

**Ministerul Educației și Cercetării**  
**Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai**  
**Facultatea de Istorie și Filozofie**

## **Teză de Doctorat**

**Security Governance and Civilian Conflict  
Management: Assessing Scenario Building in  
Elections-Related Structural Violence Prevention**

**- Case Study: Nepal –**

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## **Introduction to a doctoral thesis: Motivation, novelty and the pillars of the argumentative process**

### **Key words:**

civilian, conflict life-line, conflict, conflict management, crisis, cultural violence, dialogic approach, direct violence, early warning, electoral cycle, electoral opportunities, electoral risk factors, electoral violence, human security, Infrastructure for Peace (I4P), multi-stakeholder, national ownership, negative peace, Nepal, peace culture, positive peace, scenario building processes, scenarios, structural violence prevention, structural violence, systemic, violence prevention, violence, violent structures, war culture.

Former UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld has said “*The pursuit of peace and progress cannot end in a few years in either victory or defeat. The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned.*”

Contemplating on the journey leading up to the idea and initial proposal development of the thesis, a clear path may be discerned, linking the personal endeavour to the perpetual pursuit highlighted in the above paragraph. As such, the thesis topic, tackling the role of the scenario building processes in successful structural violence prevention programming toward free, fair and peaceful elections, has benefitted from a long conceptualization process, in which the theoretical knowledge and practical expertise has played mutually enforcing roles. The first steps towards understanding the notion of peace, and searching for sustainable conflict solutions came in the form of a Bachelor’s thesis that focused on realpolitik, and the assurance of peace and national security through the operationalization of collective security and afferent mechanisms and institutions.

With the further widening of the theoretical knowledge base on the concept of peace and security a first Master’s thesis came along, focusing on an another facet of security, and pillar of peace: the economic security and its assurance within the European Union. While the emphasis of this research paper was still on the national and supranational efforts to assure

security for the citizen of different countries and geographic regions, a slow paradigmatic shift was noticeable from conceptualizing security under negative peace to positive peace.

Once the shift was completed and a new one brought about – from a war culture school of thought to a peace culture one in the engagement and strategizing for sustainable peace –, a second Master's dissertation was developed and written, which tackled conflict, violence and peace from a triangular relationship between their direct, structural and cultural roots and the consequent behavioural, attitudinal and contradictional manifestations. It has recognized the importance of placing human security in the center of peace efforts, and that without the transformation and reform process of the root causes of violence, there is no constructive and sustainable conflict solutions. The dissertation built around the vision well expressed by Archbishop Óscar Romero of El Salvador in 1979: *“I will not tire of declaring that if we really want an effective end to violence we must remove the violence that lies at the root of all violence: structural violence, social injustice, exclusion of citizens from the management of the country, repression. All this is what constitutes the primal cause, from which the rest flows naturally.”*

The thesis represents a refinement and aggregation of hypotheses, theories and conclusions of the above research papers, and an output building on six years of practical work in and on conflict affected areas; where the understanding of peace transcended an official peace agreements and searched solutions in: participatory governance, economic equity, freely and equally available social services, transitional justice processes, lifting indigenous conflict transformation and violence prevention practices at national level and many others. Such a composition is not accidental, the writing of the doctoral thesis being **motivated** by the need to:

- emphasize that peace and security can be achieved only through a multi-stakeholder approach, which offers a broad participation base to civilian stakeholders;
- highlight once again the utmost importance of treating conflict as a phenomenon that may lead to development and positive value creation, if the crisis points of its life-line and period leading up to them are managed through constructive, transformative means;
- emphasize the importance of a country's, state's and society's structural elements in bringing about sustainable positive peace, or, in the worst case, create protracted conflict and violence situations;

- put the governance and electoral cycle in the middle of a good service provision process contributing to the achievement of positive peace, while raising the awareness that the governance – election relationship may produce good service delivery only if structural fault lines are bridged by adequate, long term strategies;
- lobby for early preventive action, in the form of structural reforms and policies, as the main avenue through which free, fair and peaceful elections may be attained, and legitimate service delivery actors may be granted access to decision making level;
- identify and scrutinize an appropriate tool that may fit the needs and challenges of such preventive actions, while assuring that the produced outcomes are both constructive and sustainable.

