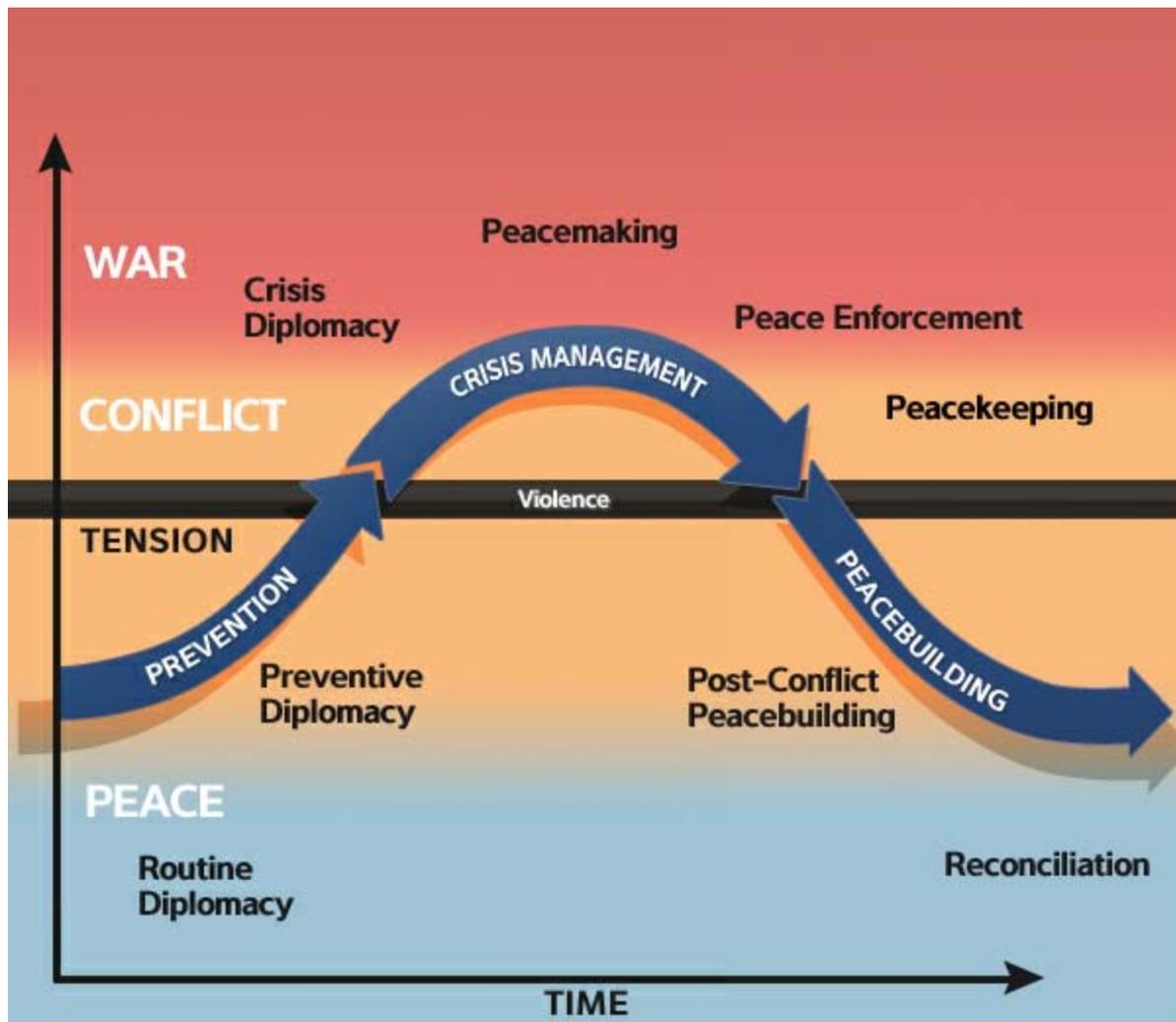


Curve of Conflict

Conflict has its own dynamic, and it tends to escalate and recede over time. The curve of conflict* helps us to visualize how conflicts typically evolve over time and how different phases of conflict relate to one another. It is one way in which we can deconstruct the dynamic of conflict and seek to understand it and handle it more effectively. Along the curve, we can identify discrete stages where action can be taken to prevent, manage, or resolve conflict.

Earn a stamp for your [Virtual Passport](#)¹ by clicking on the three phases of the Curve of Conflict below to learn more about [prevention](#)², [crisis management](#)³, and [peacebuilding](#)⁴ and answering the associated question! For a glossary of related terms, see [USIP's Peace Terms](#)⁵.



Overview

The first phase of the curve shows an escalation from stable peace to growing hostility, increasing tension, and then the outbreak of violence. The mid-phase of the curve is where violent conflict peaks and then begins to subside. The back-end of the curve shows the de-escalation of conflict.

Understanding where a conflict falls in the cycle is essential to developing effective strategies for intervention, crisis management, and for controlling violence. It is also critical to determining the best timing of those strategies.

Even when conflicts de-escalate, they can recur, and the curve can turn back up. At any point in time, a number of the active conflicts in the world are old conflicts re-ignited; they were resolved only to fall back into old patterns of violence.

Peacebuilding is a process and not an end-state. Managing conflict takes constant work, but it can solve problems, save lives and money, and it is worth our best effort, particularly in an era of weapons of mass destruction.

A concept introduced by and adapted from **Michael S. Lund⁶, who is a 2011-2012 USIP Senior Fellow.*

Source URL: <http://www.buildingpeace.org/think-global-conflict/curve-conflict>

Links:

¹ <http://www.buildingpeace.org/virtual-passport>

² <http://www.buildingpeace.org/think-global-conflict/curve-conflict/conflict-prevention>

³ <http://www.buildingpeace.org/think-global-conflict/curve-conflict/crisis-management>

⁴ <http://www.buildingpeace.org/think-global-conflict/curve-conflict/peacebuilding>

⁵ <http://glossary.usip.org/>

⁶ <http://bookstore.usip.org/books/BookDetail.aspx?productID=51314>