2. Research Design

Before the theoretical framework for this work is introduced, several considerations regarding the research design of this study need to be discussed to clarify its scope and limitations. These considerations include the methodological paradox of researching issues of prevention, the method selection followed by the selection of cases as well as a note on data collection. Afterwards, Chapter 3 will deal with the actual development of the theoretical model used in this study and with the operationalization of this model.

2.1 The methodological paradox of researching conflict prevention

As the explicit aim of this study is to contribute to the field of conflict prevention by analyzing the prevention of state failure, it has to be noted first that researching questions of prevention is met with a fundamental paradox: It is impossible to find empirical proof that the non-occurrence of violent conflict is the direct result of successful conflict prevention.\(^{15}\) Could it not also be that the conflict at hand was less likely to escalate than other conflicts in the first place? Or that the preventive measures taken by outside actors contributed to de-escalation, but the crucial efforts were made by the conflict parties themselves, making it impossible to precisely evaluate the “success” of the preventive measures? Of course, it is also possible that preventive action really did prevent a violent conflict, but in this case successful prevention at the same time destroys any proof of its success as the prevented conflict never occurred.\(^ {16}\) In such cases, a counterfactual analysis is impossible; contrary e.g. to chemical experiments, in the course of which a certain reaction can be repeated over and over while adding or not adding specific reagents. Thus, any study aiming to contribute to conflict prevention research has to find a way of dealing with this paradox.


To complicate matters even more, prevention itself has to be considered an extremely broad study field with various possible starting points, methods, and time frames, as illustrated by Lund’s fire prevention analogy: “Fire prevention methods differ in their strategies toward the problem, such as enforcing fire codes on house builders, requiring fire-proof materials, educating home dwellers to install fire alarms, speeding up fire engine response times, and locking up convicted pyromaniacs (but definitionally exclude fighting a raging fire).”\(^\text{17}\) The same applies to conflict prevention. While every approach to conflict prevention has its own values, not all of them can be covered in the same study. Furthermore, while studies on every subtype of prevention have to deal with the aforementioned paradox, every possible subtype requires a specific research design to deal with it. Therefore, the broad field of conflict prevention itself must first be broken down into subtypes in order to be able to specify the limits of the method developed in the next chapter.

To narrow down the field of conflict prevention, this study follows an approach that George/Bennett call *block building*, which allows to systematically specify the context to which results may transferred.\(^\text{18}\) The authors suggest structuring a complex field of study into various subtypes or “building blocks,”\(^\text{19}\) each filling “a ‘space’ in the overall theory or in a typological theory. In addition, the component provided by each building block is itself a contribution to theory; though its scope is limited […]. Its generalizations are more narrow and contingent than those of the general ‘covering laws’ variety that some hold up as the ideal, but they are also more precise and may involve relations with higher probabilities. In other words, the building block is self-sufficient; its validity and usefulness do not depend upon the existence of other studies of different subclasses of that general phenomenon.”\(^\text{20}\)

Therefore, within the scope of this work, the research field of conflict prevention will be distinguished according to a typology comprising two dimensions: The *first* dimension looks at whether the preventive measures are used to decrease the structural risk of violent conflict occurring or

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18 Cf. George/Bennett 2005, p. 78.
19 Ibid., p. 78.
20 Ibid., p. 78.
whether they are meant to defuse an acute crisis,\textsuperscript{21} and the second looks at whether the preventive measures are employed comprehensively, meaning involving several policy dimensions, or whether they are employed in a selective way. Thus, four subclasses of the complex field of conflict prevention can be identified.