To that end, the **main thesis** of the research is represented by the following affirmation: *scenario building is a valuable tool of the elections related structural violence prevention toolbox, as it brings about constructive and sustainable conflict solutions through the result of a complex navigation process between risks and opportunities of a given conflict life-line, while adhering to the process, content and infrastructural needs and best practices of early prevention programming.* The chosen approach allows the thesis to tackle the usefulness of scenarios, the programming of prevention and peacefulness of the electoral processes in a novel manner. This **novelty** stands in the:

- manner in which these elements are linked together to create a coherent strategy to be followed when selecting customized prevention tools to various conflict contexts; and
- the choice of tool to be analyzed against the set of preconditions and challenges of prevention programming, identified through the development of the chapters.

On the one hand, the existing literature, while addressing the main concepts of the thesis separately in a more or less extensive manner, it does not tackle them in an exhaustive manner, nor does it create a link between the notions. Therefore, though the literature on violence prevention is quite wide, specific treaties on structural violence and its prevention are quite few and offering mostly a general overview of what it may be. The existing case studies are many but scattered and offer only a fragmented view on structural violence prevention programmes. Building on the existing information and the practical experience gained in the line of work, the thesis first looks at understanding the structural make-up of a country, state and society, and then, overlaying these structures onto the direct, structural and cultural manifestations of violence, it creates a thorough understanding of the typology and a coherent strategy towards

prevention programming. Regarding the second conceptual line, electoral violence and its structural prevention, the literature and practice covering it mostly focuses on managing its direct manifestations in the immediate proximity and aftermath of the election day. Major organisations engaged in elections only recently have started looking into structural fault lines that may cause violence in the different phases of the electoral cycle. While these organisations promote a five phase cyclical approach to electoral violence prevention, which allows for certain structural reforms and transformations that may produce changes within the electoral context, the thesis proposes a six phase electoral cycle, based on the electoral violence prevention methodology promoted by the Romanian Peace Institute (PATRIR). The thus created 48 months time-frame allows engagement not only with electoral context related structural fault lines, but with historical and contextual risk factors as well, that, if not addressed, may otherwise hinder the effectiveness of prevention programmes.

On the other hand, the chosen tool to be analyzed against the set of preconditions and challenges of prevention programming represents novelty as well. Scenario building has come to be known as a future forecasting tool, for its ability to create narratives of the future by recognizing the links between, and merging varied structural risks and opportunities of a given context and time-frame. As scenario building processes have the capacity to collect and create vast amount of conflict intelligence early enough to signal any potential, violence creating fault lines, and recognize causal links between the different elements of a scenario, the thesis explores its capacity to generate violence prevention strategies and programmes in the early onset of the conflict life-line. A capacity that has not been explored in any but one case study taken under scrutiny.

The thesis has put forth a series of **research questions** as guides for the argumentative process and structural pillars of the research process and output.

Chapter 1, assigned to set the thesis into a general conceptual and paradigmatic framework, was guided by the question “*What are the preconditions of constructive and sustainable conflict solutions?*”

The chapter aimed at setting a sustainable vision for peace, through the identification of preconditions to be met by each conflict management strategy that targeted constructive and sustainable results. It also explored the relationship between positive and negative peace,

highlighting conflict life-line phases that may foster an environment where, even in the absence of negative peace, elements of the positive one may be found and acted upon. The chapter recognized that the specificity of each conflict context is given by a mix of exposed behaviour patterns, which, in turn, are generated and conditioned by the consciousness level of underlying contradictions and related attitudes imbedded in the structural construction and cultural heritage of the conflict context. Thus, it explored an array of strategies and actors that are mandated to mitigate different conflict behaviours throughout the conflict life-line, in order to recognize the few that meet the identified preconditions for sustainable peace generation.

Chapter 2, the amplest section of the thesis, was guided by three clusters of questions, each cluster directed towards one of the innovative elements mentioned above. These four clusters and related research questions are:

- *Considering the architectural elements of conflict and violence that interplay to bring about violent behaviour, what is the role of state and social structures in generating violence and sustainable peace?*
  - *What does the concept of “structure” stand for in the context of state and society?*
  - *What is the relation between structures and sustainable peace?*
  - *What are the factors conferring violent tendencies to any kind of structure?*
  - *Which are the effects of violent structures on the state, society and the relations between them?*
- *Narrowing the scope of the research, what does structural violence mean within the electoral cycle?*
  - *How does an electoral cycle look like and what are its structural components?*
  - *How wide-spread is the phenomenon of electoral violence, what structural fault lines lie at its roots and which are the risk factor enabling violent acts?*
  - *How did structural violence manifest itself throughout the electoral history of Nepal and which is the risk profile of the country before its upcoming elections?*
- *Having browsed through the meaning of structures and structural violence within the electoral cycle, what therapy/ prevention programmes may be operationalized to transform these structures into peace generators?*
  - *What is the meaning of structural violence prevention and which are the principles guiding its operationalization?*



