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The European Union's peacebuilding action and the liberal peace framework

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Figure 1: Participants to an EU-funded peacebuilding project in Kenya (Search for Common Ground)

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
CPPB	Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding
CSDN	Civil Society Dialogue Network
CSDP	Common Security and Defense Policy
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSO-LA	Civil Society Organisations and local authorities
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DG DEVCO	Directorate General for Development and Cooperation
DG INTPA	Directorate General for International Partnerships
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
EPF	European Peace Facility
EPLO	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
EUSR	European Union Special Representatives
FAMA	Forces armées maliennes
FPI	Foreign Policy Instrument
HQ	Headquarters
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UN	United Nations
WEU	Western European Union

i. Introduction



Figure 2: Participants to an EU funded peacebuilding project in Kenya

The European Union (EU) was built as post-World War II peace project. It aimed to put an end to centuries of bloody conflicts between the continent's nations. By entering into a Union, European nations aimed to prevent future loss of human lives, allow for stability to prevail, and for the continent to flourish. Preserving peace, preventing conflict and strengthening international security is a European Union's core mandate, as set out in Article 21 of the Treaty of the European Union.

Over the past two decades, following the war that unfolded at its borders in Yugoslavia, the EU has also become increasingly interested in projecting peace outside its the union's borders. The EU's focus on peacemaking, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and other mediation or peace education concepts rose in parallel to the development of liberal peacebuilding as a school of thought. In the 1980's and 1990's, the number of dedicated Peace academic

programmes and journals increased by the day. Similarly, the number of times “peace” and “conflict” were being mentioned in various institutional and policy documents also started to increase. In 1992, “peacebuilding” entered officially in the United Nations (UN) official vocabulary after the publication of then-UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's landmark *An Agenda for Peace*.

That same year, the Western European Union¹'s Council of Ministers near Bonn, Germany, focused on the *peacekeeping* and *peacemaking* responsibilities of the EU. 1992's Bonn Council marked the beginning of a series of European statements, discourses, and policy documents, where the concept of “liberal peacebuilding” slowly emerged.

Since then and for the past 20 years, the concept of liberal peacebuilding paradigm has dominated the efforts of the EU to prevent conflicts, stabilize and rebuild lasting peace in post-conflict countries. It argues that liberal democracies do not go to war against each other and that, in order to guarantee durable peace, issues concerning social, economic and institutional needs should be addressed in building stable states.

Over the years, the EU has put liberal peacebuilding at the center of its foreign affairs policy and its approach to peace and conflict. This is visible from the launch of the EU programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflict in the 2000s. Two decades later, liberal peacebuilding is still central to the EU's external action. Building on the 2016 Global strategy, the EU depicts itself as a normative, multilateral actor, supportive of an integrated approach to conflicts and crises:

¹ The Western European Union (WEU) is the international organisation and military alliance that succeeded the Western Union after 1954. From 1984 and in the 1990's, the WEU was central to European defence policy. Following 2001's Nice Treaty, the WEU responsibilities were gradually transferred to the European Union, providing central parts to the European Security and Defence Policy. The WEU was dissolved in 2011.

“The EU will engage in a practical and principled way in peacebuilding, concentrating our efforts in surrounding regions to the east and south, while considering engagement further afield on a case by case basis. We will pursue a multi-level approach to conflicts acting at the local, national, regional and global levels; a multi-lateral approach engaging all players present in a conflict and necessary for its resolution.” (EEAS, 2016)

Many researches have explored the EU's *peacekeeping* and *peacemaking* action. Numerous reviews analyse the European Union's status as the largest provider of foreign development and humanitarian aid in the world. However, little has been researched so far about the EU's *peacebuilding* action, and the conceptual framework that underpins it. Several assumptions can be used to explain this relative lack of interest by the academic sector. The small budget dedicated to peacebuilding could be such a factor. The lack of a clear, structured, centralized conceptual framework for the EU's approach might also be a push factor. The institutional complexity of the EU's management of peacebuilding actions² hinders the researchers' access to a comprehensive set of data. This, too, could contribute to discourage the research in that sector.

To fill in that gap, I explore the EU's current approach to peacebuilding, and how it evolved over the past two decades. In this document, I focus on the peacebuilding, peacemaking and conflict prevention actions of the EU (labelled here collectively as “peacebuilding”). I have made a conscious decision to leave peacekeeping initiatives outside the scope of this research, as they have already been extensively studied.

I aim to understand if and how the EU has a favorite approach to peacebuilding, and whether this has evolved over the past two decades. To do so, I use the

² Peacebuilding actions are spread between the Political arm (Council), the development arm (DG INTPA), and the External Action Service's arm (EEAS)

liberal peacebuilding framework as a basis, with its three main trends: the conservative, orthodox and emancipatory approach. With this as an analytical framework, I analyse the EU's discourses, policy documents, and its actions.

Does the EU focus on strengthening the Westphalian model by supporting security, state-building, rule of law in a centralized and top-down approach? Or rather, does the EU focus mostly on promoting just and durable societies with a localized, bottom-up approach? Or could this be a mixed approach? If so, can the various trends of liberal peacebuilding within the EU coexist and reinforce one another, or does the coexistence of these models generate contradictions or disconnects?

To answer these questions, **Chapter one** takes the reader through a brief intellectual history of the concept of democratic peace and liberal peace, some key definitions, and the main ideological challenges to liberal peacebuilding. I also introduce, in that chapter, the key elements of three main approaches of liberal peacebuilding: the conservative, orthodox, and the emancipatory peacebuilding frameworks. **Chapter two** brings in our case study, the European Union. In this chapter, I explore the main policy developments that brought about a “peacebuilding external action” framework of the EU since the early 2000's, as well as the evolution of the peacebuilding discourse. I analyse the discourse and highlight the trends and evolution of the EU's stated approach to peacebuilding. **Chapter three** is a deep-dive in the EU's peacebuilding action. First, I take the reader through a tour of the main instruments and tools that the EU has developed to prevent conflict and build the conditions for peace. I then offer some concrete examples of how the peacebuilding actions are implemented. I also map each of the actions vis-à-vis the liberal peacebuilding spectrum and analyse whether they fit under the conservative, orthodox, or the emancipatory liberal peace labels. **Chapter four** looks into some of the challenges that emerge from the coexistence, within the EU, of the three liberal peacebuilding models – conservative, orthodox and emancipatory. I use the examples of the

“localisation” and of the European Peace Facility’s “Train and Equip” components to illustrate how the three models can at times be hard to reconcile.

This research draws its conceptual framework from the analysis of pioneers of the Peace Studies field and founders (Galtung) and those who have contributed to the Liberal Peace concept (i.e. Doyle, Lederach, Paris). I also draw from the conclusions of the researchers who have challenged and turned away from a conservative approach of liberal peacebuilding, to create new concept of hybrid emancipatory peacebuilding (i.e. Richmond, Autesserre). The primary data on the case study is a series of policy document and statements issued by the EU with regards to its external action, as well as of a review of official documents outlining the existing peacebuilding mechanisms and funding instruments. Evaluations of the EU peacebuilding actions, published in 2010 and in 2020, also serve as important resources for the analysis. I also use my empirical experience of a decade working for a peacebuilding organisation that implements EU-funded peacebuilding actions, and has produced various researches and evaluation reports.

ii. Definitions and Scope of the document

1. Definitions

After the end of the Cold War, peacebuilding blossomed, understood generally as “*external interventions that are intended to reduce the risk that a state will erupt into or return to war*” (Barnett et al., 2007). Johan Galtung is one of the pioneers and he is certainly one of the most prominent figures of the Peace Studies field. He outlined 3 types of conflict-related interventions (Galtung, 1976):

- **Peacekeeping** focuses on preventing or stopping the immediate crisis and irruption of violence. It requires the intervention of a third party, such as the UN's blue helmets or a foreign actor. The peacekeeping seeks to cease fire and prevent losses of lives;
- **Peacemaking** focuses on finding a negotiated solution to a specific conflict or set of issues between conflicting parties, through negotiation or mediation. This may be supported by a third party such as a mediator or a convener. Such process may lead to peace agreements or ceasefire agreements;
- **Peacebuilding** is the process of creating self-supporting structures that “remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur.” Peacebuilding aims to establish a sustainable positive peace, which is more than the absence of violence, but includes a structural transformation of societies that prevents all forms of violence, including direct violence, cultural violence, and structural violence.
- Over time, the concepts were expanded to a fourth approach was added: **conflict prevention**, which focuses on analyzing and recognizing trends of underlying conflict at the latent stage (Zelizer, 2013) p.7.

All four approaches are aligned with the various chronological steps of conflicts: from the structural context of societies and the root causes of conflict (*peacebuilding*), to the latent or emerging stages of conflict (*conflict prevention*), until the active crisis and ongoing violence which is halted by an external party (*peacekeeping*), with parties then negotiating a settlement to their dispute and a cessation of hostilities (*peacemaking*).

2. Scope of the document

In this document, the term “peacebuilding” encompasses the *peacemaking*, *peacebuilding* and *conflict prevention* concepts defined above. I research the non-coercive, non-military actions of the EU. Rather, I focus on the EU's actions which serve to removing the potential causes and triggers of violence, to strengthen or create the structures of a sustainable, positive peace, and those that serve to find a negotiated agreement to existing conflicts.

The *peacemaking actions* are purposely left outside the scope of this study and I do not explore them. While an important element of the European Union's external action, we decided to focus on the European Union's mid to long term preventive action in favor of peace, including on addressing of the root causes of conflict and ensuring the long-term conditions for lasting peace; rather than focusing on concepts that mostly relate to the reactive action to stop an immediate crisis.

3. Period reviewed

This study focuses on the 2000-2020 period when it comes to the analysis of the evolution of the policy framework and discourse. In analysis the peacebuilding instruments and actions funded by the EU, I focus solely on the current peacebuilding action of the EU.

Chapter 1 – On Peace and Liberal peacebuilding



Figure 3: Community leaders formalize their agreement in a ceremony in Ivory Coast (*Search for Common Ground*)

Neither the literature nor the practice of conflict resolution and peacebuilding is new. In fact, there is an impressive amount of literature on the topic with profusion of journals, research centers, policy groups and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) focusing on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. ***Let us go back to the basics.***

In this chapter, I take the reader through a review of some of the basics of peace and conflict theories. I introduce the concept of liberal peacebuilding and its main critics. I outline the evolution of thoughts that emerged in the 2000's with an emphasis on "local peace", and introduce the three main trends of liberal peacebuilding: the conservative, orthodox, and emancipatory approaches to peacebuilding.

1. On peace, conflict, and conflict prevention

The liberal peace studies are founded on a series of hypothesis, which have guided the work of scholars and practitioners since the 1950s and the development of the field by founders such as Galtung or Boulding. **Among these assumptions, conflicts are considered natural and inherent elements to humane societies and humane relationships.** Whenever human beings coexist and interact, their interests always appear to conflict around access to resources, power, values, ideologies, amongst others. These diverging interests may lead to friction, then to potential conflict and, if unresolved, this might lead to violence.

Johan Galtung **explains violence in terms of its three dimensions:** direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence. Direct violence can be directly perceived and experience, such as physical or psychological violence that causes trauma or anxiety. Structural violence is violence built into the social structure and systems, such as law and institutions, markets, religious institutions that may lead to social injustice and marginalize or discriminate against certain groups. Cultural violence refers to the prevailing attitudes or beliefs used to legitimize violence of direct or structural nature.

In order to address conflicts, one must not only eradicate direct violence (which is called *negative peace*) but also enable the conditions of a *positive peace*, which prevents structural and cultural violence (Galtung, 1990).

There is a general consensus, amongst peace studies scholars, that **addressing the nascent manifestations of a conflict requires a much lesser degree of energy, time, and resources than when addressing a conflict that has already resulted in direct violence.**

Once diverging interests spiral into violence, killings and death, this can lead to a cycle of retaliation, resentment and complexification of a conflict which increases significantly the energy required to restore peace. Similarly, the prospects of success and peace decrease as the direct violence persists.

This is one of the reasons why preventing conflict has become broadly accepted among regional and international actors as a valuable external action (Ackermann, 2003). In 1992, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Gali referred to the need for a preventive diplomacy. In 2001, Kofi Annan advanced the idea and practice of conflict prevention, arguing the UN had a moral duty to move from a “*culture of reaction to a culture of prevention*”. Conflict prevention as a policy started then to be taken up by several multinational bodies, global or regional (UN, OSCE, World Bank).