First, there are measures aimed at decreasing structural risks of violent conflict by employing a comprehensive set of actions. Prime examples for this subtype are the OSCE Field Operations analyzed in a later chapter of this work. Second, there are measures aimed at decreasing structural risks of violent conflict by employing selective means. Examples for this subtype are bilateral development programs in specific economic or political sectors as well as specific capacity building efforts such as stand-alone rule-of-law programs. Third, there are measures aimed at defusing ongoing crises by employing comprehensive means. A prime example for this subtype is the combination of preventive military deployment in Macedonia in 2001 and efforts of preventive diplomacy at the same time leading to the Ohrid Agreement, which probably prevented a Macedonian civil war. Fourth, there are measures aimed at defusing ongoing crises by employing selective means. Notable examples are fact-finding missions conducted to investigate incidents that could potentially lead to the escalation of a conflict, attempts of preventive diplomacy by third-party mediators, sanctions against potential conflict parties or preventive military deployments to deter a violent escalation. The following matrix sums up the four subclasses in the field of conflict prevention:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Acute</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Preventive political field missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>Development aid, specific capacity building programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Typology of conflict prevention; author’s own compilation.

While studies of all of these four types of conflict prevention will find themselves in the situation of having to deal with the paradoxical immeasurability of a prevention’s degree of success, an approach of assessment will take a different form according to which subtype is being investigated. Thus, as this work aims to analyze the structural efforts of comprehensive field missions, the approach sketched out in the next subchapter will be transferable only to other studies dealing with the first subtype.

2.2 Method selection

As a starting point for method selection, three approaches discussed in the current literature dealing with the question of how to select indicators for analysis will be briefly considered in the following: mandate achievement, missed opportunities, and effectiveness of policy instruments.

The first approach – mandate achievement – seems, at first glance, to be tempting to use when explicitly focusing on the work of international organizations based on mandates. Mandates hold an official status; they offer goals defined more or less clearly by the organization and can therefore be transformed into measurable indicators. However, mandate achievement has been criticized by Stedman to be an unreliable indicator to measure the work of international organizations because mandates can be purposely worded by international organizations in a very modest way in the first place, aiming “to inflate their success rate by purposely minimizing performance goals […]”.22 In other cases, missions can also be overburdened with unachievable mandates, making it almost impossible to compare several field missions by comparing the number of goals by mandate they achieved.23 Therefore, mandate achievement, an easily measurable indicator at first glance, is rejected as an approach for this study.

The second approach is to use a research design focused on the process of escalation of violent conflicts, trying to identify so-called “missed opportunities”24 for prevention as discussed by Jentleson. However, such an approach is limited by two inherent drawbacks: Firstly, while missed op-

23 Cf. ibid, p. 46.
opportunities for preventive action might be identified, it cannot be assessed whether this preventive action would have been successful or not as “one can never be entirely confident in the conclusions drawn from what-might-have-been-scenarios […].”

Second, and closely related to the first approach, conclusions drawn from the identification of missed opportunities in a past case can hardly be transferred to policy advice on how to act in a present case. Thus, while the ex-post analysis of missed opportunities has an epistemological value, it is not considered suitable for the aims of this study.

Instead, Lund suggests a third approach, which consists of “examining the effects in one or more emerging conflict settings when certain policy instruments are introduced.” Such an approach, however, comes with an inherent drawback: Evaluating the efficiency of a specific policy instrument for conflict prevention is almost impossible as, on the one hand, the evaluation of efficiency would require reliable quantitative data, which in many possible cases is hard to collect, while, on the other hand, the causal connection between policy instrument and successfully prevented conflict cannot be identified due to the paradox of researching prevention. Thus, the only possible research design would be a comparative study, based on a design using a controlled comparison in which two almost identical cases, which both are at risk of violent conflict and of which one escalates and one is prevented by external action, would be analyzed. However, the empirical world does not offer suitable cases for such a research design.

Therefore, in this study, a fourth approach is created by a combination of elements of Jentleson’s and Lund’s approaches. This approach in turn is built on three steps:

The first step follows some of Jentleson’s considerations. As there is already a vast body of literature on state failure available, dilemmas and processes causing or contributing to state failure can be identified. Of course, one has to agree with Lund “that systemic factors do not directly cause violent conflicts. General poverty does not start wars, people do –

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when they act coercively to preserve their privileges, or seek to violently reverse their oppression and misery.”