- *How do these generalities translate into the prevention activities employed in the electoral cycle?*
- *What are the specificities of the structural violence prevention programmes within the electoral cycle from a process, content and capacity building point of view?*
- *Which are the major challenges and needs of structural violence prevention operationalized within the electoral cycle?*

Building on findings of the first one, Chapter 2 explored the potential of violence prevention strategies to affect the development of the conflict life-line through early conflict intelligence generation, root causes transformation and reform implementation, and/ or capacitating state and society to act constructively towards the de-escalation of violent situations. Honing the focus of the thesis, the chapter had taken an in-depth look at structural violence prevention operationalized within the electoral cycle, as a corner stone in the conscientization process of violence generating attitudes and contradictions, and their transformation into peace enablers. The chapter gave a three-fold understanding to structural violence prevention, as a process of early warning and early response, as programme/ content, and as infrastructure, highlighting also several of the challenges facing prevention programmes targeting electoral violence.

Chapter 3, which aimed at measuring the warning, strategizing and prevention capacities of scenarios and scenario building processes against the preconditions of positive peace and challenges of structural prevention programmes, was built on the following research questions:

- *What does the concept of scenario building stand for and are there consistent practical examples that underpin its usability and utility for the overall field of violence prevention?*
- *Does the practice of scenario building abide by the preconditions of constructive and sustainable conflict solutions?*
- *Are there adequate process, content and infrastructural characteristics through which scenario building exercises may cover the crucial areas identified within structural prevention programming to aid in reaching sustainable conflict solutions for electoral violence?*
- *What does a structural violence prevention focused scenario building process look like and contain in the case of the Nepali electoral cycle?*

Integrating the findings of the first two chapters, the third one was designed to explore the role of scenarios and scenario building processes in elections related structural violence prevention, and bring concluding arguments to uphold the main hypothesis of the doctoral research: *scenario building is a valuable tool of the elections related structural violence prevention toolbox, as it brings about constructive and sustainable conflict solutions through the result of a complex navigation process between risks and opportunities of a given conflict life-line, while adhering to the process, content and infrastructural needs and best practices of early prevention programming.* As such, the tool was presented as an important catalyst of the elections related structural violence prevention programmes through its ability to enhance the adherence capacity of prevention programmes to the preconditions of sustainable conflict solutions, by attenuating the effects of challenges, and bridging process, content and infrastructural gaps with lessons identified and consecutively transformed into best practices.

The **literature and information sources** accessed to formulate answers to the various research questions stretch across the primary, secondary and tertiary categories.

Access to primary sources of information was facilitated by research and practical work implemented within the Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR), and it relates to the various country engagements, capacity building programmes, consultancies and derived outputs. For the formation of the conceptual base of the thesis, information gathered through first hand experiences in Moldova-Transdnistria, Northern Ireland, Liberia, Singapore, Cambodia and Nepal were crucial. These engagements allowed for widening the perspective over peace and finalizing the paradigmatic shifts mentioned earlier. In the same time they facilitated ample learning processes in stakeholder mapping, risks assessments, early warning practices, systemic peacebuilding activities, and contributed to distilling a clear understanding of what are the best practices that assure the sustainability of conflict solutions. The capacity building programmes, engaged in over the period of the research and writing process, represented optimal methodological toolboxes for information gathering on structural fault lines hindering the positive and negative peace, international, regional, national and local violence prevention practices and programme examples. High level consultancies narrowed and specialized the topical focus, allowing for an in-depth analysis and development of prevention guidelines for general conflict contexts, and for the particularities of free, fair and peaceful elections.

The secondary sources of information were either freely available or have been received and consulted under confidentiality clauses. Under this category the thesis makes use of UN resolutions and prevention strategies, EU electoral monitoring reports, Nepal related constitutions and legal documents, and handbooks, manuals of major peacebuilding, electoral, development and future forecasting organisations such as UNDP, USAID, IFES, Shell International and many others. The information gathered through such means were used to strengthen the conceptual and theoretical base of the thesis, and serve case study examples for the various prevention practices discussed within the thesis. Their main function, however, was to draw the theoretical and practical parts of the thesis closer together, by narrowing the usual gap created between the two sides. This was possible through the fact that most of the secondary sources were built on the first hand experiences, lessons learned, good practices and failures of the issuing organisations, in projects where the theory was translated into practice, and customized for the contextual needs.

