



**SAFERWORLD**  
PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT. BUILDING SAFER LIVES

# Conflict prevention in the 21st century

## China and the UK



February 2016

**Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity.**

**We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.**

**COVER PHOTO:** A failure of conflict prevention: A UN Protection of Civilians camp in South Sudan where large numbers of internally displaced people (IDPs) are seeking shelter from the ongoing civil war. © ASHLEY HAMER



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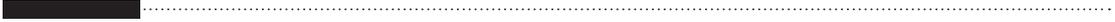
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Registered charity no. 1043843

A company limited by guarantee no. 3015948

ISBN 978-1-909390-41-6



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SAFERWORLD

**FEBRUARY 2016**

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## Acknowledgements

Saferworld would like to thank Christopher Langton, Adviser to the Conflict Prevention Working Group (CPWG), and CPWG members David Nyheim, Mariam Kemple, Rob Parker, Dr Sheng Hongsheng, Dr Xue Lei and Dr Zhang Chun for their contributions to this report and for their commitment to mutual China-United Kingdom (UK) learning and dialogue on conflict prevention.

This report follows a two-year 'track two' dialogue process between China and the UK on conflict prevention. We are grateful to all those who participated in meetings and seminars with the CPWG and Saferworld, in both China and the UK, as part of this process.

This report presents the views of a CPWG composed of Chinese and UK policy experts and as such does not necessarily represent the views of Saferworld or the governments of China or the UK. It was made possible thanks to financial support from the UK Department for International Development.

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## Abbreviations

<b>AIIB</b>	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>APPG</b>	All Party Parliamentary Group	<b>MOD</b>	Ministry of Defence
<b>AU</b>	African Union	<b>MOFCOM</b>	Ministry of Commerce
<b>BSOS</b>	Building Stability Overseas Strategy	<b>MONUC</b>	United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
<b>CAITEC</b>	Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation	<b>MPS</b>	Ministry of Public Security
<b>CNPC</b>	China National Petroleum Corporation	<b>NATC</b>	New-Century Academy on Transnational Corporations
<b>CPC</b>	Communist Party of China	<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>CPCTC</b>	China Peacekeeping CivPol Training Center	<b>PLAN</b>	People's Liberation Army Navy
<b>CPWG</b>	Conflict Prevention Working Group	<b>QUNO</b>	Quaker United Nations Office
<b>CSIS</b>	Centre for Strategic and International Studies	<b>RUSI</b>	Royal United Services Institute
<b>CSSF</b>	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund	<b>SARS</b>	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development	<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>ECAS</b>	Europe Conflict and Security	<b>SDSR</b>	Strategic Defence and Security Review
<b>ETIM</b>	East Turkestan Islamic Movement	<b>SHADE</b>	Shared Awareness and Deconfliction
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>SIIS</b>	Shanghai Institutes for International Studies
<b>FEWER</b>	Forum for Early Warning and Early Response	<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>FCO</b>	Foreign and Commonwealth Office	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>FOCAC</b>	Forum on China-Africa Cooperation	<b>UNMISS</b>	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
<b>IGAD</b>	Intergovernmental Authority on Development	<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>IISS</b>	International Institute for Strategic Studies	<b>US</b>	United States of America
<b>KIO</b>	Kachin Independence Organisation		

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# Executive summary

**A NUMBER OF CHINESE AND UK EXPERTS IN CONFLICT PREVENTION**, termed the ‘Conflict Prevention Working Group’ or CPWG, were brought together intermittently over a two-year period for a series of exchanges and debates. The three thematic pillars of crisis diplomacy, early warning and response, together with upstream conflict prevention from the UK Government’s Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) were used as an initial framework for this dialogue. A number of country case studies were also featured. This report attempts to summarise the discussions and draw from them tentative conclusions about the viability of a closer partnership between China and the UK in this area.

Conflict prevention means different things among the policy and academic community in the UK and in China. In the UK, discussions about conflict prevention tend to extend quite widely into the areas of peacebuilding and international development in general. In China, on the other hand, when talking about conflict prevention many interlocutors focus exclusively on the question of armed intervention and the role of the UN Security Council (UNSC). Mistrust at this level following recent controversial interventions by Western powers (in Libya in particular) therefore tends to cloud the debate, and made for a challenging initial backdrop to the work of the CPWG.

Given this uncertain starting point the prospects of the group finding immediate and very practical entry points for the ‘conflict prevention partnership’ between China and the UK aspired to in the 2010 BSOS were slim. As a result, the dialogue tended to focus on where policy convergence and parallel interests could be identified with a view to assessing the overall trajectory, and to establish whether there was any momentum towards a partnership to build on.

The CPWG recognised that policy and/or approaches to conflict prevention overseas are shifting both in the UK and China, and that this is leading in very general terms to greater convergence of outlook. From a UK perspective this shift is evident in the emphasis now placed on conflict prevention within the last two Strategic Defence and Security Reviews (2010 and 2015), the first of which led to the development of the BSOS itself. The extent to which UK overseas development assistance is being increasingly focused on conflict-affected and fragile states is further evidence of renewed focus. In terms of Chinese policy ‘non-interference’ remains an important philosophical starting point for China’s foreign affairs. However, increasing engagement overseas, particularly in the economic sphere, is leading to greater flexibility and pragmatism. Phrases such as ‘constructive engagement’ and ‘creative involvement’ are being developed to explain these more politically nuanced approaches in the conflict prevention arena. So at a time when the UK is increasingly attempting to be more proactive in preventing conflict so as to avoid the need for direct intervention, China’s

expanding engagement overseas is forcing policy makers to think through similar issues.

The CPWG also identified a growing overlap of overseas interests between China and the UK. For example, the group discussed approaches in different countries in Africa at some length. The group saw the potential for greater collaboration between the UK – a major established donor to many countries – and China, given the latter’s significant recent rise in political and economic engagement on the continent. Increasing UK interest in the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ and joint interests in the stability of many conflict-prone regions that feature within the broad areas covered by this initiative were also discussed.

The CPWG also looked at modalities and differing incentives for engagement. The UK’s pursuit of partnership with China in this area can be clearly understood in terms of China’s increasing global influence and the UK’s overriding desire to extend and uphold a ‘rules-based international system’. The incentives for China to partner specifically with the UK in this area are less clear. Nonetheless, it was recognised that the China-UK bilateral relationship was strong and growing, and that a rapidly developing economic relationship could form the basis for greater cooperation in other areas.

The conclusions were therefore generally optimistic. There is value in both sides continuing to explore the possibilities for more practical future cooperation. Continuing dialogue at different levels to enhance mutual understanding and further build trust was seen to be critical. At the formal level simple exchanges of information between Chinese and UK institutions operating within unstable regions and countries were seen as an obvious and fairly uncontroversial first step.

# Introduction

## Rationale

**THE END OF THE COLD WAR** marked the beginning of a new era in international conflict management and prevention, with many of the protocols and treaties that govern the international order having been drawn up in a different context to that in which the world now found itself. By the beginning of the 21st century, new and challenging conflict factors were emerging. Globalisation of trade and communications has broken down territorial and virtual borders allowing previously restricted threats to spread unhindered. The growth in the numbers of non-state armed groups driven by grievances stemming from political and economic exclusion, ideology and often criminal commercial enterprise introduced a new challenge, partly by virtue of the scale of the growth, but also because there are few international protocols for dealing with the non-state 'sector', which has syndicated across and within continents.

The change in the world order has also brought new opportunities for countries to develop both economically and politically. However, these new opportunities have created new imbalances in power, wealth and prosperity. These have in certain cases created conflict and fragility, and – given the increasing multiplicity of interests – placed growing demands on external actors to cooperate to mitigate this. In this changed environment, the great powers of the Cold War, particularly the US and European partners, have struggled to contain threats in their traditional areas of interest. Alongside this, and partly resulting from failed efforts to prevent conflict, there is a declining appetite for engagement in conflict management among Western actors.

In parallel, China, as the major emerging power, is expanding trade relationships to fuel its growing economy. These relationships are often cultivated in areas affected by conflict. As a result, China has found itself embroiled in situations that oblige it to play a more proactive role in addressing immediate operational security challenges. Long-term conflict prevention, however, remains a relatively undeveloped area of Chinese foreign policy, and there is limited discussion about how China's growing role overseas can at the same time support greater peace and security.

The United Nations (UN) has acknowledged that “the international community is failing at preventing conflict”.<sup>1</sup> Yet the benefits of resolving, managing and containing crises and disputes before they escalate into violent conflict are obvious, not only in terms of minimising widespread devastation and human costs but also because of the devastating impact of conflict on political, social and economic development, which can lead to the destabilisation of whole regions. From an economic perspective, investing in conflict prevention is also considerably cheaper than responding to conflict after it has broken out.<sup>2</sup> A lack of effective international cooperation is a key contributor to

<sup>1</sup> High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (2015), 'Uniting our strengths for peace – politics, partnership and people', June, p 16.

<sup>2</sup> T Brück, G Milante (2014), 'Financing peace and security for sustainable development' in *OECD Development Co-operation Report 2014: Mobilising Resources for Sustainable Development*, (Paris: OECD), pp 219–227.

this failing. New ways of cooperating across old 'boundaries,' ideological or territorial, are needed if states are to cope with the increasing number of security challenges that threaten their interests and the global community.

This report is one of the main outputs of a two-year 'track two' dialogue process between China and the UK on conflict prevention. It presents the views of a Conflict Prevention Working Group (CPWG), composed of Chinese and UK policy experts. It aims to raise awareness of the ways in which both China and the UK approach conflict prevention and support peace in conflict-affected and fragile states. It analyses the policies, practices and capacity gaps of both countries as an essential starting point for potential cooperation in the future. The report also explores whether the coordination of Chinese and UK efforts towards a more joined-up approach to conflict prevention is desirable, realistic, and/or feasible.

With this focus on conflict-affected and fragile states, the dialogue was able to avoid focusing on some of the ongoing international tensions at the geopolitical level, such as the current territorial disagreements in the South China Sea. These tensions impinge on relations with some of China's near neighbours in the Asia Pacific region, and the United States in particular. Dialogue and action is clearly needed to prevent conflict in this context. While not totally disconnected from some of these issues, the UK has significant geographic and political distance from them, which has prevented them from becoming stumbling blocks within this particular endeavour.

### Existing China-UK cooperation in conflict management and prevention

China-UK cooperation on peace and security issues, and conflict prevention in particular, is currently very limited, although both countries have committed to working collaboratively. In 2004, China and the UK first established a 'comprehensive strategic partnership' to "help create a safer, more prosperous and open world".<sup>3</sup> Within this, the two countries committed to increasing cooperation on countering terrorism and more generally within the framework of the UN. China also requested an increase in consultation with the UK on the Middle East and Iraq.

In 2009, the UK set out its evolving policy towards China in the paper 'The UK and China: A Framework for Engagement'. This recognised the impact that China's economic growth could have on the UK's national interests and global agenda (including, for example, international development and conflict management). It suggested that the UK would help to foster China's emergence as a responsible global player, and prioritised building a comprehensive relationship with China within UK foreign policy.

While this signals that the impetus for improved relations has been from the UK, the relationship is reciprocated, at least to a degree, by China. This can be seen at the leadership level within the ongoing China-UK strategic dialogue initiated in 2010. The dialogues aim to increase high-level exchanges, strategic communication and cooperation between China and the UK on foreign policy and security issues. Discussions within these meetings have previously focused on African development, peacekeeping and military reforms, and the security situations in Syria, Iran and South Sudan.

The UK-China Global Development Partnership Programme is an attempt to build on the high-level exchanges and identify practical approaches for the two countries to work together to achieve their shared international development objectives. A framework for this cooperation was provided by a 2011 'Memorandum of understanding for a partnership to enhance development cooperation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals'.<sup>4</sup> The agreement committed the two countries to work together on global development issues and poverty reduction in a range of sectors, including conflict prevention.

<sup>3</sup> UK Parliament (2004) 'UK/China Joint Statement 2004', ([www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmfaff/860/6060705.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmfaff/860/6060705.htm)).

<sup>4</sup> Between the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) of the People's Republic of China and the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This memorandum was signed by Chen Deming, China's Minister for Commerce at the time, and William Hague, the UK's Foreign Secretary at the time.

These commitments have since been reiterated in a number of joint statements. For example, in June 2014 the two sides agreed to “work actively to promote the peaceful resolution of the Iranian nuclear issues, the North Korean nuclear issue, Ukraine, Syria, Middle East, Afghanistan and other hot-spot issues” and to “strengthen coordination and cooperation on UN peacekeeping missions”.<sup>5</sup> However, it is perhaps only recently that the bilateral relationship has developed momentum, with a notable push from the UK in October 2015, in which it strived to become China’s “best partner in the West”.<sup>6</sup> While the basis of this growing relationship is largely economic, the two sides have expressed in joint statements that they will continue to strengthen cooperation in conflict management through multilateral forums such as the UN, and have committed to a renewed development partnership<sup>7</sup> which will in part contribute to ‘upstream conflict prevention’<sup>8</sup> efforts to address the root causes of conflict. This new partnership aims to bring China and the UK closer together in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), tackling global poverty, promoting economic development in Africa, supporting global health initiatives, international disaster relief, and providing opportunities for women and girls.<sup>9</sup> Although it is welcome that this builds on pre-existing commitments, it is still too early to determine whether the renewed partnership will go beyond rhetoric and yield more tangible results.