The correlation that most failing states belong to the group of the poorest countries in the world (with the notable exception of Ukraine) does not mean that all countries with low economic indicators will inevitably become failing states sooner or later. In fact, several of the poorest countries of the world have remained stable over decades. Similarly, arbitrary thresholds set up in indices defining every state as failed when it undercuts a certain score can easily be over-interpreted. Nevertheless, one has to consider such structural aspects as factors contributing to conflict escalation.

Therefore, a theoretical model identifying processes destabilizing a weak state will be developed. The core of this model will be a set of three mutually reinforcing structural dilemmas. The interdependences between these dilemmas and other symptomatic factors of weak statehood deducted from an established body of secondary literature will be analyzed to identify all processes perpetuating the status of a weak state or contributing to state failure.

In a second step, an empirical analysis will be conducted to find out which of these dilemmas and processes can be influenced by an external actor at all. While it seems tempting to analyze the question of the extent to which processes can be influenced, such an approach would require the existence of a way to measure effectiveness. However, the measurement of effectiveness of administrative reforms still lacks a theoretical basis, as “service sector productivity is inherently hard to measure.” Furthermore, the quantitative data required for such an approach would not be available in most cases, while qualitative assessment of project success by means of interviewing the persons that have conducted these very projects would be inaccurate. Therefore, an approach based on measuring effectiveness is unsuitable for assessing whether external programs contribute to prevention of state failure or not. Instead, the analysis of whether specific processes can be influenced by external actors at all allows for a Popperian logic of falsification, as it is, in the case of this study, clearly

32 See Chapter 3.
33 See Chapter 3.3.
34 Cf. Ebinger 2013, p. 38.
possible to identify those processes that are beyond the OSCE’s capabilities.\textsuperscript{37}

In a \textit{third} step, it can then be assessed if and to what extent these processes that are beyond the OSCE’s influence are major contributing factors in the destabilization of a state when additional triggering effects occur.\textsuperscript{38} To conduct such an assessment, these symptomatic factors of weak statehood beyond reach will be analyzed from two perspectives: First, whether it is possible that they contribute directly to the emergence of non-state actors capable of challenging the monopoly on the legitimate use of force,\textsuperscript{39} as this is the major contributing effect fostering the three dilemmas of a \textit{weak state}. Second, it will be analyzed to which extent they influence the emergence of non-state actors capable of challenging the monopoly on the legitimate use of force indirectly. If the OSCE is either unable to influence all of those symptomatic factors directly contributing to the emergence of non-state actors capable of challenging the monopoly on the legitimate use of force, or if it is unable to influence most of those symptomatic factors contributing to the same effect indirectly, it will be safe to assume that it could not prevent a state failure in the event that additional triggering effects occur. If it is able to influence those symptomatic factors directly contributing to the emergence of non-state actors capable of challenging the monopoly on the legitimate use of force, but not those contributing indirectly, it might stall a further deterioration from \textit{weak state} to \textit{failing state} but be unable to contribute to the development towards a \textit{consolidated state}. Only if the OSCE is able to contribute to symptomatic factors indirectly contributing to the emergence of non-state actors capable of challenging the monopoly on the legitimate use of force in all three state functions can it also contribute to a development towards a \textit{consolidated state}. This way, an estimation to which extent external actors can contribute to the stabilization of a fragile state would be possible without having to judge whether a state failure was prevented or not – which in turn solves the methodological paradox of researching prevention for this particular study.

As such an approach requires a methodology in which one ““can look at a large number of intervening variables and inductively observe any unex-

\textsuperscript{37} Cf. Rudolf/Lohmann 2003, p. 6.  
\textsuperscript{38} See Chapter 3.5.  
\textsuperscript{39} See Chapter 3.4.
pected aspects of the operation of a particular causal mechanism,” a case study-based inquiry has to be considered the most suitable approach to test the developed hypotheses. However, not all conceivable case study designs are equally suited for such an inquiry. Moreover, due to their inherent methodological constraints, none of the standard case study designs (single case study, classical controlled comparison, large-n comparative study) is considered suitable for the research objectives at hand:

First, single case studies lack transferability to different cases as “social reality is not reasonably treated as being produced by deterministic processes.” Furthermore, as a successful prevention of state failure cannot be measured directly, no existing empirical case could be considered a so-called “crucial case” which would make a test of contradicting theories possible to conduct, as none of these empirical cases would allow for analytical judgment to be made. In this particular research design, it would be impossible to analyze the relevance of different constellations of the three dilemmas mentioned before using a single case study. Therefore, single case studies on the prevention of state failure should be considered mainly plausibility probes “to determine whether more intensive and laborious testing is warranted.”