The tertiary sources of information represented the widest category of the three, contributing to the general, theoretical framework on which information obtained from primary and secondary sources were able to be placed. The books, analyses, reports making up the category defined and underpinned the paradigms governing the thesis – positive peace and the peace culture school of thought, while offering comprehensive definitions and action proposals that may be challenged or confirmed by the research process of the thesis. Several criteria were applied in the selection of the tertiary sources of information:

- The wideness of presented perspectives, so to assure that the research and following outputs are not based on narrow points of views, but are inclusive and dialogue generating;
- The prestige of the author and organisation standing behind the publication, so to ensure that the conceptual and theoretical base of the thesis is thorough and balanced;
- The timeliness of the information, so that all proved hypotheses and conclusions are drawn based on the latest theoretical and practical findings and cutting edge knowledge;
- The practicality of the information provided by the information source, whether the information has a purely theoretical use or its translation into practice is possible.

## **The methodology of the thesis**

### ***Ontology and epistemology***

From an ontological point of view the thesis adheres to the social theory of constructivism, as an approach that places actors and structures as center elements of social interactions, their understanding and interpretation.<sup>1</sup> The thesis presents both a state and human centric understanding of peace, where the attainment of security is possible only through the generation of positive outcomes in several structural categories making up a country, state and society closely related to human security: infrastructural elements of state and society, laws and other similar sources of rights and responsibilities, overall state, country and social systems, state- and society-wide processes, procedures and policies, conflict management capabilities and mechanism, and internal geographical configuration/ geostrategic delimitations. Taking human needs and insecurities as central to the vision of peace creates changes in the social interaction towards its achievement, shifting the thinking and action framework from war culture to peace culture.

The methodology of the argumentative process adheres to the interpretivist position of epistemology, as the strategy towards constructive and sustainable conflict solutions is built around the necessary understanding of the subjective attitudes and contradictions lying behind human interactions, while consciously pursuing the identification of structural and cultural conditions that give birth to attitudes, contradictions and behaviours.

The thesis mainstreams the ideas promoted by constructivism through its dimensions and levels of analysis, basic postulates and suppositions and views over the achievement of peace. According to the main tenets of this social theory “structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and [...] identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature”.<sup>2</sup> Thus, none of the social and international phenomena are pre-determined and given, each manifestation being rooted in individual ideas, attitudes and identities, which, in turn are being conditioned by the structures and cultures in which the society is immersed. In parallel, the theory emphasizes the interdependent and causal relations between actors and structures within a given framework not only from the mentioned ideatic point of view, but also from an

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p.16-18.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p1.

architectural one, as actors of various dimensions may be built up by structures, while structures, be that social, state or international are composed by actors and their ideas.

The thesis envisions a peace that is attained through the fulfillment of various preconditions and tools constructed for bridging the roots causes of conflict and violence. At the bases of each precondition and tool rests the need for conscious, multi-stakeholder, structurally systemic and individually, locally and nationally owned transformative processes of conflict and violence root causes. These efforts may bring forward sustainable peace through matching comprehensive awareness raising and conscientization processes of interacting individual and group perceptions, ideas, attitudes and generated contradictions with constructive mitigation efforts of the existing fault lines within the structural and cultural bases of these elements. Generating change through the reshaping and reconstructing of these interactions between the actors of the social life through positive value and content generation, is the assurance that the life-line of a conflict will not reach its crisis point, or in case the passing of this point, de-escalation from violence is attempted on solid and sturdy bases. Thus the avoidance and prevention of violent conflicts and full-out-wars is possible.