Beyond the statements, and from a practical perspective, there is little evidence of existing China-UK cooperation in conflict prevention. However, there has been some, albeit limited, cooperation in peacekeeping, which demonstrates that there is some level of interest and capacity for tangible cooperation in the wider field of peace and security. The UK has provided technical assistance to the China Peacekeeping CivPol Training Center (CPCTC) in Langfang, south of Beijing, which was established by China’s Ministry of Public Security (MPS) in 2000. Similarly, they have offered training to support China’s participation in the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), and have worked trilaterally with the CPCTC and Ghana’s Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre to provide training to police. China and the UK have also worked together in joint counter-piracy operations, including through the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) initiative to coordinate counter-piracy activities in the Gulf of Aden.

<sup>5</sup> UK Government (2014), ‘Joint Statement from Government of the People’s Republic of China & Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland’, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-from-government-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china-government-of-the-united-kingdom-of-great-britain-and-northern-ireland>).

<sup>6</sup> HM Government (2015), ‘Chancellor: “Let’s create a golden decade for the UK-China relationship”’, 22 September, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/chancellor-lets-create-a-golden-decade-for-the-uk-china-relationship>).

<sup>7</sup> HM Government (2015), ‘UK-China Joint Statement 2015’, 22 October, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-china-joint-statement-2015>).

<sup>8</sup> Saferworld (2012), ‘Upstream conflict prevention: Addressing the root causes of conflict’, September, ([www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/688-upstream-conflict-prevention-addressing-the-root-causes-of-conflict](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/688-upstream-conflict-prevention-addressing-the-root-causes-of-conflict)).

<sup>9</sup> HM Government (2015), ‘UK and China join together to tackle extreme poverty’, 21 October, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-china-join-together-to-tackle-extreme-poverty>).

## 1

# The UK approach to conflict prevention

**FOR THE UK,** conflict prevention is a key component of a wider strategy of ‘building stability overseas’. This combines a range of approaches including the promotion of early warning, effective crisis response and the delivery of overseas development assistance and upstream conflict prevention.

## UK policy on conflict prevention

### Rationale for the UK’s increased engagement in conflict prevention

There are arguably three factors currently driving the UK’s focus on conflict prevention. First, the changed international dynamics in the period following the end of the Cold War have brought conflict, and the consequences of conflict, much closer both to the UK itself and UK nationals overseas. The real or perceived threats from extremist groups operating from territory left ungoverned due to ongoing conflict are increasingly felt in the UK. Meanwhile, conflict is triggering mass migration, either directly as a result of its impact on people’s security, or indirectly as a consequence of its drag on economic opportunity in conflict-affected countries and regions.

Second, the UK’s attempts during this period to bring about greater stability overseas through direct intervention, albeit in most cases alongside other countries, have shown mixed results. While the military intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000 helped bring a swift end to a bloody and protracted civil war, subsequent attempts to bring stability in, for example, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya were less successful.

Third, the events of the Arab Spring undoubtedly caught many UK policy makers (together with others) by surprise. The resulting uncertainty and shifting power in the region and their importance for wider global peace and security have galvanised action in many Western policy centres.

Therefore, in what has become from a domestic perspective an increasingly politically charged arena, the UK has sought an approach which responds robustly to threats while being seen to learn lessons from failed interventions and to better anticipate the future. The approach also stems from the UK’s desire to retain a degree of influence on major global peace and security issues within a changing international order, particularly given the rise of emerging economies, including China. This leads to the UK leveraging its established and favourable position within the UNSC and other key international governance mechanisms.

## UK policy evolution

In 2010 a UK Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) called for a significant increase in UK support to conflict prevention, delivered through an integrated approach bringing together diplomatic, development, defence and intelligence resources.<sup>10</sup> The review emphasised the need to focus on addressing the causes of security concerns, rather than the consequences. It outlined increased investment in strengthening early warning capacities; higher contributions of overseas development assistance to fragile and conflict-affected contexts; enhanced defence engagement on conflict prevention; and a focus on building effective security and justice, and responsible and accountable governments. The review resulted in the development of the BSOS, which was published in 2011 and which has become the cornerstone of the UK's conflict prevention policy. This document, which was produced jointly by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Department for International Development (DFID), highlighted four key priorities for the UK:

- improving capacity to anticipate crises and react quickly to **early warning** signals
- enhancing **crisis response** to prevent them spreading and/or escalating
- investing in **upstream conflict prevention** to ensure that countries are more capable of managing tensions
- **coordinating with other international actors** such as the UN, regional organisations such as NATO, the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), and emerging powers such as China

The cross-governmental approach called for in the 2010 SDSR was encouraged by further increasing funding available within the 'Conflict Pool', a resource jointly managed by DFID, the FCO and the MOD. The Conflict Pool provided joint funding for conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacekeeping activities in line with joint priorities. In April 2015 the Conflict Pool was superseded by a £1.033 billion Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF). The CSSF is overseen by the National Security Council and includes a wider range of governmental actors than the previous instrument, such as the Home Office, Intelligence Services and National Crime Agency. It also places an emphasis on particular country and regional strategies and has facilitated the creation of regional boards, chaired by officials from the FCO, with representation from all departments overseen by the National Security Council within the CSSF. The UK Government has since committed that by financial year 2019–2020 funding for this CSSF will increase by £267 million to £1.3 billion.<sup>11</sup> These changes have generated concern among civil society and the wider UK policy community about the impact of aligning development and conflict prevention efforts with the UK's national security objectives in what is referred to by some as the "securitisation of development".<sup>12</sup>

## The future direction of UK conflict prevention policy

On 23 November 2015 the UK Government published an updated National Security Strategy and SDSR. This document builds on themes within its 2010 predecessor. The focus is on '3 Ps' – the UK priorities to "protect our people", "project our global influence" and "promote our prosperity". It highlights the main challenges driving UK security priorities to be: threats posed by terrorism, extremism and instability; state-based threats and competition; technological developments and cyber threats; and the erosion of the rules-based international order and resultant difficulties in building consensus to tackle shared challenges. The three key elements of the BSOS – early warning, crisis response and upstream conflict prevention – still feature. The Govern-

<sup>10</sup> HM Government (2010), 'Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review', October, p 44.

<sup>11</sup> HM Government (2015), 'National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015', November, ([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/478933/52309\\_Cm\\_9161\\_NSS\\_SD\\_Review\\_web\\_only.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf)).

<sup>12</sup> Fisher and Anderson (2015), 'Authoritarianism and the securitization of development in Africa', The Royal Institute of International Affairs, (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons Ltd).

ment has promised to implement a new early warning and early action system across government, and to introduce a £500 million overseas development assistance crisis reserve to encourage a speedier response to crisis.<sup>13</sup> It also emphasises the need to address the root causes of conflict.<sup>14</sup>

The new commitment to allocate at least 50 per cent of the DFID budget to fragile states alongside the introduction of a new aid strategy suggests that there will be a greater concentration of overseas development assistance in these contexts, which could provide a great boost to the UK's upstream conflict prevention efforts if effectively delivered.

Critics of the new UK policy direction have suggested that the renewed emphasis on UK aid supporting the UK national interest will inevitably de-prioritise longer-term bottom-up approaches focusing on the needs of people most affected by conflict and underdevelopment, in favour of short-term gains in 'stability'.<sup>15</sup> Others have suggested that the involvement of other government departments alongside DFID in the delivery of UK aid will create unhelpful new dynamics.

However, how the UK Government plans to implement its new strategy has not yet been made clear and it is too early to identify what impact the changes will have on the UK's conflict prevention efforts.

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<sup>13</sup> HM Treasury and Department for International Development (2015), 'UK aid: tackling global challenges in the national interest', 23 November, ([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/478834/ODA\\_strategy\\_final\\_web\\_0905.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478834/ODA_strategy_final_web_0905.pdf)).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Saferworld (2015), 'UK aid and the SDSR: managing the contradictions around increased aid to fragile states', 25 November, ([www.saferworld.org.uk/news-and-views/comment/193-uk-aid-and-the-sdsr-managing-the-contradictions-around-increased-aid-to-fragile-states](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/news-and-views/comment/193-uk-aid-and-the-sdsr-managing-the-contradictions-around-increased-aid-to-fragile-states)).

## 2

# China's approach to conflict prevention

**THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT**, and indeed most Chinese actors, tend to avoid using the phrase 'conflict prevention' (or *Chongtu Yufang*, 冲突预防) other than within the context of the UNSC or other institutions (for example, the AU) which are considered to have legitimacy on matters of conflict and security. There is no clear-cut definition of conflict prevention from a Chinese perspective, and there is little consensus on what it means. Chinese hesitance to use the term is also linked to assumptions that conflict prevention has become synonymous with legitimising military intervention and undermining state sovereignty. This does not, however, mean that they are against the *principle* of conflict prevention. Chinese Government representatives have, on numerous occasions, emphasised the need to address the root causes of conflict, and to invest in economic and social development to stabilise areas and encourage peace.

In the first position paper on UN reform by the Chinese Government in 2005, it was stated that "China supports the establishment of the 'prevention culture' by the UN and larger input into conflict prevention and mediation, especially the improvement of mechanisms and measures such as early warning and fact-finding mission".<sup>16</sup>

## Rationale for China's increased engagement in conflict prevention

China's interest in conflict prevention is increasing. There are a number of factors driving this change. First, as the country becomes a more prominent actor on the world stage there is more pressure from the international community for China to play a more proactive role in both the management and prevention of conflict. This includes pressure from both Western actors and conflict-affected or fragile states which have recognised China's increasing role, and value its contributions to enhancing peace and security.

Second, and particularly following the launch of China's 'going out strategy' in 2002 to promote Chinese investment overseas, Chinese businesses are in some cases operating in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. The need for protection for these increasing assets, and the subsequent impact on Chinese foreign policy, has been evident in, for example, South Sudan, where China is the largest investor, and where an estimated 120 Chinese enterprises operate.<sup>17</sup> China is consequently engaging in the South Sudan peace process, and has contributed peacekeepers to the United Nations Mission in

<sup>16</sup> Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN (2005), 'Position Paper of the People's Republic of China on the United Nations Reforms', 7 June, ([www.china-un.org/eng/chinaandun/zzhgg/t199101.htm](http://www.china-un.org/eng/chinaandun/zzhgg/t199101.htm)).

<sup>17</sup> Global Risk Insights (2014), 'Conflict in South Sudan a major concern for China', December 14, (<http://globalriskinsights.com/2014/12/conflict-south-sudan-major-concern-china/>).

South Sudan (UNMISS). In May 2014 China also secured the inclusion of the protection of oil workers within the UNMISS mandate. How China operates overseas, and the extent to which it works in a 'conflict-sensitive' way, is increasingly under the international spotlight. This has created pressure on the Chinese Government to adapt its approach.<sup>18</sup>

Third, there is increasing domestic pressure on the Chinese Government to protect the growing numbers of Chinese citizens living, working, and visiting conflict-affected and fragile states. This pressure was evident after 2004 when 11 Chinese nationals were killed in Afghanistan, 3 were killed in Pakistan and 2 were killed in Sudan. Similarly, in 2011 there was another surge in pressure on the Chinese Government. In March of that year the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) were dispatched in their first non-combatant evacuation operation, to evacuate Chinese citizens from Libya as unrest surged within the country. Later that year, 13 Chinese sailors were killed on the borders of Myanmar and Thailand in an area notorious for drug smuggling. When photos of the bodies appeared on social media a public outcry compelled the Government to take action to better secure the region. As a result, China joined forces with Laos, Myanmar and Thailand to increase and coordinate security patrols and law enforcement within the region. Beijing is keen wherever possible to pre-empt this public pressure and anticipate need for more direct action. The responsibility to protect Chinese citizens was emphasised in a 2013 defence White Paper on 'The diversified employment of China's armed forces',<sup>19</sup> and has been reiterated in the subsequent 2015 defence White Paper.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, there is a concern about conflict and instability in neighbouring countries spilling over into China. For example, ethnic conflict, misfired shells, and refugees from Myanmar have often spilled into China's border regions. This has prompted China to engage in diplomatic efforts and dialogue to help manage the conflict and prevent an escalation. There are also concerns about Central Asia, given the potential impact on China's domestic security of Islamist extremist groups from the region extending activities into the Chinese region of Xinjiang and/or providing support for Uighur separatist groups such as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM).<sup>21</sup>

## Chinese policy on conflict prevention

### Policy-making apparatus

China has no overarching policy or discourse on conflict prevention and its conflict prevention efforts to date could be described as having been *ad hoc*, reactive, and context-specific rather than driven by grand strategy. A large number of often disparate Chinese actors engage in conflict prevention and there is no specific body dedicated to work in this area or coordination across it. At present, the seven-person Politburo Standing Committee is the main decision maker responsible for approving largely country- or region-specific policies on conflict prevention, with support from the State Council. State departments prominent in the policy formation process include the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Prominent think tanks and universities feed into the process, as do significant state-owned enterprises such as China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and Sinopec, when relevant. MOFCOM and the MFA tend to be the key actors in policy implementation, although which ministry takes leadership can vary depending on the specific event that they are responding to. Similarly, there is no specific funding mechanism within government for conflict management matters.