As we will see in subsequent chapters, the EU over the years put much emphasis on conflict prevention, considering it as a primary objective of its external action. Some even argue that EU's involvement in conflict prevention is now much more advanced than the one of the United Nations, for instance:

“The EU's emphasis on conflict prevention stands in stark contrast to the UN's reluctance to include a prevention element in its peacebuilding concept and practice. Due to certain UN member states' fear that conflict prevention would become a pretext for undue interference in their internal affairs, UN peacebuilding has been limited – conceptually and practically – to the post-conflict phase and the avoidance of relapse into violent conflict” (Stamnes, 2016)

2. The liberal peacebuilding paradigm

Since then and for the past 20 years, ***the concept of liberal peacebuilding has dominated the efforts of multilateral institutions and Western governments to prevent conflicts***, stabilize and rebuild lasting peace in post-

conflict countries. As its starting point of the liberal peacebuilding doctrine is the so-called “liberal peace thesis”. It argues that liberal democracies do not go to war against each other:

“Liberal peacebuilding sought to build state institutions that adhere to the key tenets of the ‘liberal peace’: democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and which provide the conditions for capitalist market economies to flourish. The concept was based on the assumption that liberalism was inherently attractive and offered the most likely path to peace and prosperity. Its authority was buttressed by the claim that promoting liberal peace would also end conflict between states, based on the democratic peace thesis” (Wallis, 2018)

The liberal peace paradigm argues that, in order to guarantee durable peace, issues concerning social, economic and institutional needs should be addressed in building stable states. It is true, indeed, that strong and stable democracies have never entered in war with one another (Autesserre, 2021). The liberal peace doctrine therefore assumes that increasing democracies will reduce the likelihood of conflicts. Going beyond the negative peace, the liberal peace theory focuses on social engineering meant to be the foundations of stable and peaceful societies. Liberal peacebuilding focuses on the prioritization of externally led democratization and liberalization processes, and therefore includes a broad range of tasks and activities combining challenges of security, economic development, humanitarian assistance, and governance and rule of law.

Since the end of the Cold War and until the early 2000's, there has been a scholarly consensus on the liberal peace approach, with a shared assessment that its record and experiences had overall been positive and had been confronted with negligible criticism (Natorski, 2011). Data from Peace Accords

Matrix also suggests that '*liberal ideals have been embedded in the vast majority of post-1989 peace accords*' (Bell, 2014).

3. Critics of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm

However, after 9/11, the liberal peacebuilding model started attracting criticism (Richmond & Mitchell, 2011). Observers started raising concerns about the results, and the principles underpinning the concepts. ***On the results, with time and perspective, it started to appear that the outcome of these liberal peacebuilding efforts were mixed***, not leading to sustainable peace in most places where it was attempted. For instance, in the 2000's, critics would argue that even after extensive peacebuilding efforts in countries like Timor-Leste or Afghanistan, order had collapsed and conflict had re-emerged. In several conflict settings, liberal peacebuilding faced blatant failure, where the democratic process had either failed dramatically (i.e. Rwanda), or led to a façade of democratic peace: with democratic institutions in place but where violence remained a prominent feature of the postwar local dynamics (i.e. Democratic Republic of the Congo).

With regards to the principles of liberal peacebuilding, too, voices started to emerge. ***Opponents started comparing the liberal peace principles to a Western imperialism***, where universalistic assumptions are being imposed. The model, they said, is often disconnected from or even clashing with cultural practices, values and cultures of the places where they are being used. In fact, the top-down imposition of this alien model is ill-adapted, fails to take into consideration domestic local conditions and engage local stakeholders. As a consequence, it can erode the legitimacy of local structures and actors of peace, and hence contribute to destabilization and return to conflict (Richmond 2009, Paris 2010, Doyle 2006). Illustrative of the critics, are Mac Ginty and Richmond:

'The practice of key state representatives and international policy makers gathering in New York, London or Washington to decide what is to be done about a specific conflict without significant local representation go unabated', and often 'with elites involved who have a controversial claim to represent local constituencies. This has been the case for Cyprus (1974 and 2004), Israel/Palestine (1992), Bosnia (1995), Kosovo (1998) and Afghanistan (2001)' (Ginty & Richmond, 2013)

In addition, detractors also pointed to the illiberal practices associated with liberal peacebuilding. The orientation of policies, they said, are centered on the values and interests of the interveners, rather than the communities. Many would denounce the disconnect between the liberal discourse promoted by international and multilateral actors, and the actions of these same stakeholders on the ground. Opponents of the liberal peace had countless examples of Western states providing support to autocratic leaders or turning a blind eye on arms transfers or human rights abuses.

Post 9/11, the world also changed dramatically, with new contexts which, too, further challenged the liberal peace paradigm (Wallis, 2018). First, with the rise of transnational threats, such as the Islamic State, conflicts increasingly started to cross over borders or unfold in the online space. This new trend of transnational conflicts challenged the state-centered liberal peacebuilding model. Second, the long-term stability, prosperity of non-democratic regimes such as China or Russia, began to be perceived by some as a demonstration of the flaws of the liberal peace paradigm, a proof that authoritarian regimes too can deliver prosperity and peace. Lastly, the Arab Spring demonstrated that the democratic uprising could lead to hostile groups taking over power.

4. The emergence of a local turn in peacebuilding

These shortcomings led to an evolution of the liberal peacebuilding doctrine, with dual tendency.

First, the post-9/11 era saw an ***increased recognition of the need for more contextualized and emancipatory perspectives in peacebuilding***. Local stakeholders and structures started to be taken into consideration and integrated into the peacebuilding framework. What was until then considered as negligible stakeholders or systems - such as traditional authority structures, civil society groups, wartime coping mechanisms - slowly started to be recognized, sometimes co-opted into the formal peace architecture, running in parallel to or integrated into the Westphalian liberal system.

This is how *hybrid or “emancipatory” liberal peace* emerged in the critical peace and conflict study, ***aiming to move away from an external blueprint approach equally applied to all conflict settings***. It aimed to better take informal structures into consideration and ground peacebuilding more firmly in local practices and structures. ‘Local’ usually refers to traditional societal structures (clans, tribes, brotherhoods, and village communities), traditional authorities (religious leaders, village chiefs, and elders), and customary law. In addition, ‘local’ also refers to the remote parts of the conflict affected countries, often rural, who are typically little or not represented in the national formal structures, and disconnected from the capital and centers of decision.

“In general, conventional forms of peacebuilding are modelled after liberal norms and ideals such as state sovereignty, democracy, market economy, human rights, rule of law, and transparency in governance (“liberal peacebuilding”). The concept of hybrid peace, in contrast, is designed to include, as part of strategies to achieve sustainable peace in post-conflict societies, diverse institutions and norms that deviate from

the predominant, Western model of peacebuilding. More specifically, hybrid peace signals a willingness to accept and work with traditional institutions and values based on religious, tribal, and kinship connections, and to explore how they can be combined with those of modernity to bring a lasting peace” (Yamashita, 2014).

With increased attention paid to local dimensions of peace and increased assertiveness by local actors, **the peacebuilding field evolved to include diverse forms of bottom-up and vertical approaches** to peace and conflict dynamics.

Hybrid peacebuilding evolved to cover a large array of conceptions of what *hybridity* should entail, with sometime contradicting claims: some supporters of *hybrid peacebuilding* remain aligned with the *vertical* notion of liberal peacebuilding, where state is central to the social contract, and where the inclusion of local stakeholders and peace hybridity aims to strengthen the social contract between state and society (Zaum, 2012). **Others have a more radical approach** and go one step further in their critique of the conservative liberal peacebuilding, **arguing that horizontal peacebuilding is equally or even more important as vertical peacebuilding**, and should be at the center of peacebuilding efforts (Autesserre)³.

³ In parallel, some note that the ambitions of the Western governments, United Nations and international institutions seem to have lowered over time. While they were driven by a sense of universal justice and good and assertive in their use of the liberal peacebuilding approach, we observe a tendency to lower the liberal peace standards, moving to more modest ambitions “good enough” objectives. Wallis notes the example the ‘*shift from attempting to hold ‘free and fair’ elections to merely holding ‘credible’ ones, in order to reduce the burden on the international community of the expense and time required to institutionalize liberal democracy during interventions*’ (Wallis, 2018)

“Similarly, Richmond's analysis of peacebuilding in Kosovo highlights how the failure of international peacebuilders to effectively address what Kalevi Holsti has termed the "horizontal legitimacy" of the state—"the attitudes and practices of individuals and groups within the state toward each other and ultimately to the state that encompasses them"—has been at the root of the poor record of peacebuilding efforts. Understanding these relations is as important for understanding the particular challenges to be addressed by peacebuilding efforts as are the sources and character of state weakness or failure.” (Zaum, 2012)

5. Gradation of peace approaches

The local turn in peacebuilding has influenced the liberal peacebuilding approach. As we will see in future chapters, some of these models might be combined or might co-exist to different degrees. Richmond (2008, 2010) identified three main models of peacebuilding, which were summarized and structured by Notarzki. The liberal peacebuilding framework can be summarized into three main models, the conservative model, the orthodox model, and the emancipatory model. These are described below. ***It is this framework that I use in the subsequent chapters of this document to analyse the peacebuilding actions, policies and discourses of the European Union.***

A conservative model of liberal peace focuses on institutional peace and order. *It uses a top-down approach aimed at guaranteeing security and sovereignty as a basis for state-building where peace tends to be imposed by military forces and sustained by coercive conditionality and dependency measures. It concentrates on delivering security, considered a precondition for peace.*

The orthodox model of liberal peace focuses on constitutional peace and democratic liberal governance. *Although it is also dominated by top-down and state-centric attempts at building the institutions for a market-oriented and democratic state, there is, however, some understanding of local ownership and culture, visible in some bottom-up practices. In this model of peacebuilding elite-level negotiation predominates, but there is greater sensitivity to the inclusion of citizens in the peace process and more direct emphasis on local ownership and engagement with civil society. In this model, security and institutions guaranteeing order are considered to be necessary factors in bringing about lasting peace, but there is also awareness of the political and economic functions of state institutions.*

Finally, the emancipatory model of liberal peace model focuses on civil peace and justice. *It aims to create the conditions for just and durable peace. Its approach is based on contextual legitimacy with respect to local cultures, extending to the questions of social justice, human security and welfare. This approach is critical of universalistic liberal peace ambitions, as it is especially concerned with local ownership and critical of top-down coercive, conditionality and dependency strategies. It prioritizes a bottom-up approach focusing on the needs as well as rights of local communities, with the main concern being delivery of social welfare and justice. In this case, the peacebuilding process is shaped by private and social movements supported by external donors, but does not emphasize state structures (Richmond 2006: 300-301; Richmond 2009: 560-561).*

Table 1 was prepared by Natorski (2011) on the basis of Richmond's framework, and proposes a simplified overview of the characteristics of the major three models of liberal peacebuilding. ***This table presents the main elements that will serve as the guidelines for the analysis which follows.***

For each of the conservative, orthodox or emancipatory peacebuilding model, Table 1 offers a useful summary of the key elements of focus, the nature of the peace that is sought, the objectives of the approach. In addition, the table shows the distinct trends in terms of the rights, sources of insecurity, and beneficiaries targeted by each of the three models.

Table 1: Gradation of the liberal peace approach to peacebuilding (Natorski, 2011b)

	Conservative	Orthodox	Emancipatory
Nature of peace	Institutional peace	Constitutional peace	Civil peace
Objective	Liberal market-oriented states	Peace and liberal states	Just and durable peace
In focus	Order: institutions of government, rule of law, anti-terrorism	Democratic liberal governance: human rights, constitutionalism, private property	Justice: welfare and social justice, identity, rights and needs of civil society
Approach and means	Exclusive, top-down activities; coercive, conditionality, dependence; international transitional administration	Exclusive and inclusive; Mix of top-down (dominant) and bottom up activities; cooperative custodianship with consent and local ownership; consensual negotiations at the elite level	Inclusive, bottom-up participation; local participation and integration
Rights and needs in focus	Security	Political and material	Socio-cultural
Sources of insecurity in focus	Armed violence	Political and economic violence	Social violence
Beneficiaries in focus	State elites	State elites and some organized civil society	Civil society and local groups; society in general

Chapter 2 - EU's peacebuilding: an evolving policy framework and discourse



Figure 4: In Yemen, a peacebuilder delivers a training on conflict management (Search for Common Ground)

25 years after the first mention of “peacebuilding” in a policy document, the EU still does not operate with an explicit peacebuilding concept and it has not formulated a peacebuilding strategy. In the absence of a documented guiding framework, I take the reader in a tour of the official EU discourse vis-à-vis peace, conflict, and peacebuilding. Looking into the main policy documents published by the EU over the past two decades, I analyse the themes and the vocabulary against the liberal peace framework and its three main schools of thoughts: the conservative, orthodox and emancipatory approaches. Using that data, Chapter 2 aims to draw conclusions on the EU's implicit peacebuilding concept and the key trends that guide and have guided the EU action since the 2000's, and see whether this has evolved over time.

1. Premises of a EU Peacebuilding Policy framework

The European Union was built as post-World War II peace project, aiming to put an end to centuries of bloody inter-state conflicts between the continent's nations. Preserving peace, preventing conflict and strengthening international security is one of the European Union's core mandates, as set out in Article 21 of the Treaty of the European Union.

