors, conflict, peace and security spending in Georgia made up €29.6 million in the year of the conflict, with €19.2 million coming from the EU alone. This more than doubled in 2009 to €66.6 million. In 2008, of the €4.07 million in German crisis prevention and peacebuilding funding, €4.05 million was spent only after the August war. Although no starting dates are given for EU spending listings in 2008, the descriptions indicate that they all began after the end of the conflict: the projects focus on rehabilitation, reconstruction, humanitarian support, and conflict resolution. The same pattern can be observed in the US listings. The UK remarkably still made no investments in crisis prevention and peacebuilding even after the outbreak of the war in August 2008.

Despite the end of the war in 2008, the conflict and all its problems remain: Russia's military presence secures the separatist governments of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and Moscow has officially recognized their independence and asserts increasing control over the regions' citizens, while Georgia and many others, including Germany and the EU,<sup>53</sup> consider them occupied territories. Between September 2018 and the end of 2019, a series of *CrisisWatch* warnings indicated the start of a new trend for escalation surrounding the breakdown of the four parties' main negotiation forum and the construction of a border fence in South Ossetia.<sup>54</sup> While further development

---

49 Popescu, "The EU's Conflict Prevention Failure in Georgia."

50 Crisis Group, "Georgia and Russia: Clashing over Abkhazia," June 5, 2008, accessed July 13, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/y4s34s38>.

51 John Markoff, "Before the Gunfire: Cyberattacks," *The New York Times*, August 12, 2008, accessed August 20, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/muyrnh>.

52 Giorgi Menabde, "Russia Boosts Its Military Contingent in Georgia's Occupied Territories," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 17, no. 22 (2020), accessed August 23, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/n8uu6z9x>.

53 Stefan Talmon, "Germany reaffirms support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and calls out Russian 'occupation,'" *German Practice in International Law*, March 9, 2021, accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/6cuauz75>; European Parliament, European Parliament resolution on Georgian occupied territories ten years after the Russian invasion, 2018/2741(RSP), June 11, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/3mb3u44b>.

54 CrisisWatch, "Georgia," September 2018 to December 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

remains to be seen, Germany's conflict prevention and peacebuilding funding fell significantly to just €180,000 in 2018, but slightly rose again to €600,000 in 2019. The EU, however, still maintains its civilian monitoring mission at the border.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

While major donors were clearly aware of serious warning signs, as shown by the dispute over EU preventive action,<sup>56</sup> funding patterns confirm that none of the Top Four reacted with serious engagement before the tensions escalated into full-blown war in Georgia.

The warning signs after 2004 very explicitly mentioned the danger of a all-out war in the South Caucasus and that continuously rising tensions and frequent smaller violent clashes were good indicators of a possible escalation of violence. Moscow's involvement in these earlier stages and the background of its military backing of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the early 1990s would have been clear indicators that Russia would try and assert as much control as possible and could get its own forces involved if provoked. Russia's involvement could at least partially explain the hesitancy of donors to invest more in preventive efforts, as was also shown by the dispute over EU preventive action. Due to the deep-rooted ethnic dimension of the conflict and the involvement of Russia, it was also foreseeable that these tensions would likely not resolve themselves without any further action toward reconciliation and mediation. After fall 2006, at the latest, the trend toward escalation was so visible that preventive intervention of some kind would have been warranted. Instead, the money only began to pour in right after the outbreak of the war in August 2008.

## 4.2. Mali (2004–2012)

Mali is the eighth-largest country in Africa, with a population estimated at 20 million in 2021.<sup>57</sup> Despite progress in human development in recent decades, Mali was among the six countries with the lowest Human Development Index scores in 2019.<sup>58</sup> For a long time, Mali's development was celebrated as a success story: the end of military rule in 1991 made way for a democratization process that donors lauded. As a "poster child of democracy," Mali appeared to provide stability in an otherwise troubled region. Washington partnered with Bamako for its "war on terror" in the Sahel. Mali also participated in the OECD's Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, for which it provided a test case. Aid workers and diplomats cherished the exceptionally good collaboration with their Malian counterparts, which also made the country a popular destination for aid funding.<sup>59</sup> Of all DAC donors, the EU, Germany and the US were the top three donors for peacebuilding and prevention in Mali in 2004–2019. Together with the UK, they

---

55 EUMM, "Our Mandate," accessed September 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/upfhunwv>.

56 Popescu, "The EU's Conflict Prevention Failure in Georgia."

57 More information about Mali's population can be found at <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/mali-population>.

58 Mali's HDI score rose from 0.234 in 1990 to 0.434 in 2019. More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/xw7raj7x>. By 2019, Mali ranked 184 out of 189 countries: <https://tinyurl.com/569bnwrd>.

59 Isaline Bergamaschi, "The fall of a donor darling: the role of aid in Mali's crisis," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 52, no. 3 (2014): p. 361f., accessed July 18, 2021, [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract\\_S0022278X14000251](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0022278X14000251).

accounted for 62% of Mali's peacebuilding and prevention support during that period. In contrast, France's special relationship with Mali is not reflected in its investment in peacebuilding and prevention at all:<sup>60</sup> Paris only contributed 1.3% of Mali's overall peacebuilding and prevention funding.

The 2012 Tuareg rebellion, marking the outbreak of the ongoing crisis, showed that not all that glitters is gold. The northern populations in Mali had suffered historical marginalization, rooted in French colonial policies, which only exacerbated troubled relations between northern and southern populations in the post-independence period.<sup>61</sup> The long-standing frustration of northern communities with southern elites, paired with hundreds of returning Tuareg fighters from Libya and a massive influx of arms, sparked the fourth Tuareg rebellion in Mali's post-colonial history. Rebel attacks plunged Mali into an unprecedented crisis. In Bamako, frustrated junior officers staged a military coup, while jihadist groups and self-defense militias fought for control over the northern parts of the country.

Were there warning signs for the 2012 crisis? And did the Top Four crisis prevention donors, and France,<sup>62</sup> act upon them to try and prevent the crisis before its outbreak? We find that none of the five donors' spending showed serious preventive efforts despite clear warnings ahead of the 2012 crisis.

## Warning Signs and Funding Patterns

To pinpoint whether donors reacted to concrete warning signs, we look at the decade before the outbreak of the crisis in 2012. Following the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the US pursued its war on terror strategy in Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania and launched the Pan Sahel Initiative to strengthen counterterrorism efforts.<sup>63</sup> In a 2005 report, Crisis Group first warned about Mali running the "greatest risk of any West African country other than Nigeria of violent Islamist activity."<sup>64</sup>

Apart from the threat of jihadist violence, tensions between northern communities and Bamako elites were also widely documented. From 2006 to 2008, *CrisisWatch* reported on the third Tuareg uprising since Mali's independence in 1960,<sup>65</sup> subsequent clashes between Tuareg rebels and government forces, and efforts by Algeria and Libya to broker peace agreements and ceasefires that never lasted long. Following the May 2008 attacks that killed 20 people on both sides and caused 900 people to escape to Burkina Faso in only a month, then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed concern over the "urgent" situation. In June 2008, the EU anti-terror coordinator also warned about Sahel extremist groups that used Mali as a training base.<sup>66</sup>

---

60 France Diplomacy, "Mali," 2019, accessed August 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/yay4pus7>.

61 Grégory Chauzal, Thibault van Damme, "The roots of Mali's conflict," Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, March 2015, accessed August 3, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/7xxmndzk>, p. 17ff.

62 Given France's special relationship with Mali, we also look at whether France responded to the warning signs.

63 European Council on Foreign Relations, "Mapping Armed Groups in Mali and the Sahel," 2019, accessed July 10, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/wf77yexw>.

64 Crisis Group, "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?," 2005, p. i, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/y25t5ham>.

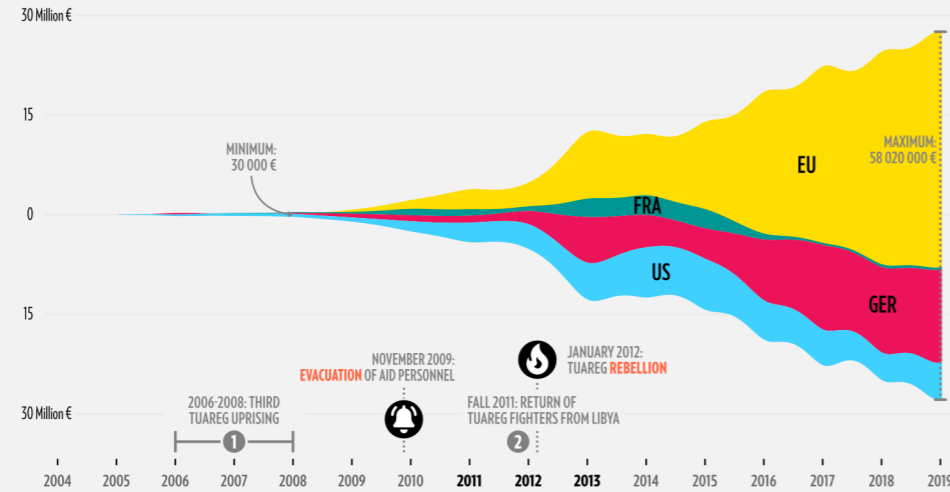
65 The first two Tuareg rebellions took place in 1963 and 1991. More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/7xxmndzk>.

66 CrisisWatch, "Mali," January 2003 to December 2008, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

### Mali: When Did Donors Invest in Relation to Major Warning Signals?

The first chart shows the development of donors' investments in relation to major warning signals 1 and 2 and the outbreak of violence 3. The following charts below and on the opposite page provide the breakdown of spending per donor and a list of all relevant projects above €100,000 during the early warning period. If a donor only invested at a smaller scale, we also included projects below that threshold.

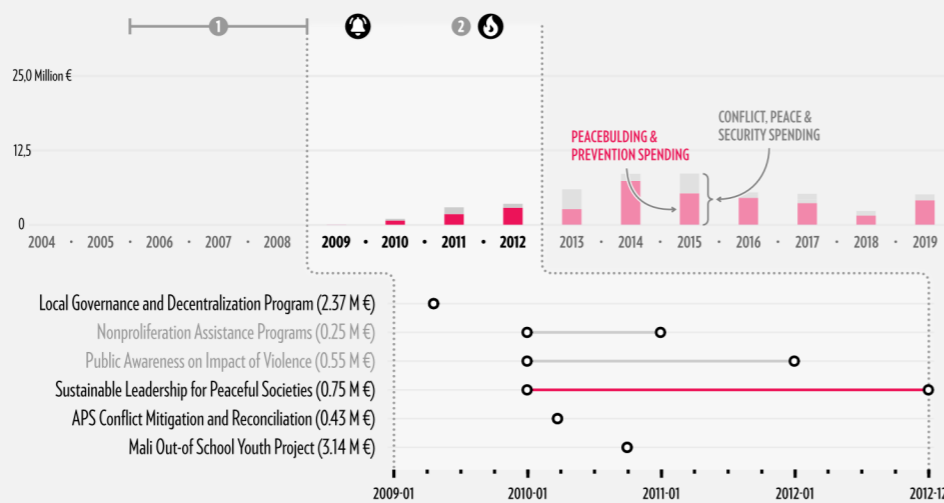
Top Donors' Conflict, Peace and Security Investments & Warning Signals, 2004-2019



### Conflict, Peace and Security Spending & Project Lists by Donor

#### United States

Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Mali, 2004-2019

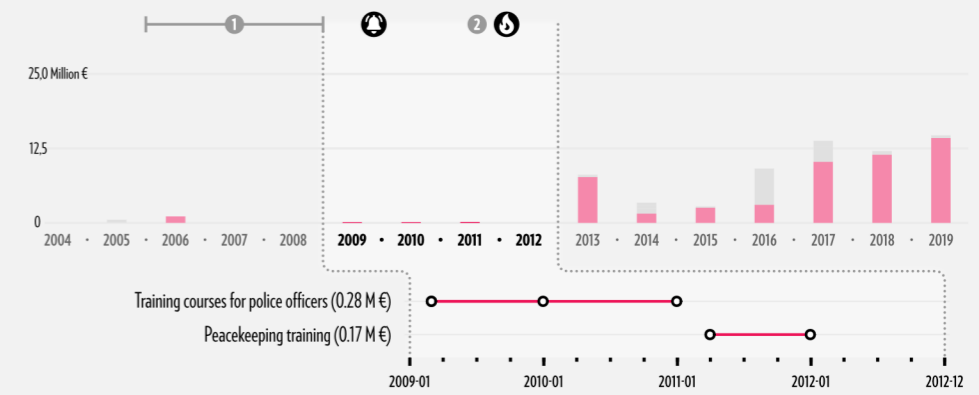


Early Warning Period (Jan 2009 to Dec 2012): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts

#### Germany

Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Mali, 2004-2019

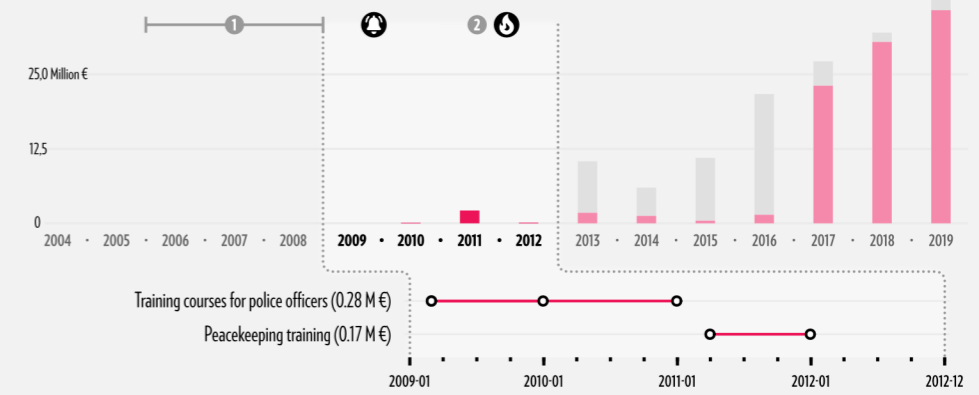
Early Warning Period (Jan 2009 to Dec 2012): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



#### European Union

Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Mali, 2004-2019

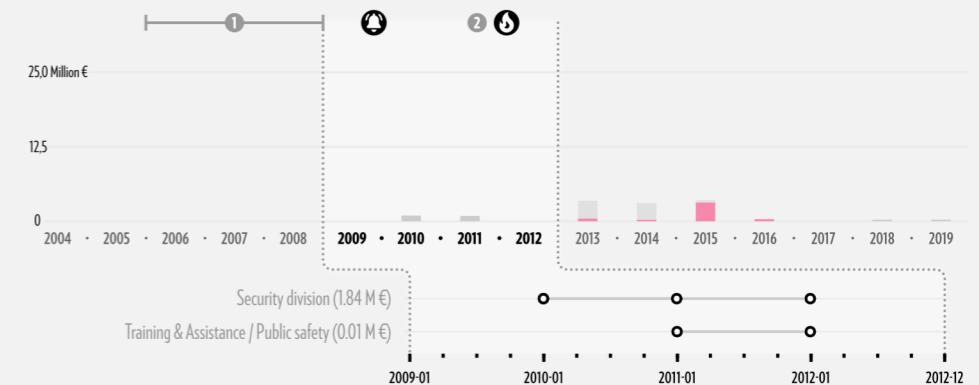
Early Warning Period (Jan 2009 to Dec 2012): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



#### France

Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Mali, 2004-2019

Early Warning Period (Jan 2009 to Dec 2012): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



Between 2004 and 2008, France, the EU and the UK did not invest in conflict, peace, and security assistance in Mali at all. The US only invested small amounts in peacebuilding and prevention in 2006 and 2007, and according to its own reporting to the OECD, Germany funded a single project labelled “peacebuilding/prevention,” worth €1.1 million in 2006. Interestingly, when asked by its parliament in 2015, the German government painted quite a different picture of German crisis prevention efforts: according to those project lists, Berlin had already started to invest in 2004 and had spent much more money, ranging from €2 million to €5 million per year. Most of the difference between the CRS figures and the data reported to parliament goes back to the “Mali-Nord” program, an fascinating example of the contradictions we encounter in donor reporting. According to project documents, “Mali-Nord” was designed to stabilize northern Mali by ensuring food security and the reconstruction of irrigation systems.<sup>67</sup> However, in its OECD reporting, the German government assigned none of the peace and conflict-related purpose codes to even some budgetary lines, and treated it as a project for rural development, all while claiming the entire amount for “civilian crisis prevention” in its reporting to parliament a few years after the outbreak of the 2012 crisis.<sup>68</sup>

When tensions between Tuareg rebels and Bamako eased after February 2009, the focus of *CrisisWatch* reports shifted to the kidnappings of foreigners by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). In response to the increased AQIM activities, the EU and the US put Mali on the al-Qaeda watch list in September 2009. Given increasing insecurity, expatriate aid workers were evacuated two months later. Bamako intensified its military operations against AQIM and ultimately declared “total war” on the terrorist group in 2009. Paris soon followed by openly declaring to be ‘at war’ with AQIM. *CrisisWatch* reported several AQIM hostage-takings throughout 2010, about which France had publicly warned. In August 2011, reports that hundreds of Tuareg fighters had returned from the Libyan war were explicitly linked to the risk of another Tuareg rebellion. *CrisisWatch* repeated the same warning in relation to further reports of returning fighters in October 2011.<sup>69</sup>

Despite an increasing terrorist threat, all top donors except France undertook only a handful of mostly small projects from 2009 to 2011. The EU invested the largest sum, €2.1 million, into a “Special Program for Peace, Security and Development in Northern Mali (PSPSDN).”<sup>70</sup> As part of the US prevention and peacebuilding portfolio, a relatively small sum was initially dedicated to a project titled “Support to Local Governance and Decentralization Program (PGP2) – Deny Terrorist Sponsorship, Support and Sanctuary.” In 2011, however, the US significantly increased its funds for the same project to €1.4 million, an indication of the growing priority of preventing

---

67 Henner Papendiek and Barbara Rocksloh-Papendiek, “Programm Mali-Nord Projektbericht Nr. 12 Technische & Finanzielle Zusammenarbeit Mai bis August 2000,” 2000, p. 1, accessed July 3, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/wu55mfsj>.