<sup>18</sup> The Chinese Government, for example, came under significant pressure in the run-up to the Beijing Olympics to moderate its support to the Sudan Government in relation to the ongoing Darfur conflict.

<sup>19</sup> Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China (2013), 'The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces', April, (<http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2012.htm>).

<sup>20</sup> The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (2015), 'China's Military Strategy', May, (<http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2014.htm>).

<sup>21</sup> Saferworld (2015), 'Central Asia at a Crossroads', July, ([www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/918-central-asia-at-a-crossroads](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/918-central-asia-at-a-crossroads)).

The recent creation of the National Security Commission has the potential to impact on Chinese conflict prevention efforts as it may facilitate greater strategic coordination and information sharing across government ministries. Although the Politburo will still determine overall policy direction, the National Security Commission will offer advice to the Politburo and will oversee the development of specific plans and proposals for crisis response and management. However, generally speaking, the National Security Commission will not manage the day-to-day activities of the relevant ministries, and will only act if there is a specific crisis or event which could potentially pose a threat to national security – meaning that China’s longer-term conflict prevention efforts are likely to remain outside this framework.

### Key themes in official rhetoric

While the Chinese Government does not currently have a detailed policy relating specifically to conflict prevention, there are a number of long-standing foreign policy principles that steer China’s response in this arena.

- The **‘five principles of peaceful coexistence’** are the cornerstone of Chinese foreign policy. The five principles, which originated in an agreement between China and India in 1954, are as follows:
  1. Mutual respect for others’ territorial integrity and sovereignty.
  2. Mutual non-aggression.
  3. Mutual non-interference in others’ internal affairs.
  4. Equality and cooperation for mutual benefit.
  5. Peaceful coexistence.
- The idea that **development leads to peace** is commonly referenced by Chinese officials, scholars and think tank experts in discussions about conflict prevention. Economic and social development is believed to be essential to addressing the root causes and drivers of conflict. Unlike many Western viewpoints, Chinese actors tend to emphasise the role of development at all phases of the conflict cycle.
- The **‘new security concept’** was first outlined in a 1998 Chinese White Paper.<sup>22</sup> It emphasises the need for international disputes to be settled by peaceful means; that security dialogues and cooperation with other countries should be encouraged; and that these relationships should feature mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination in order to solve disputes and safeguard peace competently.
- The concept of a **‘harmonious world’** in which the international system is open, fair and non-discriminatory is another important theme in Chinese policy statements. It encourages China to work alongside and not neglect actors from the Global South and was recently used as part of the justification for the launch of the Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

### Recent trends

China is playing an increasingly proactive role in **crisis diplomacy** and mediation. This has been evident in South Sudan where it has become actively involved in the ongoing Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-led peace process. Similarly, the Chinese Government has become involved in refereeing talks between the Government of Myanmar and rebel groups such as the Kachin Independence Organisation<sup>23</sup> and has appointed a Special Envoy on Asian Affairs, Wang Yingfan, to manage diplomatic efforts to support peace. In Afghanistan, China has according

<sup>22</sup> Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China (1998) ‘China’s National Defense’, July, (<http://china.org.cn/e-white/5/index.htm>).

<sup>23</sup> Yun Sun (2013), ‘China’s Intervention in the Myanmar-Kachin Peace Talks’, *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, 20 February, ([www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/china%E2%80%99s-intervention-in-the-myanmar-kachin-peace-talks](http://www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/china%E2%80%99s-intervention-in-the-myanmar-kachin-peace-talks)).

to some sources facilitated talks between the Government and the Taliban.<sup>24</sup> It has appointed a Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Sun Yuxi, in July 2014 and has worked tri-laterally in China-US-Afghanistan and China-Pakistan-Afghanistan initiatives to help promote peace and prevent a return to conflict.

There has also been an increase in Chinese **overseas development aid**. This has taken the form of grants, interest-free loans, concessional loans, contributions to debt relief and provisions of humanitarian assistance, technical assistance, training, and medical teams. At the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, President Xi announced<sup>25</sup> that China will establish a new US\$2 billion South-South cooperation assistance fund – due to increase to \$12 billion by 2030<sup>26</sup> – to help developing countries to meet the SDGs. Alongside this significant increase in aid volume, there are indications that China is beginning to develop a more nuanced policy approach in this area. China is recognising, perhaps, the need to develop the expertise necessary to understand development needs more comprehensively and evaluate the impact of its interventions.<sup>27</sup> In relation to overseas aid in support of conflict prevention activities (particularly *upstream*), China was not a leading supporter of the incorporation of Goal 16, which sets targets for “peaceful and inclusive societies”, within the SDGs; but neither, ultimately, did it object to its inclusion. Furthermore, as has recently been highlighted, many of the principles underlying Goal 16 targets are now enshrined within the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) statements and commitments.<sup>28</sup> In Afghanistan, the Chinese Government has provided a range of development aid in what it has described as an attempt to inhibit the country’s role as a “breeding ground for extremist groups”. In doing so, it has sought to address the root causes of conflict by assisting in livelihood projects and aid programmes, including the provision of 500 million yuan to build affordable housing.<sup>29</sup> It has committed to providing a total of 1.5 billion yuan in grants to Afghanistan within three years.<sup>30</sup>

**Infrastructure development** is another growing priority for Chinese engagement overseas. It has been claimed that in June 2015 over 3,800 kilometres of railway and 4,300 kilometres of road had either been built or were under construction in Africa with Chinese financing.<sup>31</sup> While the incentive for such investment in physical infrastructure is not necessarily to prevent conflict, it is recognised that investment can have a positive effect on conflict dynamics, especially in areas where the lack of infrastructure marginalises communities and inhibits state presence and access to services and employment. However, there are also examples of Chinese investment in infrastructure fuelling localised conflict dynamics when it is not conflict sensitive,<sup>32</sup> and such large-scale investment in the absence of adequate domestic regulatory frameworks – and where the state itself is a conflict actor – risks entrenching corrupt and divisive elite power structures at a national level. Given that loan funding for infrastructure development is largely tied to the use of Chinese contractors, commercial incentives also clearly come into play.

At present, most of China’s engagement in conflict prevention tends to be at the multi-lateral level, and most notably through the UN. It has participated in **UN peacekeeping operations** for 25 years, and currently provides the most troops to UN peacekeeping

24 Wong & Marshall (2015), ‘Taliban and Afghan Peace Officials Have Secret Talks in China’, *Wall Street Journal*, 25 May, ([www.nytimes.com/2015/05/26/world/asia/taliban-and-afghan-peace-officials-have-secret-talks-in-china.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/26/world/asia/taliban-and-afghan-peace-officials-have-secret-talks-in-china.html?_r=0)).

25 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (2015), ‘Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech at UN Sustainable Development Summit, Stressing to Realize Common Development of All Countries from New Starting Point of Post-2015 Development Agenda’, 27 September, ([www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/topics\\_665678/xjpdmgjxgswbxcxlhgcl70znxlfh/t1302359.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpdmgjxgswbxcxlhgcl70znxlfh/t1302359.shtml)).

26 *Ibid.*

27 Yun Sun, Brookings (2015), [www.brookings.edu/blogs/africa-in-focus/posts/2015/07/01-china-foreign-aid-africa-sun](http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/africa-in-focus/posts/2015/07/01-china-foreign-aid-africa-sun).

28 Saferworld (2015) ‘Upstream Conflict Prevention and the Sustainable Development Goals’ (upcoming).

29 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (2015), ‘Li Yuanhao Attends Reception for the 60th Anniversary of China-Afghanistan Diplomatic Ties’, 4 November.

30 *Ibid.*

31 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (2015), ‘China committed to Africa’s economic growth through infrastructure development: envoy’, 3 November, ([www.focac.org/eng/zfgx/jmhzt1311050.htm](http://www.focac.org/eng/zfgx/jmhzt1311050.htm)).

32 Saferworld (2013), ‘China and conflict sensitivity: An introduction’, August, ([www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/753-china-and-conflict-sensitivity-an-introduction](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/753-china-and-conflict-sensitivity-an-introduction)).

missions of all permanent members of the UNSC. In September 2015 Xi Jinping committed to build a further UN peacekeeping standby force of 8,000 troops.<sup>33</sup>

China also values **engagement with regional bodies** such as the AU. Its commitment to the AU is demonstrated by the \$100 million-worth of free military aid in the next five years which Beijing pledged to support the building of the African Standby Force and the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis in September 2015.<sup>34</sup> The FOCAC, a platform designed to build official dialogue and partnership between China and African states, is increasingly prioritising the discussion of peace and security issues. In the current FOCAC Action Plan (2013–2015) China and Africa have committed to cooperate to help Africa become more peaceful by coordinating policies and working together in peacekeeping operations, capacity building, post-conflict reconstruction and preventive diplomacy. This was reiterated in the December 2015 FOCAC Johannesburg Summit, during which President Xi pledged to continue to participate in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa and support the capacity building of African states in areas such as defence and counter-terrorism.

### The future direction of Chinese conflict prevention policy

China will likely become more involved in conflict prevention as its global footprint continues to grow. The protection of its overseas assets and nationals is a clear driver of foreign policy change in this direction. China's security strategies have shifted from an emphasis on military security to a more comprehensive security. China's pragmatic adaptation of the concept of non-interference, in what has been termed 'creative involvement', has allowed it to engage in mediation and shuttle diplomacy.<sup>35</sup> This apparent reinterpretation of its policy of non-interference has enabled China to go beyond its traditional role of only engaging in dialogue with government actors and to start to engage – albeit on an incremental, *ad hoc* basis – with non-state actors and opposition groups, as has been the case in Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Creative involvement envisages the proactive use of diplomatic, military and commercial routes together, and can also involve sending humanitarian and poverty relief teams abroad. It emphasises that rather than pursuing Western-style policies, Chinese engagement should be cautious, creative and constructive. It seems unlikely that the formal rhetoric of non-intervention will fade from Chinese policy statements in the near future, given its important role as a legitimising tool for the government, and attraction for South-South diplomacy. But the trend towards a more flexible interpretation when it comes to operationalising foreign policy now seems well-established, and the growth in Chinese overseas development (whether or not directly intended for conflict prevention purposes) is evident.

<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (2015), 'China is Here for Peace: Remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China At the United Nations Peacekeeping Summit', 28 September, ([www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1302562.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1302562.shtml)).

<sup>34</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations (2015), 'Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind, Statement by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China at the General Debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly', 28 September, ([http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/70/70\\_ZH\\_en.pdf](http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/70/70_ZH_en.pdf)).

<sup>35</sup> Beijing Review (2012), 'New Direction for China's Diplomacy', 5 March, ([www.bjreview.com.cn/world/txt/2012-03/05/content\\_439626.htm](http://www.bjreview.com.cn/world/txt/2012-03/05/content_439626.htm)).

## 3

# China-UK cooperation on conflict prevention:

## An empty promise, a misguided aspiration, or a future reality?

**What might a 'prevention partnership' between China and the UK look like?**

**THE BSOS MAKES EXPLICIT MENTION** of the need to create 'prevention partnerships' between the UK and a number of non-traditional partners including China. The CPWG project is a practical, if limited, step towards that. 'Partnership' is also a thread that runs through the National Security Strategy and SDSR 2015. It is recognised as key to the UK's ability to deliver security and prosperity for its citizens across a range of areas including countering extremism and radicalisation, cyber security, tackling transnational organised crime, intelligence-sharing, global health, crisis response and defence production. There is a specific section on partnership with China that sets out the UK's broad vision for UK-China partnership across a range of conflict and security-related issues:

*"Our relationship with China is rapidly expanding. We do not expect to agree with the Chinese Government on everything... But our aim is to build a deeper partnership with China, working more closely together to address global challenges, including... economic development in Africa, peacekeeping... We strongly support China's greater integration into more of the world's key institutions and organisations... The UK and China will establish a high-level security dialogue to strengthen exchanges and cooperation on security issues... We will work together to strengthen cooperation on settling international and regional disputes peacefully."*<sup>36</sup>

On the basis of an understanding about the various modalities of the UK's traditional partnerships in this area it is reasonable to assume that an idealised, future, China-UK conflict prevention partnership might have some of the following characteristics:

- greater coordination of upstream conflict prevention work, through development assistance coordination mechanisms at the international and country level (akin, perhaps, to OECD DAC)
- greater sharing of information and analysis at different levels to foster improved early warning

<sup>36</sup> HM Government (2015), 'National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015', November, Para. 5.74 p 58, ([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/478933/52309\\_Cm\\_9161\\_NSS\\_SD\\_Review\\_web\\_only.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf)).