The basic tenets of constructivism have made possible the identification and analysis of the appropriate violence prevention tool and have provided theoretical backing to upholding the usefulness and usability of it: the scenario building processes and its outcomes. Scenarios and their development process are highly dependent on the variations of risks and opportunities within a given conflict context, each risk and opportunity being the manifestation of interacting individual and group ideas, attitudes, behaviours, contradictions and their conditioning structures and cultures. Thus, the programming of prevention in various contexts will need to take into consideration at all times the existence and changing nature of these elements. If we were to look at social interactions from the point of view of neorealism or neoliberalism, theories which promote their materialistic, pre-determined, given nature, scenarios and scenario building processes would be ill fitted tools, as the fixed nature of social relations would exclude risk and opportunity variations, offering a very foreseeable and non-challengeable future, regardless of any transformative, positive value and content generating efforts towards sustainable peace. Basing the thesis on the theory of constructivism, however, has offered a flexible and changing nature to the actors, structures and their constitutive ideas, attitudes, contradictions and cultures, allocating active roles to these elements in the development of a sustainable peace.

### *Investigation methods*

The research and information gathering process had made use of both qualitative and quantitative investigation methods, each of the methods underpinning the findings of the other.

The *quantitative analysis* was used to identify the most important variables underpinning the main hypothesis of the thesis, understand the relationships between these variables, formulate generally usable work frames and bring forth future prognosis where needed. This type of analysis was used in the following instances:

- Understanding the content and relationship between the key concepts of conflicts, crisis and violence vis-à-vis the independent variable of time units within the life-line of the conflict. Mapping the development of a conflict life-line along different time-frames has allowed to better understand the development path for a conflict from peaceful, stable situation to full-out war and violence, contributing to correct draw-up of situation analysis, diagnostics and strategy development processes towards constructive and sustainable conflict solutions.
- Understanding the linkage and difference between conflict and violence based on the dependent variables of culture, structure, contradictions, attitudes and behaviours. The aim of such analysis was to highlight the causal effect between the mentioned variables, and their role in choosing engagement strategies with conflict and violence situations,
- Comparing conflict management mechanisms based on the independent variables of the dialogic approach and the principles of: inclusiveness of participation, created space, the formality/ informality of the used approach, and the enforceability of the outcomes. The process was employed for the selection and highlighting of the most appropriate conflict prevention mechanism, so its constitutive principles may be integrated in the preconditions of constructive and peaceful conflict solutions.
- Measuring the magnitude and the impact of electoral violence, based on the dependent variables of frequency, time, continental and country based allocation. The process was employed to establish the need and importance of electoral violence prevention programmes, their direction and depth.
- Exemplifying scenario building practices within different organisations and projects, in order to offer an overview of scenario building endeavours in the international practice.
- Developing an understanding of the structural risks and opportunity factors touched upon in various scenario building exercises, in order to analyze the adherence of

scenario building to the established preconditions of constructive and sustainable conflict solutions.

In what the qualitative research methods are concerned, the thesis is built on the followings:

- Interviews: elite interviews, structured, semi-structured and unstructured
- Focus groups activities
- Non-participative observations and field work
- Document, discourse, case study and text analysis
- Printed, online and social media monitoring

### ***The interview process***

Interviews were conducted through all tracks of society, summing up more the 1000 individuals within the last six years of the practical work, research and writing process. The interviews made use of the structured, semi-structured and unstructured forms.

The *elite interviews* were facilitated by the various country engagements and comprised a group of people representing ambassadors and consular envoys, military and paramilitary leaders, government officials, heads of donor and UN agencies, and heads of other intergovernmental organisations in each of the countries visited. The *interviews targeting Track 2 and 3* representatives engaged NGO and community workers (both international and national), civil servants of different sectors of the government, UN and other intergovernmental organisations' staff, military personnel, and police. The aim of these interviews was to gather information on country contexts, understand the role of different stakeholders in the risk perpetuation and opportunity creation within conflict areas, learn about national, regional, local peace endeavours, gather best practices and challenges faced in prevention programming and explore strategy options that may counter the identified challenges. The interviews also offered the opportunity of facilitated network creation between participants to interviews, as they were part of not only the research process for the doctoral dissertation, but ample country programmes developed within PATRIR.

The interview processes made use of tertiary interviews made available online with lead practitioners engaging on the topics of human security, non-violence communication, prevention and several others.

### ***Focus group activities***

Being facilitated through the various workshops and capacity building programmes, from where the research drew a part of its information, focus groups have been moderated through several approaches, among which: practitioners' forum, expert task forces, working groups, and collaborative brainstorming. Each type of focus group activity benefitted from a senior moderator and group facilitator, and has worked based on a mix of structured, semi-structured and unstructured interview principles, in order to generate discussions on either pre-established topics or those customized to the needs of the participants and the overall process. Such focus group activities have generated the below theoretical and practical information clusters. Please note that the list is not exhaustive.

