



Advisory Board to the Federal Government
for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding

Messages from the Berlin Peace Dialogue 2022

Europe in the Shadow of War: New Challenges for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Conflict Management

Annual conference of the Advisory Board to the Federal Government for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding

On 29 September 2022, the Advisory Board hosted the Berlin Peace Dialogue. Around 180 participants engaged in lively discussions at the Federal Foreign Office, while up to 1,300 participants joined the conference online. The conference focused on the effectiveness and limitations of instruments of civilian crisis prevention and conflict management currently in use, as well as on the potential for innovations in this field. In various formats, the current national and European institutional structures and instruments of early warning and civil crisis prevention were scrutinized and discussed against the backdrop of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The **Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Annalena Baerbock**, opened the conference and stressed the role of civilian instruments of crisis prevention and conflict management to end violence, rendering them in her speech an essential part of security policies. However, Foreign Minister Baerbock also highlighted that in recent years there has been a strong focus on how to resolve internal conflicts or how to strengthen fragile states. The current war in Ukraine nonetheless shows the need for civilian instruments to create long-term peace in all conflict settings, including conflicts between states.

In the following interview, Belarusian Civil Rights Activist **Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya** emphasised that Western commitment to democracy is crucial, and that democratic rule is always work in progress, which makes it central to support democratic movements abroad. She reminded the audience that while the West is doing a lot to support Ukraine, more than the Russian leadership expected, however, it seems to lack the will and does not have a strategy to support the fight of Belarusians for democracy and independence.

After a panel discussion under the title "Civilian Crisis Prevention and Conflict Management in 'Crisis Mode'", four facilitated workshops allowed the conference participants to engage in more depth with a variety of dimensions of civilian conflict prevention and management under the themes of "Early Warning and Strategic Foresight", "Instruments of Civilian Crisis Prevention", "Multilateral Structures, International Commitments and Linkages", as well as "Energy Security and Climate Crisis in the Context of Russia's War of Aggression". The conference concluded with a second panel, titled "Promoting Conflict Transformation in the Shadow of War".

10 Take-Aways:

- Even though the key ingredients for **early warning** are now available and in use (such as the analytical framework, the process, access to relevant information, the technology and models including solid quality control and data mechanisms), these systems apparently can only direct human analysts' attention to cases in which major escalation over the next 12 - 18 months appear more likely than elsewhere. However, they cannot provide reliable warning of the precise onset of new wars like the one in Ukraine. This remains a job for qualitative **strategic foresight analysis** based on data-driven initial alarms and for organizational development to **bridge the "attention gap"**. In this respect, currently the best method to combine the strength of data-driven and human analysis seems to be the **development of scenarios**, which is effective only if undertaken as closely to the ultimate decision-makers as possible, ideally by the decision-makers themselves. Such a scenario analysis has to create conscious room for the role of emotions – explicitly countering cultural norms in bureaucracies which tend to exclude emotion from the range of relevant inputs – and to allow for messengers or “warners” to reach the decision-maker level.
- German **civilian engagement in Eastern Europe including the South Caucasus** has been quite limited in terms of resources invested into peace when compared with others' investments to reach military solutions. While Germany's multilateral and EU engagement is substantial, these fora seemingly have not been the most effective in preventing crises in Eastern Europe. Regarding German development cooperation in the South Caucasus, there are two critical gaps: first, disputed territories and their populations are hardly targeted by development cooperation; second, development portfolios do not usually focus on the conflict dimension. For German resources to be effective in the whole region, a coherent, longer-term strategy is needed.
- With a view to future engagement, hard power and defensive capabilities will need to remain a key component of German policy given the shattered European security order. Expectations for peacebuilding in regions such as Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus should be realistic. **The continuation of peacebuilding activities, partnerships, and networks** itself can already be considered a success. A further distracted Russia may open new windows of opportunities for conflict management and peacebuilding, for instance, in the Georgian-Abkhaz or the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict.
- Consensus-based organisations like the **OSCE and the UN Security Council**, which depends on the P5 members not to refer to their right to veto even majority decisions, need to **adapt to new realities** and rethink their way of operating. Key is a reform of the UNSC system, which is a serious impediment to act in a crisis. The international community needs to value risk taking to tackle new challenges and accept the notion of “fair failure”: trying can be better than not engaging in conflict resolution at all.
- The EU has already begun to play a role different from that in the past, witnessed by both the extent of the sanctions enacted and the use of the European Peace Facility to finance military aid for Ukraine. Nonetheless, national governments are still calling the shots, and the past failures attributed to the EU are still very much the failures of its large member states. If a country like Germany puts its weight behind common European interests, the **EU could make a difference** in European and global politics.
- It remains questionable whether the EU could act as a security guarantor (which is different from providing peace support) to keep peace between nations that are hostile to each other. The EU as a third-party mediator has no credible pressure potential as long

as Ukraine and Russia are not willing to negotiate. However, there will be a time **to begin to negotiate a way forward. Such negotiations should not only be about territory but also about international law and accountability.** The art is to determine when that time has come. Guarantees will not pave the way to negotiations but can be part of a negotiated solution.

- It is essential to think in sequences: Even if dialogue seems impossible today with some actors, there will be a need in the future to **reinvest into fora and partnerships that still exist.** The interest of ordinary people should be centre staged to make a prospective agreement viable.
- The expansion of **renewable energies in Europe constitutes a resilience-promoting measure** and the design of future energy imports has a signal effect on future German foreign policy. While increased use of fossil fuels may be necessary in the short-term, long-term emission reduction targets should not be lost sight of. In the context of a changed geopolitical environment, Germany must rethink existing structures and procedures to ensure resilient and long-term energy partnerships based on reciprocity. The design of energy partnerships must ensure that on top of knowledge transfer, value creation takes place in the partner countries so that, for example, the local manufacturing industry benefits from the green transformation, while avoiding one-sided specialisation.
- On the African continent, the request for solidarity with Ukraine is sometimes perceived as bitter and ambiguous due to experiences of injustice connected with the international management of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the deeply rooted experience of colonialism. **Historical legacies** must be addressed with honesty and self-reflection.
- On a global level, a “perfect storm” in fragile situations beyond Europe is forming due to rising food and energy prices and, consequently, sharply rising humanitarian needs, to which the German government should devote appropriate political attention and financial resources. Energy policy, for instance, plays an important role in the context of improving food security. **Climate protection, energy policy and stabilisation are nexus issues** that should be considered together.

About the Advisory Board

By bringing together expertise from both civil society and academia, the Advisory Board supports the Federal Government in the areas of crisis prevention and peacebuilding. It is appointed for four years and comprises 20 experts from academia, foundations and civil society organisations. Its mandate is laid down in the Federal Government’s Guidelines on [Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace](#) adopted in 2017. The Advisory Board fosters constant exchange between the Federal Government and civil society. It publishes positions on overarching strategic questions and develops contributions on pertinent issues. More information can be found on the Advisory Board’s website: <https://beirat-zivile-krisenpraevention.org/>

Disclaimer

As results from the discussion at the conference, the above statements do not necessarily reflect the position of the Advisory Board and its members.