- increased joint analysis at the country level, and improved mutual understanding that might lead to joint positions being sought more readily in the event of a crisis

Through the discussions of CPWG it became clear that such characteristics, although not unobtainable, are perhaps some distance away.

It is also worth taking into account that this focus on partnership has been largely at the UK's instigation. The UK's motivation for taking these proactive steps can be linked to, arguably, quite a farsighted international development policy together with an eagerness to work with China as it begins to engage more comprehensively with the 'rules-based international system'. Fundamentally, the UK sees the eradication of poverty as both a moral and a pragmatic, self-interested cause given the extent to which poverty is connected with instability. Furthermore, it recognises that countries need to work together to bring about lasting change. The previous section of this report has highlighted how China's motivations to support international development, and conflict prevention as a subset of that, are increasingly clear. China's motivations for forming a partnership with the UK in this area are, however, less obvious.

Rather than looking for how a partnership could come about immediately, a key line of enquiry of the CPWG has therefore been the extent to which we are seeing increasing convergence between the UK and China in outlook and approach, together with increasing overlap of interests. Cooperation and partnership between China and the UK in conflict prevention will only flourish in the longer term if there continues to be a positive trajectory.

## Convergence of outlook and approach

At the most fundamental level of international outlook there is arguably a significant impasse between the two countries. China remains committed, at least rhetorically, to its long-standing principle of non-interference outside its borders. In contrast the UK has, at least from a historical perspective, been quicker and keener to exert political and often military force overseas in a proactive manner. The cloud of controversy surrounding recent UK and Western interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Libya in particular, has even rendered 'conflict prevention' a difficult term for Chinese interlocutors.

In more practical terms, within the UNSC this difference can be seen in different interpretations of how the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle should be implemented. Guiding the implementation of R2P are three 'pillars':

- The primary responsibility for protecting populations residing with the State.
- The responsibility of the international community to encourage and assist States in fulfilling this responsibility.
- The obligation of the international community to take collective action (including force as a last resort) if a State manifestly fails to protect its population.

Whereas both sides are unequivocally committed to the principle that populations should be protected from mass atrocity crimes,<sup>37</sup> the main point of departure between them concerns the implementation of the third pillar, particularly when this involves the use of force. This is not to say that China is opposed to the use of force where there is a civilian protection mandate in all cases, but it has set the bar high in terms of the criteria to be met in justifying force, and has tended to focus on the first two pillars in policy terms.

The case of Libya has been particularly damaging for international consensus. Following unanimity at the UN in 2011 on the use of limited force (seen by some as the high-water mark for R2P), China (together with others) felt that the US, UK and France significantly overstepped the mandate when they subsequently directed action

<sup>37</sup> Defined in the R2P doctrine as genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.

towards regime change. The fact that Chinese businesses in Libya were particularly exposed, and lost significant investments in the ensuing chaos, further aggravated the situation. Significant trust was lost within the UNSC.

However, the fact that China and the UK have since committed to work together to address mutual security concerns<sup>38</sup> indicates that trust between the UK and China in this realm is being re-established. This can perhaps be attributed to movement on both sides.

The UK is undoubtedly going through a period of policy reflection following the failure of the Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya interventions to bring about greater stability. One apparent shift is towards the 'securitisation of development', with international development work increasingly being driven by UK national security priorities. The CPWG debated the risks inherent in this including, among others, a focus on short-term security priorities at the cost of a reduced focus on both the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable, and longer-term developmental objectives. The flip-side of this is that with an ever-increasing focus on directing development resources towards fragile and conflict-affected states<sup>39</sup> there is clearly an increasing recognition of the importance of upstream conflict prevention – or the first and second pillars within the R2P doctrine – which could be viewed as a move towards the Chinese position. Ongoing debates at time of writing about action in Syria demonstrate that this is, however, a continuing discussion.

As identified earlier in this report China is, relatively speaking, working in a policy vacuum when it comes to conflict prevention, with the 'non-interference' doctrine seemingly preventing any comprehensive consideration of conflict prevention strategy. The CPWG, however, identified areas where China was "learning through doing"<sup>40</sup> and reflected on the increasing pressures on the government to take a more proactive stance in support of increasing economic interests and the safety of its nationals. There is little by way of established public policy to point to that, which demonstrates increasing convergence except, perhaps, for an increasing focus on development cooperation, where commitments have increased significantly in recent years.<sup>41</sup>

China, in common with the UK, clearly recognises the link between poverty and instability. The CPWG reflected on different approaches, with the UK tending towards the 'golden thread'<sup>42</sup> argument that sees peace, governance and the establishment of strong institutions as prerequisites to economic development, whereas China tends towards the argument that economic development leads to longer-term peace. The CPWG concluded that that there was evidence to support both arguments,<sup>43</sup> and noted that in the practical delivery of development programmes on the ground choices were rarely so clear-cut. CPWG members also recognised that – if approached in a positive way and with effective cooperation at the country level – there was clear potential for greater complementarity between Chinese and UK development efforts. The UK enthusiasm for the AIIB also perhaps demonstrates a new-found belief, in line with China, that infrastructure development – done well – can be considered a global 'good' and a key foundation for stability and growth. There is, finally, evidence that China (as a label for a multiplicity of different – largely economic – actors) is becoming a more self-reflective development actor, with attention increasing in policy circles to the potential negative impact of under-regulated Chinese economic development that is insensitive to conflict contexts.

<sup>38</sup> HM Government (2015), 'UK-China Joint Statement 2015', 22 October, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-china-joint-statement-2015>).

<sup>39</sup> HM Government (2015), 'National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015', November.

<sup>40</sup> Saferworld (2015), 'From conflict resolution to conflict prevention: China in South Sudan', March, ([www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/894-from-conflict-resolution-to-conflict-prevention-china-in-south-sudan](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/894-from-conflict-resolution-to-conflict-prevention-china-in-south-sudan)).

<sup>41</sup> Including for example the new China-UK partnership to eradicate extreme poverty and work towards the achievement of the SDGs, and the new development partnership between DFID and the Chinese State Council's Development Research Centre.

<sup>42</sup> HM Government (2013), 'David Cameron's speech to the UN', 15 May, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/david-camersons-speech-to-un>).

<sup>43</sup> Saferworld-RUSI roundtable, 'Upstream Conflict Prevention in Sierra Leone', 9 September 2015.

The CPWG therefore concluded – albeit tentatively – that there is currently a positive trajectory when it comes to outlook and approach, which can be capitalised upon. This is clearly subject to change given the tendency for policy in this area to shift in line with world events.

## Overlap of interests

A conflict prevention partnership relies not only on increasing policy convergence but also parallel interests.

### Africa

Peace and security within Africa is a priority for both China and the UK. China's recent economic expansion in Africa has been the subject of considerable debate and discussion. China is Africa's largest trade partner as well as a significant source of investment. Although some have characterised China's model as being one based on resource extraction, with little investment in value-adding services on the continent, this is evolving over time as both Chinese enterprises and Chinese policy makers become more engaged. China now has considerable investments tied up in different African countries – and even with, in many cases, the African resources themselves in place as a relatively risk-free collateral for loans, China has a lot to lose through instability.

As the former colonial power in many cases, the UK has long and deep connections with the African continent, and remains a significant trading partner and investor. The UK's bilateral aid programme has retained a strong focus in many African countries. The UK has been concerned about the rise of extremist groups across certain countries and their ability and intent to launch attacks in the UK. Migration to the UK from many African countries suffering from instability has been an additional source of political concern.

There are specific areas in which both countries have played an important role in preventing conflict and promoting stability – either directly or indirectly. Both are involved in peacekeeping operations across the continent – and both support the development of AU and regional capacity for peace-support operations. Both have been involved in the ongoing South Sudan peace process, in combating piracy off the coast of the Horn of Africa, and in providing relief to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

China and the UK have already recognised the value of working together within Africa, as acknowledged in the 2011 China-UK memorandum of understanding to enhance development cooperation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. More recently, a memorandum of understanding has been signed between DFID and the China Development Bank on enhancing the trade performance of African countries, and as noted above, the UK's 2015 SDSR also outlined its aim to build a deeper partnership with China on addressing global challenges that include economic development in Africa. For China to work with the UK in helping to prevent conflict in Africa it will be important that African countries are portrayed as partners in the process, rather than as aid recipients.

There is arguably relatively little from a geopolitical perspective that gets in the way of China and the UK collaborating more in Africa. Although both are engaged economically, there is no significant direct competition outside some of the target investment destinations such as South Africa and Nigeria. The CPWG concluded that this region offers significant potential for cooperation, particularly if effective modalities can be established which chime with China's existing and developing formal engagement with the continent, such as through the FOCAC and in supporting African countries to better implement the AU's Agenda 2063 and the global 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

### Middle East

Increased violence and instability across the Middle East (including Yemen, Libya, Israel and Palestine) is a serious concern to both China and the UK. This is amplified by fears that extremist groups with global reach thrive on the insecurity in these regions. China has previously had to perform costly evacuations of its citizens as a result of instability, in Yemen in March 2015, and in Libya in 2011 and 2014. It also has growing economic ties with the region, which are likely to increase with the advancement of China's Belt and Road infrastructure development projects. China's Special Envoy to the Middle East, Ambassador Gong Xiaosheng, has indicated that China is committed to helping to stabilise the region, and has suggested that the Belt and Road Initiative could help to spur economic development and promote peace within the region.<sup>44</sup> While the incentives for increased efforts to prevent conflict in Middle Eastern hotspots are clear, a China-UK partnership focusing on this geographic region is likely to present more challenges than it would in regions such as Africa, due to geopolitical sensitivities and history of controversial interventions in the region.

### Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road is a network of connectivity which has been promoted by the Chinese Government since 2013. The Silk Road Economic Belt is designed to provide land-based economic corridors linking China, Mongolia, Central Asia, Russia, the Middle East and Europe. The Maritime Silk Road adds greater connectivity by linking the South China Sea, the South Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. It goes beyond the physical infrastructure and promotes connectivity in terms of trade, investment, and flows of people – tourists, students and traders alike.

In 2015 the China-Britain Business Council and the FCO published a report '*One Belt One Road: a role for UK companies in developing China's new initiative, new opportunities in China and beyond*', which voices the UK commitment to helping China to deliver on the Belt and Road Initiative, emphasising their shared commitment to improving connectivity, growth, free trade and economic openness. The Belt and Road project provides new opportunities for the British business community. While predominantly economic in nature, the Belt and Road will have important geopolitical implications, and also expands through a number of conflict-affected and fragile regions.

The Chinese Government has made a point of making this a multilateral, if Chinese-led, endeavour. As was seen by its early sign-up to the AIIB, the UK has been one of its biggest supporters, at least among Western powers. Both countries are therefore invested in the results. Both are keen to avoid the pitfalls of any insensitive Belt and Road development across fragile regions, and both could bring useful and complementary analysis and action to support the mitigation of such development.

## Cooperation modalities

The following section highlights some of the modalities that might bring about conflict prevention partnerships, given sufficient policy convergence and overlap of interests.

### Bilateral cooperation

The CPWG has been supported to this point through funding made available under the China-UK Development Partnership. Given that this formal bilateral partnership has just been renewed, this seems like an obvious entry point for the development of a conflict prevention partnership.

The UK-China Strategic Dialogue can also support the development of a conflict prevention partnership. The bilateral dialogue is in the main focused on issues of

<sup>44</sup> CRI (2015), 'Chinese Envoy: 'Belt and Road' Initiative May Help Ease Mideast Tensions', 6 April, (<http://english.cri.cn/12394/2015/04/06/3745s872989.htm>).

direct bilateral concern: cooperation over cyber and other organised crime, illegal migration, bilateral trade and investment opportunities, among others. Current issues of mutual concern relating to the stability of other countries and regions are discussed in these forums, although the exchange seems to be limited to explaining respective positions.

What remains critical to maintaining forward momentum is a similar level of commitment on both sides. Following the recent high-level diplomacy between the two countries, there is a strong commitment to the strategic dialogue. However, the commitment from China to the Development Partnership appears a bit more uncertain. This may stem in part from a discernible unease on the part of Chinese policy makers in particular, identified through CPWG discussions, for bilateral discussion to extend to considerations of third countries or regions. Whether this stems from China's multi-polar world viewpoint, or a resistance to be seen siding specifically with the UK, is perhaps a moot point. The consequence, however, is that there are clear philosophical obstacles to the bilateral dialogue evolving into a conflict prevention partnership that works together in third countries or regions.

What might begin to shift these obstacles in the medium to long term are clearer incentives on the part of Chinese actors to collaborate. At present – with policy in general driving narrow engagement with developing country governments, and a focus on capacity-building work driven by host government requests – there is little need for China to collaborate with other international development actors. The CPWG discussed whether there was a degree of inevitability about China eventually becoming more nuanced in its development cooperation. As China's commercial interests increase, so may the pressure to take a more active role in securing those interests. As the line between capacity building and reform becomes increasingly blurred, the need to collaborate becomes more pronounced.