68 Unrelated to the contradictory reporting, “Mali-Nord” later faced serious allegations that its agricultural interventions lacked basic conflict sensitivity and may have contributed to the 2012 crisis by exclusively supporting settled farmers regardless of their unresolved land conflicts with nomadic populations in the same area. Philipp Rotmann’s interview with Mali expert, August 2017.

69 CrisisWatch, “Mali,” January 2009 to December 2011, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

70 More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/5xs5bbt6>. Even though the program was designed to prevent people from joining AQIM by supporting economic development in northern Mali, it only further deepened the grievances of northerners against Bamako. More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/afrdjafb>.

violence and terrorism. Germany supported seven months of training for police and peacekeepers with much smaller sums.

Early 2012 mark the outbreak of the crisis in Mali. In January, the Tuareg rebel group National Movement for Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) – with returning Tuareg fighters from Libya and reportedly with some help from AQIM – conducted several attacks in the north and northeast of Mali. The Tuareg rebellion displaced 130,000 people, intensified intercommunal tensions and resulted in a few dozen non-civilian casualties. Two months later, the army overthrew the Malian government in a military coup and suspended the constitution. Several jihadist groups and self-defense militias got involved in the messy situation, either backing the MNLA to gain a foothold in parts of Mali, or the Malian army to fight back.<sup>71</sup> By that point, any attempt at preventative action would have come too late. The situation worsened drastically throughout the year until France’s military intervened with “Operation Serval” in January 2013. Since 2013, the top donors have massively ramped up their investments in conflict, peace and security assistance: compared to the period before the crisis, 2005–2012, donors provided 20 times the funding in the aftermath of the crisis from 2013 to 2019.

## Conclusion

The funding patterns show that the clear warning signs of tensions with Tuareg rebel groups, as well as the rise of jihadist groups, did not lead to significant investments in crisis prevention ahead of the outbreak of the crisis in 2012. The few projects undertaken beforehand indicate only limited reactions to the warnings. Ninety-five percent of the total investment in conflict, peace and security assistance from 2005 to 2019 was spent in the period after the outbreak of the crisis. Taken together with the small level of project budgets in prevention and peacebuilding overall, the massive difference in spending levels before and after the crisis shows that only the 2012 crisis triggered significant assistance. Donors failed in prevention, and only opened their wallets to start cleaning up the mess through stabilization efforts that are ongoing nine years later.

Admittedly, many did not foresee the rebellion and the ousting of the Malian government.<sup>72</sup> However, tracing back the specific warning signs, several voices had in fact warned of Islamist violence and clashes between government forces and Tuareg rebel groups. Not only did Crisis Group cover the simmering conflicts, but the UN Secretary-General and the government in Bamako also voiced concerns. Donors themselves were obviously well aware of the escalating conflict, as Brussels and Paris publicly warned about the situation. The US Pan-Sahel Initiative shows that they took the terrorist threat quite seriously. The addition of Mali to the al-Qaeda watch list by the EU and the US, the evacuation of aid personnel in 2009, and Mali and France’s declarations of being in a “total war” with AQIM in 2009 and 2010 should have been clear alarm bells for a potential escalation of the situation. This should have sparked serious preventive efforts, including by donors like Germany, which was heavily invested in Mali for many years and linked its interests with those of France.

---

71 CrisisWatch, “Mali,” January 2012 to December 2012, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

72 Crisis Group, “Mali: Avoiding Escalation,” July 18, 2012, accessed July 14, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/5abf6dfh>.

### 4.3. Ukraine (2004–2014)

After Russia, Ukraine is the second biggest country in Europe, and together with Moldova, it is also persistently the poorest.<sup>73</sup> On the Human Development Index, Ukraine is classified as “high,” sharing the 74th position with Mexico.<sup>74</sup> Ukraine’s population is estimated at 42 million.<sup>75</sup> Over the past 30 years, the country has faced political divisions between rival camps: those that sought to align with the West by joining the EU and NATO, and those advocating for tying Ukraine closer to Russia.<sup>76</sup> Tensions escalated in 2014, when the Euromaidan protests and Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich’s forced resignation were followed by Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the violent separatism and Russian intervention in Donbas.<sup>77</sup> During the Euromaidan, more than 100 people died in clashes with security forces or were shot dead by snipers, and over 2,500 more were injured.<sup>78</sup> Since 2014, more than 3,300 civilians have been killed in Donbas and more than 7,000 injured, with total fatalities exceeding 13,000 people.<sup>79</sup>

Did any of the Top Four donors make any efforts to prevent the 2014 Ukraine crisis? Could they have foreseen this level of escalation? We conclude that there were sufficient reports about conflict within Ukrainian society and with Russia to give donors ample warning. However, none of the Top Four donors turned this knowledge into preventive action in any way that is reflected in their investments in the country.

#### Warning Signs and Funding Patterns

For this case study, we focus on the time between the Ukrainian Orange Revolution in 2004 and the crisis in early 2014. The Orange Revolution had already revealed the issues that would become relevant again in 2014: in rigged presidential elections, the progressive pro-EU candidate Viktor Yushchenko lost against Russia-backed Viktor Yanukovich, triggering mass protests. In a second round of voting, the results were reversed. During the 2004 crisis, several eastern Ukrainian politicians threatened

---

73 Anders Åslund, “What is wrong with the Ukrainian economy?,” Atlantic Council, April 26, 2019, accessed July 18, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/3hfm6v2k>.

74 United Nations Development Programme, “Ukraine,” accessed July 17, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/37j7anhu>.

75 International Monetary Fund, “Ukraine,” accessed July 18, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/yb8evccx>.

76 Ruslan Minich, “Forget East-West and Language Divide. Politicians May Exploit New Wedge Issues in Ukraine’s Elections,” Atlantic Council, February 14, 2018, accessed July 2, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/forget-east-west-and-language-divide-politicians-may-exploit-new-wedge-issues-in-ukraine-s-elections/>; The presidential elections of 2004 already sparked mass popular protests that have become known as the Orange Revolution. More information is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/57jjm67s>.

77 “Ukraine Crisis: Timeline,” *BBC News*, November 13, 2014, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/ydnj-88dw>.

78 “Amnesty International: Five Years After Euromaidan, Justice For The Victims ‘Still Not Even In Sight’,” *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, February 19, 2019, accessed August 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/23fcx89w>.

79 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), Report on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine 16 November 2019 to 15 February 2020, accessed August 3, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/4fyz29jf>.

that their regions would move toward secession.<sup>80</sup> After this non-violent revolution, observers pointed to the likelihood of rising tensions between Ukraine and Russia.<sup>81</sup> Repeated reports in the early 2000s stressed the lines of conflict between the different linguistic groups and a regional divide between western Ukraine and eastern Ukraine and Crimea.<sup>82</sup>

From 2004 to 2010, *CrisisWatch* reported about the fact that serious, periodic disputes with Russia over gas payments with several diplomatic fallouts (as well as an energy crisis straining relations with the EU in January 2009) had increased political tensions along the pro-Russia/pro-West divisions.<sup>83</sup> In 2010, Yanukovich won the presidential elections and subsequently appointed a pro-Russian government as well as starting rapprochement with Moscow. Meanwhile, scholar F. Stephen Larrabee warned of the Crimea scenario that would eventually happen four years later:

“Separatist sentiment, although diminished, continues to exist in Crimea, and provides Moscow with a potential tool to exert pressure on Kiev. An outright Russian military invasion of Ukraine is unlikely; nonetheless, Ukrainian officials worry that small scale clashes provoked by Russian nationalists in Crimea could be used as a pretext for Russian intervention under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians in Crimea.”<sup>84</sup>

Between 2004 and 2010, Germany spent a total of €470,000 on strengthening the rule of law in Ukraine and a miniscule amount on mine action. The EU invested €46 million in mine action and security sector reform, but none in crisis prevention and peacebuilding activities. The UK only invested in such measures starting in 2009, and only at a value of €150,000. Similarly, the US granted a Catholic University a democracy grant of €34,000 as their only prevention and peacebuilding activity in this timespan.

In the following three years, *CrisisWatch* focused on the escalating situation surrounding ex-PM Yulia Tymoshenko’s involvement in the 2009 gas deal with Russia. Her imprisonment caused further splits across the Ukrainian political spectrum and was condemned by the EU and the US as politically motivated.<sup>85</sup> When, in November 2013, economic pressure from Russia led Yanukovich to postpone an Association Agreement with the EU, *CrisisWatch* noted that the ensuing protests, now known as the Euromaidan, were the “largest rallies since [the] 2004 Orange Revolution.”

---

80 Paul D’anieri, “Ethnic Tensions and State Strategies: Understanding the Survival of the Ukrainian State,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 23, no. 1 (2007): pp. 4–29, accessed August 3, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523270701194896>.

81 Kataryna Wolczuk, “Ukraine after the Orange Revolution,” Centre for European Reform, 2005, accessed August 12, <https://tinyurl.com/xk2xcr5m>.

82 Taras Kuzio, “The Ukrainian-Russian Cultural Conflict,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 6, no. 87, May 6, 2009, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/4peu8nm9>; Hans van Zon, “Ethnic Conflict and Conflict Resolution in Ukraine,” *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 2, no. 2 (2001): pp. 221–240, accessed August 5, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1570585018458760>; D’anieri, “Ethnic Tensions and State Strategies: Understanding the Survival of the Ukrainian State.”

83 CrisisWatch, “Ukraine,” January 2004 to March 2014, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

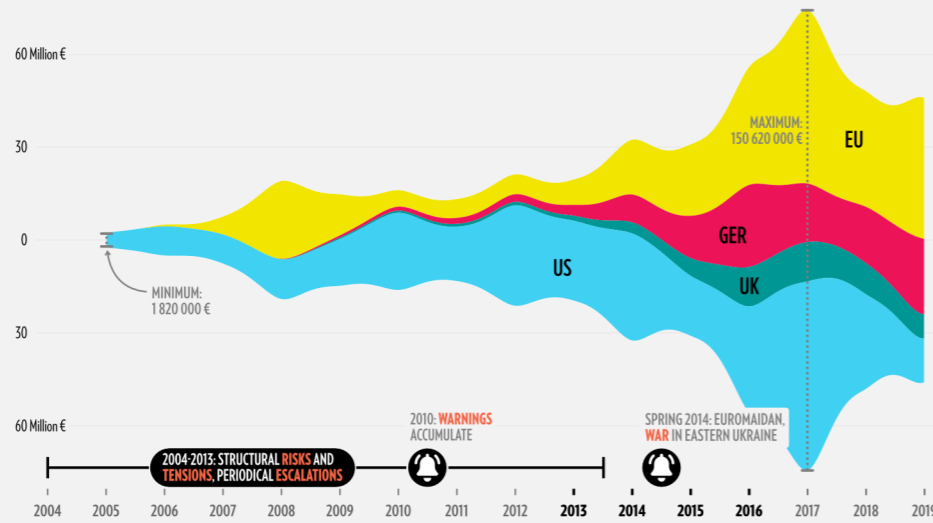
84 F. Stephen Larrabee, “Russia, Ukraine, and Central Europe: The Return of Geopolitics,” *Journal of International Affairs*, April 15, 2010, accessed August 15, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/4kaky39u>.

85 “West condemns Ukraine over Yulia Tymoshenko jailing,” *BBC News*, October 11, 2011, <https://tinyurl.com/ssfwfz26>.

### Ukraine: When Did Donors Invest in Relation to Major Warning Signals?

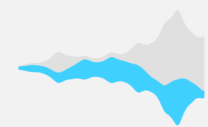
The first chart shows the development of donors' investments in relation to major warning signals 🚨 and the outbreak of violence ⚡. The following charts below and on the opposite page provide the breakdown of spending per donor and a list of all relevant projects above €100,000 during the early warning period. If a donor only invested at a smaller scale, we also included projects below that threshold.

Top Donors' Conflict, Peace and Security Investments & Warning Signals, 2004-2019

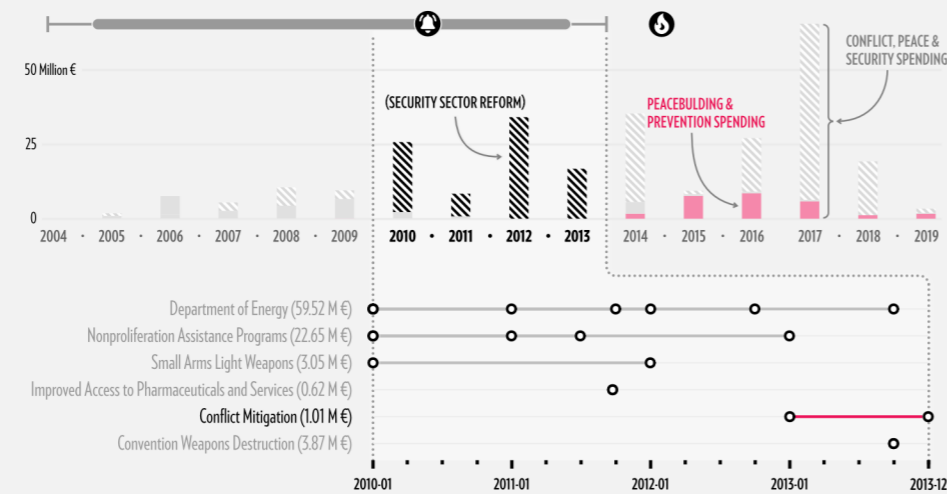


### Conflict, Peace and Security Spending & Project Lists by Donor

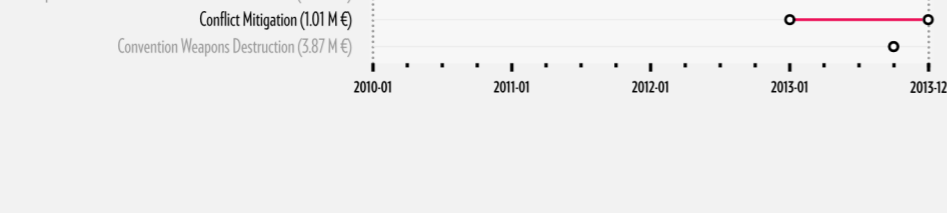
#### United States



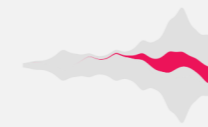
Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Ukraine, 2004-2019



Early Warning Period (Jan 2011 to Dec 2013): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts

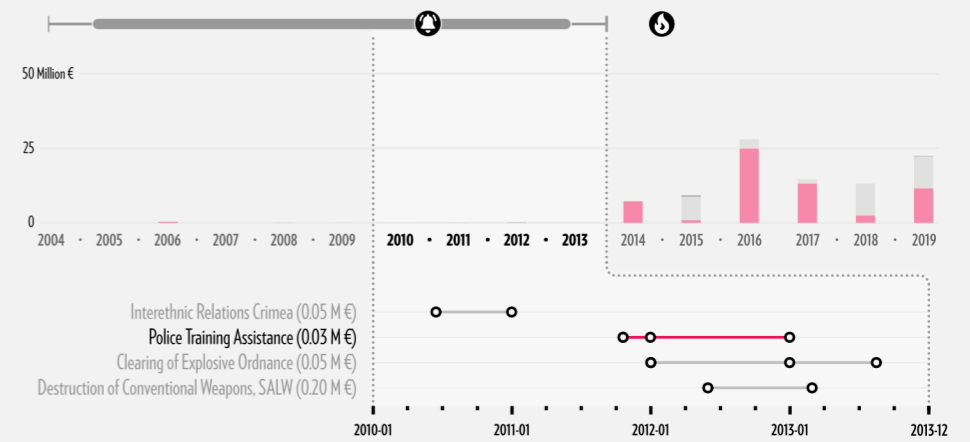


#### Germany



Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Ukraine, 2004-2019

Early Warning Period (Jan 2011 to Dec 2013): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts

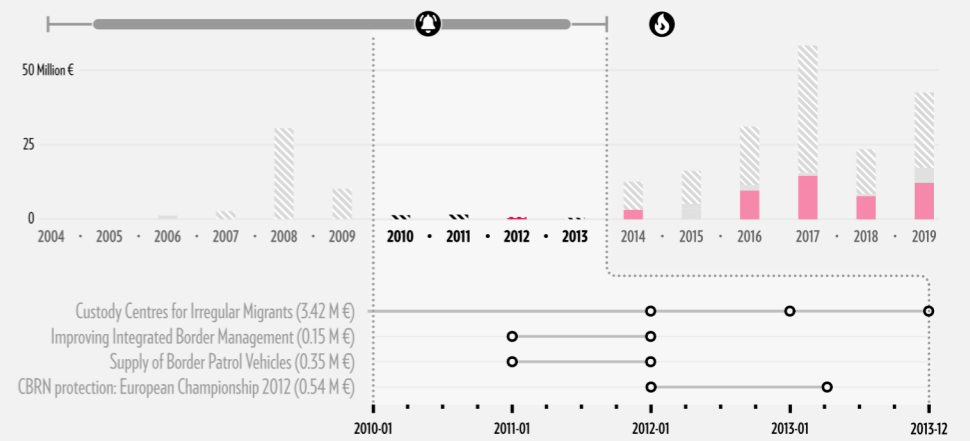


#### European Union

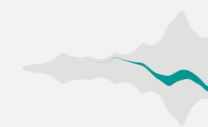


Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Ukraine, 2004-2019

Early Warning Period (Jan 2011 to Dec 2013): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts

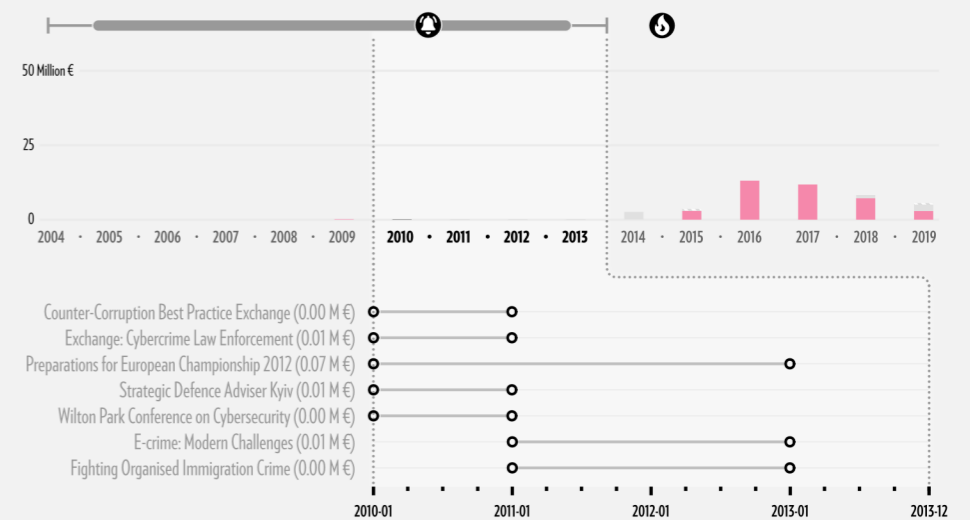


#### United Kingdom



Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Ukraine, 2004-2019

Early Warning Period (Jan 2011 to Dec 2013): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



In January 2014, the Euromaidan demonstrations turned violent, and clashes with security forces made Kiev resemble a war zone.<sup>86</sup> After one of the deadliest phases of the protests, with at least 88 fatalities in 48 hours, Yanukovych fled to Russia in late February. Only a week later, pro-Russian Crimean gunmen and Russian forces overtook Crimea and held a referendum that allegedly resulted in 97% of votes in favor of secession from Ukraine. At the end of April, after pro-Russian and Russian-backed militants had seized government buildings in several cities, Ukraine's interim president launched a military operation in the east of the country. In May, pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk, backed with Russian military equipment and personnel, declared their independence after unrecognized referenda. Alongside the continued fighting, the downing of flight MH17 from Amsterdam over separatist territory on July 17, 2014 made international headlines. It was later discovered that the 298 people on board lost their lives because the plane was shot down with a Russian-made missile.<sup>87</sup> The war in Donbas is ongoing, with another phase of intensified fighting and the break of a renewed ceasefire as recently as March 2021.<sup>88</sup>

Between 2010 and the start of the escalation in January 2014, Germany only spent €60,000 on crisis prevention and peacebuilding in Ukraine. Only two listings in that period, projects in 2011 and 2012 to address inter-ethnic tensions and foster social dialogue, were relevant to crisis development. Before 2014, the EU's spending in Ukraine focused on security system reform and largely went to Ukrainian state border guards. The only crisis prevention and peacebuilding listings are two supplies of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear detection and identification equipment "in the framework of the UEFA European Championship 2012," which were allotted €400,000. Similarly, seven UK listings in the years 2010 to 2013 relate directly to the 2012 soccer championship, while only one – at a cost of €1,400 – fell into the crisis prevention and peacebuilding category. The US did not display any engagement in that area either, spending nothing toward prevention and peacebuilding in Ukraine in the three years before the crisis.

In 2014, the Top Four's money started to flow in: Germany, the UK and the EU increased their conflict management investments from miniscule amounts to several million euros. The US had already spent a considerable amount on security system reform in 2013, but still more than doubled their spending to €35 million in 2014. Interestingly, for all four donors, funding only peaked a couple years later in 2016 and 2017, when they boosted their conflict, peace and security investments – including significant rises in the crisis prevention and peacebuilding category – to large amounts between €13 million (UK, 2016) and €65.6 million (US, 2017).

## Conclusion

Overall, the warnings between 2004 and late 2013 were not as explicit as one would expect ahead of as big a crisis as that in early 2014. However, the Orange Revolution had brought existing structural risks and tensions both within Ukraine and with Moscow to

---

<sup>86</sup> BBC News, "Ukraine Crisis: Timeline."

<sup>87</sup> "Judge sees evidence of Buk missile being used in downing of MH17 airliner" *Reuters*, June 8, 2021, accessed August 13, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/z345tsp7>.

<sup>88</sup> Andrew E. Kramer, "Fighting Escalates in Eastern Ukraine, Signaling the End to Another Cease-Fire," *The New York Times*, April 30, 2021, accessed August 20, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2px3u766>.

a new level, a development widely reported on and well known. The subsequent years of pro-Western governments did not ease these tensions. On the contrary, the indications were clear that one side was only nursing its grievances and mobilizing for the next round, both within Ukraine and in Russia. The incredibly quick pace of developments between November 2013 and April 2014 and their precise timing were difficult to foresee, but the underlying societal and political conflicts were not: secessionism in the east of the country and in Crimea, as well as Moscow's unwillingness to let the Ukrainian people democratically choose their future was written on the wall.

The 10-year window between the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan would have been a great opportunity to invest in mid- and long-term projects to ease the tensions that eventually formed the trigger point for the 2014 escalation. Although it is very unlikely that such investments would have prevented Russia from invading Ukraine, greater political efforts underwritten by larger-scale projects to enhance social cohesion and resilience could have helped Ukrainian society to better cope with its internal divisions. At the same time, such preventive efforts would have certainly helped if there were less societal tensions for Russia to exploit, and it might have been harder for them to find an entry point. The main impediment, however, was likely donors' considerations of their policy toward Russia. In addition, the Yanukovich administration would probably not have welcomed stronger prevention efforts by external donors. Moreover, many in western Europe simply did not take the warning signs seriously enough. As Germany's then-Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier put it: "A war in Europe was unimaginable."<sup>89</sup>

At the end of the day, all four donors only started increasing their crisis prevention and peacebuilding investments significantly after the crisis had unfolded and violent conflict had come to Europe again.

## 4.4. Iraq (2010–2013)

With an estimated 38 million people, Iraq's population is about half the size of Germany's. Whether in nominal (\$250 billion in 2019) or PPP terms (\$399 billion in 2019), its GDP ranks at the bottom of the top quartile globally, reflecting the country's oil wealth. In terms of human development, Iraq is still considered at the "medium" level. Even after decades of war, Iraq is far better off in terms of economic potential, level of education and infrastructure than many other conflict countries. After decades of divisive and repressive rule, the 1991 Gulf War, the 2003 invasion led by the US and UK, and the subsequent insurgency that tore the country apart, social cohesion was already on shaky ground. When the political leadership expelled US forces in 2011, however, physical, social and political infrastructures in the country were completely destroyed. For Europe, Iraq has been one of the most important countries in the Middle East due to its pivotal role in terms of sectarian peace and the Saudi-Iran rivalry, its enormous economic potential, its geographical proximity, and its social connections through its Kurdish population. The massive outpouring of aid following the takeover

---

89 Auswärtiges Amt, „Rede von Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier bei der Tagung „Europäische Erinnerungskulturen“ im Welsaal des Auswärtigen Amts,“ December 17, 2014, accessed August 22, <https://tinyurl.com/7p9epv2f>.

of huge portions of Iraqi territory by so-called Islamic State (IS) insurgents in 2014, which included the unprecedented decision by Germany to deliver lethal arms to a conflict party - the Kurdish Peshmerga - testifies to Iraq's relevance for Europe. Were there warning signs for the rise of the IS and its consequences around the time of the US departure? Did the Top Four donors heed these warning signs by trying to prevent the new war before its outbreak in mid-January, when the city of Fallujah was conquered? We find no indication that there were any serious attempts at material support for preventive action before the IS overran Iraqi security forces, and stabilization investments began pouring in only after that time.

## Warning Signs and Funding Patterns

The US military withdrawal from Iraq in 2011 marked the beginning of a new chapter for the country. Both a major campaign promise of US President Barack Obama and an important demand of the Iraqi leadership, the departure of US forces saw the country return to something like sovereignty, at least on paper. However, Iraq was left with many alarming structural fractures that were well understood internationally: viciously sectarian politics and violence that made the 2010 elections deeply contested and mistrusted; weak security forces despite billions of US and UK investments in training and advice;<sup>90</sup> endemic corruption and abuse of power by political leaders;<sup>91</sup> and very active neighbors keen to prevent Iraq's oil wealth and central location from falling into the hands of the opposing political camp. Meanwhile, popular movements across the Arab world flooded the streets with demands for better governance and socio-economic opportunities.

If there was ever a country awash with red flashing warning signs for root causes of conflict, it was Iraq as it turns from US overrule to independence. Left by the US in a messy state that would neither heal by itself nor be eager to accept much more US assistance, it was clear to European observers that there was plenty of risk for renewed violence. Given the heated rivalry among Iraq's main neighbors, it would have fallen to continental Europe to carry the main burden of preventing the next round of fighting, whether for reasons of alliance politics vis-à-vis an Obama administration that called for greater burden sharing, due to its own moral compass in preventing mass violence and genocide, or due to its interests in a stable Middle East. By early 2012, Syria had erupted in violence. This was all the more reason to cast a wary eye across the border as Syrian refugees added to its neighbor's burdens.

The spending data shows no reaction at all to these blatant structural warning signs, whether in the same or the following year. On the contrary, the other donors mirrored US disengagement: the US, UK, EU, and Germany reduced their combined prevention and peacebuilding investments in Iraq from €53 million in 2010 to just €5 million in 2011, a 90% cut. In fact, the US remained engaged with mine action, conventional weapons destruction and unspecified security sector work to the tune of €17 million, but had little or nothing to do with prevention or peacebuilding. (see ➡ Figure 17: Iraq infographic, p.52).

---

90 Crisis Group, "Loose Ends: Iraq's Security Forces between U.S. Drawdown and Withdrawal," October 26, 2010, accessed August 21, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/k6yzbsvr>.

91 Crisis Group, "Failing Oversight: Iraq's Unchecked Government," September 26, 2011, accessed August 21, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2repk9ze>.

Following seemingly isolated terrorist attacks in January 2012 that claimed more than 500 casualties, by April, the IS of Iraq insurgents issued formal claims for bombings that the international media and *CrisisWatch* picked up on, followed by a steady stream that continued through the spring and early summer and that established a clear sectarian pattern. The month of July 2012, in which a single terrorist attack claimed more than 100 lives and “at which point Agence France Presse (AFP) began to track daily casualties in Iraq in detail,”<sup>92</sup> stood out further from what may have been considered “normal” levels of Iraqi political violence at the time.<sup>93</sup>

Meanwhile, the Iraqi political class was fully focused on infighting. “Politicians are fiddling as the embers of conflict are being relit,” warned Crisis Group’s Middle East Director Joost Hiltermann, writing for CNN.com on July 30.<sup>94</sup> By September, open sources provided analyses of how the IS of Iraq “demonstrates a nationwide command and control capability to synchronize attacks from Mosul and Kirkuk in the north to Basra in the south” in order to “dominate the territory” it previously controlled in 2006.<sup>95</sup> This was a summer that provided ample warning signs for another serious escalation of violence in Iraq. In December, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani suffered a stroke and was flown to Germany for medical treatment.<sup>96</sup>

In terms of preventive investment, the Top Four donors maintained their low level of engagement in Iraq into 2012, with a combined €15 million reported for peacebuilding and prevention. The bulk of this sum – €11 million – was EU resettlement assistance for the 3,200 residents of Camp Ashraf in Diyala province, a mainstay of the Iranian “People’s Mujahedin” militia, who had repeatedly been attacked. This was an important effort, but very focused on only one of Iraq’s many urgent crisis risks.<sup>97</sup> The other €4 million was spread between many tiny projects, while the one big effort that continued was the US-funded mine clearance scheme (€9 million). Interestingly, in the German government’s reporting to parliament, there is no “crisis prevention” spending reported at all for Iraq until 2015.<sup>98</sup> This indicates that the five continued and four new projects that Berlin reported to the OECD as its “civilian peace-building, conflict prevention and resolution” assistance for the 2011–13 period were seen more as contributions to peacebuilding than prevention in Berlin (see ➔ Figure 17: Iraq infographic, p.52).

The civilian spending data does not even show a reaction to the alarming developments of summer 2012 in terms of activities that would only begin in 2013. Beyond completing the Ashraf resettlement to another camp, the main efforts of 2013 – most of which were prepared for implementation in 2012 – focused on vocational

---

92 Jessica D. Lewis, “Al-Qaeda in Iraq Resurgent,” Institute for the Study of War, Middle East Security Report 14, September 2013, p. 10, <https://tinyurl.com/d87sv67v>.

93 CrisisWatch, “Iraq,” January 2012 to July 2012, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

94 Joost Hiltermann, “Violence in Iraq? It’s the Politics, Stupid!,” Crisis Group, July 30, 2012, accessed August 23, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/3bdccyfp>.

95 Sam Wyer, “The Islamic State of Iraq and the ‘Destroying the Walls’ Campaign,” Institute for the Study of War, September 21, 2012, accessed August 22, 2021, <http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounders/islamic-state-iraq-and-destroying-walls-campaign>.

