Is Conflict Prevention Relevant to 21st Century Problems?

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Abstract

This paper asks if conflict prevention is relevant to 21st century problems. It argues that to bridge the gap between discourse and practice, an evidence-based, contextual approach to conflict prevention is necessary for 20th century conflict prevention tools to match key 21st century problems of forced displacement, terrorism, and climate change-related conflicts. To elaborate the argument, the paper examines cases of both success and failure in conflict prevention. Drawing on insights from the Independent Study on the Iraq War commonly known as the Chilcot Report (2016), it demonstrates that modern day conflict prevention practices should incorporate three main phases: a pre-conflict project design phase with a proper context analysis including a country’s political, economic, and cultural characteristics; a policy implementation phase adjusted to the specific country’s characteristics that should be regularly reassessed; and a regularized post-conflict evaluation phase.