- General information:
  - Introductory elements related to the various interpretations of the concept of “peace”;
  - Content of the architectural elements of “conflict” and “violence”;
  - Knowledge, skills and capabilities needed to respond to conflicts and peacebuilding;
  - Historical, contextual and electoral risk factors affecting free, fair and peaceful elections.
- Nepal conflict mapping:
  - ABC triangle: conflict behaviours, attitudes and contradictions in Nepal;
  - Peace Profile: implemented peace efforts and their impact in Nepal;
  - Electoral, geographic and thematic risk factors and dynamics affecting the electoral cycle of Nepal;
  - Electoral violence prevention objective of Nepal;
  - Fire scenarios for the Nepali elections.

### ***Observation and field work***

While a full observation process requires substantial time allocation and several layers of approvals, the thesis has benefitted from short term country context observations through the various on-site country engagements and field work. Though the time spent in each country was short, some engagements allowed for several visits, and a larger opening for familiarization of country conditions. As each country engagement of PATRIR is conducted by the principle of non-engagement unless local invitation is issued, observing country and community conditions was made possible through the guidance of our local partners. These



short term observations and field work opportunities have allowed to deepen the understanding and widen the perspective over conflict causes, dynamics, manifestations and prevention strategies that impact in a particular manner the societies visited, while making possible their generalization, based on the frequency of occurrence in each space encountered.

### ***Document, discourse, case study and text analysis***

Representing the widest used investigative method, the analysis of documents, discourses, case studies and various texts have generated both theoretical and practical input into the research and writing process. Using books, documents and reports available in hard copies and online versions, from primary, secondary and tertiary sources, the literature has helped in creating the general, theoretical frame of the thesis, giving content to the explorative and argumentative process put in place. The process of analysis has also allowed for setting up and demonstrating various hypotheses and construct new definitions, principles and categories which were missing from the overall bibliography and prevention practice. Please see more information on the topic in the section “*Literature and information sources*”.

### ***Printed, online and social media monitoring***

Though the overall literature was sought to be the most up-to date, in order to offer the latest developments in the field of structural violence prevention, electoral violence prevention and scenario building, monitoring the events for the main case study of the thesis, Nepal, was done through printed, online and social media. Newspapers accessed were mixed between international and Nepali national ones, while Youtube provided the sources of various interviews, LinkedIn Groups and Facebook pages the real time events. In order to assure the correctness of the information, each information provided by the various media outlets, and used for the completion of the thesis, has benefitted from a verification process compiling three sources.

### ***Main findings and conclusions of the thesis***

With the utilization of the above mentioned methodology and sources of information, the main findings of the research and thesis compilation process are:

- There are four major preconditions for constructiveness and sustainability to be taken into account when envisioning, strategizing and implementing conflict solutions:

- a. The set vision of the peaceful future should build on the optimal combination of negative and positive peace elements, so that strategizing, planning and programming may address the core needs and expectations of a set of well-defined actors in a given situation.
  - b. The chosen strategy assuring the attainment of the set vision should be developed after a clear diagnosis of the present situation within a clearly defined conflict context; an understanding conferred by an early and conscious analysis of the conflict generating attitudes and contradictions for each conflict strand brewing, and the cultures and structures in which they are immersed.
  - c. The chosen strategy assuring the attainment of the set vision developed upon a clear diagnosis/ analysis conflict context should rest upon a dialogic, multi-stakeholder approach; a safe space and a transparent process that - through their inclusive principles and commonly accepted ground rules - would: open the way for trusted communication and open dialogue, legitimize the vision of peace, confer national ownership of the developed peace strategy, and result in a number of mutually acceptable outcomes to all conflict stakeholders involved.
  - d. Strategies and the related programming for the attainment of the set vision should match each phase of the conflict life line with the optimal mix of measures and tools, building on the particularities of the context: traditional/ indigenous conflict management methods and the results of previous programming efforts.
- In the analysis of structural fault lines lying at the root of various conflicts and violence outbreaks the following six major categories should be considered:
    - a. Infrastructural elements of state and society
    - b. Laws and other similar sources of rights and responsibilities
    - c. Overall state, country and society-wide systems
    - d. State and society-wide processes, procedures and policies
    - e. Conflict management capacities and mechanisms, raising the state and society resilience in addressing emerging and existent conflict issues;
    - f. Internal geographical configuration/ strategic delimitations of a country
  - Elections should be look at not as an event but as a continuum, a cycle which is made up of six phases, linked together over a maximum of 48 months timeframe:
    - a. Stage 1: Pre-election preparation