96 CrisisWatch, “Iraq,” December 2012, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

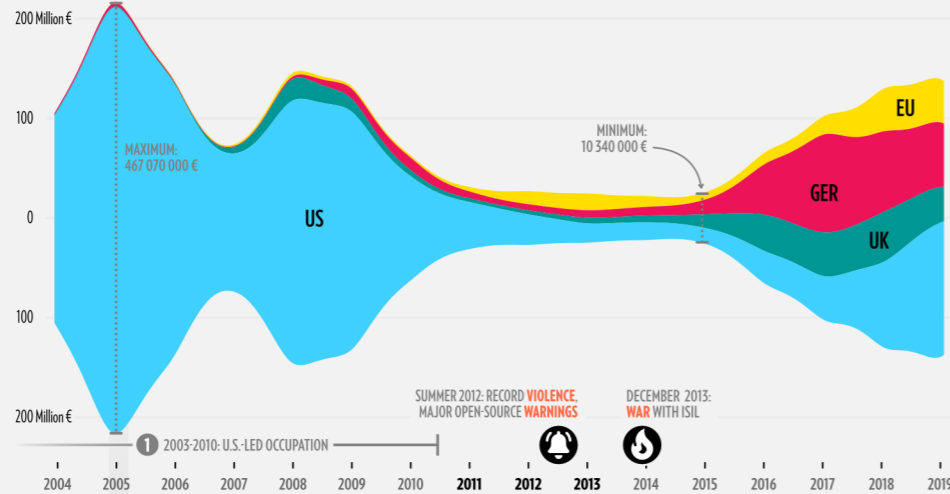
97 “Kobler Urges for Cooperation to Complete the Relocation of the Remaining Residents of Camp Ashraf,” reliefweb, June 25, 2021, accessed August 12, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/wazk44fe>.

98 Deutscher Bundestag, “Drucksache 18/4626.”

### Iraq: When Did Donors Invest in Relation to Major Warning Signals?

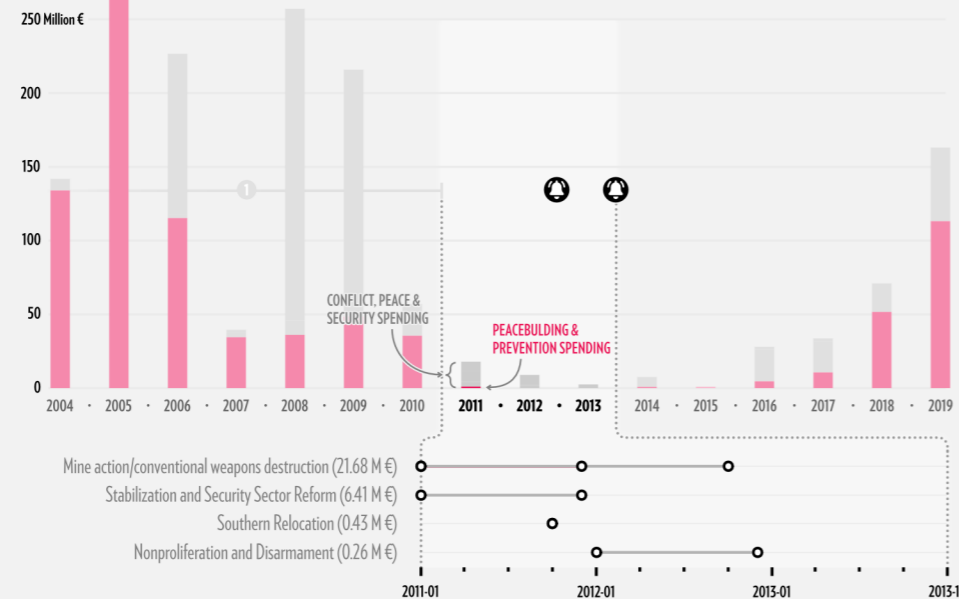
The first chart shows the development of donors' investments in relation to major warning signals and the outbreak of violence. The following charts below and on the opposite page provide the breakdown of spending per donor and a list of all relevant projects above €100,000 during the early warning period. If a donor only invested at a smaller scale, we also included projects below that threshold.

Top Donors' Conflict, Peace and Security Investments & Warning Signals, 2004-2019

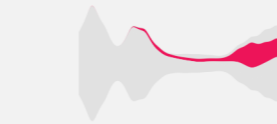


### Conflict, Peace and Security Spending & Project Lists by Donor

United States

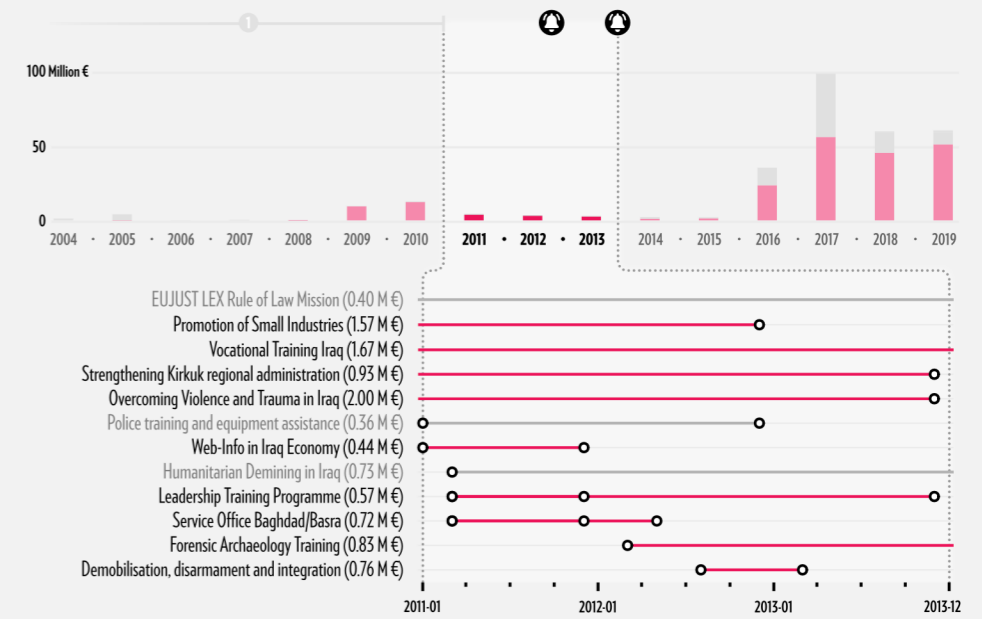


Germany

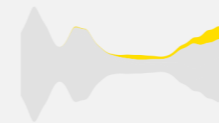


Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Iraq, 2004-2019

Early Warning Period (Jan 2011 to Dec 2013):  
Selected Projects in **Peacebuilding & Prevention**  
vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts

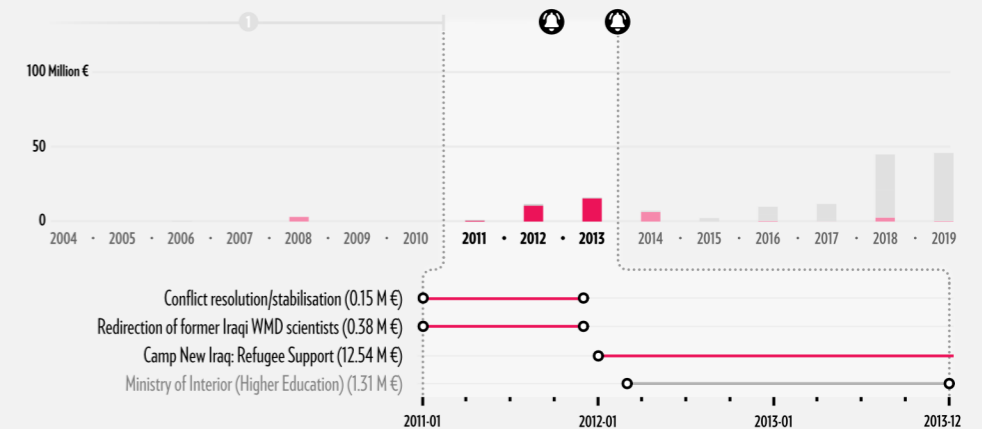


European Union

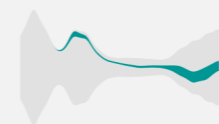


Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Iraq, 2004-2019

Early Warning Period (Jan 2011 to Dec 2013):  
Selected Projects in **Peacebuilding & Prevention**  
vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts

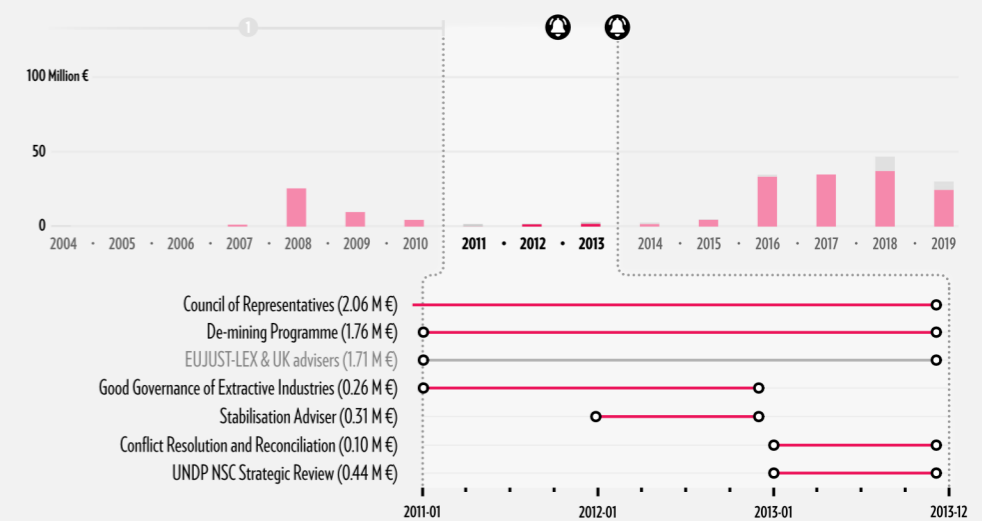


United Kingdom



Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Iraq, 2004-2019

Early Warning Period (Jan 2011 to Dec 2013):  
Selected Projects in **Peacebuilding & Prevention**  
vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



training for young people (Germany, €669,000), dealing with the past (Germany, two projects together worth €1.2 million), supporting the Iraqi parliament and a national security review (the UK, €1.4 million), demining (the US and Germany, €4 million in total), and bilateral support to the EU CSDP judicial assistance mission EUJUST LEX Iraq (Germany and the UK, €2.2 million together).<sup>99</sup>

The death toll continued rising into 2013. By May 2013, Iraq's "deadliest month in five years," *CrisisWatch* regularly mentioned more than 1,000 killed in terrorist violence per month,<sup>100</sup> with similar figures available from other sources.<sup>101</sup> The massive escalation in numbers from the previous year continued over the summer. In an August 2013 report, Crisis Group pinpointed the sectarian problem and again highlighted the risk of a "relapse into generalized sectarian conflict."<sup>102</sup> The release of a meticulously researched 40-page report in English and Arabic indicated plenty of briefing activity in the preceding months, going back at least to the Hiltermann op-ed the previous summer.

By December, the IS insurgency was widely referred to as another "war," and by mid-January 2014, the group had overrun the city of Falluja. In the summer of 2014, the mass atrocities against the Yezidi population in northern Iraq amounted to genocide. By then, any attempt at "crisis prevention" would have come too late, and accessibility constraints meant funding levels from the main donors fell further, with money redirected into mine clearance in areas away from the fighting. Even then, the pattern we observed in 2012 and 2013 – fragmented portfolios that addressed only a few of the pressing issues with all-too-small investments – continued all through 2014 and 2015: only from 2016 onward does the data show serious investment in supporting Iraq's desperate fight against IS and its stabilization only from 2016 onward.

Since mid-2018, reports of periodic popular protests and other warning signs should have directed donor attention again to the risk of another new crisis that may yet emerge.<sup>103</sup> The 2019 investment data provides too little granularity to make estimates about the degree to which donors have responded to these new warnings. The overall level of investment remains relatively high at €300 million total (by Germany, the US, the UK, and the EU together), which amounts to about 0.1% of Iraq's annual GDP, and project descriptions contain plenty of sensible concepts like community resilience, countering violent extremism, anti-corruption, accountability and reconciliation, security sector assistance, and protection of civilians.

## Conclusion

Despite the massive political attention that Iraq has commanded among the top donors, the ample available analyses and very specific warnings – the cases taken from Crisis

---

99 The OECD data also records a French €5 million effort in the security sector for which no details are provided.

100 CrisisWatch, "Iraq," January 2013 to December 2013, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

101 Iraq Body Count, "Database," accessed August 12, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2xdcpk6r>.

102 Crisis Group, "Make or Break: Iraq's Sunnis and the State," Middle East Report no. 144, 2013, accessed August 30, <https://tinyurl.com/59p9tpat>.

103 Crisis Group, "How to Cope with Iraq's Summer Brushfire," Middle East Briefing no. 61, 2018, accessed August 22, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/4u4rauh6>; CrisisWatch, "Iraq," January 2019 to December 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

Group are just the tip of the iceberg in this regard – Iraq is clearly another example of the pattern, that at least in managing their financial instruments for crisis prevention, donors tend to ignore even very clear warnings. As in the other cases, we did not analyze whether and the extent to which other instruments such as preventive diplomacy were applied in the key period (2011–13). However, the pattern we found in the spending data points toward two conclusions: One, amid very modest-sized country portfolios for Iraq, donors overwhelmingly funded projects that sought to clean up after the previous rounds of violence rather than preventing a new one. Two, donor investments were made once the purpose was stabilization and peacebuilding, as the figures show for 2016 onward.

While we cannot perfectly assess the degree to which the few 2011–13 efforts in mine clearance, reconciliation, legal reform, vocational training, or the UK-funded, UNDP-supported national security review could have had preventive as well as peacebuilding effects, the balance is likely to favor peacebuilding rather than prevention. Incidentally, it may be the national security review – a €430,000 UNDP project – that retrospectively comes the closest to addressing the key fractures that were the subjects of timely warnings like those from Crisis Group: fractures that proved a weak spot that enabled the onslaught of IS and thus the expansion of a terrorist campaign into full-scale war.

For Germany, Iraq was not a designated “partner country” for development cooperation at all during the 2011–14 period. That designation and the accompanying flow of technical cooperation funds only came during and after the war with IS. In this regard, it is also notable that the first response to a parliamentary query about crisis prevention investments in the 2004–14 period was compiled in the spring of 2015, at the height of the war. And still, the German government was so keen to emphasize its prevention efforts elsewhere that it reported several times more preventive spending to the parliament than it did to the less widely noted OECD’s CRS, where it did not even report a single euro of spending for Iraq.

## 4.5. Myanmar (2010–2017)

Myanmar is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, with at least 135 major ethnic groups and 100 languages spoken among its population, which is estimated at 54 million.<sup>104</sup> About 70% of the population is made up by the Bamar, the majority ethnic group.<sup>105</sup> In 2020, Myanmar had a GDP of \$76 billion.<sup>106</sup> Ranked 147th out of 189 in the Human Development Index, Myanmar is only situated in the “medium development” category (2019).<sup>107</sup> In 2010, although widely perceived as rigged, the first elections in 20 years took place, followed by the dissolution of the military junta in 2011.

---

104 Minority Rights Group International, “Myanmar/Burma,” 2020, accessed August 16, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/ujhf79ed>; World Bank, “Population, total – Myanmar,” accessed August 23, <https://tinyurl.com/n7her8sz>.

105 Minority Rights Group International, “Myanmar/Burma.”

106 World Bank, “GDP (current US\$) – Myanmar,” accessed July 24, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/bsrhak9s>.

107 United Nations Development Programme, *The next frontier Human Development and the Anthropocene, Human Development Report 2020*, New York: United Nations, 2020, accessed August 20, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/52pevrnp>.