But before the end of the Cold War, the EU's role as a peacebuilder was mostly domestic. The external role as a peacebuilding was mostly only by its normative power rather than by concrete external action outside its border. The Bosnia and Kosovo wars, and Europe's failure to preserve peace and security in its immediate neighborhood marked a turning point on that regards. ***Following the Balkans war, an institutional and political shift started to take shape.*** The EU started to put in place plans to satisfy its desire to project externally its successful domestic model of reconciliation.

The first explicit policy commitment to conflict prevention appeared in 1996 in a European Commission communication on EU responses to conflicts in Africa, followed ***in 2000 with the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, which, for the first time, made legally binding commitment to peacebuilding***, conflict prevention and resolution⁴. In 2001, the European Commission issued a first Communication focused on conflict prevention ("Communication on Conflict

⁴ Article 11 of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement deals with "Peace building policies, conflict prevention and resolution". This includes political dialogue and exchange of views between EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group countries on crises and conflict situations. Article 11 was later revised to include "response to situations of fragility".

prevention”), with a concrete plan to step up the EU’s engagement in conflict prevention and make it a central objective of the EU’s external action.

This opened up the door to the 2001 Communication on Conflict Prevention, also known as the “**Gothenburg**” programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflict. This document is the first EU policy statement on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It gave an impetus for the first structured efforts to mainstream conflict prevention into the EU’s development and diplomatic actions, improve early warning and early actions, and increase partnership with international and regional bodies active in conflict prevention.

Table 2 below summarizes the top policy documents which have framed the EU’s peacebuilding and conflict prevention role since the end of the 1990s up to date. As can be seen, fragility and conflicts are mentioned in several policy documents, such as the 2003 European Security Strategy or the 2006 European Consensus on Development. But until 2011, the Gothenburg programme remained the policy basis of the EU on conflict prevention, in the absence of other dedicated policy documents. In 2011, the Council’s conclusion on conflict prevention offer a new policy basis to the field, followed in 2013 by the EU’s Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises.

As can be noted, several key documents make explicit references to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, or the EU’s role as a peace actor in the word. ***Yet, 25 years later, the EU still does not operate with an explicit peacebuilding concept, and it has not formulated a peacebuilding strategy.*** The EU also has, to date, no agreed or single definition of either “peacebuilding” or “conflict prevention (Nicole Ball et al., 2020).

Table 2: Key EU peacebuilding policy documents, 1996-2020

Year	Policy document
1996	European Commission. The EU and the issue of conflicts in Africa: peace-building, conflict prevention and beyond (European Commission, 1996).
2000	Cotonou Partnership Agreement (European Commission, 2000)
2001	European Commission. Communication on Conflict prevention and the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflict (so-called "Gothenburg programme") (European Commission, 2001)
2003	European Union. A secure Europe in a better world. European Security Strategy (European Council, 2003)
2006	European Union. Joint statement on The European Consensus on Development. (European Union, 2006)
2007	Treaty of Lisbon (European Union, 2007)
2007	Council of the European Union. Council Conclusions on a EU response to situations of fragility. (European Council, 2007)
2011	Council of the European Union. Council conclusions on conflict prevention. (European Council, 2011)
2013	European Commission and HR/VP. The EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council (European Union, 2013)
2016	European Union. Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe: A global strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EEAS, 2016)
2017	European Commission. New European Consensus on Development - Our world, our dignity, our future (European Union, 2017)
2017	European Commission & HRVP. A strategic approach to Resilience in the EU's external action. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and to the Council. (European Commission, 2017)
2018	Council of the European Union. Council Conclusions on the Integrated approach to external conflicts and crisis (European Council, 2018)

2. Conservative-orthodox dominance of the early EU policy

"Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free. The violence of the first half of the 20th Century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history". The opening words of the 2003 European Security Strategy sound strangely disconnected with the 2021 reality. As the world evolved, the *"prosperous Europe in a prosperous world"* (European Strategy 2003) entered *"times of existential crisis, within and beyond Europe"*

(Global Strategy 2016). In between the 2003 and 2016 Strategy statements, the world seemed to turn upside down: Russia became more assertive, the Trump presidency put into question the multilateral order, and the Union faced political unity challenge with Brexit. ***But did the EU's peacebuilding narrative also evolve with such dramatic changes over the past two decades? It did evolve indeed, as can be seen in the next section, but not in such radical ways.***

As explained in the previous section, the EU does not have an organizational definition of peacebuilding nor of conflict prevention. However, the policy documents issued over the past two decades are illustrative of the EU's conception of peacebuilding, the vision on the role it aims to play as a peace actor, and the doctrine it uses to guide its action in that sense. In this section, I emphasize some of their key features and I analyse the narrative against the liberal peace framework.

In 2003, the European Security Strategy is one of the first official policy documents featuring conflict prevention which lies very heavily on the conservative side of the liberal peacebuilding framework. It identifies repeatedly state fragility as a security threat to Europe and highlights the connection between security and development and the conflict-insecurity-poverty cycle. State failure is perceived as *“an alarming phenomenon that undermines global governance, and adds to regional instability”*. The EU aims to *“put failed states back on their feet”*. As outlined in the document, *“state failure and organised crime spread if they are neglected”*, which implies the need for conflict prevention which *“can not start too early”*. While the conservative nature of the Strategy is undeniable, I note some elements of ***orthodox*** as well, for instance when the Union calls for multi-faceted action including political,

security, and economic response mechanisms. Or when it points at the need for governance response⁵:

*“The best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states. Spreading **good governance**, supporting social and **political reform**, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the **rule of law and protecting human rights** are the best means of strengthening the international order.”* (European Council, 2003)

This same mix of conservative-dominant with elements of orthodoxy is also salient in the 2008 report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: just like the European Commission's "European Consensus on Development" published in 2006, it links peace and security to poverty alleviation.

*“There cannot be sustainable development without peace and security, and without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace. (...) **Conflict is often linked to state fragility.** Countries like Somalia are caught in a vicious cycle of weak governance and recurring conflict. We have sought to break this, both through development assistance and measures to ensure better security.”* (European Council, 2008)

The signature of the **Treaty of Lisbon**, in 2007, is a corner stone of the EU construction. This is the first time that conflict prevention is explicitly mentioned in the Treaties. Although peacebuilding was not used explicitly, major decisions

⁵ Bolding not in the original text

and shifts were agreed⁶ on regarding the EU's external action, including efforts aimed at preventing conflict, raising the capacity and mechanisms for early warning, prevention, mediation, and response to conflicts. The Treaty of Lisbon committed the EU to '*preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security*'. ***In the provisions on the Union's external action*** (Article 10 A) (European Union, 2007)⁷, ***the international policy objectives once again demonstrate a conservative-orthodox vision of liberal peace:***

“The Union shall define and pursue common policies and actions, and shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations, in order to:

- (a) Safeguard its values, fundamental interests, security, independence and integrity;*
- (b) Consolidate and support **democracy, the rule of law, human rights** and the principles of international law;*
- (c) Preserve **peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security**, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and with the aims of the Charter of Paris, including those relating to external borders; (...)*”

In a very similar approach, the “Council conclusions on an EU response to situations of fragility” issued that same year 2007 also highlights prominently

⁶ Among other things, the Treaty of Lisbon (2007) establishes the position of High Representative / Vice-President and the European External Action Service (EEAS), an inter-institutional body whose mission is to '*translate the strategic concepts into daily politics within the EU and vis-à-vis third actors*'.

⁷ Bolding not in original text

democratic governance and state-building as key response to situations of fragility.

2011 and the **“Council Conclusions on conflict prevention”** mark a **subtle yet important change of narrative**. For the first time, the document speaks to the need for the EU to act “in conjunction with its global, regional, national and **local partners**” (European Council, 2011) and to support a series of stakeholders in their conflict prevention efforts, out of which “**local partners**” are also listed. This is the **premise of a trend that will very slowly start to shift the EU’s approach of peacebuilding** from a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach, to an approach that starts to recognize the need to engage with local stakeholders and use a bottom-up and/or a localized approach to peacebuilding.

The 2013 of the **Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises**⁸ is created in an attempt to foster conflict-sensitive and collaborative action across the conflict cycle based on a shared context analysis and strategic vision. The goal of the approach is to bring together a response that covers all stages of the cycle of conflict, taking benefit of the arrays of the EU’s instruments,

⁸ In 2011, an evaluation of the EU’s conflict prevention and peacebuilding work found that the coherence and effectiveness of the EU’s approach to peacebuilding was challenged by the complexity of the EU’s institutional set-up for external affairs, uncertainties regarding the precise roles of the Commission and the Council in supporting peacebuilding, and the fragmentation of peacebuilding issues across various Commission entities. Over the following decade, various efforts to improve coherence took place. Formal and informal coordination mechanisms and structures emerged in the early 2010’s, aimed to align and coordinate the various instruments and policies for development, security, conflict prevention, or response to conflict. EU’s comprehensive approach serves as a guiding paradigm to ensure that the array of EU tools and instruments are used coherently and efficiently, including in how poverty eradication and development objectives are used to serve security and the presentation of peace.

mechanisms and institutions. The Comprehensive approach, a 12-pages document, again makes a direct reference to the need for tailored approaches and context-specificities:

*“Sustainable development and poverty eradication require peace and security, and the reverse is equally true: fragile or conflict-affected countries still remain the furthest away from meeting the Millennium Development Goals. The connection between security and development is therefore a key underlying principle in the application of an EU comprehensive approach. Other important principles underpin this approach. **Firstly, our responses must be context-specific and driven by the reality and logic of real life situations encountered: there are no blue-prints or off-the-shelf solutions.**”* (European Union, 2013)

3. 2016 and the turn to a new (emancipatory) approach

In 2016, the **EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy** is centered on the notion of “principled pragmatism”: ***investing in conflict prevention is not simply seen as way to promote European values, but it is also framed as a means to advance EU interests in an uncertain global environment.*** To do so, building state and societal resilience are identified as priorities of EU external action when responding to fragility and instability. Again, a conservative-orthodox approach is dominant, with national, state-centered approach to peace and conflicts put forward. As in previous policy documents, the Global Strategy once again points at the link between state fragility and violent conflicts, and outlines various “root causes” of conflicts such as human rights violations, inequality, or resource stress. In terms of response, the EU focuses on the role it can play in the security dimension of the conflicts, and, post conflict, on the need to legitimate institutions to rapidly deliver basic services and security to local populations.

But while the overall narrative is conservative-orthodox, the ***relevance and need for working at the local level is fully recognized with the new concept of an 'integrated approach to conflicts and crises'***, which calls for a 'multi-dimensional, multi-phased, multi-lateral and multi-level approach to addressing violent conflict', recognizing the need to engage with local actors. The section on conflict settlement seems copied from an emancipatory peacebuilding textbook, outlining the need for bottom-up and inclusive approaches to peace and conflict, a first in the EU's policy documents:

"When the "center" is broken, acting only top-down has limited impact. An inclusive political settlement requires action at all levels. Through CSDP, development, and dedicated financial instruments, we will blend top-down and bottom-up efforts fostering the building blocks of sustainable statehood rooted in local agency. Working at the local level – for instance with local authorities and municipalities – can help basic services be delivered to citizens, and allows for deeper engagement with rooted civil society" (EEAS, 2016)

In that same vein, in 2017, the **Communication on the strategic approach to Resilience** in the EU's external action stresses the importance of building "*both state and societal resilience*" by advancing an all-encompassing approach that emphasises upstream and long-term measures, including conflict prevention. The Communication also stresses the need for local ownership, involvement of civil society and women: it puts attention to building inclusive and participatory societies and identifying endogenous capacities within societies that can allow some communities to resist a drift towards violence, or peacefully resolve conflicts.

4. A shifting narrative

As outlined in the above sections, the analysis of the narrative of the top peacebuilding policy documents show a clear trend over the past two decades. ***Slowly, it moved away from a conservative-only approach*** focused on nation-building, security and institution-building, to gradually include some focus on orthodox peacebuilding (with a focus on human rights, governance, political and economic violence). The attention to security and order remains present throughout the two decades' policy documents. ***Eventually, in the mid-2010's, elements of emancipatory approach make their way into the official positions of the EU:*** they start to recognize the need for bottom-up and inclusive approaches to peacebuilding.

Policy documents do not always transcribe into action. It is therefore important to keep these limitations in mind when analyzing a discourse and the policy documents. Nevertheless, such methodology does offer some useful perspectives which can contribute to our reflexion. To help draw conclusion on the EU's implicit peacebuilding concept, I analyse the top ten peacebuilding policy documents issued during the period 2003-2018⁹. In each document, I analyse the discourse and the terminology used. I associate key words to a school of thought. For instance, "security" is associated to the "conservative

⁹ 2001 Communication from the Commission on Conflict Prevention, 2003 European Security Strategy, 2006 European Consensus on Development, 2007 Council Conclusions on a EU response to situations of fragility, 2011 Council conclusions on conflict prevention, 2013 Comprehensive approach to external conflicts and crisis, 2016 Global strategy for the EU's foreign and security policy, 2017 New European Consensus on Development, 2017 Communication on a Strategic approach to resilience in the EU's external action, 2018 Council conclusions on the integrated approach to external conflicts and crisis. See Annex 1 for more details and table with analysis of the terminology used in these documents.

peacebuilding”, and “just” or “justice” is associated to the emancipatory doctrine. With this approach, I shed light on some trends on the EU discourse vis-à-vis the liberal peacebuilding framework. These trends are outlined below.

