

# Presage AI

## Anticipatory Intelligence and Creative Intervention Design for Conflict Prevention

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### Executive summary

AI is, at its core, pattern recognition. And humanity, when it comes to conflict, is remarkably predictable. We fall into the same traps — the same hardening of language, the same erosion of trust, the same accumulation of grievance — again and again. Every one of those traps has precedents, and every one of those precedents has left data behind.

This paper proposes **Presage AI**: an initiative that pairs AI-driven pattern recognition of conflict signals with an engine for *creative intervention design*. Its purpose is to spot conflicts before they harden, and to propose intervention pathways — including the non-obvious ones — to the actors best placed to act.

Armed conflict is the extreme and the exception. The real mass of human suffering lives in the broader spectrum of conflict *before* the escalation threshold: political stand-offs, communal tensions, inter-organisational disputes, commercial frictions, and the slow corrosion of trust between peoples and institutions. That is where Presage AI focuses. If we succeed there, war is prevented as a by-product — not as the headline.

Presage AI is conceived as the **orchestration and intervention-design layer** of a broader anticipatory peacebuilding ecosystem. It is complementary to existing prediction systems such as VIEWS, ACLED, and UN Global Pulse. Where current systems excel at forecasting, Presage AI addresses the under-served gap: translating a signal into a *concrete, context-aware set of intervention options* that the appropriate actors — state, civil, or commercial — can choose from.

This paper sets out the premise, the scope, the landscape, the gap Presage AI closes, its role, governance, stakeholder ecosystem, a roadmap, and the Programme Lead position that turns this from a concept into a functioning consortium.

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## 1. The premise: pattern recognition for preventable conflict

Conflict rarely erupts. It accumulates. Rhetoric hardens before borders close. Trust frays before institutions break. Grievance narratives sharpen before the first shot. Each escalation leaves a signature — in language, sentiment, economic indicators, migration patterns, and the rhythm of public discourse — and most of those signatures rhyme with history.

AI's strongest faculty is recognising rhyme. Modern language models detect shifts in tone and rhetoric across dozens of languages simultaneously. Anomaly detection spots unusual patterns in flow, demography, and commerce. Network analysis traces how grievance and misinformation propagate through communities. Each of these faculties is now production-grade.

Humanity is, in the aggregate, a highly patterned species — especially in how it falls into conflict. That predictability is the leverage point.

The ambition of Presage AI is simple to state and harder to build: *douse the fire at the hearth, before it is a fire*. Do it at the scale of the bulk of human conflict — not at the narrow, exceptional top of armed war.

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## 2. The scope: conflict in the broad sense

We draw a deliberate line. Armed conflict is real, and catastrophic in its cost — over 117 million people were displaced by war in 2024, and the figure continues to rise. But war is the rare extreme. The majority of human conflict, and the majority of its cumulative suffering, lives upstream: inter-communal tension, inter-organisational dispute, political stand-off, commercial friction, faith-community fracture, and the slow-moving corrosion of cooperative trust.

Presage AI's scope covers conflict in that broad sense: between peoples, between organisations, between political leaders, between firms, between communities, and between institutions.

**On detection, we are inclusive.** The pattern layer examines the full field, including conflicts deliberately engineered for economic or geopolitical advantage. Those are the harder cases, but their motives and actors have to be factored into any serious analysis.

**On intervention, we are opinionated.** We privilege the preventable: conflicts that arise from ego, status, misunderstanding, and the dynamics of fear — not because the other kinds don't matter, but because they are where AI-assisted design has the highest leverage and the fewest ethical traps. Every conflict prevented at this level compounds: we avert not only the conflict in front of us, but the larger, harder ones it might have fed.

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## 3. Why now

Three currents converge to make Presage AI feasible in 2026 in a way it wasn't five years ago.

**Mature AI capabilities.** Natural language processing now works reliably across multilingual rhetoric. Multimodal models connect text, imagery, and network structure. Open models run at a cost that permits serious experimentation outside the commercial AI hyperscalers.

**Mature conflict data.** The Uppsala Conflict Data Program has nearly four decades of structured conflict records. ACLED tracks real-time events globally. VIEWS publishes monthly 1–36 month forecasts. UN Global Pulse has pilots spanning social media and radio analysis. The raw material for triangulation is the richest it has ever been.