Nonetheless, the military maintained close control of the government it had effectively installed in Myanmar. In 2015, the National League for Democracy (NDL), the opposition party headed by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, won the elections, raising hopes for a democratic shift in Myanmar.<sup>108</sup> Yet, after the end of the military rule, Buddhist nationalism became increasingly visible among the Bamar, unleashing deep-seated hatred against already severely marginalized minority groups like the Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state.<sup>109</sup> Suu Kyi's administration not only did little to protect them, but rather fueled anti-Rohingya propaganda while the military effectively retained all power over the security apparatus.<sup>110</sup> In a disproportionate crackdown against militant groups, the Myanmar army led an attack against the Rohingya in 2017 which left at least 6,700 dead, including 730 children under five years old.<sup>111</sup> Many more people were raped, abused or otherwise injured; several hundred Rohingya villages were burned to the ground; and more than 700,000 Rohingya were forced to flee to Bangladesh.<sup>112</sup>

These atrocities, which an independent UN fact-finding mission found amounted to genocide,<sup>113</sup> did not come out of nowhere. The Rohingya had been discriminated against in Myanmar for decades. But were there warning signs for the extreme escalation of the conflict? And did the Top Four donors adapt their investments in the country to try and prevent this development? We conclude that the warning signs were plentiful, and more than apparent to even the most fleeting observers – a massive outbreak of violence in 2012 preceding the 2017 escalation triggered all atrocity prevention sirens. All four donors had major stakes and interests in Myanmar: Germany had declared genocide prevention part of its *raison d'état* the same year, the US and the EU were politically involved in the transition, and the UK was the former colonial power in the country.<sup>114</sup> Germany was the only actor not investing in bilateral prevention efforts in the country. However, Berlin contributed prevention investments through the EU.

---

108 Lindsay Maizland, "Myanmar's Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict," Council on Foreign Relations, February 10, 2011, accessed August 8, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/background/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya>; "Myanmar Profile – Timeline," *BBC News*, September 3, 2018, accessed August 26, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2ytzdysw>.

109 Crisis Group, "Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar," *Asia Report* no. 290, September 5, 2017, accessed July 22, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/26xb2bsc>.

110 Fiona MacGregor, "Aung San Suu Kyi's Reputation Marred by Myanmar's Rohingya Crackdown," *NBC News*, September 4, 2017, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/5b73rza4>.

111 "Myanmar Rohingya: What You Need to Know About the Crisis," *BBC News*, January 23, 2020, accessed August 11, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/pwttta674>.

112 The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), "Rohingya Emergency," accessed August 6, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/4n2d9mk3>.

113 Stephanie Nebehay, "Myanmar Generals had 'Genocidal Intent' Against Rohingya, Must Face Justice – UN," *Reuters*, August 27, 2018, accessed August 7, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/32kz526e>; United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar*, A/HRC/39/64, September 12, 2018, accessed August 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/jy4syw>.

114 Tessa Alleblas, Eamon Aloyo, Sarah Brockmeier, Philipp Rotmann, and Jon Western, "In the Shadow of Syria: Assessing the Obama Administration's Efforts on Mass Atrocity Prevention," *The Hague Institute for Global Justice*, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/ykht7ef6>, p. 100; European External Action Service, "EU-Myanmar relations," last updated June 26, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/yw9957rp>; Robin Hering, Gregor Hofmann and Jens Stappenbeck, "Preventing Mass Atrocities: Germany Finally Needs a Strategy," *PeaceLab Blog*, May 26, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/yr9a95s2>.

## Warning Signs and Funding Patterns

In what follows, we look at the time period between November 2010 and 2017, as the 2010 elections were the starting point in the reforms that caused the EU and other Western countries to lift their sanctions against Myanmar and thus opened a window for cooperation.<sup>115</sup> After taking office, Myanmar's newly-elected President Thein Sein moved quickly to reduce media censorship, release political prisoners, allow for the formation of trade unions, and approach opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Remarkably, he launched a wide-scale peace initiative to reach agreements with armed groups fighting against the central government due to ethnic conflicts. However, Crisis Group warned that these efforts still fell short of the extensive reforms required to ease the deep-seated grievances of the many ethnic minorities and to meaningfully address the government's failures of the past decades.<sup>116</sup>

Moreover, in summer and fall 2011, while the peace initiative was under way, *CrisisWatch* reported "the worst clashes" in two years as fighting between government forces and armed factions of the Kachin ethnic group broke out.<sup>117</sup> A ceasefire in Kachin state could not be reached, and in summer 2012, an additional outbreak of severe violence strained the fragile reform process: the rape and murder of a Buddhist woman triggered widespread ethnic violence against the Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state. The intercommunal strife left dozens dead, hundreds of houses destroyed and displaced approximately 75,000 people. Another round of targeted attacks on Muslims in October 2012 was evaluated by Crisis Group as "organized in advance by extremist elements."<sup>118</sup> Crisis Group warned that, "there is the potential for similar violence elsewhere, as nationalism and ethno-nationalism rise and old prejudices resurface."<sup>119</sup> These atrocities served as a massive alarm bell for a potential genocide which led, among others, the US administration to take action. The US government's new "Atrocities Prevention Board" took on Myanmar, as its first case.<sup>120</sup>

Between 2010 and 2012, only one German crisis prevention and peacebuilding investment stood out: a project fund for the German Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations' (ifa) civilian conflict management program of €6 million, which had no assigned purpose. Notably, a "program for the peace development in Myanmar" received just €300. The EU institutions and the US invested small amounts in a number of projects to strengthen civil society and the transition in Myanmar and the UK made no investments at all.

In March 2013, violence against Muslims escalated outside of Rakhine state, with at least 40 killed, hundreds of houses again being destroyed and another wave of displacement in Meiktila town. In June, UNHCR voiced its concerns over ongoing

---

115 Lindsay Maizland, "Myanmar's Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict."

116 Crisis Group, "Myanmar: A New Peace Initiative," Asia Report no. 214, November 30, 2011, accessed August 6, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2622hhwp>.

117 CrisisWatch, "Myanmar," January 2010 to January 2017, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

118 Crisis Group, "Myanmar: Storm Clouds on the Horizon," Asia Report no. 238, November 12, 2012, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/25twej6v>.

119 Crisis Group, "Myanmar: Storm Clouds on the Horizon."

120 Alleblas et al., "In the Shadow of Syria," p. 100.

clashes in which several Rohingya Muslims had been killed and wounded. In October 2013, Crisis Group issued an even more explicit warning than the year before: emphasizing that further clashes are likely, they predicted that “unless there is an effective government response and change in societal attitudes, violence could spread, impacting on Myanmar’s transition as well as its standing in the region and beyond.”<sup>121</sup> Early 2014 saw further reports of deadly attacks on Rohingya, while a nationwide census starting in March 2014 – the first in over 30 years – accelerated the escalation. The government denied Rohingya the means to self-identify as such, effectively excluding them from the census – a development that was fostered by the UN and international donors, who rejected concerns over the political sensitivity of the census. The result: The census “has prove[n] to be highly controversial and deeply divisive,” said Crisis Group.<sup>122</sup> In February 2015, the president announced that the “Temporary Registration Certificates” held by about one million Muslims in Rakhine state, which formed the prerequisite to vote in the elections, would expire in April, making it unlikely that the Rohingya could participate in the November elections. *CrisisWatch* warned that would lead to further confrontations in Rakhine state.<sup>123</sup> The landslide victory of the opposition NLD party was widely regarded as the first credible election outcome in decades. Nonetheless, the Rohingya were not given citizenship status, and were thus excluded from voting.<sup>124</sup>

In the years 2013, 2014 and 2015, the EU institutions invested a total of €26.8 million in crisis prevention and peacebuilding in Myanmar, the majority of which (€19.4 million) was spent in 2015. The projects aimed to support the peace process by funding central initiatives like the Myanmar Peace Center or projects to strengthen ethnic political parties’ constructive impact as well as local projects in states affected by ethnic violence. Next to political efforts in atrocity prevention and high-level meetings with Myanmar’s officials,<sup>125</sup> the US also increased its crisis prevention and peacebuilding investments to several million euros per year, the majority of which went into “peace and reconciliation processes” and the “Burma Transition Initiative.” The UK, too, drastically raised its engagement in Myanmar from €650,000 in 2013 to €12.2 million in 2015. Notably, the UK spent €2.3 million in 2015 “to reduce violence against the most vulnerable sections of society in the areas that have been affected by armed conflict and inter-communal violence.” In contrast, Germany spent only €320,000 on projects other than mine action over the three years.

An attack by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on a border post on October 9, 2016, marked a new escalation point: this came after clashes between government forces with several armed groups had grown in intensity in Rakhine state since January. The military reacted to the incident by mobilizing helicopters to attack local villagers, killing dozens of civilians, including women and children. Subsequently, humanitarian

---

121 Crisis Group, “The Dark Side of Transition: Violence Against Muslims in Myanmar,” Asia Report no. 251, October 1, 2013, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/3zkyj88k>.

122 Crisis Group, “Counting the Costs: Myanmar’s Problematic Census,” Asia Report no. 144, May 15, 2014, accessed August 9, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/4x3rtjm4>.

123 CrisisWatch, “Myanmar,” January 2010 to January 2017, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

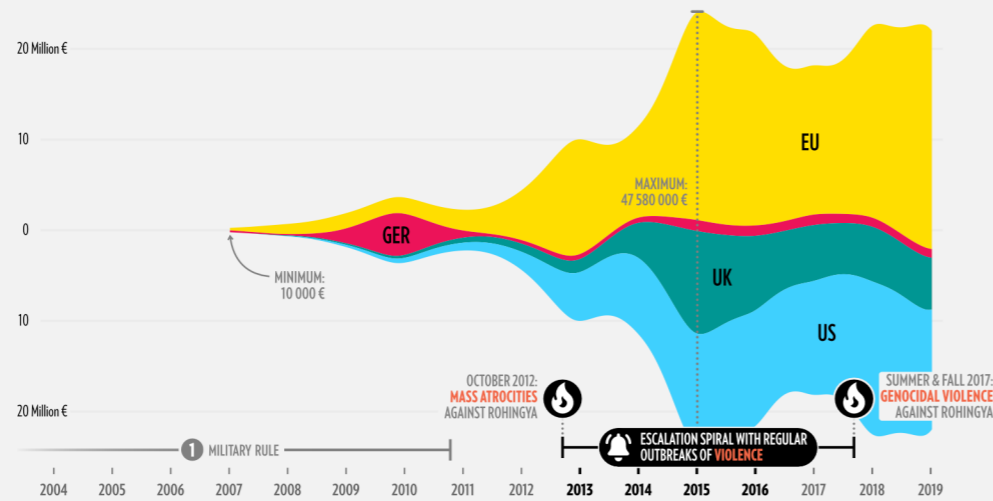
124 “Myanmar Election: Suu Kyi’s NLD Wins Landslide Victory,” *BBC News*, November 13, 2015, accessed July 29, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/36r67uxt>.

125 Alleblas et al., “In the Shadow of Syria,” p. 100.

### Myanmar: When Did Donors Invest in Relation to Major Warning Signals?

The first chart shows the development of donors' investments in relation to major warning signals and the outbreak of violence. The following charts below and on the opposite page provide the breakdown of spending per donor and a list of all relevant projects above €100,000 during the early warning period. If a donor only invested at a smaller scale, we also included projects below that threshold.

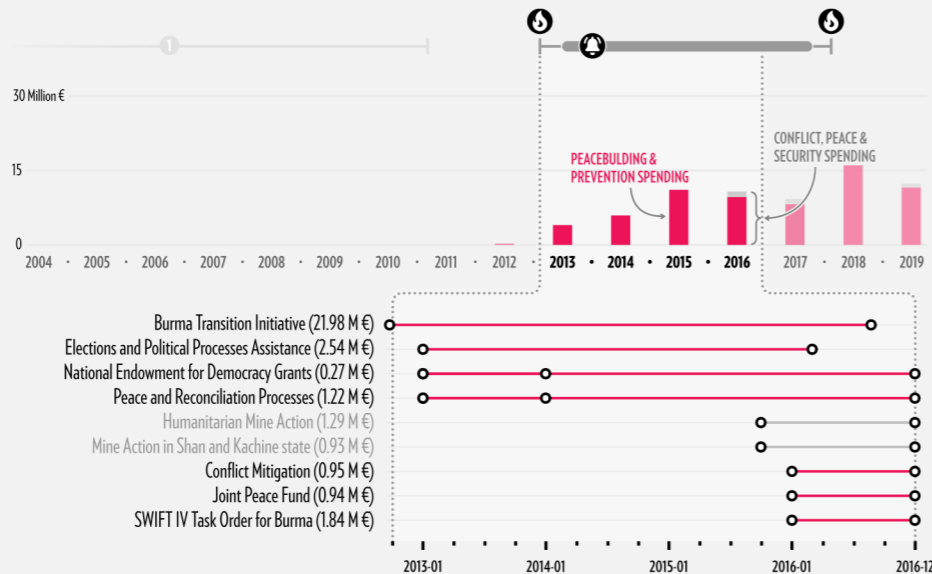
Top Donors' Conflict, Peace and Security Investments & Warning Signals, 2004-2019



### Conflict, Peace and Security Spending & Project Lists by Donor

#### United States

Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Myanmar, 2004-2019

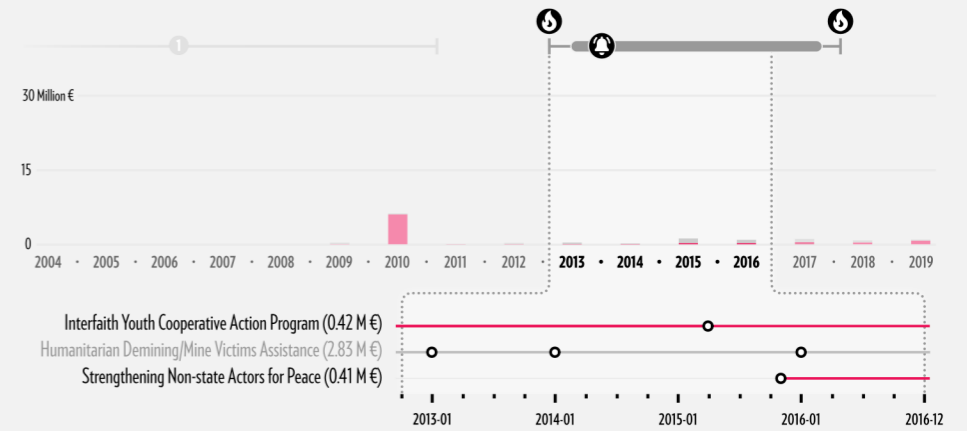


Early Warning Period (Oct 2012 to Dec 2016): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts

#### Germany

Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Myanmar, 2004-2019

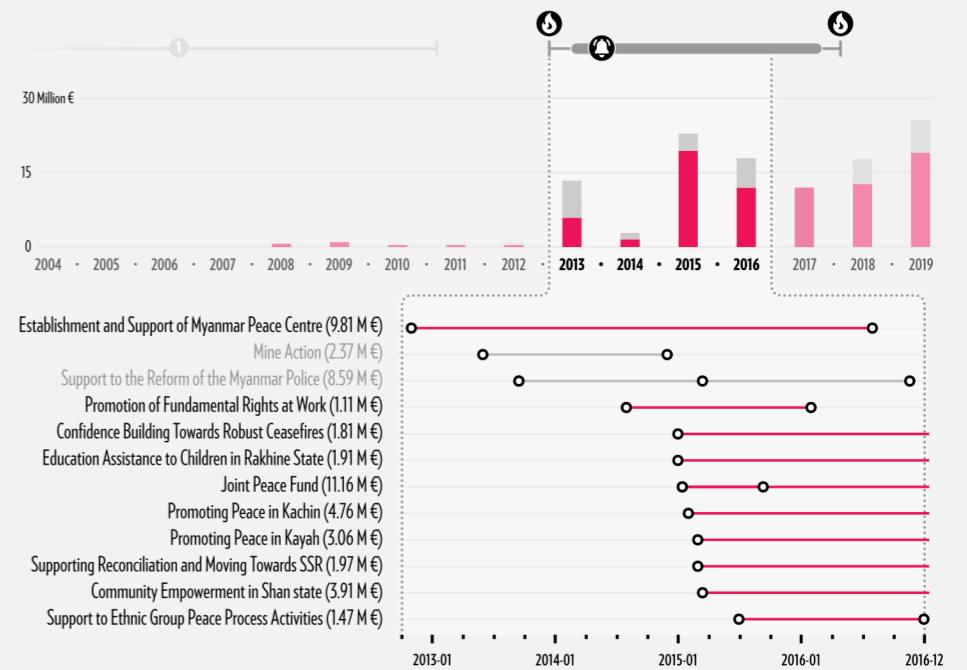
Early Warning Period (Oct 2012 to Dec 2016): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