When analyzing the key words used in the top 10 peacebuilding policy documents, we notice a predominance of the ‘conservative terminology’ and focus in the EU’s public discourse. Words like “*rule of law*”, “*security*”, or “*institutions*” are listed on average twice more often than words associated with the “orthodox terminology” such as “*democra**”, “*governance*”, “*constitution*”, or “*human rights*”; and three times more than words associated with “emancipatory terminology” such as “*local*”, “*just**”, “*inclusive*” or “*civil society*”. Table 3 provides a word-per-word count, outlining the number of times a given word has appeared among the top 10 public policy documents that have shaped peacebuilding over the past two decades:

Table 3: Number of occurrence of a set of conservative, orthodox and emancipatory terminology in the top EU policy documents on peacebuilding, 2001-2018¹⁰

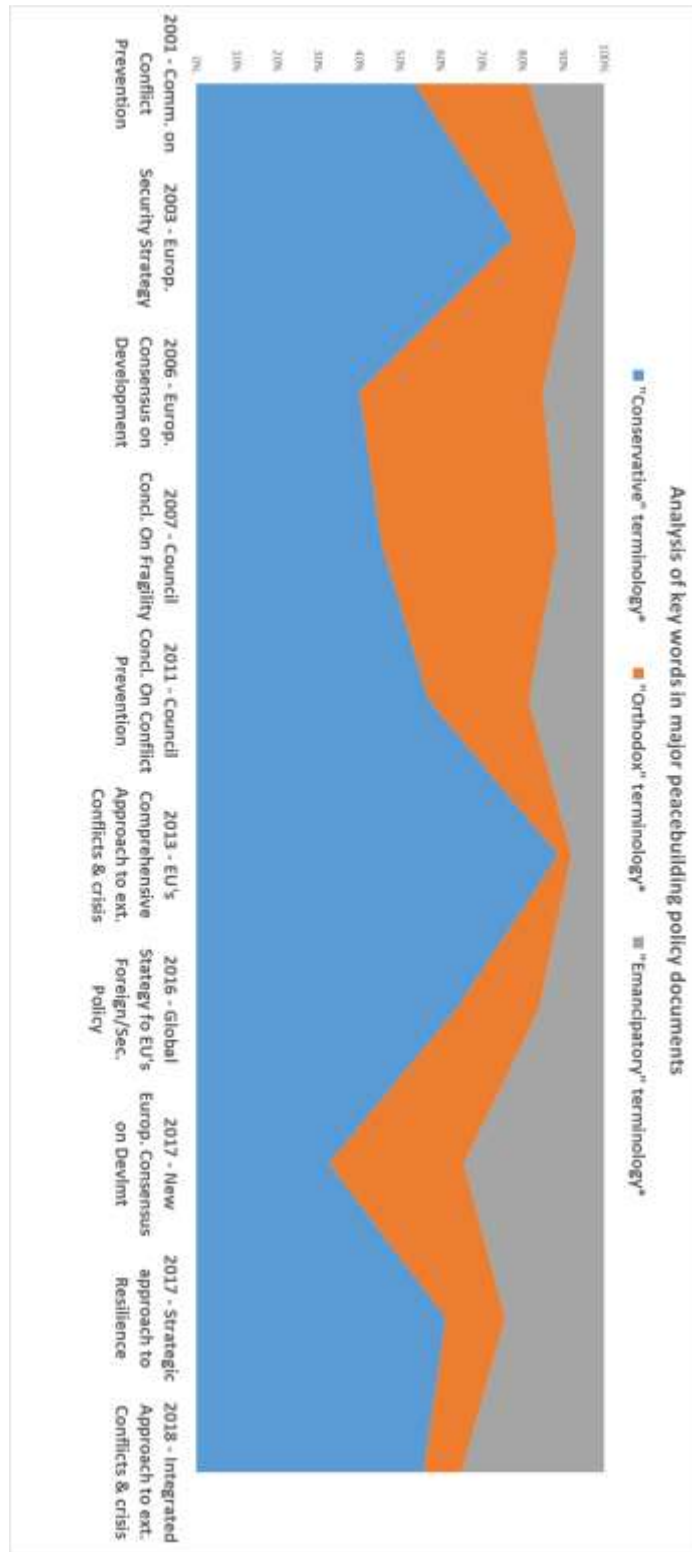
Conservative	Rule of law	51
	Security	364
	Institution	121
Orthodox	Democra*	116
	Governance	108
	Human Rights	114
Emancipatory	Local	84
	Just	52
	Inclusive	68
	Civil society	60

It is striking to see the frequency of some words such as “*security*” (364 occurrences), “*human rights*” (114 occurrences) or “*governance*” (108 occurrences), while some words are barely even mentioned such as “*constitution*” (1 single mention) or “*just*” with only 52 mentions.

Graph 1 provides an overview of the evolution of the trend between 2001-2018: when comparing the past two decades, we notice a dual trend, with the increase of both the conservative and the emancipatory discourse in European policies.

¹⁰ Table 3 was compiled by the Charline Burton. See Annex 1 for the detailed table and list of policy documents used and detailed word count per document.

Graph 1: Analysis of key words, per top 10 EU policy documents on peacebuilding¹¹



That trend likely reflects two realities of the 2010's: on the one hand, there is a growing debate around the relevance and effectiveness of the classical, conservative approach to liberal peacebuilding. As outlined in Chapter 1, the failures to “build peace” in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or in Afghanistan have fueled new thinking around peacebuilding, and the need to reinvent the field. During that time, academic and peacebuilding practitioners gathered growing evidence of the shortcomings of vertical, state-centered, top-down peacebuilding approaches, and advocating for a change of methodologies. And gradually, the new thinking moved from being “provocative” to being accepted, and ultimately, mainstreamed. This is best described by Autesserre in her book “The Frontlines of Peace” (p.8):

“When I started presenting my findings and recommendations for local conflict resolution, my hosts, colleagues, book reviewers, and audience members called me “provocative”, “groundbreaking”, “revolutionary”, and “dangerous”. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the former head of the United Nations Peacekeeping, found my criticisms of his organization so offensive that, the first time he heard me speak, he compared me to Libyan President Colonel Gaddafi. In public. Heat rushed to my cheeks as I blushed in a dark shade of red – I was humiliated and furious. And then, a few years and a few chats later, I ended up with Guéhenno again on a panel, where he advocated for the very ideas that I had promoted and that he used to hate: Peacekeepers should start from the bottom up, and work with grassroots organisations rather than pursuing the typical top-down, outsider-led approach, which is fundamentally flawed” (Autesserre, 2021)

¹¹ Graph 1 was compiled by Charline Burton. See Annex 1 for the detailed table and list of policy documents used and detailed word count per document.

On the other hand, even if the peacebuilding field was becoming more open to emancipatory influences, ***the increased uncertainty about the international order and shifting global balance¹² meant that security – a key feature of the conservative model - would need to remain central to the EU's approach.*** Because of the growing instability of the world order, security issues started to feature much more prominently in the EU's external action and, as a consequence of this, in the approach to peacebuilding. As mentioned by the evaluators of the EU's peacebuilding work, "*security issues also featured more prominently in the 2017 European Consensus on Development, signaling growing interlinkages between the security and development agendas.*" This new approach raised many eyebrows among the civil society organisations, concerned over an increasing "securitization" of the EU external action and development aid (Nicole Ball et al., 2020). ***That situation led to a tension in the EU peacebuilding discourse, between an approach that more and more dictates a focus on security and state-building, and a growing narrative that emphasizes a contextual and a locally sensitive form of peacebuilding.***

¹² Terrorism, Brexit, rise of Russia and China, weakened multilateral system, Trump presidency, etc.

Chapter 3 – EU Peacebuilding actions: from conservative to emancipatory



Figure 5: Nepali police officers, in a community-based security peacebuilding project (Search for Common Ground)

What does peacebuilding actually look like, in concrete terms? What does and what does not fall into the “peacebuilding” category? This Chapter introduces the main peacebuilding instruments of the EU and the main tools from the EU peacebuilding toolbox. We learn that this actually includes whole range of actions and initiatives, insofar as they are designed to creating the conditions for lasting peace in conflict-affected or fragile countries. Chapter 3 maps these tools and instruments on the liberal peacebuilding framework based on the themes they tackle, and the approaches that are used. We analyse whether one of the three peacebuilding trends (conservative, orthodox or emancipatory) prevails.

1. EU peacebuilding institutions and instruments

Over the years, the EU translated its policy commitments into various institutional frameworks, financial instruments, and peacebuilding actions. **Yet, mapping the whole spectrum of peacebuilding action is a delicate, complex task.** This is in part explained by the complexity of the EU institutions, and the integration of peacebuilding as per a 'multi-dimensional, multi-phased, multi-lateral and multi-level approach to addressing violent conflict'¹³. With this in mind, a whole range of actions can be accounted for as falling under the "peacebuilding" label, so long as they are being implemented in fragile, in-conflict or post-conflict settings. For instance, considering that EU Global Strategy (2016) states that "*when the prospect of stabilisation arises, the EU must enable legitimate institutions to rapidly deliver basic services and security to local populations, reducing the risk of relapse into violence and allowing displaced persons to return*", one can therefore consider that a water provision programme or a security sector reform initiative can be accounted for as "peacebuilding action", in so far as they are implemented in a post-conflict setting and aim to legitimate state institutions.

Considering EU's generous definition of peacebuilding, many instruments and actors can be labeled as "peacebuilding" among the EU's complex set-up and plethora of actors¹⁴.

To equip its teams with the necessary knowledge with regards to conflicts, fragility and peacebuilding, the ***EU worked on two fronts. First, it strengthened the capacities of existing entities to mainstream***

¹³ The so-called "integrated approach"

¹⁴ To the extent that some argue that it may seem simpler to list what is not directly or indirectly peacebuilding.

peacebuilding. For instance, the European Commission invested in the development of thematic expertise within its external relations services, with the creation of the Unit “Resilience, Fragility” in the EU’s Directorate General for Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO) and of Centers of Thematic Expertise in the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). ***On the other hand, some entities created in the aftermath of the Lisbon treaty have received a dedicated mandate to prevent and respond to conflict.*** The EU also developed specific instruments and tools dedicated to peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Over time, an increasing share of EU development aid became concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected environments. The European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU’s diplomatic service, has certainly been one of the main actors responsible for translating into action the EU’s policy vis-à-vis the response to conflict. It plays an important role both for designing the EU’s external policy and for implementing it at Brussels and Delegation level. With 4,100 officials located in in Brussels and at EU delegations, the ***EEAS contributes to the programming and management cycle of various following instruments which serve to fund peacebuilding action,*** amongst others (EPLO, 2020b):

- Development Cooperation Instrument (€19.7 billion for 2014 - 2020)
- European Development Fund (€30.5 billion for 2014 – 2020)
- European Neighbourhood Instrument (€15.4 billion for 2014 – 2020)
- European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (€1.249 billion for 2014 – 2020)
- Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (€ 2.34 billion for 2014-2020), including Article 4 (Assistance for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis preparedness) and Article 5 (Assistance in addressing global and trans-regional threats and emerging threats)

In addition to these funded instruments, the structures and institutions also contribute to peacebuilding initiatives. For instance, we have seen the EU Delegation and Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI) play an increasingly important role in information-sharing and analysis, mediation, conflict analysis, or shaping the EU's preventive diplomacy efforts. Other dedicated structures and instruments also play an important role in political dialogue in conflict situations such as the EU Special Representatives (i.e. for the Middle East Peace Process), EU Special Envoys (i.e. Special Envoy for Afghanistan), Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions¹⁵.

2. Three categories of EU peacebuilding actions

As discussed in the previous section, a whole range of actions and initiatives can be labeled as “peacebuilding”. This is, insofar as they are designed to contribute to the root causes of conflicts or to contribute to creating the conditions for lasting peace in conflict-affected or fragile countries. ***To ease the analysis, I distinguish actions that are geared towards directly addressing conflict and peace issues, versus those that indirectly or partially aim to address it.*** The evaluators of the EU's peacebuilding action propose a useful typology (Nicole Ball et al., 2020) which distinguishes the various peacebuilding action based on the degree to which they are designed to address conflict and peace issues:

¹⁵ At the same time, the shifting context in Europe also contributed to the evolution of the engagement of the EU with third countries. The Africa and Madad Emergency Trust Funds were created as a response to the unprecedented irregular migration flows towards Europe, which themselves were a direct consequence of the growing insecurity in the immediate neighborhood of the EU (Syria, Sahel, Libya).