**Institutional momentum.** The UN Early Warnings for All initiative targets universal coverage by 2027. Funding bodies for AI-for-good programmes have multiplied. More than 40 percent of all published papers on AI and early warning appeared in 2024 alone. The field is accelerating — which makes the connective-tissue gap more visible, not less.

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## 4. The landscape and the gap

Important work is already under way.

Initiative	Focus	Strength	Limitation
<b>VIEWES</b> (Uppsala / PRIO)	Conflict forecasting 1–36 months	Rigorous, open-source, monthly	Prediction-focused; intervention out of remit
<b>ACLED</b>	Real-time conflict event tracking	Granular, global coverage	Collection and cataloguing, not analysis or response
<b>UN Global Pulse</b>	Big data experiments for peace	UN system access; innovative pilots	Pilot-scale; limited operational integration
<b>Dataminr / Insecurity Insight</b>	Real-time AI event detection	20× increase in relevant detection	Commercial alerting platform, not prevention
<b>International Crisis Group</b>	Political analysis & policy advocacy	Deep field expertise; policy influence	Human-driven; limited AI integration

Each is excellent in its lane. None provides the end-to-end connective layer from *signal* to *coordinated intervention design*. That is the gap Presage AI addresses.

And there is a deeper part of that gap that deserves its own name: **creative intervention design**. It is one thing to say "conflict is brewing here." It is quite another to ask: *which unexpected actor, with what interest, through which channel, might prevent it?*

## 5. What Presage AI is

Presage AI is three things in sequence.

### 5.1 A whistleblower

Presage AI does not mediate. It signals. When the pattern-detection layer is confident enough, it raises the flag — with context: which actors, which factors, which trajectory, which historical rhymes. Raising the flag is a deliberate, cautious act; most signals stay inside the human-in-the-loop review process and never propagate externally. The ones that do, do so with explanation attached.

### 5.2 A factor and actor analyst

Alongside the signal, Presage AI explains *why*. What are the pressure points? Which grievances are thickening? Who holds disproportionate influence? What economic or political interests are in play? Which historical conflict profile does this resemble, and how did those resolve? The aim is to make the situation legible enough that a human decision-maker can reason about it — and, crucially, legible across institutional silos that would otherwise each hold a partial view.

### 5.3 A creative intervention ideation engine

This is Presage AI's distinctive contribution. Given a conflict profile, Presage AI proposes intervention options — including ones a human mediator might not think of, or might consider too unorthodox to raise.

Some options are classical: shuttle diplomacy, track-two dialogue, de-escalation messaging, humanitarian access, sanction easing, joint economic projects. But Presage AI deliberately also surfaces the non-obvious:

- A **commercial actor** with trade exposure in the region, no stake in conflict, and internal mediation talent. Firms often have excellent mediators and concrete self-interest in stability — a peace motivator that is chronically under-used and typically ceded to diplomats and NGOs.
- An **influencer or credible channel** with standing on both sides who, if briefed early, could shape the narrative before it hardens. Increasingly, the people who shift sentiment at scale are not in formal institutions.
- **The neighbour** — in inter-communal or family-scale conflicts, the third party who holds a relationship with both sides. In geopolitics, that neighbour might be a mid-sized state, a diaspora community, a faith network, or a technical community that spans the divide.
- **A new forum** — sometimes the intervention is to create the venue that the actors themselves cannot. Presage AI can suggest the forum, the host, the framing, and the first agenda.

Intervention outputs are handed off to those with the standing and motivation to act — whether governments, civil-society organisations, commercial parties, or individuals. Presage AI does not act. It informs and invites.

## 6. Governance and responsible AI

An AI system operating on conflict signals carries profound risks: surveillance misuse, algorithmic bias, narrative asymmetry (a 2025 study found ChatGPT reported 34% fewer fatalities in Hebrew than in Arabic for the same events), and the potential for state actors to weaponise the system.

Presage AI's response is structural, not ornamental:

- An **independent advisory board** with cross-institutional representation.
- **Open-source components** wherever feasible, so model assumptions can be inspected.
- **Regular bias audits**, including cross-linguistic parity checks.
- **Human-in-the-loop** validation: no external signal escalates without expert review.
- **A published data charter**: what we use, what we never use, who has access, what is retained, and for how long.

Governance is built in from the start, not bolted on afterwards.

## 7. Stakeholder ecosystem

Presage AI is a collaborative layer. Its value lives in the five stakeholder groups it connects.