#### European Union

Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Myanmar, 2004-2019

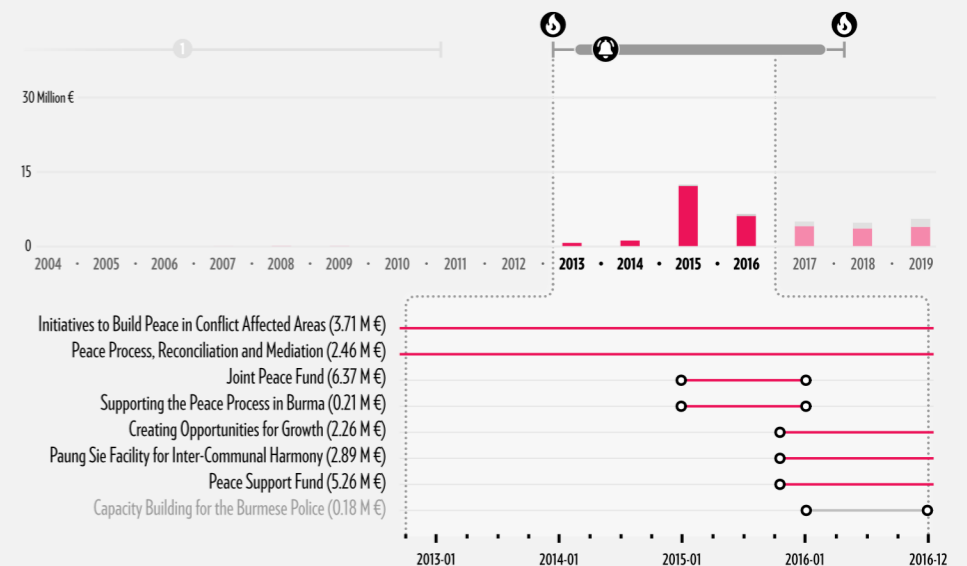
Early Warning Period (Oct 2012 to Dec 2016): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



#### United Kingdom

Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Myanmar, 2004-2019

Early Warning Period (Oct 2012 to Dec 2016): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



access to the area was blocked.<sup>126</sup> At this point, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide Adam Dieng said it was reported that “the response of the military has been characterized by excessive use of force and other serious human rights violations against civilian population, particularly the Rohingya Muslim population, including allegations of extrajudicial executions, torture, rape and the destruction of religious property.” Moreover, he warned that if the reports were true, the lives of thousands of people were at risk.<sup>127</sup>

In February 2017, an OHCHR report confirmed the perpetuation of mass atrocities by Myanmar’s security forces against the Rohingya in the previous fall. Over winter 2016, *CrisisWatch* reports on killings and rapes in Myanmar had grown, as did the number of refugees leaving the region for Bangladesh. After military operations ceased, several thousand refugees returned to their homes in late March and April. Tensions rose again in June 2017, when two Buddhist villagers were killed and military forces killed three people in a raid of a suspected Rohingya insurgent camp. Then-State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and the government rejected any OHCHR investigation into the involvement of state security forces in atrocities in Rakhine state and across the country.

By August 2017, the clashes escalated to what the OHCHR eventually termed “atrocities with genocidal intent.” A coordinated attack on police posts by Rohingya insurgents was followed up with an extensive military crackdown. In the course of this escalation, Aung San Suu Kyi alleged that foreign aid workers were helping “terrorists,” causing the UN and NGOs to evacuate their staff from the region. The killings, rapes and systematic burnings of Rohingya villages committed by state forces subsequently spiked, and more than two-thirds of the Rohingya population – several thousand people – fled to Bangladesh. Many of them remain there, while the remainder of the Rohingya population in Rakhine state live under severe oppression and the continued risk of genocidal violence.<sup>128</sup>

The EU, US and UK reduced their crisis prevention and peacebuilding investments after the peak in 2015, but funding remained in the seven-to-eight-digit area. The EU spent €12 million in both 2016 and 2017, for some of the same and similar projects as in previous years. The UK continued its support for inter-communal violence reduction and increased the previous year’s contribution from €2.3 million to €5.2 million in 2016. In 2017, another €2.9 million went to a different project on inter-communal harmony. The US, too, showed similar levels of spending to previous years. An addition to Washington’s listings was €17.8 million in 2016 and 2017 dedicated to a US Agency for International Development (USAID) initiative to support peace and democracy transitions in partner countries. German crisis prevention and peacebuilding spending in 2016 and 2017, too, followed the same pattern as in previous years: the listings encompassed only a small number of relatively low-budget projects.<sup>129</sup>

---

126 CrisisWatch, “Myanmar,” January 2010 to January 2017, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

127 United Nations, “Statement by Adama Dieng, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide on the situation in northern Rakhine State, Myanmar,” November 29, 2016, accessed August 26, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/e2nek4df>.

128 Human Rights Watch, “Myanmar: Rohingya Await Justice, Safe Return 3 Years On,” August 24, 2020, accessed August 1, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2kkwx23>.

129 Germany’s explicit suspension of development cooperation in reaction to further mass atrocities came much later, in February 2020. German Federal Foreign Office, “Germany and Myanmar: Bilateral relations,” last updated April 28, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/r7j8vmuw>.

## Conclusion

Despite the positive developments in Myanmar's politics after the 2010 elections and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's move to power after the 2015 elections, the warning signs for the genocidal violence in Rakhine state and the escalation steps were clear and widely known. The outbreak of organized violence against the Rohingya in 2012 served as the loudest alarm bell. When these warnings were then followed by further exclusion, stigmatization and discrimination in subsequent years, a development toward genocide was plausible.<sup>130</sup>

However, worsening situation is not reflected in German bilateral crisis prevention and peacebuilding spending. The US, UK and EU (and also Germany, through Brussels) provide quite a different picture of preventive efforts. As of 2013, all made significant investments, which culminated in about €42 million spent among the three donors in 2015.

It is beyond the limits of this study to evaluate the impact of each funded project and to assess the relationship between political strategies and spending patterns. However, the three donors' increased investments in strengthening civil society (with some projects directly targeting inter-ethnic tensions) and in peace and stabilization process following the 2012 escalations is one of the most concerted efforts at preventive early action we could trace in the OECD's datasets across these six case studies.

## 4.6. Burkina Faso (2013–2019)

Burkina Faso is the home of an estimated 20 million people.<sup>131</sup> In 2019, Burkina Faso was still one of the lowest ranked countries in the Human Development Index (182th out of 189) despite progress in recent years.<sup>132</sup> In recent years, the Sahel and Burkina Faso have moved into the international spotlight. The 2012 outbreak of the Malian crisis also spilled over to its neighbors, worsening the critical relationship between the central government and rural communities. On the periphery, there is widespread public distrust in elites and the government in Ouagadougou, a sense of neglect and of a lack of representation.<sup>133</sup>

Since 2015, violent attacks and clashes of jihadist groups, community self-defense groups and former members of the presidential guard have become more frequent.<sup>134</sup>

---

130 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "They Want Us All to Go Away," accessed August 13, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/sn54vr8x>.

131 World Bank, "Population, total – Burkina Faso," accessed August 18, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/nba7hdtj>.

132 United Nations Development Programme, "Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today: Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century," *Human Development Report 2019*, 2019, accessed August 14, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/uhh5dth8>, p. 302.

133 Crisis Group, "The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso's North," Africa Report no. 254, October 12, 2017, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/whzkatm6>.

134 The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), "In Light of the Recent Attacks in Ouagadougou," accessed September 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/rysa4uvh>; Rinaldo Depagne, "Burkina Faso's Alarming Escalation of Jihadist Violence," Crisis Group, March 5, 2018, accessed August 4, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/ynmsrfe8>.

Jihadist groups exploit local tensions, and Burkina Faso's security forces' violence against its own population further aggravates frustration with the elites.<sup>135</sup> By 2019, the violence had reached almost 1,300 civilian conflict deaths, a 650% increase from the year before.<sup>136</sup> Over 1 million people were internally displaced in 2020.<sup>137</sup> The OECD's *States of Fragility* also noted a deterioration in the security situation in Burkina Faso, from minor to high fragility.

Insecurity remains high in 2021: in mid-August, presumed extremists attacked a convoy, killing about 50 people.<sup>138</sup> As an important diplomatic player in West Africa and a strategic partner for France (and therefore the EU) and the US,<sup>139</sup> donors rely on Burkina Faso's stability. According to OECD spending data, the main contributors to peacebuilding and prevention in Burkina Faso are the UN Peacebuilding Fund, whose main donors and decision-makers are a number of European countries including the US, the EU, as well as individual European countries like Switzerland, France and especially Germany. The US, the EU, France and Germany have together contributed to 42% of Burkina Faso's peacebuilding and prevention assistance in the past decade and a half, and played a directing role in far more through their influence over the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

Were there warning signs for this escalation? And did Germany, the EU, the US, or France act upon them to try and prevent the crisis before the outbreak of the conflict in 2019?<sup>140</sup> We find that Burkina Faso is one of two exceptional cases among our case studies, in addition to Myanmar, where all donors seem to have reacted to warning signs.

## Warning Signs and Funding Patterns

The period for which we look for warning signs for the escalation of violence in Burkina Faso starts in 2012 with the collapse of the Malian government, which was a powerful warning sign in itself: the instability and violence that followed sparked Burkina Faso's fears of spill-over effects.<sup>141</sup>

The threat of the extension of the Malian conflict to Burkina Faso emerged at a critical time for Burkina Faso: in 2013, Crisis Group warned about a "real risk of

---

135 Crisis Group, "Burkina Faso: Stopping the Spiral of Violence," February 24 2020, accessed August 8, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/4mt8s87t>; Human Rights Watch, "Burkina Faso: Security Forces Allegedly Execute 31 Detainees," April 20, 2020, accessed August 10, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/nfsw83f>; Ornella Moderan, Habibou Souley Bako, Paul-Simon Handy, "Sahel Counter-Terrorism Takes a Heavy Toll on Civilians," Institute for Security Studies, April 14, 2021, accessed September 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2r8k6fub>.

136 The New Humanitarian, "In the News: Burkina Faso Shows Almost 650% Increase in Civilian Conflict Deaths," February 27, 2020, accessed August 16, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/e8vket8>.

137 UNHCR, "Burkina Faso," accessed August 17, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/tert82dv>.

138 „Mindestens 47 Menschen bei mutmaßlichem Terroranschlag getötet,“ *ZEIT ONLINE*, August 19, 2021, accessed August 10, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2h3wf78x>.

139 Crisis Group, "Burkina Faso: With or Without Compaoré, Times of Uncertainty," Africa Report no. 205, July 22, 2013, accessed August 29, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/a75e2j4s>, p. 26.

140 Given France's special relationship with Burkina Faso, we also look at whether France responded to the warning signs. At the same time, we leave out the UK, as it did not contribute to peacebuilding and prevention assistance in Burkina Faso at all, likely due to its focus on Anglophone African countries.

141 Rinaldo Depagne, "Burkina Faso's Alarming Escalation of Jihadist Violence."

socio-political crisis in Burkina Faso,<sup>142</sup> as the 2015 elections foresaw a transition of power from then-President Blaise Compaoré, who had ruled the country for over a quarter of a century. The high expectations of a predominantly young population and the general public distrust of the central government provided rocky ground for a transition of power. In the same report, the international NGO explicitly outlined that securing Burkina Faso should be of utmost interest for Western powers, as Burkina Faso plays a vital role in navigating regional conflicts. After attempts by Compaoré to amend the constitution to prolong his 27-year presidency,<sup>143</sup> popular unrest and violent protests pressured him to resign in October 2014. After Compaoré stepped down, Crisis Group again highlighted the risk of growing discontent if expectations remain unfulfilled and the dissolution between the former presidential guard did not occur during the transition period.<sup>144</sup> While disputes of the former presidential guard and Prime Minister Zida, who took over control of the army, and a short-lived coup in 2015 produced a brief political crisis, the situation seemed to remain calm and no widespread violence followed at first.

Despite the warnings of Crisis Group, the OECD data shows that no donor except France contributed to ODA-compliant conflict, peace and security assistance in Burkina Faso before 2016. From 2012 to 2016, France provided Burkina Faso with technical expertise in security and defense worth €1.2 million. Notably, the activity was first coded as security system management and reform in 2013, but was then relabeled as prevention/peacebuilding in subsequent years, leaving it unclear what portion was actually focused on crisis prevention, if any. With this possible exception, there is no indication that any donor attempted crisis prevention during the post-Compaoré transition. Considering the clarity of warnings ahead of the transition of power, donors should have invested (more) into preventing a potential escalation.

In January 2016, two jihadist groups committed large-scale terrorist attacks that killed 30 civilians, among them many foreigners, in the capital Ouagadougou. The attacks received broad international media coverage.<sup>145</sup> From 2016 to 2017, *CrisisWatch* reported ongoing tensions and increasing clashes between different armed groups (jihadist groups, vigilante groups, former members of the presidential guard, and unidentified gunmen), especially in the north of Burkina Faso.<sup>146</sup> In Crisis Group's 2017 EU Watch List, the conflict experts alerted the EU and its members to "pay more attention to Burkina Faso, which faces a real threat from armed groups" who hid in Mali and attacked over the desert border.<sup>147</sup> At the same time, Burkina Faso's security apparatus was weakened by the many changes that followed Compaoré's resignation.<sup>148</sup>

---

142 Crisis Group, "Burkina Faso: With or Without Compaoré, Times of Uncertainty."

143 Crisis Group, "Burkina Faso: With or Without Compaoré, Times of Uncertainty."

144 Crisis Group, "Burkina Faso: Nine Months to Complete the Transition," Africa Report no. 222, January 28, 2015, accessed August 11, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/7cj9h7dm>.

145 "Burkina Faso attack: Foreigners Killed at Luxury Hotel," *BBC News*, January 16, 2016, accessed August 23, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2nxrtm6f>; "Dozens Killed in Burkina Faso Hotel Attack," *France24*, January 17, 2016, accessed August 23, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/tfvn773x>; Faith Karimi, Sandra Betsis, "Burkina Faso Attack: At Least 29 Dead, Scores Freed After Hotel Siege," *CNN*, January 18, 2016, accessed August 23, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2dsf9jpp>.

146 CrisisWatch, Burkina Faso, January 2013 to January 2021, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database>.

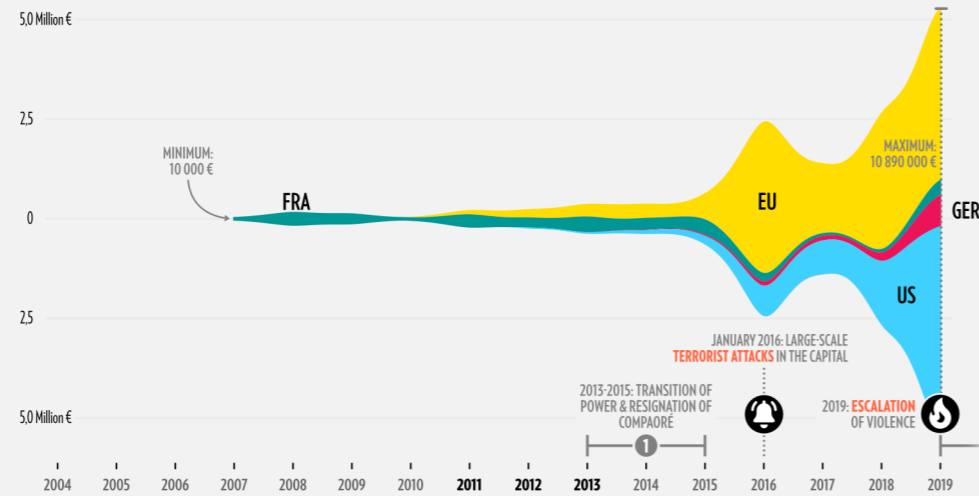
147 Crisis Group, "Watch List 2017," February 24, 2017, accessed August 23, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/un2sw934>.

148 Rinaldo Depagne, "Burkina Faso's Alarming Escalation of Jihadist Violence."

### Burkina Faso: When Did Donors Invest in Relation to Major Warning Signals?

The first chart shows the development of donors' investments in relation to major warning signals and the outbreak of violence. The following charts below and on the opposite page provide the breakdown of spending per donor and a list of all relevant projects above €100,000 during the early warning period. If a donor only invested at a smaller scale, we also included projects below that threshold.