- **Primary peacebuilding interventions:** Actions that by their nature have clear objectives for exerting positive effects on peace and conflict dynamics, and that would not be implemented in a non-conflict prone / crisis environment
- **Mixed objectives interventions:** Actions that could be implemented to achieve peacebuilding objectives, but that could also have other types of objectives, usually depending on the context in which they take place. They also serve to address the root causes of conflicts, and contribute to a country's long term stability
- **Complementary interventions:** Actions that usually have objectives others than peacebuilding (i.e. development, humanitarian assistance, and counter terrorism) but that can be considered as contributing to overall EU peacebuilding objectives within certain contexts. They also serve to address the root causes of conflicts, and contribute to a country's long term stability

This distinction of the actions based on the level of peacebuilding intent (primary / mixed-objectives / complementary) offers a useful way of categorizing the vast spectrum of the EU's action. We use that categorization during all of Chapter 3's analysis¹⁶.

To give the reader a better sense of the EU's peacebuilding action and how this, concretely, is put into action, this section provides some illustrative examples of the EU's peacebuilding actions for each of the three categories.

¹⁶ It is important to note one limitation of such a categorisation: it entails that one same type of action (i.e. election monitoring) might be considered a "primary objective peacebuilding intervention" in context A, while the exact same action might fit into the "mixed-objectives" or "complementary peacebuilding action" in context B or C. The categories are therefore not mutually exclusive.

The EU's definition of peacebuilding actions is so large that listing all the EU actions would be a challenging endeavor. ***Rather than trying to provide an exhaustive list, in this section we provide a couple of selected examples of some of the most prominent, visible, or innovative peacebuilding actions of the EU¹⁷.***

Primary peacebuilding interventions

- **Local Dialogue and Reconciliation:** This type of action aims to contribute to healthy relationships between divided groups. Enabling dialogues to take place offers a chance to express each group's grievances, develop empathy for the other group, find common solutions to shared problems, and move towards new, healthier relationship. While this type of action can be an action per se, it can also serve as an approach that can be applied to other types of action (i.e. human-centered security approaches, building of a dialogue-centered CVE strategy, etc.). Such dialogues are typically implemented by international NGOs, in partnership with local government institutions and/or Civil Society Organisations (CSO).
- **Special Representatives' high level engagement:** The nine EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) are individuals whose role is to promote the EU's policies and interests in conflict-affected regions or countries. They play an active role in efforts to consolidate peace, stability and the rule of law. They provide the EU with an active political presence

¹⁷ As a reminder, this research focuses on the non-coercive, non-military actions of the EU. Rather, we focus on the EU's actions which serve to removing the potential causes and triggers of violence, to strengthen or create the structures of a sustainable, positive peace, and those that serve to find a negotiated agreement to existing conflicts.

in key countries and regions, acting as a “voice” and “face” for the EU and its policies. Currently, the EU has deployed Special Representatives for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central Asia, Horn of Africa, Human Rights, Kosovo, Middle East Peace Process, Sahel and South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia.

Mixed objectives interventions

- **Security Sector Reform:** Support partner countries to ensure security for individuals and the state. The Security Sector Reform centers on the legitimacy, good governance, integrity and sustainability of the security sector of partner countries. To do so, the EU works along three main scopes: (i) the development of a clear and appropriate legal and strategic framework; (ii) strengthening the capacities of security sector institutions and civil society organisations working in this field; (iii) supporting stabilisation of fragile and post-conflict areas through other complementary means (i.e. Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration). This set of actions is implemented either by EU civil and military servants, and/or by partner organisations.

- **Support to Civil Society:** The EU thematic programme for civil society organisations and local authorities (CSO-LA). The civil society leg has three objectives. It aims at (i) enhancement of an enabling environment for civil society; (ii) promotion of meaningful participation of civil society in policy and programming to build stronger government performance and accountability at all levels; and (iii) capacity development for CSOs to act as independent development actors. This programme operates mainly through calls for proposals launched by the EU. They are open to civil society organisations (local and European) (Buhl-Nielsen et al., 2020).

- **EU Election Observation Missions and Election Assistance:** The purpose of EU election observation missions is to assist partner countries in holding elections of a high standard. To do so, the EU conducts an analysis of the electoral process and provides an assessment of the elections to strengthen the confidence of voters to participate freely. The EU has deployed over 120 missions since 2000. In addition to the monitoring missions, the EU also provides election assistance via its Directorate General for Development (DG DEVCO now renamed “International Partnership”), supporting electoral institutions and the media to organize credible election processes.

Complementary interventions

- **Humanitarian assistance:** The EU provides needs-based humanitarian assistance to people hit by disasters, whether they are man-made or natural disasters. Such aid includes programmes tackling acute nutrition needs, urgent healthcare support, education in emergencies, or provision of shelters, amongst others. The EU has been providing humanitarian aid in 110 countries since 1992. The aid is channeled via UN agencies, international organisations (i.e. International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent) or NGOs. Such aid is never channeled via state or local authorities. As mentioned in a 2021 EU communication (Commission of the European Union, 2021), *“in a world where the footprint of conflicts and disasters is expanding steadily, humanitarian aid is a key pillar of the EU’s external action and an important part of its ability to project its values globally.”*
- **Human Rights:** the EU has a dedicated thematic instrument designed to support civil society to become an effective force for political reform and defence of human rights. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) cooperates directly with human rights defenders

and local civil society organisations. Key specificities of this instrument is that it does not require the approval of national authorities, can address sensitive political issues (such as torture, discriminations against vulnerable groups) and is flexible in terms of implementation modalities.

3. Mapping the EU peacebuilding actions vis-à-vis the liberal peacebuilding framework

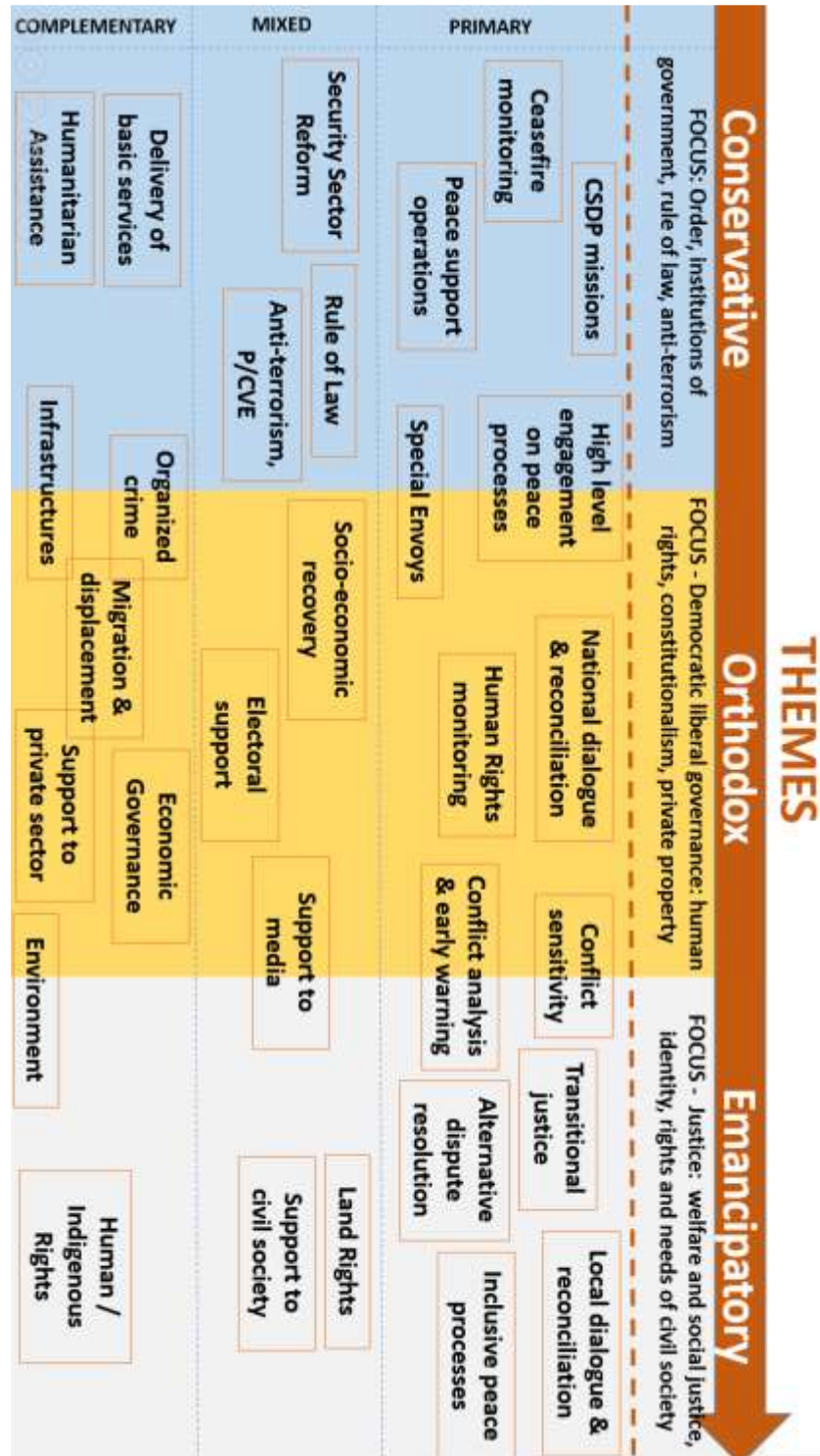
A. Main themes of focus

Now that we have a clearer understanding of the EU's peacebuilding instruments and actions, let us have a closer look at them in light of the liberal peacebuilding framework.

In the Graph 2 below, I map the major types of EU peacebuilding actions and mechanisms, vis-à-vis the liberal peacebuilding framework. Purely “conservative” actions are pinned to the left of the figure, the “orthodox” ones are in the center, and all the “emancipatory” actions are pinned the right of the map. ***In this Graph 2, I focus on the themes and areas of focus tackled by these actions***¹⁸. Recognizing that some actions do not fit squarely into one only label, some of them are placed in between two categories. Graph 2 also distinguishes the actions based on the intent and degree of focus on peacebuilding: I segregate them between primary (top), mixed (center) or complementary (bottom) peacebuilding interventions.

¹⁸ As opposed to the methods or approaches to the actions.

Graph 2: Mapping of EU peacebuilding action's themes and focus of action¹⁹



¹⁹ The mapping in Graph 2 was prepared by Charline Burton

While some might contest the exact position of the various actions on the map, the conclusion from this mapping is unequivocal: ***the themes and focus of the EU's actions clearly span across the full spectrum of the liberal peacebuilding framework. In the EU's toolbox of external actions, the EU tackles themes that are dear to all three main schools of thoughts.***

Conservative peacebuilding tools and actions of the EU.

These are pinned to the left of the map. To the top-left, primary peacebuilding conservative side of the mapping, I pinned the very the security-focused ***Common Security and Defense Policy***. This instrument supports the partners states' army and military operations to deliver security and order. In the conservative mixed objectives intervention we list, for instance, the ***reforming of the security sector*** of partner countries, as the strengthening, merging and reforming of a State's army directly serves to ensure effective rule of law and the sustained capacity of a country to deliver effective security services in the long term. At the bottom of the map, in the "complementary intervention" section, one example of a such a tool is the development aid aimed at supporting the state's ***delivery of basic health or education services***: by supporting the State's provision basic services to their population, it strengthens the state institutions and its capacity to deliver on its social contract, hence contributing to order and state acceptance.

Orthodox peacebuilding actions.

These are pinned at the center of the map. At the top, amongst the primary peacebuilding actions, ***Human Rights monitoring*** is a good illustration of such type of actions, where the focus is put on democratic

liberal governance, where human rights abuses are documented, human rights defenders are protected, and where sanctions are taken towards the governments and their leaders who fail to abide to the international conventions on human rights protection. At the center of the map (mixed-objectives action), the **electoral support** is one such action that serves to address the root causes of a conflict (i.e. undemocratic access to power, exclusion of sections of the population from decision-making processes) and that focuses on democratic governance. Complementary-objectives actions such as the **support to private sector**, contribute to the orthodox vision of long-term peace, where flourishing capitalist market economies are seen as a key element of democratic peace, and where ensuring the individuals' capacity to benefit from this market is perceived as meeting the conditions for stability and peace.