Second, classical comparative research designs like the most similar case design or the most dissimilar case design share two inherent flaws, making them unsuited for this particular study. First, both are suited specifically to explain certain outcomes which in turn necessarily need to be directly measurable. However, the prevention of state failure cannot be assessed directly, as has been shown in the previous subchapter. Second, the most similar case design requires “two cases resembling each other in every aspect but one,” while the most dissimilar case design would require cases resembling each other in no other aspects but one. Both preconditions are hardly to be found in the empirical world, making this formalistic approach unsuited for this study.

Third, King/Keohane/Verba argue that even for qualitative case studies the principle of “[t]he more, the better” should be the guideline for case...
2.2 Method selection

However, the number of existing empirical cases of a certain phenomenon is limited. Furthermore, in the specific area of conflict prevention, the field of research was explicitly narrowed down as the paradox of researching conflict prevention cannot be tackled for every type of preventive action in the same way. Moreover, as the principal level of analysis within a given subtype of prevention has to be the state level, increasing the number of cases by analyzing sub-state entities like regions as proposed by King/Keohane/Verba to solve the problem of insufficient numbers of cases cannot be transferred to this study. The same applies to their suggestion of adding historical cases to the comparison, as comprehensive field missions deployed to weak states are a relatively new phenomenon in world politics. Thus, a comparative method suitable for drawing as much relevant information as possible out of a limited number of existing cases has to be found.

One way to analyze a small number of cases and to be able to draw conclusions valuable to other scholars’ subsequent cumulative research projects is the method of structured, focused comparison developed by George/Bennett. “Structured” in terms of George/Bennett means analyzing all cases using exactly the same criteria, allowing for a standardized comparison between the cases. Meanwhile, “focused” means that all cases will be analyzed with the same theoretical foundation providing a transparent “set of data requirements,” allowing to draw conclusions for general theory-building beyond the particular cases at hand. While one has to consider this approach to be minimalistic to a certain extent, it is able to deal with the drawbacks of the classical approaches while avoiding using a simple descriptive and atheoretical procedure that is neither comparable to past nor useful for future research to build upon.

Similar to formalistic controlled comparison designs, this approach is based on dependent and independent variables as well as fixed parameters. Within this study, the dependent variable to be explained is the ability of external actors to influence symptomatic factors which can destabilize a state. The independent variables are basically constituted by the

46 See Chapter 3.1.
48 Cf. ibid., pp. 221/222.
49 Cf. George/Bennett 2005, p. 70.
50 Ibid., p. 70.
51 Cf. ibid., p. 79.
2. Research Design

three central dilemmas influencing processes linked to the corresponding state functions: the Internal Security Dilemma, the State Leader’s Dilemma, and the Liberalization Dilemma. However, as will be shown in Chapter 3.3.2, the State Leader’s Dilemma can be seen as a result of reactions to the Internal Security Dilemma, while the Liberalization Dilemma can be seen as a result of reactions to the State Leader’s Dilemma, which in turn can lead to the Internal Security Dilemma again. Furthermore, as will be shown in Chapter 3.4, different dilemmas influence different symptomatic factors. Therefore, case selection should represent the variance in which of these three mutually reinforcing dilemmas causes most of the specific symptomatic factors. As the Internal Security Dilemma is distinctive in cases in which the Gewaltmonopol (the monopoly on the legitimate use of force) is already crumbling,\textsuperscript{52} therefore constituting failing states, cases which vary in whether the State Leader’s Dilemma or the Liberalization Dilemma is more distinctive are to be preferred as these are the cases that constitute weak states. In terms of parameters, both cases will be influenced by the Internal Security Dilemma and share a similar geographical and historical context.