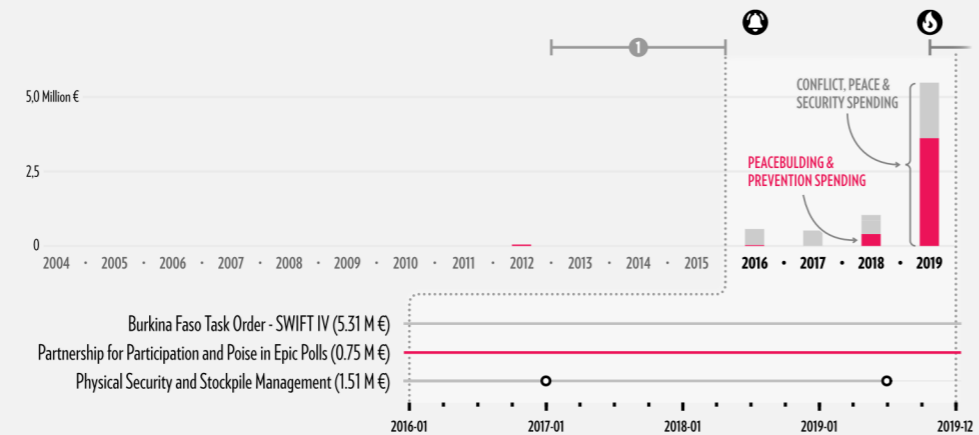
#### Top Donors' Conflict, Peace and Security Investments & Warning Signals, 2004-2019



#### Conflict, Peace and Security Spending & Project Lists by Donor

##### United States

##### Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Burkina Faso, 2004-2019

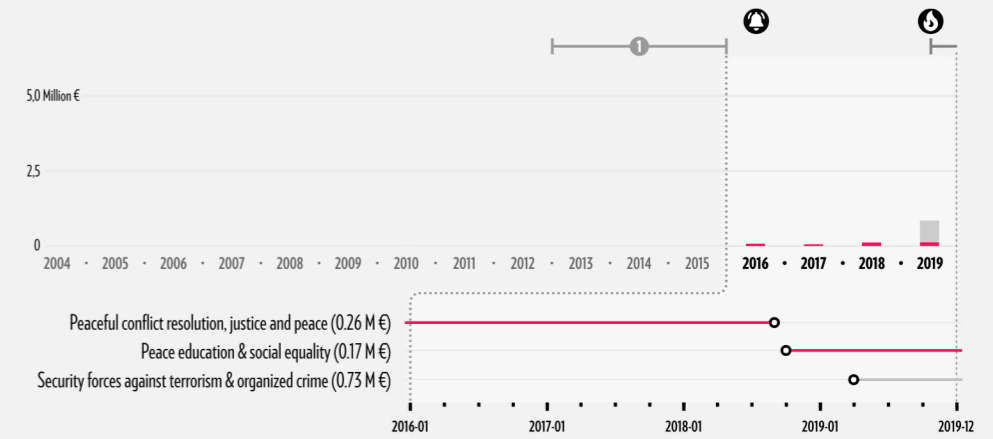


Early Warning Period (Jan 2016 to Dec 2019): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts

##### Germany

##### Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Burkina Faso, 2004-2019

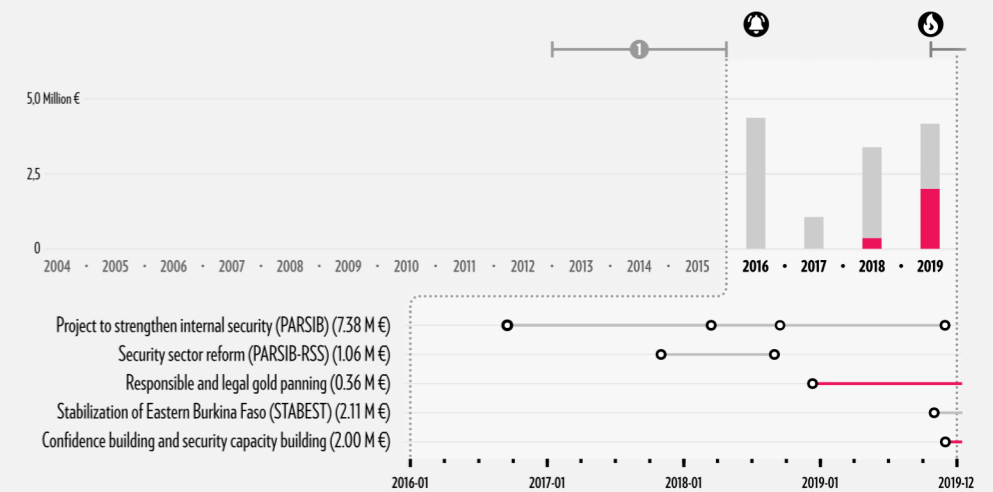
Early Warning Period (Jan 2016 to Dec 2019): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



##### European Union

##### Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Burkina Faso, 2004-2019

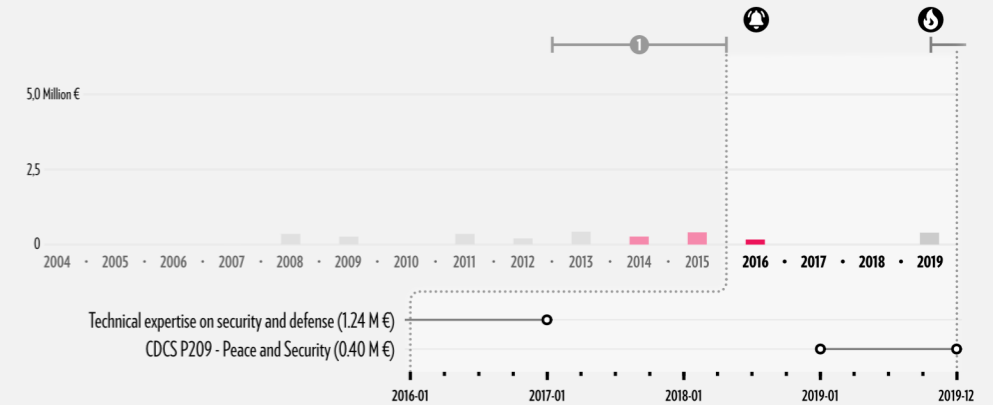
Early Warning Period (Jan 2016 to Dec 2019): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



##### France

##### Conflict, Peace & Security Spending in Burkina Faso, 2004-2019

Early Warning Period (Jan 2016 to Dec 2019): Selected Projects in Peacebuilding & Prevention vs. Other Conflict, Peace & Security Efforts



Given the critical situation, Crisis Group found it necessary to issue another warning in the same year.<sup>149</sup>

Starting in 2016, top donors besides France began to engage in Burkina Faso. In September 2016, the EU launched a “program for stabilizing Burkina Faso and strengthening the Burkinabé internal security forces,” which spent a considerable amount – €8.4 million – over the following two years. Considering the similarity with France’s previous three-year project, one can assume that Paris convinced Brussels to take over and expand its security program. Germany disbursed a small amount of money on a project focused on conflict resolution and peace promotion. The US predominantly focused on the removal of land mines and explosive remnants. All in all, the investment data indicates an uptick in donor attention to Burkina Faso beginning in 2016, right after the major terrorist attacks at the beginning of that year.

In the following two years, attacks from jihadist groups against security forces, as well as civilians, accelerated significantly. The OECD’s fragility assessment of the security situation in Burkina Faso also moved from minor in 2015 to high in 2017 and 2019. In March 2018, military headquarters and the French embassy were attacked and 16 people were killed, showing that the attackers were extremely well organized and did not spare foreign representatives. In response to the attacks, Crisis Group warned again of an escalation of the situation in Burkina Faso.<sup>150</sup>

The year in which violence in Burkina Faso truly escalated was 2019. The country suffered more jihadist attacks than any other Sahelian country, with a massive increase of 650% of civilian conflict deaths compared to the previous year.<sup>151</sup> By then, any preventive efforts came too late to hinder the escalation of the crisis.

The years of escalation, 2018 and 2019, also saw more of a reaction by donors to the earlier and ever more serious warnings. Donor budgets for prevention and peacebuilding grew: the top donors altogether spent €6.8 million in 2016–2017, and the collective 2018–2019 budget more than doubled. Ninety-five percent of the peacebuilding and prevention spending for Burkina Faso in 2013–2019 was disbursed from 2016 onward, indicating reactions to the accumulating warnings of recent years.

The EU followed up on its previous security assistance package with two other projects with similar objectives that started in late 2019, each worth €2 million. Over the two escalation years, the US spent a considerable amount of €5.3 million focusing on countering violent extremism.<sup>152</sup> Germany reported only two smaller projects with a potential focus on prevention: in 2018 and 2019, a low amount of €0.2 million for both years was spent on strengthening peace education and social equality. In 2019, a slightly higher amount of €0.7 million was contributed to strengthening Burkina Faso security forces capacities. All of these projects started after the intensifying warnings of 2016 and 2017 and fit the pattern of preventive investment.

---

149 Crisis Group, “The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso’s North.”

150 Rinaldo Depagne, “Burkina Faso’s Alarming Escalation of Jihadist Violence.”

151 The New Humanitarian, “In the News: Burkina Faso Shows Almost 650% Increase in Civilian Conflict Deaths.”

152 United States Agency for International Development, “SWIFT IV Semi-Annual Progress Report April-September 2018,” accessed August 23, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/9jxxtptb>; United States Agency for International Development, “SWIFT IV Semi-Annual Progress Report October-March 2019,” <https://tinyurl.com/26xfjzjh>.

## Conclusion

Burkina Faso is one of two exceptional cases in our spot checks, in addition to Myanmar, where all donors seem to have reacted to warning signs. Between 2012 and 2015, only France appears to have responded to Crisis Group's specific warnings about the critical period of transitioning power from Compaoré to avoid increasing popular discontent. Despite the lack of preventive investments from other donors, related tensions did not result in a visible increase in violence. If and how other instruments beyond civilian crisis prevention played a role in this was not part of this analysis. The other major donors only started investing in conflict, peace and security from 2016 onward. The surge of investments by donors in recent years indicates a response to the warning signs: the EU and the US, in particular, dedicated considerable amounts to prevention projects in 2016–2019, both before and when the violence escalated. Notably, the EU supported the weakened Burkina Faso's security forces after the dismantling of the presidential guard in the aftermath of Compaoré's resignation, and therefore appears to have addressed this publicly known risk factor. It is striking that Germany and France invested little to nothing in bilateral prevention spending in 2017 and 2018. However, bearing in mind the spike in investments from the EU, it is plausible that they bundled their preventive efforts with the EU.

# 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

In this concluding chapter, we summarize our key findings: Where and how did donors invest to prevent crises? Were these investments timely in relation to available early warning? We contextualize these findings with regard to the limited scope of our study: What questions need to be asked to expand our insights from investment patterns to the quality of preventive action as a whole? And finally, we develop four practical recommendations: three for donor governments that want to become more effective actors in prevention, and one for legislators, civil society activists and academics who would like to support governments in doing so.

## **Finding 1: Investment Growth Predates the 2017 UN Commitments**

From even just scraping the surface of the available data on civilian investment in crisis prevention, we can establish a plausible range of estimates for their magnitude at between €650 million and €820 million in 2019, the most recent year for which we have data. That sum is probably several times as much as 15 years earlier, but barely higher than the €640–750 million estimate for 2017 – the year in which UN Secretary-General Guterres, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and many other world leaders made lofty commitments to prioritize prevention. In short: we are not seeing much more investment in prevention after these speeches and whitepapers, let alone anything close to the \$2.5 billion/€2.1 billion per year that the UN-World Bank study estimated as a target.

Important donors, most notably the UK, have even cut their spending in recent years, while Germany and the EU have driven a large portion of the most recent global expansion in investment. Germany is now by far the world's largest donor to peacebuilding and prevention in ODA terms. The relative share of investment in prevention as opposed to acute crises, however, has recently remained stable at best among the Top Four donors: in the case of the EU and the US, sharply increasing investments in acute crisis management have even reduced the shares of preventive investment.

## **Finding 2: Preventive Investment Follows a Scattershot Approach**

We found that the Top Four donors all invest in the same large number of developing countries that are not in acute crisis: over the past decade, 97% of peacebuilding and

---

**Even after all the speeches and white papers, there has not been more investment in prevention.**

---

prevention funding went to places where all Top Four donors are present. The average size of prevention investment per country, however, is just €2–3 million per year by each of the Top Four donors. This figure falls short by orders of magnitude in the hundreds of millions of euros on average per country, as compared to what models estimate as necessary to achieve decisive impact (with the other prerequisites, such as an effective political strategy, assumed to be in place). It falls equally short of the hundreds of millions of euros per year that the same donors invest in priority countries for stabilization after crises have broken out.

Between 2015 and 2019, the size of the average country portfolio has grown along with the overall budgets. Allocating additional available money proportionally among all the possible investment cases does not indicate a successful attempt to prioritize and support promising political strategies, which are likely to be fewer in number and hardly likely to all be undertaken in parallel among dozens of countries. In fact, each of the Top Four recently reduced the number of countries where it invested by more than €5 million per year, and all except the UK increased their number of tiny country portfolios of less than €1 million per year. Regional projects grew in number, but most of them are very small.

Overall, the data shows a pattern of breadth over depth: from the abstract bird's eye view of country lists and political maps, no place appears to be left behind since there are projects for every country. However, the investment volume per project and for most country or regional portfolios is tiny compared to the challenges these societies face. Ninety-three percent of prevention and peacebuilding projects across all donors in 2019, and about three-quarters if we only look at the Top Four donors, were below €1 million in size. Each of these projects requires significant administrative overhead on the part of national funders to approve, monitor, audit, and evaluate. How likely is it, simply based on their volume and scope, that most of these projects are able to make a significant impact on the sources of crises? Or would we find huge blind spots in places at risk if we opened up the black box of national borders and traced project activities to the local level?

Take a very current example, which is too recent to be fully reflected in the CRS data, the latest of which is for 2019. In Mozambique, the Cabo Delgado unrest and insurgency has been going on since 2017. By 2019, as the insurgency was already well entrenched, the global prevention and peacebuilding portfolios for Mozambique came to around €10 million in total, spread across 30 projects funded by 11 donors at an average investment of €300,000 per project. The year before, 2018 – perhaps the last year in which prevention could have been the overriding imperative – there were only four donors spending a combined total of €3.8 million on 14 projects, half of which cost less than €100,000. Some of these donor funds may have been contributions to basket funds or trust funds that would be bundled to achieve impact. Still, given the high salary costs for the Western expats leading many of these projects, not to mention logistics, the tiny scale does not inspire confidence that donors mounted a robust and promising effort at preventive action that these projects might have supported.

---

**Overall, the data shows a pattern of breadth over depth.**

---

## Finding 3: Country Case Studies Show Little Preventive Action

In our spot checks in Georgia (2004–08), Mali (2004–12), Myanmar (2010–17), Iraq (2010–13), Ukraine (2004–14), and Burkina Faso (2013–19), we found few indications of either structural or operational preventive action. From the openly available project data, the Top Four donors’ investments in the periods we identified between early warning information being public and the outbreak of the respective crises or wars appear to selectively address particular sources of fragility, while leaving others unaddressed. In some cases, we even found clear indications that there were no political strategies in place that these projects could have supported, or that political engagement was the subject of contested debate between allies and thereby watered down beyond recognition, as in Georgia before the 2008 war.

We found no indication of preventive action in Georgia before the war in 2008, in Mali before the Tuareg rebellion of 2012, in Iraq before the Islamic State conquered large parts of the country in early 2014, and in Ukraine before the war that began in 2014. Even if some of the activities we found may have been designed for structural prevention, the donor portfolios – each on its own, but also taken together – were far from consistent enough over time, across the relevant geography and across the key risk factors so that they could have likely achieved decisive impact on “root causes of conflict” in line with the idea behind structural prevention. We also did not see signs of operational prevention, for which investments would have needed to respond much faster to serious warning indicators and provide very targeted support to a political strategy addressing whatever actors and escalation dynamics their analysis would have identified.