- i. Phase 1: Governance and development phase
    - ii. Phase 2: The short run-up to elections
  - b. Stage 2: Electoral period operations
    - i. Phase 3: Electoral campaign
    - ii. Phase 4: Voting operations and election day
  - c. Stage 3: Post-election strategies
    - i. Phase 5: Between voting and proclamation
    - ii. Phase 6: Post-election outcomes and aftermath
- Electoral violence, as a subtype of political violence is an extremely wide-spread phenomenon, affecting on average more than half of the elections held worldwide. Using as source of information the EU observed elections between 1993 and august 2012, 90% of Asia's observed elections had experienced outbreaks of violence, followed by Africa with 77.5%, the Americas and Europe each with 50% and Middle East with 37.5%. Oceania was the single region which did not experience violence in the analyzed cases.
- The structural fault lines affecting the freedom, fairness and peacefulness of elections may be categorized in three major risk categories: historical risks and causes, contextual realities of the state and society, and contradictions of the electoral cycle and process.
- Structural violence prevention strategies and efforts targeting the electoral cycle need to approach the concept of prevention from three angels: process of early warning and early response, programme/ content, and infrastructure.
- The areas that an optimal prevention tool would need to cover in order to enable prevention programmes to reach sustainable solutions for electoral violence are:
  - a. Systemic intelligence acquiring on conflict contradictions, attitudes (root causes) and violence sustaining pillars within a given context and timeframe, complemented by a recognized analysis of existing capabilities and resources to address risks and opportunities presented by the assessed components;
  - b. The implementation of complete and dialogic based future forecasting processes through which comprehensive mixes/ variations of risks and opportunities may come about;

- c. Measuring the hazard level of each variation, the structured approaches of mitigating the foreseen hazards and maximization of identified opportunities in order to prevent emergence of violence in any given component of the violence triangle: direct, structural and cultural dimension;
- d. Mutually agreeable spaces and processes for elections related structural violence prevention planning that foster shared analysis, joined-up, inter-organizational cooperation and cumulated impact of prevention programmes;
- e. Functional communication mechanisms/ avenues between the warning and response capabilities with integrated multi-stakeholder participation, where both the warning and response capabilities have ownership of the outcome of their assessment and planning processes, this quality enhancing the efficiency of the preventive action;
- f. Quick and efficient dispatch mechanisms for prevention programming mandates from the decision makers towards implementing stakeholders;
- g. Robust implementation capabilities in place and ready to activate upon receipt of the mandate.

The research has outlined a series of challenges hindering the effectiveness of structural violence prevention efforts:

- Insufficient time allocated for conflict information gathering and analysis, resulting in partial conflict intelligence acquirement;
- As a consequence there is a lack of proper understanding of the impact that each risk factor bears on the context in which prevention is planned to be implemented;
- The assessment process is made more difficult by the reluctance of organisations to share information, each moving towards the development and implementation of own prevention programmes;
- Such a trend denotes a certain ad-hocism in strategy and programme development and implementation, which can easily lead to siloed, piece-meal prevention initiatives, without a cumulative impact on the overall conflict situation;
- It can also cause a thematic restrictiveness and detachment from the systemic understanding of the interlinkages between the elements of conflict and violence, each organisation focusing on a narrow thematical area in which it has experience;
- The decision making process towards programming and implementing structural prevention proves to be too lengthy as well. This may happen due to exogenous and endogenous reasons. Externally the intelligence provided by warning stakeholders may

not bring relevant information and strategies on which decision makers would be able to dispatch mandates, internally there may not be either the political will, proper national interest or adequate resources for such endeavours;

- The joined effect of the above challenges would materialize in either obsolete prevention programmes due to the fast changing nature of any conflict context against slow decision making, or the implementation of over politicized solutions, which will highly affect the sustainability and constructiveness of any solution.<sup>3</sup>
  