However, as will be shown in the next subchapter, finding cases that fit these requirements includes narrowing down systematically a wide range of cases that seem eligible at first glance, with only a very limited selection of suitable cases remaining after applying all criteria. Furthermore, one should keep in mind that, because of all the methodological problems described in the last two subchapters, research on conflict prevention still has to be considered a “low information setting,”\textsuperscript{53} i.e. the testing of the hypotheses within this research design will only strengthen or weaken the developed theoretical framework, but not establish a completely new theory based on only one comparative study.\textsuperscript{54}

2.3 Case selection

First of all, it must be noted that the term preventive political field mission, which has been established in Chapter 2.1, has not been defined yet. While classical peacekeeping missions based on a uniformed military

\textsuperscript{52} See Chapter 3.3.1.
\textsuperscript{53} Gisselquist 2014, p. 477.
\textsuperscript{54} Cf. ibid., p. 478.
component can by now be considered well-defined both in international law as well as in political science studies. Johnstone observed that, “[t]he term ‘political mission’ is not well-specified,”\(^\text{55}\) arguing in favor of defining them by their function, not by mandate or composition. Thus, as a first step, I will follow Gowan, who defines political missions as “primary civilian missions”\(^\text{56}\) and distinguishes between those that “are tasked with indirectly contributing to stable and sustainable politics such as promoting good governance, justice or security sector reform […]”\(^\text{57}\) and those with “clear mandates to guide and sustain mediation processes.”\(^\text{58}\) Transferring these two types of definition to the typology of preventive measures, the first can be easily placed into the ideal type of comprehensive and structural prevention, while the second can clearly be placed into the ideal type of selective and acute prevention. However, while an academically suitable definition of the ideal type of a preventive political field mission can be easily set up by using the first part of Gowan’s definition, matching currently deployed real-world missions with this definition is harder than it seems at first glance.

First, as the former UN Special Representative Ian Martin stresses, all modern UN missions include civilian components with e.g. capacity building functions, regardless of their position in the conflict cycle (preventive, peacekeeping, peacebuilding).\(^\text{59}\) Thus, as the transition from one mission type to another is very fluid, it is extremely hard to classify a specific mission and particularly to distinguish between a post-conflict peacebuilding mission and a preventive mission, as peacebuilding by definition is a means to prevent a renewal of a conflict that has ended.\(^\text{60}\) Second, different international organizations use different terminologies to classify their missions internally, which are neither congruent to the definition introduced above nor complementary to each other.

In the UN terminology on the one hand, peacekeeping mission and special political mission are solely budgetary categories, showing only whether the mission is paid for from the peacekeeping budget or the regu-

\(^{56}\) Gowan 2010, p. 2.
\(^{57}\) Ibid. p. 2, emphasis in the original version.
\(^{58}\) Ibid, p. 2.
\(^{59}\) Cf. Martin 2010, p. 12.
\(^{60}\) Thus, Johnstone lists in his compilation several UN Missions both as “preventive” and as “peacebuilding”, cf. Johnstone 2010, p. 19.
lar budget, without regard for the function of the mission. Furthermore, political missions of the UN, while often lacking a clear mandate for structural conflict prevention, are at the same time often tasked with coordinating activities of other UN agencies, like UNDP or UNHCR, making them de facto missions which still can be classified as belonging to the field of comprehensive, structural prevention.

In the current OSCE terminology on the other hand, the term *mission* is historically reserved for field operations in conflict and post-conflict environments, while other field operations lack a consistent terminology and are given a wide range of denominations (e.g. centre, office, presence, project co-ordinator, etc.). However, despite this relatively clear-cut distinction in terminology between “missions” and other field operations, they are actually not that different from each other in terms of structure, size, or mandate, as they are usually civilian, rather small (less than 60 international staff members and up to 140 national staff members), and are deployed with the consent of the host state for a pre-defined duration (even though the one-year mandates are usually extended).