In the two other cases, there may have been at least partial operational prevention efforts. In Myanmar in response to warnings and escalating cycles of mass atrocities between 2012 and 2017, and in Burkina Faso in response to escalating warnings and acts of violence since 2016, we do find the possibility of limited preventive action in the spending data. In Myanmar after the 2012 political opening (see chapter 4, pp. 54–60), the US appears to have taken the lead in implementing a targeted operational prevention effort with regard to mass atrocities, and the UK and EU appeared to have followed suit, while Germany did not. In 2016–19 in Burkina Faso (see chapter 4, pp. 60–65), all donors except the UK did appear to react to warnings, even if their initial investments before 2018 remained very small and the only substantive effort is visible in the security sector.

### 5.1. Further Questions: From Investment Patterns to Quality of Preventive Action

Of course, these initial conclusions are based only on spending patterns as publicly available and reported by the donors themselves. The limited available data and our brief case studies leave out at least three important perspectives that would be necessary to move from an assessment of investment patterns toward an assessment of plausibility and effectiveness of preventive action:

**In our spot checks, we found few indications of either structural or operational preventive action.**

- What was the donor’s political strategy for prevention, and how did the project portfolio support it? If project funding is employed to compensate for the lack of a good political strategy, such investments are likely to fail: projects cannot replace political engagement. At the same time, there are also situations in which no feasible political strategy for timely preventive action are available, for example, when the government of a country at risk rejects international support, as was the case for Ethiopia in the years leading up to the current war. In such cases, it makes sense not to invest in prevention at all, and rather to focus on preparing rapid response options for future crises.
- To what extent are there additional, important efforts hidden in the CRS categories of “regional” and “bilateral/unspecified” investments? We refrained from aggregate analysis of regional portfolios, since their composition of beneficiary countries differs project-by-project, which makes the aggregate categories useless for comparative purposes, and the overall limited size makes it unlikely that we would have found substantive efforts. The “unspecified” category, however, does contain promising instruments for prevention such as the German “civilian peace service” scheme, whose allocation and impact was last evaluated in 2011.<sup>153</sup>
- How good are the activities themselves? From just the project titles, donor-assigned purpose codes (a security sector project, military or police operation could also support preventive action, even if not assigned the prevention purpose code or completely ineligible for ODA), and short descriptions found in the OECD Creditor Reporting System, we do not presume to judge either a project’s design or its likelihood to achieve impact. Prevention is politics – projects can only support a good political strategy, and their form must follow this function. To find out the extent to which they do, we need more evaluations and meta-evaluations: if done well, they create the evidence base and identify the pathways to improve.

With these limitations in mind, our study’s approach helps understand the orders of magnitude at which the main donors have invested in crisis prevention, where they invested, when they invested in relation to when the alarm bells rung, and how these patterns have developed over the past decade and a half. Its findings should be understood as a serious warning sign and a reason to look much more closely at the allocation of investments in crisis prevention. Only such a close look will be able to confirm, disprove or add important nuance to the findings collected here.

---

**Since 2017, we have seen a new plateau in prevention efforts.**

---

## 5.2. Key Implications and Recommendations

Our findings indicate that over the last five years since 2017, we have seen a new plateau of prevention efforts: there are higher levels of investment than before, but still at a level far below the available estimates of what may be required for success. We found that donors may be targeting their efforts more toward operational prevention than

---

153 Civil Peace Service, “Ziviler Friedensdienst (ZFD) kompakt: Grundlagen, Akteure und Verfahren des ZFD,” February 2014, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/yrzd4uyn>; Brockmeier and Rotmann, *Krieg vor der Haustür*, ch. 3, explains an example of ZFD preventive work in Guinea.

**Most country portfolios are so small that they are not likely to make a political difference.**

in the past, for example in Myanmar and Burkina Faso. However, we are not seeing prioritization or investment at levels that the same donors consider necessary in acute crises. Most country or regional portfolios are so small that the projects are hardly likely to make a political difference, even if they were effectively bound to a plausible, locally grounded political strategy, which is often missing because, as other research has shown, most embassies and multilateral political missions in the relevant places are too small.<sup>154</sup>

As a result, and supported by the findings of our case studies on country risk situations, we have serious doubts as to whether a comprehensive review of any of the Top Four donors' investment portfolios would find them consistent with the requirements for either structural or operational prevention. Along with Myanmar and Burkina Faso, we and others have documented additional, similar cases in which a donor, in this case the US, has tried and struggled to put an operational prevention effort in place.<sup>155</sup> These are, however, exceptions to the rule: most civilian investment in at-risk countries is too small, fragmented or limited in geographical coverage to meet the standards of structural prevention, and comes too late and/or insufficiently targeted at the key crisis risks to count as operational prevention.

If the hundreds of millions of taxpayer euros invested annually in crisis prevention are to become more effective, this pattern will have to change. On this basis, we make three recommendations to policymakers who seek to improve crisis prevention and are ready to invest more taxpayer money toward that important objective. We have an additional recommendation to legislators, civil society activists and academics who would like to support governments in becoming more effective at crisis prevention.

**1 Donor governments should invest more in at-risk situations for which actors have developed plausible political strategies whose success is decisively aided by project support.**

Our findings suggest that donors allocate prevention funding as if progress on any potential driver of conflict or violence anywhere is equally useful. Since the same donors are unable to cover all key drivers of violence at the same time and in a sustainable fashion, this is not the case. In fact, in many at-risk places, there is an acute crisis every few years – in a timespan shorter than the periods within which many sustainable peacebuilding efforts expect to achieve impact – that destroys whatever progress may have been made since the preceding crisis ended.

This risk should give donors pause. Now that there is more and more early warning data available to assess risk events in a timely manner, there is an alternative to pouring vastly insufficient structural prevention funds into a leaky sieve. A different

154 Gerrit Kurtz, "Preventive Diplomacy: Invest in the Skills of Frontline Diplomats," *PeaceLab Blog*, July 4, 2019, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/jfe4pf42>; Gerrit Kurtz, "Civilian Conflict Management: Priorities for the Next Government," German Council on Foreign Relations, August 2021, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/3bkr444n>; Sarah Brockmeier, "Without Diplomats, No Diplomatic Solutions," Global Public Policy Institute, April 27, 2017, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/ya4mye6s>.

155 Alleblas et al., "In the Shadow of Syria"; Sarah Brockmeier, Gerrit Kurtz and Philipp Rotmann, "Protection and Responsibility: An Analysis of US Foreign Policy to Prevent Mass Atrocities," Heinrich Boell Foundation and Global Public Policy Institute, 2013, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/ysh6rf86>.

balance between long-term structural prevention efforts on the one hand, and medium- or short-term operational prevention efforts, on the other hand, could look like this: by targeting structural prevention in fewer places, funds could be made available to invest in more serious attempts at operational prevention. Investing in operational prevention could safeguard structural prevention's long-term investments by avoiding or reducing the impact of some of these recurring crises.

Going down this road would require using early warning information to prioritize more: to invest a greater amount in the most promising cases of prevention, similar to the recent concentration of investment in the highest priority stabilization efforts.

Of course, there is no technocratic recipe identifying the most promising cases and achieving success in preventive action, which is the most serious obstacle to policymakers. However, the current record on crisis prevention is limited enough, and public expectations are so low, that the only way forward is up. Preventive action is akin to seed funding in the venture capital business: early-stage venture capitalists invest large sums of money in tiny companies that have little to show for themselves but promise. Just like investments in prevention, the probability of success for any particular case is not very high and many of the means of success are out of investors' hands.

Also just like prevention, there are two ways in which investors shape the success or failure of their investments: if they invest too little, a good idea cannot grow fast enough to lead its market, and if they do not find an effective way of supporting the founders in the difficult task of navigating their company's explosive growth, the investment is likely to fail. Crisis prevention similarly requires critical mass in terms of investment and political engagement to get from the zone of all-but-certain failure into the zone of possible success, where it saves a large number of lives.

And just like in venture capital, again, because the likelihood of success in every individual case is not huge, the strategy only works at scale: investors place dozens of large bets on good ideas to see a few of them succeed. They reap monumental profits to make up for all the lost bets. In human and in economic terms, the same is true for prevention: a few cases in which a lot of lives can be saved because massive bloodshed, violence and displacement can be prevented is worth a lot of money, even if quite a few other investments fail to save lives elsewhere.

**In crisis prevention, government investors are trying to play it so safe that they all but ensure failure:** investment patterns are so dispersed and slow to react to "market signals" (early warning) that most investments are simply too small to ever succeed, even if there was a promising "business plan" (political strategy). Promising political strategies do not fall from the sky, and it is not possible to develop one in every case. We made a conscious choice in this study, for example, not to call out donors on their failure to prevent the civil war in Ethiopia. Despite ample early warning in 2019, we did not see an available, clear-cut political strategy: the Ethiopian Government was probably far too reluctant to allow for more than the existing political engagement or any additional foreign-funded activities of its own civil society organizations, for any more preventively focused and ambitious political strategy on the part of Germany, the EU or other international actors to have a chance. Other experts may be more critical of these actors, but the important point is that these are very difficult situations in which foreign actors have limited leverage, so it must be assumed and accepted that donors will not come up with a promising strategy for every case.

---

The current record on crisis prevention is so limited that the only way forward is up.

---

---

Government investors are trying to play it so safe that they all but ensure failure.

---

Even the most promising political strategies will be like early-stage investments in venture capital terms: a serious attempt will require serious investment, typically both in political and monetary terms. Success is far from guaranteed, and prevention advocates need to promote a political context in which failure remains as acceptable as it is now, but in which there is a greater incentive to make a more targeted effort to succeed.

**2 Donor governments should improve their early warning/early action processes to focus on actionable information that helps decision-makers to prioritize the most urgent and most feasible cases for preventive action.**

Using early warning information to set political priorities has been a challenge for governments for decades. Recent research has quite a few pointers for ways of overcoming this, however.<sup>156</sup> The first, in terms of improving early warning itself, is that there are major gaps in timely, reliable analysis at a sufficient resolution (far more precise than at the level of nation-states). To improve this will require greater investment in solid, local data and expert capacity for analysis something the new multilateral Complex Risk Analytics Trust Fund driven by the UN and Germany appears geared to address.<sup>157</sup> The second is that governments struggle to overcome their excessive self-limitation to trust internal sources (diplomatic or intelligence reporting) over open-source information, which is often superior when it comes to places that are not among the top priorities for either diplomatic reporting or intelligence gathering.

Even more important, however, is a third insight: **early warning is less about information than it is about persuading decision-makers that there is a specific set of risks that is important enough to make a timely, costly – but feasible – investment to avoid.** Key institutions such as foreign services in the Top Four donor governments are not set up to facilitate the robust internal debate within which this kind of persuasion effort can routinely succeed. They need to assign a high-ranking official with the unambiguous responsibility and accountability for managing such a process. They need to put staff resources and procedures in place that support this process, and that help counteract pervasive cognitive and social biases that make individuals and groups likely to overlook or underplay important risks. A key part of this decision support is to develop solid political action options for prevention: decision-makers need to see a plausible course of action to commit to, not just a threatening image of the future.

Process evaluations can help identify ways of retooling existing early warning/early action procedures to implement these principles.

---

<sup>156</sup> The following builds on Christoph O. Meyer, Chiara de Franco and Florian Otto, *Warning about War. Conflict, Persuasion and Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019; Brockmeier and Rotmann, *Krieg vor der Haustür*; Sarah Brockmeier and Anton Peez, “Akteneinsichten: Die deutsche Außenpolitik und der Völkermord in Ruanda,” Heinrich Boell Foundation, May 14, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/88jnzste>; Alleblas et al., “In the Shadow of Syria”; Brockmeier, Kurtz and Rotmann, “Protection and Responsibility”; Sarah Bressan and Aurora Bergmaier, “From Conflict Early Warning to Fostering Resilience? Chasing Convergence in EU Foreign Policy,” *Democratization* 28, no. 3 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1918108>.

<sup>157</sup> See <https://www.crafd.info/> for more information.

**3 Donor governments should learn why some political strategies for preventive action have been more successful than others, and why some projects have been more successful in supporting preventive political strategies.**

**Getting better at crisis prevention means understanding why some approaches succeeded while others failed.**

Part of getting better at developing actionable strategies for crisis prevention is looking back and understanding why some previous approaches succeeded while others failed. This is not mainly about externally implemented projects such as the ones counted as ODA spending: although important, the key to useful evaluation of political engagement is to evaluate the actual political engagement in a way that includes programming, but is not limited to it. “It is a common perception in government ministries and international organizations that crisis prevention is taken care of if you fund projects that are well targeted toward the challenges of a particular context.”<sup>158</sup> But this is not true, and even political backing for well-designed projects will be insufficient in the absence of a political strategy in the lead. This strategy, or its absence, must therefore be the centerpiece of any evaluation of preventive action.

Therefore, preventive action should be independently evaluated with a focus on the political strategies themselves, with attention to the contributions made by the supporting project portfolios to those political strategies, whether in terms of addressing structural crisis risks or operationally trying to influence the behavior of particular actors and groups.

Along with these three recommendations to policymakers, we have another recommendation to legislators, civil society activists and academics who would like to support governments in becoming more effective at crisis prevention.

**4 Prevention advocates should hold governments accountable not only for budgeting or reporting the highest amount of money for prevention, but for having a robust early warning system, for turning each serious warning into the best conceivable strategies for early action, and for making a plausible preventive effort subject to independent external evaluation.**

**Politicians receive an A for effort just for growing prevention budgets.**

With regard to preventive action, policy institutions face a domestic political environment in which there is no political or analytical attention to results. This goes back to civil society, the media and political parties. **The domestic political constituencies for crisis prevention demand more effort and more spending, but rarely ask for results in terms of preventive impact.** As a result, politicians receive an A for effort, simply for growing prevention budgets. In the absence of hard-nosed, realistic engagement with results from elected officials and civil society experts, it looks like failure if a crisis breaks out in a country where a major donor like the Top Four were found to have no projects at all: much better to have a project list ready for every potential crisis country. The fact that major crises constantly break out in countries where the Top Four have prevention projects is all too easily justified with the claim that prevention is severely underfunded, and thus decisive results cannot be expected.

158 Gerrit Kurtz, „Krisenprävention,“ *Internationale Politik*, no. 5 (2020): pp. 96ff., translation: Rotmann, <https://tinyurl.com/sprzsfkf>. See also Gerrit Kurtz and Christoph Meyer, “Is conflict prevention a science, craft, or art? Moving beyond technocracy and wishful thinking,” *Global Affairs* 5, no. 1 (2018): pp.23–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2018.1533387>.

---

**If governments, the EU or the World Bank claim to prioritize prevention, then they need to report on their progress.**

---

The opposite attitude needs to take hold. For every serious warning sign, we need to expect a proportional political analysis, planning and engagement effort. For every failure of prevention – i.e., every crisis – we need to hold governments accountable not for the failure itself, but for the quality of the effort made to prevent the crisis.

This call for accountability needs to involve serious attention to the technical problems of data and reporting found in this study. Donors regularly fail to report even the limited data required by the DAC rules – which they themselves designed and agreed in the DAC – accurately and comprehensively. While the OECD statistics division can change obvious mistakes based on the information reported by member states, its capacity to go after member states to fix missing data is all too limited. There are also key parts of the dataset, from an analytical user’s perspective, that are purely optional for member states to report, such as the start and end dates of projects. It would make the CRS data much more useful for analyzing investments – whether preventive or reactive – in their political context if timing data was more widely and accurately available. These are issues that legislators and civil society advocates are well placed to help governments address.

If governments, the EU or the World Bank claim to prioritize prevention, they need to measure and report on their progress. It will be in their own interests to provide a more comprehensive picture than only civilian ODA-compliant spending. Some might count core staff allocations to local embassies or offices as a measure of political engagement, for example, and others might count the costs of military efforts like NATO’s intervention in North Macedonia in 2001 or the ECOWAS’ show of force over the Gambia in 2017 and the subsequent stabilization operation for their preventive effect. Whatever choices they make in these matters, the extent to which the reported data is consistent over time and the extent to which it meets basic plausibility tests in comparison with other data reported by the same actors – such as the OECD’s CRS – will weigh on any independent observer’s impression of how seriously to take their political commitments.

**Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)**

Reinhardtstr. 7, 10117 Berlin, Germany

Phone +49 30 275 959 75-0

Fax +49 30 275 959 75-99

[gppi@gppi.net](mailto:gppi@gppi.net)

[gppi.net](http://gppi.net)