Emancipatory peacebuilding actions

Lastly, to the right-hand of the map, the “emancipatory” peacebuilding actions of the EU are listed: those that focus on justice, including issues of identity, the rights and needs of the civil society, and the social welfare and justice. These emancipatory actions include diverse institutions and norms, and include a willingness to work with traditional and / or decentralized institutions and leaders. And there too, the EU has a plethora of strings to their bow. In primary peacebuilding actions, the **community-level dialogue and reconciliation** actions is a concrete example of how the emancipatory approach takes shape and supports bottom-up peace at the sub-national or community level. **Strengthening access to land rights** is a good example of a mixed-objective emancipatory peacebuilding action, where land rights is often governed by customary law and decision made by traditional leaders and often conflicts with central / national laws. In these initiatives, taking into

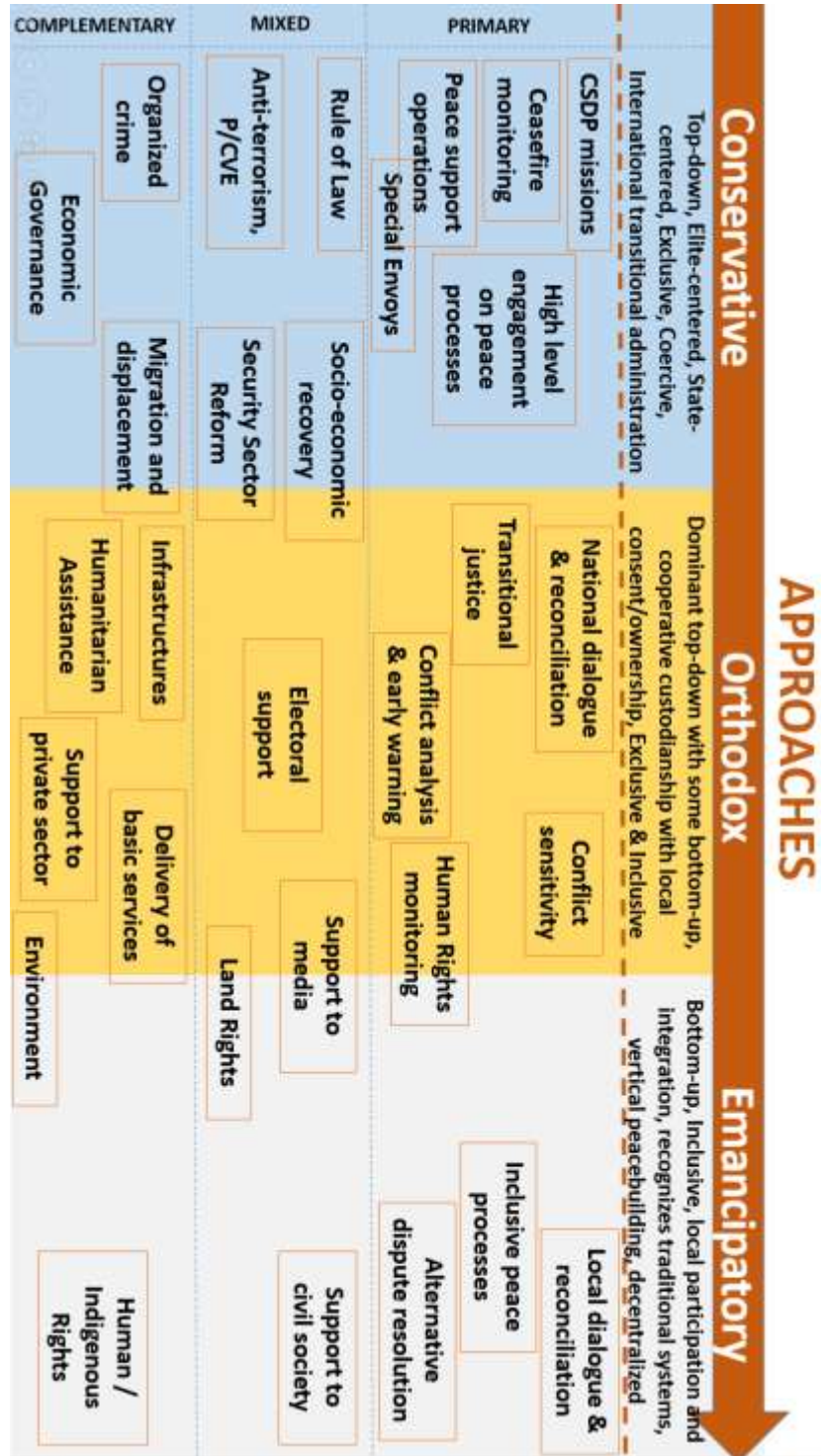
consideration the local identities and practices is vital in order to reconcile the local practices with the national laws and have a real, lasting impact. Lastly, at the bottom-right of the map, the complementary-objectives action, actions focused on **Indigenous rights** speak well to how the local realities and needs of some specific groups – as opposed to the whole nation's needs - are also taken into consideration in the EU's peacebuilding action.

B. Approaches to peacebuilding

Let us now have a look at how the EU implements its peacebuilding actions. As outlined in Chapter 1, there are major differences of approaches to peacebuilding, depending on where one sits on the liberal peacebuilding framework (see Richmond, 2008, 2010). The **conservative model** focuses on top-down approaches, highly centralized, state and elite-centered approaches to peacebuilding, where peace tends to be imposed by military forces and sustained by coercive conditionality and dependency measures. The **orthodox model**, while also dominated by a top-down and state-centric vision, does however have *some* understanding of local ownership and culture, which translates into some bottom-up practices, some inclusion of citizens in the peace process, some engagement with civil society and some attention paid to local ownership. Finally, the **emancipatory model** is especially concerned with local ownership, prioritizing a bottom up approach focusing on the needs and rights of local communities, and highly critical of top-down, coercive strategies.

Graph 3 below maps the major types of EU peacebuilding actions and mechanisms vis-à-vis the liberal peacebuilding framework, this time, with a focus on the approaches used by the EU in implementing these actions. Again, we distinguish the actions based on the intent and degree of focus on peacebuilding, segregating them between primary (top), mixed (center) or complementary peacebuilding (bottom) interventions.

Graph 3: Mapping of EU peacebuilding action's approaches²⁰



²⁰ Mapping in Graph 3 was prepared by Charline Burton

There is no exact science to the interpretation of the EU's action and where they stand vis-à-vis the liberal peacebuilding framework. Some might therefore dispute the choices I made in placing some specific actions on the map. Nevertheless, few could dispute the conclusion that I'm drawing from the map: **the methodologies and approaches used by the EU in implementing its peacebuilding action, clearly lean towards the conservative-orthodox models.**

This trend is visible at all levels of actions, be it primary peacebuilding actions or mixed- and complementary-objective actions. From high-level negotiations with heads of state and rebel chiefs, state-centered economic reforms or fight against corruption, training and equipment of military forces, “national dialogues” or “reconciliation processes” to the support to election processes, **there is a clear dominance of a state-centric, top-down approach to peacebuilding in the EU's support to peace.** Many of these actions rely heavily on the involvement of the elites and national institutions based in capital-cities²¹. Others rely on regional bodies (i.e. African Union).

However, **it is also important to recognize that some actions are grounded in an emancipatory model of peacebuilding, whereby they recognize the value of vertical peacebuilding** and engage with a set of stakeholders or institutions that are not part of the Westphalian state construction. Several actions on this mapping **accept the ambiguity of working with traditional, customary or religious leaders**, recognizing the value of building on tribal justice systems, faith-based peacebuilding initiatives or traditional alliances. Similarly, on that the right-hand side of the mapping in Graph 3, some actions focus not solely on the elites. Rather, they recognize the importance of a

²¹ Even though their local branches too are involved when the centers of powers, too, are decentralized (i.e. provincial government, justice institutions, or decentralized army or police corps).

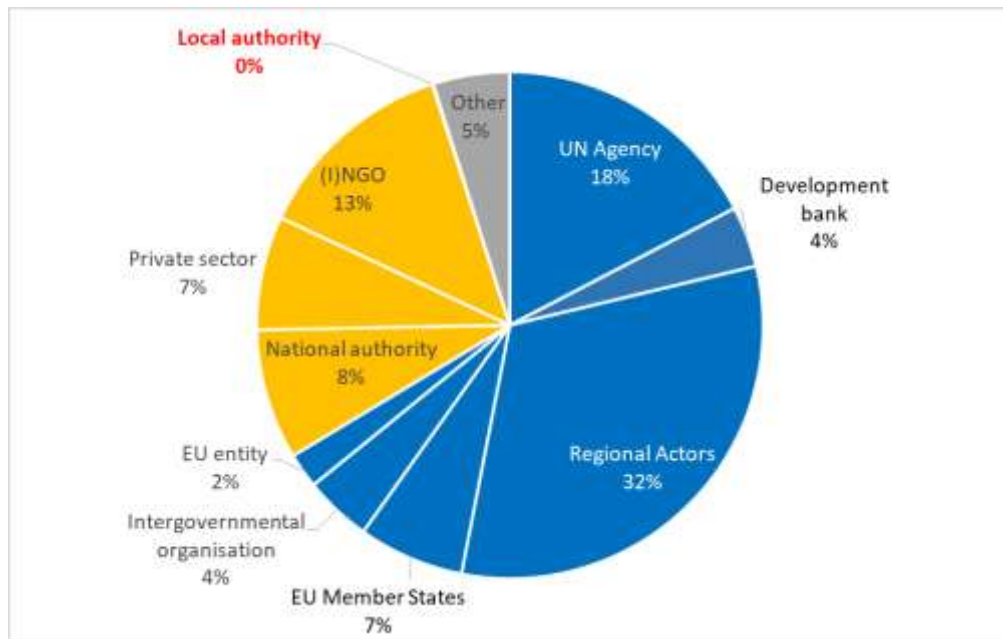
bottom-up approach where citizens have their say and can be actively involved in issues pertaining to their security, their peace. We see this notably in the way that some of the complementary-objectives peacebuilding actions are designed. The delivery of basic services is one such example, where participatory approaches to development have become more systematically included in the EU's approach over the past decades, complementing a top-down approach designed and/or implemented by the state institutions.

C. Channels of peacebuilding funds

In reviewing the approaches of the EU's peacebuilding action, ***is also important to look at to whom the peacebuilding funds go***. It provides a useful indicator that clearly shows a trend towards a top-down approach to the implementation of peacebuilding. Hence, leaning again towards a conservative model.

In an evaluation commissioned by the EU of its 2011-2018 “conflict prevention and peacebuilding” work, evaluators have mapped the various conflict prevention and peacebuilding funding. They estimate that the EU has allocated 5.6 billion euros in this area during that period of time. In this mapping, the evaluators list the various ***channels*** that the EU uses for disbursing that money, listing the type of institutions who benefit from the funds. When looking at this data, it is important to keep in mind the distinction in state-centric approach of the conservative model, versus the decentralized and civil society-centered approach of the emancipatory model. ***In Graph 4 below, we colored in blue the international and regional actors. They represent the overwhelming majority of disbursement channels (66% of the total funds)***. The national stakeholders are colored orange, totaling 28% of the disbursements, while the local authorities only make up for 0.1% of the total disbursements.

Graph 4: Overview of the EU's peacebuilding delivery channels (2011-2018)



Based on Nicole Ball et al., 2020, volume III, p.60

What this data tells us, is that the large majority of the EU's peacebuilding funds go to regional, international or national stakeholders, while almost none of these are disbursed via local authorities or stakeholders.

Of course, this needs to be nuanced.

First, it is important to recognize that there may be some “hidden” funds transferred to local stakeholders. These do not appear in Graph 4. Some of the national or supra-national actors may eventually themselves disburse some of these funds to local civil society organizations. This is often the case with peacebuilding international NGOs, UN agencies or regional organisations, who tend to cascade funds to local stakeholders or to local authorities. However, the amount that can be transferred to local stakeholders is usually limited by their absorption capacities and their capacity to meet the (often complex) EU reporting requirements. In fragile contexts, these capacities tend to be limited and peacebuilding actors tend to implement a large portion of the peacebuilding

actions directly. As a consequence, it seems that only a fraction of the EU peacebuilding funding is ultimately distributed to the local stakeholders²².

A second nuance to Graph 4 data is also important: the one that relates to the non-monetary peacebuilding actions. In addition to these financial contributions, it is important to note that several of the EU's peacebuilding action is in fact non-funding interventions that are implemented by EU staff directly, such as the work of the Special Representatives, political dialogue, mediation initiatives. However, the vast majority of these actions, by nature, fit into the "conservative" category of the liberal peacebuilding, since they necessarily are elite-centered and bottom-up actions.

Even with nuances in mind, though, it seems clear that the disbursement methods are mostly in line with a conservative approach which favors a top-down, centralized peacebuilding.

²² Unfortunately, no data was found with regards to such "hidden funds" or the proportion of EU peacebuilding funds which are ultimately transferred to local stakeholders.

Chapter 4 – A difficult coexistence of the three peacebuilding models



Figure 6: Kyrgyz women participate to an inter-faith activity (Search for Common Ground)

In Chapter 4, we look into some of the challenges that emerge from the coexistence, within the EU, of the three liberal peacebuilding models – conservative, orthodox and emancipatory. In this Chapter, we illustrate the potential challenges with two concrete examples.

First, we use the “localisation agenda” of the EU to demonstrate that the challenges to connecting the dots between official positions, and the practice of “emancipating” peacebuilding. In the second section of this Chapter, we use the example of the European Peace Facility’s “Train and Equip” components to illustrate how the various schools of thoughts of peacebuilding might conceptually clash with one another, even if they are meant to tackle one same challenge.