Regardless of this longer-term hypothesis, the CPWG identified greater information sharing and exchange between China and the UK at the country level as something that is likely to be beneficial to both sides. This is also uncontroversial, and could start straight away. One element of this could involve conducting joint analysis. Finding a common language and points of convergence between economic, diplomatic, developmental and security actors from both countries and the host state will present challenges, but the potential exists for this to lead to a meaningful trilateral engagement.

### **Multilateral cooperation**

For a number of years, the UK has been pushing for greater emphasis on its holistically defined concept of conflict prevention within multilateral forums, and within the UNSC specifically. In November 2015, for example, the UK used its UNSC presidency to introduce a debate on 'Security, Development and the Root Causes of Conflict', led by Justine Greening, the UK Secretary of State for International Development. This emphasised the importance of addressing underlying causes of fragility and conflict, and advanced the idea that this would involve the international community "moving from peacekeeping to peacebuilding"<sup>45</sup>

For China, the UNSC has always been the right and proper place for consideration of its narrower interpretation of 'conflict prevention'. With regard to UN peace operations, China is a significant and growing contributor from a military perspective, and is increasingly taking more frontline roles (for example, in South Sudan and Mali) after many years of limiting its support to such missions to providing technical and medical detachments. However, the trust lost over the war in Libya, as discussed above, perhaps

<sup>45</sup> Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for International Development (2015), 'Statement by Justine Greening, UK Secretary of State for International Development, at the UN Security Council Open Debate on Security, Development and the Root Causes of Conflict', 17 November, (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/if-we-act-now-and-together-then-we-can-build-a-better-more-prosperous-more-secure-planet-for-us-all>).

serves as an obstacle to China actively embracing the UK's more holistic approach at this level.

There are signs of movement towards increasing cooperation, however. The UK-China Strategic Dialogue is already being used as a forum to help China and the UK to increase coordination and collaboration within multilateral forums such as the UN and G20, for example by facilitating discussion on Iran ahead of the UNSC meeting to adopt resolutions on Iran's nuclear programme. In the 2015 SDSR, the UK listed the difficulties in building consensus as a result of the erosion of the rules-based international order as a key challenge driving UK security policy, and explicitly stated that it would support China's integration into international organisations.<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, the UN itself is going through a process of reviewing its approach to peace operations. In June 2015 a 'High-level Panel' Review Report recommended that the UN continue to strengthen its ability to undertake diplomatic and preventive political missions, elections support, human rights work, peacemaking and mediation support, and post-war peacebuilding efforts. This suggests an increasing focus on conflict prevention activities to either complement or, ideally, pre-empt the need for military-led peacekeeping.

As China increasingly takes a frontline role in peacekeeping operations, the incentives for it to take a similarly frontline role within these expanding UN-led conflict prevention activities may also increase. This may represent another entry point for UK-China cooperation in this field, and would build on existing cooperation between China and the UK on peacekeeping.

### **The SDGs as a framework for cooperation**

The adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in September 2015 brings with it an opportunity to rethink how conflict prevention and development are implemented, and to help revitalise a shared culture of conflict prevention within the international community. The agenda includes a focus on peace, including through Goal 16, which calls for the international community to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". Given that both countries are actively committed to achievement of the SDGs, the new agenda could provide a platform, or at least a common language, around which cooperation could be built. Discussions within the CPWG highlighted that, while China was content to accept Goal 16 in the final 2030 Agenda because there is a recognition that development and security are interdependent, the Chinese view remains that the appropriate forum for discussing and responding to conflict and security issues is the UNSC. It will be interesting to see how far each country approaches the implementation of Agenda 2030 at the domestic level and how far it frames its overseas engagement.

### **People-to-people exchanges**

The CPWG discussed a number of opportunities for China-UK cooperation on conflict prevention to develop beyond the governmental level.

Businesses from both countries are already active in many fragile and conflict-affected parts of the world. Both have experiences to share on working within these difficult contexts, where the need to work in a conflict-sensitive way is paramount. There are examples for both sides to learn from where businesses and the private sector in general have actively contributed both to conflict prevention and transformation.

<sup>46</sup> HM Government (2015), 'National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015', November, ([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/478933/52309\\_Cm\\_9161\\_NSS\\_SD\\_Review\\_web\\_only.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf)).

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The CPWG has been what could be described as a ‘track two’ dialogue mechanism. One of the clear findings from the exercise is that dialogue at this level on conflict prevention is both possible and also productive in terms of both improving mutual understanding and debating the merits of entry points at different levels. However, for these discussions to permeate the policy-making apparatus in both the UK and China in a meaningful and sustainable way there needs to be greater outreach and involvement of actors from a range of sectors, and improved entry points into official dialogue processes.

# 4

## Recommendations

**THE UK GOVERNMENT** should retain its aspiration to forge conflict prevention partnerships with China at strategic and operational levels where appropriate and feasible. Using the ongoing strategic dialogue and the recently renewed UK-China Development Partnership as platforms both Chinese and UK governments should proactively identify areas for cooperation on conflict prevention that can continue to build trust and mutual understanding on the issues. Consideration should be given to the following:

- Introducing **mechanisms for information exchange between Chinese and UK institutions responsible for analysing conflict trends at the country level** to facilitate more effective early warning and response, and to inform longer-term peacebuilding and development efforts. They should also explore the potential for joint analysis on issues of common concern/interest such as radicalisation, counter-terrorism, gender, peace and security, and conflict-sensitive engagement.
- Introducing **mechanisms for greater information exchange and coordination between Chinese and UK institutions responsible for development cooperation at the country level** to facilitate more joined-up upstream conflict prevention and development efforts. This dialogue could potentially be framed around implementation of Agenda 2030 and tailored to context.
- **Jointly examining conflict implications of joint international initiatives** discussed under the Economic and Financial Dialogue, including the Belt and Road Initiative, and reviewing safeguards within the AIIB in the context of that analysis.
- **Working more closely together in supporting the AU to develop its capacity to undertake peace-support operations, and in other interventions to support peace and security in Africa.**
- Examining **closer cooperation in the area of UN peacekeeping**, both in terms of building Africa's indigenous peacekeeping capacity and implementing a new vision for international peacekeeping that is less oriented towards military responses, and more people-centred. In particular, they should consider the potential for a greater civilian focus and civilian expertise in peace-support operations, placing the needs of local populations at the centre of peacekeeping operations, and making greater efforts to anticipate crises and protect civilians.
- Providing mechanisms to **support the involvement of think tanks and academic institutions from China, the UK and conflict-affected regions and countries in wider 'track two' dialogue** around conflict prevention so as to increase joint analysis at the country level, widen mutual understanding, and expand possible entry points for formal cooperation.

# 5

## Conclusions

**CHINA-UK COOPERATION IN BRINGING SUSTAINABLE PEACE,** stability and development to conflict-affected regions and countries is desirable and, if given a long timeframe, both realistic and feasible. With the continually evolving international security landscape and the failures of the international community to effectively prevent conflict, new partnerships and interpretations of conflict prevention are required to make peace more sustainable.

Achieving a significant increase in China-UK cooperation on conflict prevention is undeniably challenging and presents a number of hurdles for both countries. Cooperation on peace and security issues, and even more so on conflict prevention, is considerably more challenging than existing China-UK cooperation on economic issues. Such cooperation will require establishing greater mutual trust and will not happen overnight. There are obstacles, such as the differing understandings of certain concepts and differing prioritisations of certain values, which will need to be carefully managed. However, if sufficiently de-politicised these differences are not insurmountable and steps are already being taken in the right direction towards cooperation. The significance of this should not be underestimated or ignored. Some encouragement can be drawn from increasing political will on both sides and evidence to suggest increasing (if incremental) convergence in outlook and approach. Recent joint statements suggest a new warmth in the bilateral relationship which could be capitalised upon, and there is also enough common ground to provide the incentives for partnership on conflict prevention.

For China and the UK, cooperation will only be feasible in certain areas of conflict prevention, and there will continue to be differences in their approaches to conflict prevention. However, there is also great potential for the two countries to work together towards shared or parallel goals in specific geographic and thematic areas where interests overlap.

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## ANNEX 1: Project summary

This two-year project ‘Conflict Prevention in the 21st Century: China and the UK’, implemented by Saferworld, aims to promote greater levels of awareness and expertise on conflict prevention and to increase levels of dialogue on conflict prevention between the Chinese and UK policy communities. The project has achieved this through a series of workshops, roundtables, policy seminars and the publication of joint briefings.

The project established a CPWG composed of both Chinese and UK policy experts from a range of backgrounds (including universities, think tanks, non-governmental organisations, the military and consultancies). The CPWG created opportunities for constructive dialogue with experts in the field of conflict prevention, exploring contemporary approaches to conflict prevention, with a particular emphasis on crisis diplomacy, early warning systems, and upstream conflict prevention (i.e. addressing the root drivers of fragility and conflict).

### The project activities are summarised here:

#### May 2014

- inception meetings in China with 15 different institutions and 23 individuals to inform a baseline assessment to measure current levels of awareness and expertise on conflict prevention within Chinese policy circles

#### September 2014

- CPWG Workshop 1 ‘Introductions to the policies and practices adopted by China and the UK in preventing conflict in conflict-affected and fragile states’
- seminar co-hosted with the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) ‘China and the UK in Central Asia’
- seminar co-hosted with the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) ‘The UK and China’s engagement and conflict prevention in East and West Africa’
- bilateral meetings with the DFID; the Stabilisation Unit; the FCO

#### November 2014

- CPWG Workshop 2 ‘Crisis prevention and response’
- workshop co-hosted with New-Century Academy on Transnational Corporations (NATC) Compliance Club ‘Risk Management and Conflict Sensitive Business Practices’
- policy seminar co-hosted with the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS) ‘Crisis Diplomacy: The experience of Sudan and South Sudan’
- seminar co-hosted with Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, (CAITEC) ‘Foreign Aid & Development Assistance in Africa: Emerging Trends and Key Developments’

#### April 2015

- CPWG Workshop 3 ‘Early warning and response to violent conflict’
- roundtable co-hosted with Kings College London ‘Bridging the gap between early warning and response to violent conflict’
- seminar ‘Early warning and response in Nigeria’

#### September 2015

- CPWG Workshop 4 ‘Upstream conflict prevention’
- roundtable ‘Upstream conflict prevention in Sierra Leone’
- bilateral meeting with DFID, FCO and MOD

- discussion meeting between the CPWG and the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Global Security and Non-Proliferation
- CPWG Workshop 5 ‘Recommendations’

#### **December 2015**

- advocacy meetings with 14 Chinese institutions and 40 individuals to discuss project findings and recommendations.

#### **The CPWG have authored the following briefings, published in both English and Mandarin Chinese:**

- *From conflict resolution to conflict prevention: China in South Sudan*
- *Early warning and response to violent conflict: Time for a rethink?*
- *Upstream conflict prevention and the sustainable development goals*

#### **Saferworld have published the following project updates, published in both English and Mandarin Chinese:**

- *Partnerships in Conflict Prevention: China and the UK Project update: Issue 1*
- *Partnerships in Conflict Prevention: China and the UK Project update: Issue 2*
- *Partnerships in Conflict Prevention: China and the UK Project update: Issue 3*
- *Partnerships in Conflict Prevention: China and the UK Project update: Issue 4*

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## ANNEX 2: Conflict Prevention Working Group Member biographies

### Advisor to the CPWG

**Christopher LANGTON** acts as an advisor to the CPWG. Christopher is currently the Head of Independent Conflict Research & Analysis (ICRA) and has spent 32 years in the British Army. During this time he served in Northern Ireland, Russia, the South Caucasus where he was Deputy Chief of UNOMIG and held defence attaché appointments in Russia, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. Subsequently he worked at the IISS for 9 years where he focused on Afghanistan. At IISS he held appointments as the Head of Defence Analysis, Editor of ‘The Military Balance’ and Research Fellow for Russia before being appointed Senior Fellow for Conflict & Defence Diplomacy. He has worked as an independent expert on the international investigation into the Russia-Georgia conflict of August 2008 and on the Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission investigating the violence that occurred in Southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010.

### Members of the CPWG

**Mariam KEMPLE** is Head of Humanitarian Campaigning at Oxfam International. Mariam is an award-winning campaigner with substantial policy, public affairs and communications experience in high profile organisations and as a volunteer with international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Her areas of specialism include disasters and armed conflict; Sudan and South Sudan; women’s rights; international and regional human rights and humanitarian law; mental health; disability law; developing supporter engagement; online campaigner development; and campaign evaluation.