Stakeholder group	Role	Example partners
<b>International organisations</b>	Policy mandate, field presence, convening power	UNDP, UN Global Pulse, World Bank, EU EEAS
<b>Peace &amp; humanitarian NGOs</b>	Field intelligence, community access, mediation expertise	International Crisis Group, Mercy Corps, Search for Common Ground
<b>Research institutions</b>	Data, models, methodological rigour	SIPRI, Uppsala (UCDP / VIEWS), Leiden, King's College London

Stakeholder group	Role	Example partners
<b>Technology partners</b>	Compute (tokens), models, engineering, frontier knowledge	Anthropic, Microsoft AI for Good, Dataminr, plus mid-sized AI firms
<b>Philanthropy &amp; policy networks</b>	Funding, strategic guidance, policy access	Gates Foundation, Open Society, Rockefeller

### A note on technology partners

This group matters beyond funding. The value exchange is concrete: **tokens and knowledge**. Presage AI needs substantial inference budget, access to frontier models for evaluation, and the responsible-AI engineering knowledge that lives inside these firms. In exchange, partners get a rare opportunity: to direct compute and expertise at something that prevents harm, in a setting where their contribution is measurable and visible. It need not be "Big Tech" — mid-sized AI firms, infrastructure providers, and specialised research shops are equally welcome, often more nimble, and often more motivated.

## 8. Roadmap

**Phase 1 — Foundation (Q2–Q3 2026).** Appoint Programme Lead. Map and engage a pilot consortium across all five stakeholder groups. Secure seed funding. Define shared data protocols, ethical review framework, and governance structure. Launch public briefing site and stakeholder communication channels.

**Phase 2 — Sandbox (Q4 2026 – Q1 2027).** Build technical sandbox integrating VIEWS forecasts, ACLED events, and selected sentiment and media streams. Develop prototype early-warning and creative-intervention dashboard for one pilot context. Begin building the intervention advisory engine using historical case data. First independent ethics and bias audit.

**Phase 3 — Pilot Operations (Q2–Q4 2027).** Deploy with 3–5 partner organisations. Monthly risk assessments and intervention briefings for the pilot context. Integrate field validation feedback. Publish first transparency report on data sources, model performance, and governance. Secure operational funding for scale.

## 9. The Programme Lead

Presage AI is a consortium-building exercise — not a research project and not a startup. The Programme Lead role sits across institutional, technical, and policy boundaries:

- **Consortium development** — identifying, engaging, and aligning partners across the five stakeholder groups. Building trust between organisations with different cultures, incentives, and timelines.
- **Co-funding strategy** — a blended model of philanthropic grants, institutional co-funding, and in-kind technology contributions.
- **Technical coordination** — working with AI engineers and data scientists to specify, build, and validate the sandbox. Translating between policy need and technical capability.
- **Intervention process design** — mapping the end-to-end workflow from signal to recommendation. Drawing on peacebuilding practice to structure decision logic and historical case matching.

- **Governance and ethics** — establishing the advisory board, defining data-sharing agreements, ensuring the platform meets the highest bar of responsible AI.

Richard Wolfe is seeking a part-time or consulting appointment with a host organisation to lead this phase.

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## 10. About the author

Richard Wolfe is an Amsterdam-based specialist in digital collaboration, personal productivity, and the practical application of AI. His career spans technology consulting, venture building, and executive education.

Through ventures including **Wolfe & Wolfe** (digital collaboration consultancy), **Dotting.ai** (AI productivity tools), and **Bespoke Software Inc.**, Richard has spent two decades helping organisations translate emerging technologies into operational value. His work with Nyenrode Business University on executive education in digital transformation has given him direct experience building cross-institutional partnerships and translating complex concepts for diverse audiences.

Richard conceived Presage AI from the conviction that the AI capabilities now available to commercial enterprises should be directed — with equal rigour and greater urgency — toward preventing human suffering.

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## 11. Invitation

Presage AI is, at its heart, an invitation.

To researchers: to see whether our intervention-design methodology complements your forecasts.

To NGOs and mediators: to help shape the intervention library with the lessons your field has already learned, and to validate recommendations where you have standing.

To technology partners: to direct compute and expertise at something that matters.

To funders: to back a connective layer whose leverage compounds.

To decision-makers — state, civil, or commercial: to act earlier, with better options, on more honest information.

The tools exist. The data exists. What is missing is the orchestration. We aim to build it.

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