1. Tension between discourse and practice in the “localisation” agenda

As outlined in Chapter 2, the ***EU discourse more and more recognizes the need to systematically include a diverse set of stakeholders in shaping and implementing the peacebuilding actions.*** This means, amongst others, including local stakeholders and civil society organizations: those should, according to official EU documents, be involved in setting the priorities, in designing the peacebuilding actions, in implementing them, and in benefiting from them. But to what extent does that take place in practice²³?

A. CSO and local stakeholders' role towards EU peacebuilding

Some initiatives are worth noting: they offer avenues for the EU to collect insights and inputs from CSOs and local stakeholders with regards to peacebuilding. ***The Civil Society Dialogue Network (CSDN) is one such important platform. It offers the opportunity for EU officials to engage directly with civil society and local stakeholders on key conflict-related topics or on some key conflict geographies.*** These sessions are funded by the EU and organized by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO). It is a platform where the EU collects insights and feedback from peacebuilding practitioners from across the world and from representatives from the conflict-affected countries. The CSDN are a precious opportunity for CSOs and local stakeholders to shape the EU's understanding of conflict dynamics and of how

²³ Analysis in this section is mostly built on the author's own experience of (i) implementing EU peacebuilding actions on behalf of the EU; and (ii) liaising with the EU both in Brussels and in capital cities of conflict-affected countries; (iii) participating to consultations organized by EPLO, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office.

to most adequately respond. Via the CSDN, CSOs are also offered a chance to input on key EU peacebuilding policy documents. Some other initiatives exist, including for instance some national-level strategy-designs, where the EU delegations consult with CSOs and local stakeholders.

However, **at the big picture level**, the involvement of local stakeholders and CSOs remains relatively limited in the design and prioritization of the EU's peacebuilding actions. ***EU's practice is still far from aligning fully with the emancipatory principles and with the discourse of an "integrated, multi-dimensional" approach to peacebuilding.***

While they are meant to be at the center of the emancipatory approach, there are serious limitations to the role of local stakeholders. In fact local stakeholders' role is ***mostly limited to one of a recipient of the peacebuilding efforts.*** This is already quite a shift from the orthodox-conservative approach, which is centered on state institutions and civil and military servants. However, it is still far away from ticking all the boxes of the "emancipatory approach" textbooks, which would require a meaningful contributions of local stakeholders – religious or traditional leaders, local CSOs, youth groups, activists – in the shaping of the EU's external peacebuilding action.

With regards to the role of ***civil society organisations, international CSOs certainly are a privileged implementing partner*** of the EU's peacebuilding response²⁴. Some areas for exchange, input or dialogue do exist which enable CSOs to influence the design and prioritization of peacebuilding policies and strategies. However, ***it is unclear what exact level of influence local stakeholders and CSOs exert on EU's policies and priorities.***

²⁴ 13% of peacebuilding funds are channeled through them

In fact, aid and peacebuilding programmes are mostly designed in Brussels, by EU staff who base their analysis on different sources. Such sources may include one, several (or, sometimes, none) of the following:

- Insights from EU Embassy who may - or may not - have consulted with local civil society groups in conflict-affected countries;
- Analysis shared by international civil society groups in Brussels (i.e. via the CSDN platform or lobbying meetings);
- National action plans and strategies designed by conflict-affected countries' national authorities (often times with support from international, multinational and/or regional stakeholders);
- Recommendations from international, multinational, regional stakeholders (IMF, OSCE, African Union, etc.).

Based on the above, ***it seems safe to conclude that there is a dissonance between the discourse, and the practice.*** While the discourse calls for a more emancipatory approach, in fact the transposition into the practice remains a challenge. This is confirmed time and again by various analysts, such as Deneckere: *“While the awareness of the need for more integrated responses is clearly reflected in various policy documents, the practice still lags behind”* (Deneckere, 2019).

B. EU ill-equipped for the emancipatory approach

But why is the inclusion of local stakeholders so hard, when it comes to the design of peacebuilding programmes? ***If there is a political agreement towards a more inclusive approach, why not connect dots between discourse and practice?*** Why does the involvement of civil society remain so limited?

A lot of this has to do with internal challenges relative to the EU's institutional set-up, staffing and peacebuilding expertise. These are currently ill adapted to the EU's peacebuilding ambitions and its desire to become more "emancipatory". As pointed by a 2020 evaluation of the EU's 2013-2018 peacebuilding action, some "*steps have been taken to strengthen the EU's institutional structure, human resources, tools and aid modalities/delivery mechanisms to deliver CPPB [conflict prevention and peacebuilding] support in a conflict-sensitive manner*" (Nicole Ball et al., 2020). However, much remains to be done. The same evaluators point to several challenges and areas for improvement, which prevent the EU from fully living up to its ambitions:

- *"As in the pre-2011 period, operationalising the integrated / comprehensive approach lags both at HQ [Headquarters] and in EUDs [EU Delegations] because of inadequate mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity across all EU external action, an institutional set-up not fully designed to promote coherence and insufficient staff in political sections at HQ and in EUDs.*
- *Inadequate mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity derives in large part from the absence of a human resources strategy to strengthen the availability of adequately capacitated staff.*
- *It also reflects inadequate buy-in and leadership on CPPB [Conflict prevention and peacebuilding] from EU senior management.*
- *Human resources remain one of the major stumbling blocks to making CPPB effective. There are too few EU officials with the expertise necessary to make linkages between politics, programming and context at HQ and in EUDs.*
- *Very little progress has been recorded on putting knowledge and learning on CPPB at the heart of the EU's external action and insufficient progress on monitoring for learning and building knowledge"* (Nicole Ball et al., 2020)

In addition to these internal challenges of the EU's set up, ***we can also point to some other bureaucratic considerations***. Because EU peacebuilding action is paid for by taxpayers' moneys, it crucial for the EU to ensure good value-for-money, transparency, and accountability of the funds. Management requirements are high. ***The complexity of managing EU funds too, is high. Too high, often, for local CSOs. Most of them lack the adequate trainings or systems needed to meet the EU's requirements.*** The EU recognizes this dissonance between their ambition for "localisation", and what actually happens to the funds disbursed. This was illustrated in a 2021 EU Communication on Humanitarian Aid.

"The Grand Bargain included a strong commitment from donors and international aid agencies to channel more resources directly to local responders. However, the flow of funding to local actors and national non-governmental organisations has been hampered by the need for many donors to reconcile this commitment with regulatory, transparency and accountability requirements, especially in conflict situations where financial tracking might be challenging" (Commission of the European Union, 2021)

In addition, the EU's limited capacities and staffing mean that there is a tendency to favour the funding of multilateral pooled funds, or of regional organization, as this reduces the management burden on EU officials. When these options are not available or do not seem adequate, the EU usually prefers turning to international CSOs with highly skilled individuals and strong systems. These international CSOs can then manage large amounts, sometimes up to several millions of euros. This explains why, as confirmed by an EU official, *"it is simply impossible for the EU to directly disburse a larger volume of peacebuilding funds to local civil society organisations: we just do not have the capacity and staff to manage a large number of small projects. This is*

why we channel these funds through larger international stakeholders, and will continue to do so” (EU official, personal communication, 30 April 2021).

To overcome that challenge, the EU works hand in hand with its international, regional or multilateral partners, with “*focus on our partners’ local partnership strategies*” and “*guidance on the promotion of equal partnerships with local responders*”.

Despite these efforts, it appears that the majority of funds are not channeled through local responders. Again, it seems safe to conclude that there is a dichotomy between what the EU says, and what the EU does with regards to localisation.

2. Tensions between the models: the European Peace Facility’s “Train and Equip” component

In this section, we explore how the various approaches to peacebuilding might conceptually clash with one another, even if they are meant to tackle one same challenge. The European Peace Facility’s “Train and Equip” project, to be implemented from 2021, is a perfect example that illustrates the challenge. With that new tool, the conservative approach to security seems to contradict or undermine - at least partially - the emancipatory approach.

The European Peace Facility (EPF) is 2021-approved off-budget fund of the EU which is “*designed to prevent conflicts, preserve peace and strengthen international security, for the benefit of EU citizens, our partners and their populations*” (EEAS, 2020). The EPF replaces former mechanisms (Athena and the African Peace Facility) and creates a new instrument to finance Common Foreign and Security Policy actions in military and defence areas.

One of the novelty introduced by the EPF is the possibility of the EU to provide military equipment - including weapons and ammunitions - to partner countries under its “Train and Equip” component.

In full alignment with the conservative approach to peacebuilding, this provision serves to ***build-up partner countries' security forces, specifically of their armies***. The “Train and Equip” component fills a long decried gap of the previous mechanisms, which prevented the EU from delivering weapons, military equipment, or ammunitions to its partner countries. This limitation had attracted a number of criticisms, as illustrated in the below Malian example (Tull, 2019):

“On a general level, it is common for Malian officers to dispute the usefulness of training. To some, training sessions distract from more urgent priorities. They find training misplaced in so far as the task is not so much rendering a dysfunctional army effective, but rather giving it the means to defeat enemies. What is therefore expected from partners is combat support and lethal equipment such as heavy weapons and air power. (...) It becomes particularly evident when equipment is provided for training sessions, but not when Malian trainees move to the battlefield. This creates bewilderment and frustration among Malian partners who do not understand why there are thousands of foreign troops and hundreds of trainers and advisers in the country, who are themselves heavily equipped but who are not able or willing to provide the FAMA [Forces Armées maliennes, Malian armed forces] with the bare minimum they feel they need.”

The European Peace Facility is a historical step for the EU, whose Treaties had until now prevented from delivering lethal equipment. With the European Peace Facility, the EU has now “closed existing gaps in the EU's toolbox, enabling the EU to do more and to act more swiftly. In this manner, the EPF will maximise the impact, effectiveness and sustainability of overall EU

external action in peace and security" (EEAS, 2020). In short, the EU hopes to provide a more holistic military support to its partner countries²⁵.

It appears that the "Train and Equip" component of the European Peace Facility falls squarely into the conservative approach. It focuses, on state security and enables the central forces to provide for the territorial integrity of the state. ***On the opposite side of the liberal peacebuilding spectrum, the emancipatory approach focuses on human security. Also called people-centered security, it puts the emphasis on the security of the individual and society at large.***

This emancipatory approach to security focuses on whole different set of factors. The low level of trusts, the absence of platforms for exchange and dialogue between the community and their security forces, or the lack of feedback mechanisms to denounce abuses are some of the issues that are at the heart of the human-centered security approach. ***They argue: if the communities – including their various minorities – are offered a chance to meaningfully participate to security decision-making processes, this will improve the efficiency of security provision and create the conditions for lasting peace*** (Sheperd & Mugula, 2018). To foster that dialogue and trust between communities and security forces, the emancipatory peacebuilders put the emphasis on building local architecture for peace, on fighting against impunity or abuses by security forces.

²⁵ Considering the budgets involved – about 300 million euros over 7 years – the EU will likely be unable to transfer expensive, complex weapon systems. Rather, the EU should be transferring light or semi-heavy materials (armored vehicles for example), or even used materials (Santopinto, 2020)

The supporters of an emancipatory approach to security point at the “Train and Equip” facility and warn: ***enabling security actors in conflict situations comes with risks and might have boomerang effects***. In a public letter signed on behalf of 39 peacebuilding organisations, EPLO explains how the provision of lethal armaments and ammunition might clash with the human-centered approach to security: ***“Supporting state security without addressing the underlying drivers of conflict can actually be counterproductive”*** (EPLO, 2020a).

In a context where the security forces commit abuses, extrajudicial killings, or act as preys on the communities they are supposed to serve, the tenants of the emancipatory peacebuilding theories argue that providing ammunition and lethal armament might actually worsen conflict dynamics, rather than offer a solution to it.

Some of the risks related to the “Train and Equip” component are highlighted by Deneckere’s *Unchartered Path Towards a European Peace Facility*. Unpacking these risks is a useful exercise to illustrate how the conservative approach to security might clash with the emancipatory approach to security.

“In this context, military capacity-building in countries that face domestic conflict bring various dilemmas, especially because many of these countries have (semi-)authoritarian regimes and/or a poor track record on human rights and good governance. For instance, a recent report described how the conduct of Malian government troops, often marked by ethnic stigmatisation, retaliatory executions of civilians after the death of soldiers and other forms of abuse, was an important reason for young people in Mali to join non-state armed groups. (...) Similarly, other experts have pointed out how attempts to train and equip armed forces in Somalia have led to several defections and put arms in the wrong hands in the absence of proper civilian oversight structures and monitoring systems. There are also various other examples of military training and equipment provided that were used to suppress civilian protests or ended up on the

black market. In such contexts, helping third countries build functional armed forces may be counterproductive for the EU's and local interests if it does not encourage broader reforms of the security sector and initiatives to build trust and resilience and provide mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution through civilian means as well.