Last, while the number of civilian EU missions deployed has increased vastly over the last two decades, all of these missions are too narrow in their scope to be considered “comprehensive.” Therefore, even though some missions have tasks similar to those of some branches of UN and OSCE missions, they cannot be considered comparable to them from a methodological perspective. Regardless of their official denomination within their organization’s terminology, all missions that can be considered *preventive comprehensive political field missions* are listed in the following table.

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61 Cf. Call 2011, p. 10.
62 Cf. OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions 2014, p. 11.
63 Sorted in alphabetical order of host states. Field operations which can be classified both as preventive as well as post-conflict peacebuilding are written in *italics.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>International Organization</th>
<th>Host state</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OSCE Presence in Albania</td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>1997-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE Office in Yerevan</td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>1999-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE Office in Baku</td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>1999-2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSCE Project Coordinator in Baku</td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>2014-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory and Monitoring group in Belarus</td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>1998-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSCE Office in Minsk</td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>2003-2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina</strong></td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>1995-</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB)</td>
<td>UN</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>2007-2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN Office in Burundi (BNUB)</td>
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<td>Burundi</td>
<td>2010-2014</td>
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<td><strong>OSCE Mission to Croatia</strong></td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>1996-2007</td>
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<td>OSCE Office in Zagreb</td>
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<td>Croatia</td>
<td>2007-2012</td>
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<td>OSCE Mission to Georgia</td>
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<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1992-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS)</strong></td>
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<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
<td>1999-2010</td>
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<th>Mission</th>
<th>International Organization</th>
<th>Host state</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
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<td>OSCE Centre in Astana</td>
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<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>1998-2014</td>
</tr>
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<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>2015-</td>
</tr>
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<td>OSCE Mission in Kosovo</td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Territory of Kosovo</td>
<td>1999-</td>
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<td>OSCE Centre in Bishkek</td>
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<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>1998-2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>2017-</td>
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<td>Macedonia (FYROM)</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>2007-2011</td>
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<td>Russian Federation (Chechnya)</td>
<td>1995-1998</td>
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<td>OSCE Mission to Serbia</td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>2001-</td>
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<td>United Nations Integrated Peace-building Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL)</td>
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<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>2008-2014</td>
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<td>Mission</td>
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<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>1998-</td>
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<td>OSCE Mission to Ukraine</td>
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<td>OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine</td>
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<td>1999-</td>
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<td>OSCE Central Asia Liaison Office</td>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>1995-2001</td>
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<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>2006-</td>
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Figure 2: List of preventive comprehensive political field missions; author’s own compilation.64

As shown in the table above, a comprehensive field operation deployed with the sole intent of conflict prevention can almost be considered an ex-

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clusive OSCE phenomenon, making Ackermann call the OSCE the organization “most advanced in terms of creating institutions with a preventive capacity.”\footnote{Ackermann 2003, p. 344.} UN as well as EU missions are usually deployed in post-conflict scenarios, which – even though their main task is to prevent the outbreak of new violent conflict – is still a different context than a mission in a country that never experienced violent conflict in the first place. The comparability between these missions is limited further by the fact that especially EU missions, while formally fulfilling the criteria of a preventive political field mission, are often deployed in addition to military peace-building operations deployed by other organizations. Moreover, especially concerning resources and staff, huge differences can be observed between the field operations listed above.

Thus, when using this list to select the cases best suited to be analyzed in this study, five criteria are applied: missions of the same organization; with similar duration and resources at hand; variance in the independent variable; a similar context for the parameters; no large-scale interference by other international organizations.

First, as has been shown, international organizations use quite different mission structures when deploying field operations (integrated missions in the case of the OSCE; integrated missions or small political missions coordinating activities of independent sub-bodies in the case of the UN; several specific missions with clear-cut tasks in the case of the EU). Hence, in the current state of research, missions by different international organizations still lack comparability. Therefore, a research design based on comparing two missions from the same organization helps to minimize variance caused by different mission structures being applied, thus allowing to focus on the analysis of the question which processes destabilizing a weak state can be tackled by a field operation and which are beyond its capabilities.