**David NYHEIM** is the Chief Executive of Europe Conflict and Security (ECAS) Consulting Ltd. He has 20 years’ experience in dialogue process design and facilitation, stabilisation strategy development, early warning and risk assessment and work on armed violence reduction. David is particularly known for his work on modern conflict early warning and stabilisation of areas affected by criminalised violent conflict. Prior to joining ECAS, he served for six years as the Director of the Forum for Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER) and has held several policy and research positions in the European Commission and universities (Belgium and United Kingdom). David spends much of his time consulting for governments, multilateral agencies, and corporations in the Eurasia, West and East Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. His most recent publications are for Saferworld’s CPWG on ‘Early Warning and Response to Violent Conflict: Time for a Re-think’ and the World Bank on ‘Preventing Petroleum-Related Violent Conflict in Somalia’.

**Robert PARKER** is a senior manager with 15 years’ experience working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding issues. He joined Saferworld in 2006 and is the Director of Saferworld’s Policy, Advocacy and Communications Division where he leads teams conducting research, analysis, technical support and advocacy on security and justice, aid and conflict, arms control and governance. His issue expertise includes conflict prevention and peacebuilding, security sector reform, small arms and light weapons control, arms transfer controls, conflict analysis and broader approaches to linking community-level peace and security with international policies and frameworks. Previously Saferworld’s Head of Europe Programme, he has experience working in and on Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, the Caucasus, Central and South Asia and East Africa.

**Dr SHENG Hongsheng** is a Professor of Public International Law at the School of International Law, Shanghai University of Political Science and Law. From April 2004 to April 2005, he was Expert on Mission of the United Nations for the MONUC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, serving as Team Leader of Military Observers and Senior Liaison Officer. He was also appointed to preside the Independent Board of Enquiry to review international criminal cases. His academic interests focus on international law, international relations, international organisations, international humanitarian law and international criminal justice.

**Dr XUE Lei** is a research fellow at the Center for Maritime and Polar Studies, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS). He earned his PhD in International Law from the East China University of Political Science and Law in 2010. Dr Xue's main research interests include international law and the transformation of the international system, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, the UNSC and China, and freedom and safety of overflight and navigation. He was a visiting scholar at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) in 2011 and at the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in 2013. His recent articles include 'China as a permanent member of the UNSC', 'Global network for preventive diplomacy and China's persuasive diplomacy' and 'Developments of contemporary UN peacekeeping operations and China's constructive involvement'.

**Dr ZHANG Chun** is a Senior Research Fellow and the Deputy Director of the Department of West Asian and African Studies, SIIS, as well as the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of two SIIS journals, *Global Review* (Chinese) and *Chinese Quarterly of Strategic Studies* (English). His research focuses on China's Africa policy, African International Relations, Northeast Asia Studies, and International Relations Theory. He publishes widely, including in academic books, journal articles and op-eds. He has also previously been a visiting fellow at Chatham House and a visiting scholar at both the South African Institute of International Affairs and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

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## ANNEX 3: Partnerships in Conflict Prevention: China and the UK

### Project update: Issue 1

The Partnerships in Conflict Prevention project aims to foster engagement and increase understanding between the Chinese and UK policy communities on ways to prevent violent conflict and promote stability overseas. This project update (Issue 1) focuses on the first CPWG workshop and the related meetings and seminars that the CPWG participated in during the two days that followed.

### Background

Given their common interests, opportunities exist for heightened engagement between the UK and China on promoting stability overseas. However, dialogue towards this goal is often overshadowed by contentious debates surrounding the use of military force and the long-standing principles of Chinese foreign policy, in particular respect of state sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Focusing on conflict prevention may prove a more fruitful avenue for UK-China dialogue. However, conflict prevention remains a relatively undeveloped area of foreign policy within China and there appears to be limited discussion of how China's economic role overseas, alongside other tools such as diplomacy and mediation, can be proactively leveraged to prevent conflicts before they reach a crisis stage. There is also room for improved understanding of Chinese approaches to conflict-affected and fragile states among key actors within the UK. Saferworld has commenced a two-year project to help address these gaps through a process of engagement with the Chinese and UK policy communities. This is facilitated by a CPWG.

The CPWG is composed of three Chinese and three UK experts on conflict prevention. It provides the structural foundations for the project and has been designed to operationalise the project by sharing the members' knowledge and expertise, facilitating dialogue and discussion amongst both the Chinese and UK policy communities, and by stimulating debate about potential future avenues for co-operation between China and the UK. The CPWG will work collaboratively to increase awareness and expertise on different approaches to conflict prevention and to promote dialogue on conflict prevention and related issues within the Chinese and UK policy communities.

The CPWG will meet for a total of five workshops and related meetings, and two high-level policy seminars over a two-year period. Following each meeting, Saferworld will publish an update to share the major discussions and findings. The introductory events reported on here provided the CPWG with an overview of the UK and China's approaches to conflict prevention, and explored some case studies of how the UK and China have recently engaged in conflict prevention.

### Introducing the CPWG and approaches to conflict prevention within China and the UK

The CPWG met for the first time in September 2014. Activities commenced in London with the first of a series of CPWG workshops. This first workshop served to introduce the project, its members and various approaches to conflict prevention. It was framed around three main themes: upstream conflict prevention (i.e. addressing the root drivers of fragility and conflict), early warning and crisis response. Presentations were given on each of these themes introducing both the UK's and China's policies and

practices. The themes were initially derived from the UK Government's conflict prevention policy, as outlined in its 2011 BSOS.

The aim was not to benchmark China's policies and practices against the UK's policies, or to present the UK's approach as superior or without fault. Instead, it served as a useful tool to facilitate comparison of the UK and China's respective approaches to conflict. Indeed, the Chinese government has publicly acknowledged the importance of these three pillars in conflict prevention, as highlighted in a recent statement by Ambassador Liu Jieyi<sup>47</sup> in August 2014 at the UNSC Open Debate on Maintenance of International Peace and Security.

The CPWG members discussed the increasing securitisation of conflict prevention and agreed that the world is currently experiencing an era of change. New methods need to be devised to help promote collaborative responses. The CPWG recommended that action must not be prescriptive; that the international community should be supportive of each other's efforts towards conflict prevention; and that efforts should be made to reinvigorate the concept of human security and revitalise the notion of responsibility to protect.

The CPWG members voiced their expectations to be able, over the course of the project, to identify areas of common ground in British and Chinese policies on conflict prevention, and to help translate this into effective cooperation that can make a tangible difference to people living in conflict-affected and fragile states. A number of similarities between the two countries' approaches were highlighted. It was argued that both China and the UK aspire to support greater UN effectiveness, but could do more to contribute to the UN; both prioritise conflict-sensitivity, acknowledging conflict drivers and addressing the root causes of conflict; and both face similar challenges around conflict prevention. However, ideological differences between the two countries were also highlighted, as was the need to bridge this divide. The CPWG identified China's priorities in conflict affected and fragile states as capacity building, infrastructure support and economic development, whilst the UK was seen to place more emphasis on state-building, good governance and human rights. It was stated that the interests of both countries are however beginning to coalesce as China begins to prioritise stability over economic development. The attitudes towards the role of NGOs in conflict prevention processes were also acknowledged as an important difference, and it was suggested that China could learn from the UK in this regard. It was argued that whilst both China and the UK recognise the need to address African concerns and that action must not be prescriptive, the approaches vary somewhat. China generally adopts the stance of providing what Africa says it needs, whilst the UK, some working group members argued, is more inclined to first expose as many options as possible to African states with a view to gaining support in their decision-making process.

## China and the UK in Central Asia

On 9 September the CPWG took part in a seminar co-hosted by Saferworld and the IISS, which addressed the involvement of both China and the UK in Central Asia, with the objective of identifying avenues of potential collaboration in conflict prevention in the region. The seminar enabled discussion to take a more practical approach and build upon the largely theoretical approaches to conflict prevention discussed in the workshop. It commenced with presentations addressing the lessons learnt from previous stabilisation and conflict prevention approaches in Afghanistan. The instability in Afghanistan is an issue that China is increasingly wary of, as evidenced by the appointment of a special envoy for Afghanistan in July 2014. Afghanistan therefore provides a useful case study for the CPWG as China potentially looks to play a more prominent role in future conflict prevention activities in the region. After introducing the role of

47 [www.china-un.org/eng/hyfy/t1186619.htm](http://www.china-un.org/eng/hyfy/t1186619.htm)

the West and the challenges it faced in its counterinsurgency and stabilisation efforts in Afghanistan, questions were raised for debate. These addressed:

- whether China can leverage the benefits of the West's investment in security and help Afghanistan move to the next stage of recovery
- whether China will be willing to focus on addressing the root causes of conflict
- if this is an area in which intelligence and military co-operation between China and major western stakeholders might be possible – and if so what barriers would need to be overcome

The debate was then broadened from Afghanistan to the wider Central Asia region, during which participants highlighted the changing geopolitical positions and strategies for both Russia and China within the region. Some of the security challenges facing the region were discussed, as was the issue of how China has, until recently, prioritised economic development over security in the region, particularly with the *Heart of Asia* and the *Silk Road* projects. The session concluded with emphasis on China's expanding presence in Central Asian states. Chinese engagement, it was argued, needs to adopt a conflict-sensitive approach in order to prevent or exacerbate conflict.

### **The UK's Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS)**

The CPWG also attended a meeting with the UK Government's Stabilisation Unit and DFID as a means of better understanding the UK's approach to conflict prevention. The meeting summarised the roles of both departments in the planning and/or operationalisation of the UK's conflict prevention policies and practices, including the cross-departmental BSOS, which lies at the core of UK policy.

The potential for China-UK cooperation was discussed, and there was consensus that this could prove to be beneficial for both countries, to support wider international peace and stability. It was suggested that the integrated approach utilised in British policies on conflict prevention should not be limited to one government, and that pooling more resources would facilitate understanding of the responses, resources and thoughts of others within the international community.

A meeting was also held with the Conflict Department of the FCO on 10 September, in order to explain the role of the FCO in the UK's approach to conflict prevention, and what changes will occur as a result of the transition away from the CSSF. In addition to highlighting the role of the Conflict Department in the streams of peacekeeping, peacebuilding, protection of civilians and business and armed conflict, the meeting addressed some of the challenges faced by the UK and other international actors. This includes the question of how institutions can best act on early warning. The UK, for example, operates a 'countries at risk of instability' index, which the National Security Council uses alongside individual country analyses to determine which countries should be considered to be priorities for UK conflict prevention activities. By providing more comprehensive country strategies, as the UK is beginning to do, it is hoped that more rigour will be brought to early warning work. However, the challenge remains for the UK, and indeed for all governments and multilateral institutions, of how to best translate such analysis into effective action. This is an issue which will be explored in more depth later in the project.

### **UK-China conflict prevention partnership on conflict prevention in Africa**

The CPWG also attended a seminar co-hosted by Saferworld and the RUSI. This seminar highlighted potential avenues for China-UK cooperation in conflict prevention in Africa, through the lenses of peacekeeping and organised crime. It explored China's evolving position on international peacekeeping and its more flexible interpretation of the principle of non-intervention. The seminar opened with a presentation on key trends in peacekeeping reform, and the increasing trend towards cooperation between states and through international organisations. It was argued that continued China-

UK cooperation in peacekeeping is very much needed. One participant proposed that China's increasing contributions to peace-keeping point to the country's transition from a cautious supporter of peace operations to assertive support. It was also suggested that the UK encourages China's efforts in peacekeeping, particularly in Sudan. One participant maintained that the British will provide support to China where requested (including by sharing their experiences of dealing with private security companies in conflict-affected states) and that the UK also has a lot of lessons to learn from China.

The second session addressed the issue of organised crime in Africa, a major impediment to security and stability. It explored potential avenues for expanding police cooperation between China and the UK in Africa to combat organised crime and therefore contribute to the building of a more secure Africa. One participant argued that China is more focused on capacity building rather than on good governance and how law enforcement is a relatively new form of Chinese engagement in Africa. It was mentioned that there are increasing incentives to pool resources and work collaboratively to combat organised crime and prominent issues such as drug trafficking and the illegal trade of wildlife products, but that there is a tendency to 'go it alone', or work bilaterally with countries concerned. There needs to be more discussion on how we can link different priorities to maximise resources, bridge gaps such as those between capacity building and good governance, and coordinate to combat organised crime. This led into a discussion on the role of liaison officers in bridging the gaps between law enforcement agencies of different countries, and some of the challenges that they face. A concluding remark reflected that as two leading powers in the world, China and the UK should expand upon their law enforcement cooperation in order to meet new challenges. This will be discussed in more detail at future CPWG meetings.

### Future prospects

The next workshop will focus on the issue of crisis response as a form of conflict prevention, and will take place in Beijing in November 2014. It will complement a high-level policy seminar on '*Crisis Diplomacy: The experience of Sudan and South Sudan*'. The objective of this high-level policy seminar, to be co-hosted by Saferworld and the SIIS, is to have a mutual exchange of lessons learned from Chinese and wider international engagement with Sudan and South Sudan in recent years. More specifically, the seminar will address the current priorities, challenges and opportunities in international support for both a viable and stable Sudan and South Sudan, as well as stable and mutually benefiting relations between the Sudans.