(...) In addition, experts have also pointed out that military capacity building for governments that are party to the conflict or whose legitimacy is contested may reduce room for engagement with non-state actors and reduce the willingness of the host government to seek political settlements or invest in basic services” (Deneckere, 2019)

As highlighted in Chapter 3, the EU has a large scale of actions in its peacebuilding toolbox. These span across the full spectrum of the liberal peacebuilding framework, enabling the EU to offer a comprehensive and integrated approach to peace, conflict and security. ***But the above example of the European Peace Facility's “Train and Equip” component illustrates how the various approaches might clash. And how the simultaneous use of the various approach can at times be perceived as counterproductive.***

Conclusion



Figure 7: Participants to an EU-funded human-centered security peacebuilding action (*Search for Common Ground*)

Many researches have explored the EU's *peacekeeping* action. However, little has been researched so far about the EU's *peacebuilding* action, and the conceptual framework that underpins it. The lack of a clear, structured, centralized conceptual framework for the EU's approach might be a push factor for researchers. Or the institutional complexity of the EU's management of peacebuilding actions hinders the researchers' access to a comprehensive set of data.

To fill in that gap, I explored the EU's current approach to peacebuilding, and how it evolved over the past two decades. This research focused on the peacebuilding, peacemaking and conflict prevention actions of the EU (labelled here collectively as "peacebuilding"). It aimed to understand if and how the EU

has a favorite approach to peacebuilding, and whether this has evolved over the past two decades.

Does the EU focus on strengthening the Westphalian model by supporting security, state-building, rule of law in a centralized and top-down approach? Or rather, does the EU focus mostly on promoting just and durable societies with a localized, bottom-up approach? Can the various trends of liberal peacebuilding within the EU coexist and reinforce one another, or does the coexistence of these models generate contradictions or disconnects?

To find the answers to these questions, I used the liberal peacebuilding framework as a basis, with its three main trends: the conservative, orthodox and emancipatory approach. With this as an analytical framework, I analysed the EU's discourses, policy documents, and in its actions.

Chapter one took us through a review of the main assumptions and concepts underpinning the peacebuilding theories. We learnt that the concept of liberal peacebuilding has dominated the post-Cold War efforts to prevent conflicts, stabilise and rebuild lasting peace in post-conflict countries. “Liberal peacebuilding” is based on the “liberal peace thesis”: it argues that liberal democracies do not go to war against each other. In order to guarantee durable peace, government should address issues concerning social, economic and institutional needs in order to building stable states.

The liberal peacebuilding evolved over time, as critics started to emerge in the aftermath of 9/11, arguing that liberal peace principles could be used to serve a Western imperialism. The model, they said, can be clashing with cultural practices, values and cultures of the places where they are being used. These critics led to an increased recognition of the need for more contextualised and emancipatory perspectives in peacebuilding.

The various approaches to liberal peacebuilding were summarised by Richmond into three main peacebuilding schools of thoughts: the conservative model, the orthodox model, and the emancipatory model.

Chapter 1 offered some insights on the key features of each of these models. These then served as the conceptual framework for the subsequent chapters. We learnt that the conservative model of liberal peace focuses on institutional peace and order. It envisions a top-down approaches aimed at guaranteeing security and sovereignty of the State. The orthodox model focuses on constitutional peace and democratic liberal governance. It is dominated by top-down and state-centric attempts at building the institutions for a market-oriented and democratic state but with some elements of bottom-up practices. The emancipatory model focuses on civil peace and justice. Its approach is based contextual legitimacy with respect to local cultures, extending to the questions of social justice, human security and welfare.

Chapter two introduced our case study: the European Union. We learnt that 25 years after the first mention of “peacebuilding” in a policy document, the EU still does not operate with an explicit peacebuilding concept, and it has not formulated a peacebuilding strategy. In the absence of a documented guiding framework, I took the reader on a tour of the official EU discourse vis-à-vis peace, conflict, and peacebuilding, with the aim of drawing conclusions on the EU's implicit peacebuilding concept. Looking into the main policy documents published by the EU over the past two decades, we outlined the key trends that guide and have guided the EU action since the 2000's.

We learnt that the early policy documents of the EU, such as the 2003 European Security Strategy or the 2006 European Consensus on Development, were firmly conservative. They repeatedly identified state fragility as a security threat to Europe and highlighted the connection between security and development and the conflict-insecurity-poverty cycle. In these first peacebuilding policy documents, some elements of orthodox concepts were also prevalent, with

pointers to the need to work on governance and political reforms, or the emphasis on the protection of human rights.

Features of an emancipatory approach started appearing in 2011, with the “Council Conclusions on conflict prevention”. This marked a subtle yet important change of narrative, where the need to work with local stakeholders started to be recognized. This was the premise of a trend that would slowly start to shift the EU's approach of peacebuilding from a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach, to one that would start to recognize the need to engage with local stakeholders and use a bottom-up and a localized approach to peacebuilding.

Steadily, the EU moved away from a conservative-only approach focused on nation-building, security and institution-building, to gradually include some focus on orthodox peacebuilding with a focus on human rights, governance, political and economic violence. However, the attention to security and order remained prevalent throughout the two decades' policy documents. Eventually, in the mid-2010's, elements of emancipatory approach made their way into the official positions of the EU, with a recognition of the need for bottom-up and inclusive approaches to peacebuilding.

An analysis of the EU discourse and vocabulary over the past two decades of EU policy documents confirms that tendency. We learnt that words like “rule of law”, “security”, or “institutions” are listed on average twice more often than words associated with the “orthodox terminology” such as “democra*”, “governance”, “constitution”, or “human rights”; and three times more often than words associated with “emancipatory terminology” such as “local”, “just*”, “inclusive” or “civil society”. With this analysis of the discourse, we noticed a dual trend over the past decades: an increase of both the conservative focus on security, and a parallel increase of the focus on “local peace”.

These trends likely reflect two realities of the 2010's: on the one hand, the growing debate around the relevance and effectiveness of the classical, conservative approach to liberal peacebuilding. On the other hand, even if the peacebuilding field was becoming more open to emancipatory influences, the

increased uncertainty about the international order and shifting global world meant that security – a key feature of the conservative model - would remain central to the EU's approach.

Chapter three took us through a deep-dive in the EU peacebuilding action.

I introduced the main peacebuilding instruments of the EU and the main tools from the EU peacebuilding toolbox. We learnt that a whole range of actions and initiatives could be labeled as “peacebuilding”, insofar as they are designed to creating the conditions for lasting peace in conflict-affected or fragile countries.

To ease the analysis, Chapter 3 distinguished actions that are *directly* geared towards addressing conflict and peace issues, versus those that *indirectly* aim to address it. We used Nicole Ball et al.'s three categories of peacebuilding typology: it distinguishes the “primary objective peacebuilding actions” from the “mixed-objective actions” and the “complementary peacebuilding actions”, based on the extent to which they are designed to address peace and conflict dynamics. We offered some (non-exhaustive) examples of actions for each of these categories. Primary peacebuilding actions include actions such as local dialogue and reconciliation or the high level engagement of the Special Representatives. Mixed-objectives interventions, such as the security sector reform or the support to civil society, are actions that serve to address the root causes of conflicts, and contribute to a country's long term stability. Humanitarian assistance or the support to human rights were used as examples of the “complementary interventions”.

When mapping this set of tools, instruments and actions vis-à-vis the liberal peacebuilding framework, we were able to draw the following conclusions: the *themes and focus* of the EU's actions seem to span across the full spectrum of the liberal peacebuilding framework. From security, rule of law (conservative themes) to welfare, social justice, identity-based issues (emancipatory themes), via human rights or governance (orthodox themes), the EU's toolbox of external actions tackle themes that are dear to all three main schools of thoughts.

However, when looking at the *approaches* that the EU uses when implementing these actions, the picture is different. The methodologies and approaches used by the EU in implementing its peacebuilding action, lean towards the conservative-orthodox models. From high-level negotiations with heads of state and rebel chiefs, state-centered economic reforms or fight against corruption, training and equipment of military forces, “national dialogues” or “reconciliation processes” to the support to election processes, there is a clear dominance of a state-centric, top-down approach to peacebuilding in the way the EU supports peace. This conservative practice is also noted when analyzing the recipients of the EU's peacebuilding funds: 66% of the total peacebuilding funds of the EU are channeled through international and regional actors, while only 0.1% goes to local authorities. While this figure does not take into consideration the redistribution of funds to local stakeholders by the recipients of EU funds, it nevertheless offers useful insights vis-à-vis the EU's modus operandi regarding peacebuilding funds.

Chapter 2 and 3 demonstrated that the EU's approach to peacebuilding spans across the full liberal peacebuilding spectrum. It also showed that EU's action leans more on conservative-orthodox side of the liberal peace paradigm. Yet, it appears that elements of an emancipatory approach to peacebuilding have increasingly become present within the EU peacebuilding policy documents, actions and approach to peacebuilding over the past decade.

In Chapter 4, we looked into some of the challenges that emerge from the coexistence, within the EU, of the three liberal peacebuilding models – conservative, orthodox and emancipatory. The localisation agenda of the EU served as an example of the challenges the EU can face in connecting the dots between what it says it wants to achieve, and the practice of truly emancipating peacebuilding. We saw that the EU is at times ill-equipped to meaningfully include local stakeholders in the decision-making, in the design and in the

implementation of peace actions. To date, local stakeholders seem to be only marginally consulted, and their role appears to be limited one of a “beneficiary” of peacebuilding actions. Chapter 4 showed the extent of the structural changes that would be required in order to truly “walk the talk” in implementing an integrated, multi-dimensional, multi-level approach to peacebuilding. Because of its own limitations, the EU will rely on its partners to ensure that a true “local turn” to peacebuilding.

The European Peace Facility's “Train and Equip” project was then used as a second example of how the various approaches to peacebuilding might at times conceptually clash with one another. We saw how much this new “Train and Equip” component was welcomed by the supporters of a conservative approach. The new facility indeed fills in a long-decried gap by offering, at last, the possibility of providing military equipment (including weapons and ammunitions) to partner countries. But while the EPF seems to satisfy the conservative peacebuilders on the one hand, on the other hand the tenants of an emancipatory approach to security express concern. According to them, human-centered security is the key to long-term security. In their views, the build-up of military forces of (semi-) authoritarian regimes with poor track record on human rights and good governance, would come with many serious risks. Tenants of the emancipatory peacebuilding theories argue that providing ammunition and lethal armament might actually worsen conflict dynamics, rather than offer a solution to it. With this example, we saw how the provision of lethal armaments could strengthen the conservative approach to security, but at the same time weaken the emancipatory approach to security.

The EU has a large scale of actions in its peacebuilding toolbox which *in theory* enables it to deliver a comprehensive and integrated approach to peace, conflict and security. But the practice is not as simple as it as it seems: truly connecting the dots between theory and practice might be impossible without clear

guidance and requirements to those who, ultimately, deliver peacebuilding in conflict affected areas. And for sure, there will time and again be conceptual clashes between the various peacebuilding approaches that the EU embraces. It is time the EU takes it to the next level and dares to engage in an inclusive process of elaborating an explicit peacebuilding concept, and a clear peacebuilding strategy.

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Annex

Annex 1: Discourse analysis of top EU policy documents, 2001-2018

Policy document full title	# pages	Year	Conservative				Orthodox				Emancipatory				
			Rule of law	Security	Institution	Average "conservative" terminology *	Democra*	Governance	Human Rights	Average "orthodox" terminology*	Local	Just	Inclusive	Civil society	Average "Emancipatory" terminology*
European Commission. Communication from the Commission on Conflict prevention and the EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflict (so-called "Gothenburg programme")	33	2001	11	29	12	53	32	5	17	55	5	12	0	7	18
European Union. A secure Europe in a better world. European Security Strategy.	16	2003	3	33	9	45	5	5	2	12	1	4	0	0	4
European Commission. The European Consensus on Development.	19	2006	4	17	21	42	17	25	21	64	5	7	0	9	16
Council of the European Union. Council Conclusions on a EU response to situations of fragility.	5	2007	3	6	3	12	4	8	3	15	1	0	0	3	3
Council of the European Union. Council conclusions on conflict prevention	2	2011	0	6	1	7	0	1	3	4	2	0	0	1	2
European Commission and HR/VP. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises	12	2013	2	29	11	42	0	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	3
European Union. Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe: A global strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy	60	2016	6	150	24	182	23	22	31	77	21	9	7	23	40
European Commission. New European Consensus on Development - 'Our world, our dignity, our future'	57	2017	16	27	19	63	24	31	29	85	25	9	45	8	32
European Commission & HRVP: Joint Communication to the European Parliament and to the Council: A strategic approach to Resilience in the EU's external action.	24	2017	5	54	17	77	11	8	5	24	16	6	12	6	21
Council of the EU: Council conclusions on the Integrated approach to external conflicts and crisis	9	2018	1	13	4	18	0	2	2	4	6	4	3	2	9
Total count			51	364	121	541	116	108	114	341	84	52	68	60	148

This table was created by the author (Charline Burton) based on a review of the policy documents.