Second, and closely related to the first criterion, the compared missions should have similar resources and capabilities at hand and should have been active for at least five years, as the work of every mission in the beginning is mainly hampered by logistical problems.

Third, there must be a variance in one of the independent variables to determine whether different dilemma structures among the analyzed cases lead to different outcomes or not. In this case, in Kyrgyzstan the core di-
lemma of weak statehood changed from the State Leader’s Dilemma to the Liberalization Dilemma with the revolution of 2010, while in Tajikistan the State Leader’s Dilemma has remained at the core since the end of the civil war. Therefore, with a shifting variable in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as a control case, it can be analyzed to which extent a shift in the core dilemmas of weak statehood in a weak state can influence the work of an international organization.

Fourth, despite the variance in the independent variable, the missions to be analyzed should be deployed in similar contexts, thus making it possible to minimize variance based on having to deal with completely different local phenomena.

Fifth and last, the missions to be analyzed should work without large-scale interference of other international organizations, i.e. without working parallel to another mission with a similar mandate (like the OSCE mission in Kosovo, EULEX Kosovo, and UNMIK) as well as without working parallel to accession negotiations to another organization, as the OSCE missions in the Baltic states did during the EU accession negotiations with these very states.

Thus, even though the methodological constraints of measuring prevention inhibit the application of a formal most similar case design, the criteria for selection still resemble the basic idea of such an approach. However, applying all of these criteria narrows down the number of suitable cases considerably.

First of all, OSCE missions offer the widest range of possible cases as most missions within the realm of the former Soviet Union are both deployed solely preventively as well as over a relatively long period of time, thus fulfilling the first two criteria. If these missions are narrowed down further by applying the third and fourth criterion, missions both in the Baltic Area as well as in Central Asia offer a similar context, while at the same time including a variance with regard to region. However, as soon as the fifth criterion is applied, the missions in the Baltic Area have to be excluded because all OSCE missions in this area worked at the same time the EU accession process of the Baltic States was taking place, making it almost impossible to distinguish between the EU’s and the OSCE’s influence on the processes within these cases. Meanwhile, in Central Asia only the OSCE operations in Tajikistan worked partly at the same time as the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT, 1994-2000) and the United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peace Building (UNTOP, 2000-2007). However, while the UN and the OSCE operations indeed worked with a certain overlap during the civil war in Tajikistan, in the
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post-conflict phase the UN presence was scaled down step by step, while the OSCE presence was scaled up step by step (see Chapter 5.3.1). Therefore, the concurrent presence of both missions is not considered a large-scale interference to each other’s work, especially since the OSCE operation is still ongoing.

Thus, the missions in Central Asia are the most suitable cases to be analyzed in this study. Out of these possible cases, the OSCE field operations in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are especially well-suited. On the one hand, they share a similar historical context as former Soviet republics, which comprises a threefold transition: First, from former provinces to independent states. Second, from centrally planned to market economies. And third, from the Soviet communist political system to more democratic political systems. Furthermore, both states share the geographic characteristics of being landlocked countries comprising huge mountainous areas which are hard to access and with only limited natural resources. Regarding their current performances in the state functions security, welfare, and legitimacy/rule-of-law, both must be considered weak states as will be shown in Chapter 4. On the other hand, regarding the basic dilemmas of fragile statehood, they differ in the peculiarities of these dilemmas: While in Kyrgyzstan the Liberalization Dilemma is more distinctive, in Tajikistan the State Leader’s Dilemma is more distinctive, thus providing a variance between the two cases.