In addition to adding insight into key policy developments, the event will seek to identify practical next steps for cooperation and collaboration among the international community moving forward. Side workshops and roundtables will accompany the seminar. A briefing paper on crisis response to be co-authored by two members of the CPWG will also be produced.

## ANNEX 4: Partnerships in Conflict Prevention: China and the UK

### Project update: Issue 2

As part of Saferworld's two-year Partnerships in Conflict Prevention project, the China-UK CPWG travelled to Beijing in November 2014 where they took part in the second CPWG workshop and associated meetings. This project update (Issue 2) summarises their discussions.

#### Conflict Prevention Working Group workshop two: Crisis prevention and response – China and the UK

Following an introductory workshop<sup>48</sup> in London in September 2014, this second workshop explored further the theme of crisis prevention and response. The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss issues raised throughout the week in more depth, in a more intimate closed-door environment. It also gave the CPWG a chance to begin considering potential policy recommendations for future UK-China cooperation in the field of conflict prevention.

The workshop started with brainstorming around key emerging issues and new security challenges faced by China and the UK. The CPWG discussed the main drivers of the two countries' involvement in conflict prevention, as well as the associated opportunities and risks. Also debated was the impact that cultural differences have on the UK and China's respective approaches to conflict prevention. A number of similarities and differences were highlighted regarding how the UK and China address the aforementioned areas. The CPWG resolved that it was important for these differences to be recognised and their causes examined in further detail. The CPWG resolved to revisit some of the underlying assumptions and challenges that would underpin official-level UK-China dialogue on conflict prevention, including the securitisation of conflict prevention, the concrete drivers for engagement on conflict prevention, the development paradigm and the impact of cultural values on how we think about conflict prevention in China and the West. They also discussed creating a lexicon of terms to examine the key conflict prevention-related terminology adopted by the CPWG moving forward.

Professor Xue Lei, a researcher at the Centre for International Law and International Organisations at the SIIS, then joined the working group, to present on his area of specialism – 'China's persuasive diplomacy'. This concept, Professor Xue argued, is part of the broader notion of preventive diplomacy in China, and incorporates ideas relating to early warning and conflict prevention more broadly. Whilst the term preventive diplomacy has negative connotations, 'persuasive diplomacy' is rather focused on the absence of coercion and respect for locally owned conflict prevention initiatives. Professor Xue described how China's involvement in crisis diplomacy is still in its early stages, and it is currently 'learning by doing'. The CPWG discussed the extent to which China's engagement in conflict affected states was driven by economic considerations, as well as the question of whether the UK and China approach crises differently due to the fact that China is currently in the process of realising its identity and becoming more externally facing, whereas the UK narrative on conflict prevention is becoming increasingly more internally facing.

This was followed by a session focusing on China-UK cooperation in South Sudan. The CPWG was joined by Dame Rosalind Marsden (former European Union Special Representative to Sudan and Former United Kingdom Ambassador to the Republic of

the Sudan), Dr Leben Moro (Professor, Centre for Peace and Development Studies and Director of External Relations, University of Juba), Mr Aly Verjee (Senior Researcher, Rift Valley Institute and Political Advisor to the IGAD Special Envoys for South Sudan) and Dr Laura Barber (Africa International Affairs Programme Coordinator, London School of Economic IDEAS). Using South Sudan as a case study, participants analysed different forms of cooperation, with a particular emphasis on the role of China and the Troika (the governments of the UK, US and Norway) in South Sudan.

The final session of the workshop considered the role of business in conflict and, more specifically, crisis response. The group discussed what duty or responsibility business has when investing in conflict areas, and whether business has a 'duty to develop'. Also debated was whether economic actors can be co-opted to be part of the development of sustainable peace, and whether China or the UK are applying this concept to their commercial strategies. The workshop closed with a discussion on next steps, including the publication of the CPWG's first briefing, relating to China, the UK and crisis prevention and response.

Throughout the remainder of the week, the CPWG took part in a series of seminars aimed at promoting greater levels of awareness and expertise on China's approach to conflict prevention, and how this compares with the UK and other international approaches. Throughout the week, the CPWG had the opportunity to engage Chinese, African and other international experts, business actors and former and current officials specialising on Sudan, South Sudan, conflict prevention and related topics. What follows is a brief synopsis of each of the events. Details of the key issues discussed and associated policy recommendations will be published in a forthcoming Saferworld briefing paper.

### **Crisis diplomacy: the experience of Sudan and South Sudan**

On 12 November, the CPWG took part in a high-level policy seminar on 'Crisis diplomacy: the experience of Sudan and South Sudan', co-hosted by Saferworld and SIIS. The seminar addressed the current priorities, challenges and opportunities in international support for both a viable and stable Sudan and South Sudan, as well as stable and mutually benefiting relations between the Sudans. In addition to adding insights into key policy developments, the event identified practical next steps for cooperation and collaboration by the international community.

Over 80 people attended, including China's Former Special Representative on African Affairs, the former EU Special Representative for Sudan, and Ambassadors and senior officials from the Sudanese and South Sudanese embassies in Beijing. Also attending were prominent experts from Sudanese and South Sudanese civil society, along with a range of embassy officials, Chinese government officials, international experts, as well as representatives from Chinese state-owned enterprises, think tanks, civil society organisations, policy banks and academic institutions.

*"The two Sudans are very good cases for us to study crisis diplomacy. China has, and will continue to play a constructive role and work together with the international community, the government in power, and practical forces on the ground."*

**Amb Liu Guijin, Former China Special Representative on African Affairs**

### **Foreign aid and development assistance in Africa: emerging trends and key developments**

On 13 November, the CPWG took part in a seminar addressing China's foreign aid and development assistance in Africa. The first half of the seminar focused on China's foreign aid policies and practices. Presentations by representatives of China's Ministry of Commerce explored the evolution of China's foreign aid policy and China's 2014 White Paper on Foreign Aid, as well as recent trends and challenges in China's aid to Africa. Scholars also addressed the role of China's commercial sector in government-sponsored investment activities, and the arguments for and against trilateral cooperation.

The second half of the seminar examined comparative approaches to development aid and assistance in Africa, with speeches from the UK, EU and US embassy officials. The nexus between development assistance and peace in the Horn of Africa was also addressed during this session.

*“China’s role in Africa needs not only to benefit and learn from experiences of others, but others need to learn from China’s experiences.”*

Paul Murphy, Executive Director, Saferworld

The seminar concluded by summing up some of the differences and similarities in the discourses of China and Western countries in approaching development aid in Africa. Whilst various common interests were identified, divergences were also noted in the approaches, histories, cultures and traditions between China and various Western countries.

### **Risk management and conflict-sensitive business practices training workshop**

With China’s growing economic engagement in conflict-affected and fragile states, it is increasingly important for Chinese companies and communities to engage in risk management and conflict-sensitive business practices. On 11 November, the CPWG took part in a workshop co-hosted by Saferworld and the New Century Academy on Transnational Corporations (under China’s Ministry of Commerce), for around 50 Chinese company representatives – including those with operations in South Sudan – scholars, officials and South Sudanese and international civil society experts.

The workshop addressed risk analysis frameworks for transnational investments; the risks facing external actors engaging in South Sudan; and what practical measures and countermeasures Chinese companies can adopt when responding to challenges in South Sudan. This was the third of a series of workshops that Saferworld has held in the past year, aimed at introducing practical tools that Chinese companies can use in order to adopt a conflict-sensitive approach.

*“According to our analysis, a conflict sensitive approach is one of the most effective solutions for Chinese companies managing risk overseas.”*

Jiang Heng, Research Associate, Ministry of Commerce, Executive Director, Beijing New Century Academy on Transnational Corporations.

### **Future prospects**

The third workshop will take place in London in 2015, and will focus on the issue of early warning as a form of conflict prevention. Side workshops and roundtables in London will also be held on related themes. Also to be published in early 2015 is a briefing paper on crisis response co-authored by two members of the CPWG, as well as a more in-depth briefing detailing the key issues and associated policy recommendations put forward by participants in the aforementioned activities in Beijing.

## ANNEX 5: Partnerships in Conflict Prevention: China and the UK

### Project update: Issue 3

The *Partnerships in Conflict Prevention* project aims to increase dialogue and understanding between the Chinese and UK policy communities on how to prevent violent conflict and promote stability overseas, particularly through upstream conflict prevention, crisis diplomacy and early warning. In April 2015, the CPWG reconvened in London for a series of events focusing on early warning and response, which are outlined in this project update (Issue 3). See here for Issue 1<sup>49</sup> and Issue 2<sup>50</sup>.

#### Conflict Prevention Working Group workshop three: Early warning and response

The third CPWG workshop to date provided a space for the group to explore the theory and practice of early warning and response systems and to discuss the parameters for China-UK cooperation in this area.

Discussion initially focused around the challenges of early warning and response systems, including:

- the need for early warning methods to adapt and evolve in response to the increasingly hybrid nature of contemporary conflict
- the issue of verification of information and ‘ground-truthing’ where ‘grey’ sources of information are relied upon
- how to involve local actors in all stages of the early warning chain (i.e. in the data collection, warning and response) to counter the risk of information being distorted, and increase the timeliness and appropriateness of response

For this to be successful, it was argued, investment in building local capacity to support early warning and response should be increased and funding to the relevant agencies and organisations should be made more flexible. At the same time, rather than prioritising the creation of new structures, responders should first analyse how existing structures can be improved to react more quickly and efficiently to emerging crises. Several members argued that alongside early warning and response there should be an emphasis on assisting communities to become more resilient to crises.

The CPWG also endorsed the concept of ‘peace early warning’, suggesting that the emphasis of early warning should not solely focus on conflict, but should also involve peace analysis to highlight windows of opportunity for peace-making and to help promote actions that sustain peace rather than just counter violence.

The second session of the workshop focused on the potential for China-UK cooperation in early warning and response to violent conflict. The CPWG discussed what a China-UK partnership in this area might look like – the findings of which will shortly be available on our website in a joint briefing by two of the CPWG members, *Is Early Warning and Response Dead?* Numerous challenges were highlighted, including sensitivities related to information sharing and differences in the two countries’ foreign policy objectives with regards to conflict prevention. It was suggested by members that as China’s foreign policy becomes increasingly active, this might increase the opportunities for international cooperation in this area. Multilateral bodies, institutions

49 [www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/869-partnerships-in-conflict-preventionchina-and-the-uk-issue-1](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/869-partnerships-in-conflict-preventionchina-and-the-uk-issue-1)

50 [www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/870-partnerships-in-conflict-prevention-china-and-the-uk-issue-2](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/870-partnerships-in-conflict-prevention-china-and-the-uk-issue-2)

and commissions – the UNSC included – were identified as arenas through which cooperation could take place.

### **Bridging the gap between early warning and early response to violent conflict**

Saferworld and King's College London co-hosted a roundtable: *Bridging the gap between early warning and early response to violent conflict*, involving the CPWG, civil society experts, NGO representatives, academics and UK government and EU officials.

One of the most common critiques of early warning is that it has not translated into early or effective response. In this respect, the roundtable aimed to contribute to the debate by exploring the early warning and response gap and potential solutions to bridging this gap. The roundtable also explored the development of collaborative relationships among local, national and international actors for effective early warning and response.

The seminar started with a discussion around the notion that the greatest challenges in early warning systems are not, as is commonly presumed, related to a lack of data, but rather a much wider set of problems, occurring at different stages of the early warning process – a process which includes data gathering, analysis, communication, prioritisation and mobilisation. Participants questioned, for example, how it is that a strong and credible relationship can be built between the warning producer and warning recipient; how warning producers can be made to feel empowered to warn even if warnings are inconvenient or risky to one's career; and how it is that warners can best communicate the warning at the right time in a way that makes the right impact.

Officials from the European External Action Service and the UK's FCO discussed their institutions' respective approaches to early warning and response, with discussions focusing on the institutional mechanisms, mandates and capacities in place, as well as the respective challenges. Representatives from two peacebuilding NGOs also discussed the policies, tools, systems and stakeholders that should allow actions to be taken to address immediate tensions and violence as well as longer-term structural causes of violent conflict. Case studies discussed included Kenya, the Philippines, Central African Republic and Lebanon.

China's approach to early warning and response was a focal point of discussion. It was argued that China does not have a systematic approach to responding to conflict outside of its territory and that early warning and response had only fairly recently come under consideration by Chinese policy makers – following the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in China in 2002. Following the SARS crisis, a national framework – the Emergency Response Preparedness Plan (ERPP) – was devised (though it has as yet not come into effect) as a means of categorising and devising responses to national-level threats. ERPP, it was posited, has also encouraged interagency coordination within China in responding to crises. China's National Security Council, responsible for domestic and international security, also has a role to play in this regard, especially in terms of responding to threats that overseas Chinese increasingly face in states affected by conflict. Participants discussed the idea that Chinese businesses have a particularly strong incentive to engage in early warning and response in this regard – as a means of protecting personnel based in conflict affected and fragile states as well as financial investments. In terms of early warning and response vis-a-vis other countries, it was argued that China has not as yet taken a very active role. One obstacle in this regard relates to China's foreign policy principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference which, it was stated, have greatly impeded China's willingness to take unilateral action in early warning and response.