- The scenarios and scenario building process are valuable tools of the elections related structural prevention toolbox, through their ability to enhance the adherence capacity of prevention programmes to the preconditions of sustainable conflict solutions, by attenuating the effects of challenges, and bridging process, content and infrastructural gaps with lessons identified and consecutively transformed into best practices. The characteristics that confer this capacity to the scenario building process, making it fit for prevention efforts are:
  - a. Scenario building processes are developed based on a future setting vision and mission as per their theoretic definition;
  - b. The processes engage in vision and mission implementation in a manner that stimulates constructive and creative thinking on strategic solutions for a better future, trust building among participants and empowering the wider stakeholder group to take on the implementation of the sustainable outputs;
  - c. The scenarios tackle and integrate systemic risks and opportunities similar with the operational, structural and cultural elements of peace, thus enabling optimal combinations that may bring about both negative and positive peace;
  - d. Scenarios and scenario building processes do have the potential to provide clear diagnosis of a conflict context through timely, comprehensive and systemic information gathering and conflict intelligence generation, contributing to useful strategies towards a peaceful future;
  - e. Due to the flexibility of the scenario building methodology, the tool may be customized to the different needs of a set context, in accordance with the particularities of the conflict targeted;

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<sup>3</sup> The challenges were formulated based on research targeting reports and findings of several international and intergovernmental organisations such as: OECD-DAC, Swedish Government, World Bank, UNDESA and several others.

- f. Scenarios integrate dynamical drivers and structural shapers that generate the different variations, and advocate for preventive measures that might gear the development of such drivers and shapers towards more favorable directions, that may steer a conflict lifeline away from a potential crisis point, or once reached that, provide constructive and transformative alternatives for de-escalation;
- g. Scenarios are developed with the help of an integrated, multi-stakeholder project group, that is representative of the diverse state and social structures and points of view within a given context;
- h. The scenario building processes foster a series of principles that uphold the dialogic character of the exercise, and promote trusted, transparent and open dialogue between the participating stakeholders. Among these we may find: credibility, informality, openness, reflectiveness, respect between participants, systemic inclusiveness, representativity, long term perspective and contextual thinking;
- i. Based on the above, scenarios have the capability to match the different phases of the conflict with adequate conflict management mechanisms;
- j. Based on the theoretical and practical evidences, we may easily recommend scenarios and scenario building processes as adequate ones for bridging the challenge of “insufficient time allocation for conflict intelligence generation”. Also, the conclusion may be drawn that scenario building processes do cater to the need of offering intelligence early enough in the electoral cycle, so that reforms and policies developed as responses to the intelligence may generate appropriate structural shifts and guide any existing conflict life-line away from possible crisis points and the possibility of escalating violence;
- k. Scenario building processes do have the methodological endowment and openness to produce scenarios with early warning potential, as they are: i) able to identify the different factors, events, processes, programmes leading up the elections and map/construct scenarios based on the different development patterns of these identified elements, and ii) showing potential to confer to the developed scenarios the accuracy and reliability needed for early warning generation, through producing critical information on the possible development of electoral risks and opportunities, the hazard level of their different combination and mitigating strategy options. Combining the identified potential of the normative methodology and illustrative capacities with fitting variations of risks and opportunities mapping exercises existent within the wide knowledge pool of the tackled expertise domain, raises the profile of

scenarios as not only early warning providers, but also as strategic options generators for structural prevention in general and for the case of elections in particular;

1. The theory of scenario building offers the possibility of enhancing the cumulative impact of prevention programmes within the electoral cycle, by building trust between stakeholder organisations towards information sharing and linking them in common platforms and program frameworks;
- m. Regarding the capability of scenario building in what the assurance of proper and functional communication and linkage between warning, decision making, and prevention capabilities is concerned, we may conclude that the process itself does contain elements that would contribute to the enhancement of these communication lines and assure that between warning and response capabilities there are few but strong and reliable linkages. This is made possible through the last two steps of the scenario building process which requires competent lobbying, external support that may provide entry points to decision makers, and an inclusive vision over monitoring, navigation and prevention, which carves out specific active roles for decision makers, beyond their mandate and resource generation role.

Based on the overall findings of the thesis, we may state that scenario building is a valuable tool of the elections related structural violence prevention toolbox, as through its theoretical build-up and practical implementation it has managed to bring about results complying with the utmost necessities of constructive and sustainable conflict solutions in any kind of context, not just the electoral one, while bridging the identified major areas that an optimal tool would need to cover in order to enable successful prevention programmes. Its role in elections related structural violence prevention, thus, is one of transformation and strengthening, enhancement of the adherence capacity of prevention programmes to the preconditions of sustainable conflict solutions, and attenuation of challenges and gaps that may hamper free, fair and peaceful elections.