Moreover, both missions share a similar mandate and composition and a similar budget, and they have both been active over a considerably long period of time. The OSCE Centre in Bishkek was opened in 1998. The current OSCE mission in Tajikistan opened in 2002 – with predecessors dating back even to 1994 – and from 1998 on, with the end of the Tajik Civil War, the mission has been able to focus on conflict prevention rather than conflict management. In 2017, the mandate of both missions was adjusted, with any references to conflict prevention eliminated from the preamble of the mandate. Therefore, as these two field operations between 1998 and 2017 serve as prime examples fulfilling all criteria of the case selection (despite a minor overlap with a UN mission in the Tajik case), they will be used in the further course of this study.

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66 See Chapter 3.3.
2.4 A note on data availability and data collection

While the OSCE Missions in Central Asia can be seen as primary examples for the attempt of structural conflict prevention, long-term OSCE efforts in general have been largely ignored by the scientific community. Thus, a reliable body of secondary literature on this specific topic is virtually nonexistent. While this observation does not apply to literature on Central Asia in general, scope and currency of the existing literature differ greatly. Furthermore, and despite the methodological concerns regarding statistical methods, statistical data to supplement a qualitative study is often of diverging quality for different countries or lacking altogether.

Therefore, for collecting data for the study at hand, three methods have been used. First of all, the body of literature on the topic, even though it is limited, was analyzed in intensive desk studies. Second, this information was supplemented by the study of primary sources, particularly statements and reports by the OSCE itself as well as newspaper articles and NGO reports. However, regarding the study of official documents and reports in general, two limitations had to be dealt with: First, reports of OSCE field missions are by default classified as “restricted” and can therefore not be quoted in open-source research. Thus, even though the ability to study the restricted documents as a researcher in residence in the OSCE Research and Documentation Centre in Prague proved invaluable for this study, only reports classified as “open” could be cited, which in turn leads to the second limitation: Reports meant to be published by any national or international organization are usually written in a way to communicate success. Relying solely on such reports could lead to an inaccurate image of the field operations, as the former USAID development worker and current scholar Sievers self-critically observed: “[...] the self-interested norm was to advertise strong successes. Basically all USAID contractors and grantees, and USAID itself, achieved success in the early independence years, according to their own reports. These reports also had substantial impact on scholars tracking changes in the region, and as a result, most scholarly reports of the early transition period also glowed. My own experience has been, especially as someone who has been asked to pen such reports, that

67 See Neukirch 2003 for a notable exception.
68 See Chapter 2.2.
69 United States Agency for International Development
these reports have little connection to reality.”70 While unofficial primary sources, such as newspaper articles or NGO reports could be used to counterbalance overtly optimistic, official primary sources by offering invaluable factual data on the one hand, their lack of theoretical embeddedness and the need to communicate bad news to ensure funding on the other hand often lead to overtly alarmist interpretations of these facts (especially in the cases of the online newspaper Eurasianet.org, which specializes in Central Asia, or the International Crisis Group).

Therefore, a third method has been incorporated: To fill the gaps left by literature and documents, I undertook several field trips to the countries studied. During these field trips, I conducted 16 guided expert interviews as well as numerous informal background conversations, both with international experts affiliated with the OSCE as well as with national experts. Due to the sensitive nature of the topics (especially regarding security sector details, corruption, human rights violations, or organized crime) and in accordance with standard research procedures when dealing with sensitive topics, the interviews were protocolled, but not recorded, while the background talks had to be considered as completely off-the-record because most respondents would not have shared their expertise in front of a running voice recorder at all.71 Furthermore, it should be noted that after the 2014 arrest of Alexander Sodiqov (a Tajik Ph.D. student doing field work on the Khorog incidents (see Chapter 4.2.2.1) for a Canadian university) and the 2015 crackdown on the Tajik opposition, field work in Tajikistan on security-related questions was considered too risky to be continued. The results of the interviews have then been compared to the results of the desk study to avoid the pitfalls of “following the ‘paper trail’”72 alone, such as the running the risk of overinterpreting certain documents.73 The combination of these three sets of sources offers a wide range of data to test the theoretical model developed in the next chapter.

70 Sievers 2003, p. 11.
72 George/Bennett 2005, p. 100.
73 Cf. ibid., p. 101.