The roundtable concluded with participants sharing views around learning and cooperation between the UK and China in warning response. Discussions here related to the possibility for building complementarity between the two countries and focusing on comparative advantages and common interests. The idea of promoting cooperation amongst British and Chinese businesses, think tanks and academics in this field was

advocated by various participants. Finally, given sensitivities around China-UK cooperation, it was also posited that the initial entry point should be around bilateral cooperation in building the capacity of local actors to do early warning and response.

## Early warning and response in Nigeria

The aim of this roundtable – *Early warning and response in Nigeria* – was to give the CPWG the opportunity to discuss early warning and response in the case of one specific country.

The roundtable was attended by the CPWG, UK officials, academics and NGO representatives, and an expert from the DFID-funded Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP).

The first session provided an overview of both the drivers of conflict in Nigeria and the different early warning systems have been implemented – ranging from community-based projects and SMS-based conflict early warning to multilateral initiatives such as those run by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It was recognised that, as crises in the country worsen, there is an urgent need to improve and develop, or even overhaul, existing early warning and response systems.

An overview of the work of the NSRP was then given, which explained how it contributed to warning and response in Nigeria, supporting stakeholders to identify and respond to violence, including mediation, resolution and sensitisation. Through these instruments, it was argued, NSRP has been able to encourage prevention of violence and share information among different actors.

The discussion then turned to a consideration of the hybrid nature of the various conflicts in Nigeria and the implications for early warning and response in the Niger Delta. New analytical methods, it was argued, are needed to adequately assess criminalised conflicts, whilst monitoring and research methods of criminalised conflicts have to be reviewed to ensure safety. It was argued that grievance-focused responses alone are insufficient, as are pure law enforcement based solutions. Engagement with criminal armed groups, meanwhile, poses a new set of challenges.

This was followed by an overview of China's relations with Nigeria. Peace and security relations, it was argued, are not as strong as political and economic relations. Whilst China supports Nigeria 'morally' rather than materially in terms of anti-terrorism efforts, and also supports Nigeria in playing a greater role in regional peace and security, China has nonetheless, it was suggested, played a relatively minor role in early warning and response in the country. Some of the reasons for China's reluctance in this regard, it was argued, relates to its caution around issues of sovereignty and non-interference, sensitivities around Nigeria's role as a significant regional power, as well as China's relative sensitivity around issues relating to religious extremism and terrorism vis-a-vis China's domestic tensions. Entry points for China and Nigeria improving cooperation around early warning and response were identified, including the need to identify comparative advantages, to begin substantial cooperation in peace and security – especially around governance, and a focus on local capacity building in early warning and response.

The roundtable ended with a discussion around potential entry points for China-UK cooperation in Nigeria. Whilst collaboration was identified as the key to more effective action on early warning and response in Nigeria, participants also admitted that this was one of the greatest challenges. In this respect more thinking was needed around how early warning and response mechanisms could be better coordinated among different actors so as to promote a more holistic and synchronised response. In this respect, various participants advocated for increased collaboration on the ground among Chinese and UK embassies in the country as well as other key international, national and local actors.

## China-UK dialogue on peacebuilding and peace operations

As a means of promoting greater levels of awareness and expertise amongst the Chinese and UK policy communities on the respective countries' approaches to conflict prevention, the CPWG also took part in a meeting with DFID officials to discuss the UN peacebuilding and peace operations reviews. The meeting provided an opportunity for the UK Government to inform the Chinese participants of the reviews and what they aimed to highlight. From the Chinese side it was argued that China is needed as a troop contributor to peacekeeping operations, especially given an apparent increasing reluctance to do so among western actors.

## Future plans

Following the aforementioned activities, a joint briefing by two of the CPWG members, David Nyheim and Dr Xue Lei – *Is Early Warning and Response Dead?* – will be produced, discussing in more detail some of the key issues raised during the course of the week and considering the potential for China-UK cooperation in this field. In order to raise awareness of how China and the UK currently engage and cooperate on conflict prevention efforts, Chinese and UK CPWG members are co-authoring a series of joint briefings. This is the second briefing, the first of which was authored by CPWG members Dr Zhang Chun (SIIS) and Mariam Kemple-Hardy (Oxfam International), focusing on crisis response in South Sudan.<sup>51</sup>

The CPWG's next workshop and side events will take place in China in July 2015, with a thematic focus on upstream conflict prevention.<sup>52</sup> The CPWG is will also use this week to begin drafting a final report, to be co-authored by the group, which will bring together findings from the four CPWG meetings and provide lessons learned and recommendations for China-UK cooperation in the field of conflict prevention. This final report will be published in early 2016.

<sup>51</sup> [www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/894-from-conflict-resolution-to-conflict-prevention-china-in-south-sudan](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/894-from-conflict-resolution-to-conflict-prevention-china-in-south-sudan)

<sup>52</sup> [www.saferworld.org.uk/what/upstream-conflict-prevention-1](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/what/upstream-conflict-prevention-1)

## ANNEX 6: Partnerships in Conflict Prevention: China and the UK

### Project update: Issue 4

The CPWG were in London in early September for the fourth round of meetings looking at UK-China cooperation on conflict prevention.

CPWG activities have been broadly structured around three central pillars of the UK Government's BSOS. After introductory meetings in September 2014, the CPWG focused on crisis response in November 2014 and early warning in April 2015 (see project updates Issue 1,<sup>53</sup> Issue 2,<sup>54</sup> and Issue 3<sup>55</sup>). The most recent meetings, which are detailed in this project update, addressed *upstream conflict prevention*, defined by Saferworld<sup>56</sup> as "a long-term approach that seeks to understand and respond to the underlying causes of conflict and instability before they result in violence". As the project starts to draw to a close, the CPWG have also begun to consider their recommendations.

#### CPWG Workshop IV: Upstream Conflict Prevention

During this workshop the CPWG looked at the different perceptions and modalities of upstream conflict prevention, and sought to identify synergies between the UK and Chinese approaches, and potential opportunities for cooperation.

The CPWG recognised that upstream conflict prevention is an elusive and constantly evolving term, and debated whether the term is useful, or whether it is just existing peacebuilding terminology which has been repackaged to suit a new fashion. It was acknowledged that upstream conflict prevention sets out to promote 'positive' peace by focusing more clearly on the root causes of conflict. However, questions were raised about the extent to which the upstream conflict prevention agenda should come into play even when conflict is not ongoing or imminent in order to better promote positive peace and prevent conflict. These are timely questions for the UK Government as it reviews its existing policies and priorities ahead of the new National Security Strategy and SDSR, which are both due to be published later this year, and which will require various actors across government to both define both upstream conflict prevention, and their role within it.

Chinese conflict prevention efforts tend to be underpinned by the idea that development leads to peace; as opposed to the common Western stance that peace is a precursor to development. For this reason, China's principles of international engagement tend to remain constant, with an overriding focus on economic development and with 'no strings attached', regardless of whether there is peace or ongoing violent conflict. Western, or UK, approaches in comparison are often concerned that development efforts can be detrimental if they are not 'conflict sensitive'. It was suggested during the workshop, however, that in practise (as opposed to theory) there is not such a great difference in approach. China's conflict prevention efforts are often compatible with the ideal of upstream conflict prevention because, in focusing on economic development, they tend to address one of the most common root causes of conflict. Similarly it is increasingly understood in Western policy making circles that economic development needs to underpin relatively short term efforts towards 'stabilisation'.

53 [www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/869-partnerships-in-conflict-preventionchina-and-the-uk-issue-1](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/869-partnerships-in-conflict-preventionchina-and-the-uk-issue-1)

54 [www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/870-partnerships-in-conflict-prevention-china-and-the-uk-issue-2](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/870-partnerships-in-conflict-prevention-china-and-the-uk-issue-2)

55 [www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/906-partnerships-in-conflict-prevention-china-and-the-uk-issue-3](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/906-partnerships-in-conflict-prevention-china-and-the-uk-issue-3)

56 [www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/688-upstream-conflict-prevention-addressing-the-root-causes-of-conflict](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/688-upstream-conflict-prevention-addressing-the-root-causes-of-conflict)

Complementarity between the approaches of the UK and China was therefore evident and there was also consensus amongst the CPWG that there is scope for China and the UK to cooperate more in this area. It was suggested that the prospect of cooperation would likely appeal to the Chinese Government given their ambition to make their own development efforts more effective while understanding how to minimise any negative side effects, such as those linked to corruption.

With the SDGs as a potential unifying framework, it was suggested that the two countries may be able to increase their cooperation in a number of different areas, although given their differing starting positions and that China has domestic development targets to meet, this may not be that straightforward. In contrast it was felt that there were very few obstacles to further, more wide ranging dialogue in this area.

In general terms, multilateral channels such as the UN are thought to be more suitable entry points for cooperation given the unease with discussing approaches involving third parties on a bilateral basis.

It was also suggested that China's existing framework of engagement with Africa through the FOCAC, and the developing, African Union sponsored, CAP on the post-2015 process may be a point where common interests intersect and opportunities for collaboration arise.

Beyond the more formal government to government route, there are other significant opportunities for cooperation and dialogue in upstream conflict prevention. One area that came up in discussion was the potential for cooperation between economic actors in conflict prone contexts, where the development of conflict sensitive business practises are vital.

Further suggestions for how this cooperation could be operationalised are discussed further in an upcoming briefing on Upstream Conflict Prevention and the SDGs, authored by the CPWG.

### Upstream Conflict Prevention in Sierra Leone

A roundtable was co-hosted with the RUSI addressing upstream conflict prevention in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone was chosen as a relevant case study for the CPWG given the extended period of UK involvement in security and justice sector reform in the country and because it has recently been highlighted as a success story by Wang Min, China's deputy permanent representative to the UN, in a call for a more integrated strategy in security sector reform in post-conflict countries<sup>57</sup>. Whilst the Chinese Government have traditionally adopted a non-interventionist approach to these kinds of issues, there are signs that their practise is beginning to shift as their involvement in Africa becomes more extensive. This dialogue sought to critically examine the different approaches adopted by the UK and China, and, if appropriate, to identify potential areas for collaboration in future upstream conflict prevention efforts.

In the first session a Senior Analyst from the Danish Institute for International Studies gave an overview of the UK's engagement in Sierra Leone and its efforts in upstream conflict prevention. He suggested that upstream conflict prevention is not new, and that elements of it have been evident in the UK's security sector reform efforts in Sierra Leone over the past 15 years, which were rebranded as upstream conflict prevention after the UK's SDSR in 2010 and BSOS in 2011. Three key principles of upstream conflict prevention were highlighted:

- **Context sensitivity:** it is important to acknowledge that the drivers of conflict vary from situation to situation.

<sup>57</sup> Shanghai Daily (21 August 2015) China calls on integrated strategy in security sector reform in post-conflict countries: envoy [online] Available from: [www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article\\_xinhua.aspx?id=298872](http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=298872)

- **Being holistic:** integrating defence, police, intelligence and justice reforms, encompassing broader concepts of development, i.e. the economy, and consolidating democracy, human rights and good governance.
- **People-centred approaches:** success depends on active support from local populations rather than buy-in from the elite alone.

The Chinese respondents suggested that people-centred approaches are also important to the Chinese Government's approaches in conflict affected and fragile states in order to identify the needs of the people. They value the need for a top-down approach to be balanced by a bottom-up approach to ensure the development of a more sustainable peace, however, whilst the UK aims for a parallel approach to support both the government and the people separately and meet in the middle, Chinese attempts try not to be divisive. There was also more divergence between the approaches of China and the UK concerning context sensitivity. Whilst it was argued that the UK has pre-conceptions which shape its engagement, it was suggested that China does not let value judgements about specific situations and conflict drivers inform its policies or practices in other countries and chooses not to interfere, except when invited by the country or region in need of support.

Whilst there are differences in the approaches of China and the UK in Sierra Leone, and direct cooperation between the two countries may not seem natural, there is a complementarity in their efforts. During the roundtable, social cohesion was highlighted as central to ensuring a sustainable peace and development trajectory for Sierra Leone, particularly given the divide between the state and its citizens. This was evident when the Ebola crisis emerged, highlighting a lack of trust in central government and the indication that there has been too much emphasis on state centred reform. Infrastructure building is one approach for developing social cohesion. For example, building roads can help governments to ensure that their services reach more remote areas. This is an area in which the Chinese Government has invested significantly. It has also supported education in Sierra Leone, and it was suggested during the roundtable that this builds the capacity of the people of Sierra Leone to help them to manage their own resources and enforce policies, thus making the UK's efforts more sustainable.

## CPWG Recommendations

The CPWG met to discuss project recommendations, which are currently being drafted into a report that is expected to be launched in Beijing in December.

Outline recommendations were presented to various members of the British policy community, including DFID, the FCO, the MOD and the APPG on Global Security and Non-Proliferation and the APPG on China, who all echoed support for the idea of China-UK cooperation in conflict prevention.