Improving Early Warning, Analysis and Response Regarding Armed Conflicts

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The Present Situation

Within the UN-related world, conflict “Early Warning and Early Response” or “early warning and analysis” have recently been recognized as important functions, usually (but not always) within the broader domain of the prevention of armed, i.e. potentially violent civil, transnational or inter-state conflicts. Major governments and well-resourced relevant international institutions and NGOs have or could have fairly effective warning practices; the harder problem is making early and effective preventive actions or responses. (Carnegie Commission on Preventing Violent Conflict, 1997: 43-47; Alker, Gurr and Rupesinghe, 2001; Carment and Schnabel, 2003: Chapters 9 and 10; Secretary General’s High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, 2004: 37; Kofi Anan, 2006: paragraphs 86-97). Writing in 2002, David Hamburg, retiring President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, a major funder of much of the work in the 1990s on early warning and early response in the US-UN context, could argue that “prevention is pervasive in discussions of war and peace” (Hamburg 2004: 277). Surely, after a century unparalleled in its human-instituted destructiveness, the Carnegie Commission arguments that “a preventive approach would have saved the international community almost $130 billion” over the estimated actual cost of “about $200 billion [spent] on the seven major interventions of the 1990s, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, the Persian Gulf, Cambodia and El Salvador, exclusive of Kosovo and east Timor” had considerable force. (Hamburg 2004: 313, quoting Kofi Annan’s citation of the Carnegie Commission’s 1997 report)

But times have changed. Increasing the UN’s effectiveness in conflict prevention or mitigation after “the high-profile disasters of Bosnia, Somalia, and Rwanda” (Cockell 2003: 183) and the continuing
frustrations of a non-legitimated intervention in Iraq and continuing genocide in Darfur are among pressing present problems. Winning “the Global War on Terrorism” (rather than preventing it) seems more important than either the meliorist goal of “conflict management” or the more transformative goal of genuine, world-wide conflict prevention in the minds of some, but not all, of the Security Council’s permanent members and their allies. Great power competition for hegemonic supremacy is also seen as historical, “natural” and inevitable by many “Realists.” On the other hand, within a preventive framework, it is notable that the “World Summit” of September 2005 at the UN unanimously affirmed an expanded preventive mandate that “Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.” (United Nations General Assembly, A/RES/60/L.1, paragraph 138)

Although Kofi Annan has recently argued that “prevention is now understood as central to the mission of the [UN] Organization, system-wide strategic leadership in this area is still weak.” Moreover, concerning our specific focus, referring to an earlier General Assembly resolution, he admits that “no specific progress has been made” regarding “early warning, collection of information and analysis”; despite a variety of related activities within the UN system, the UN lacks a “comprehensive repository for the knowledge gained in its diverse conflict-prevention activities.” A newly strengthened “Framework Team” could (but has not yet) form a basis for such a repository and the “extraction of best practices and their systematic use in the development of integrated strategies for conflict prevention.” (Annan, 2006: paragraph 94)

An Outline of the Present Paper

Rather than the easier task of suggesting incremental reforms, our main purpose here is to paint a plausible, transformative vision of what significantly stronger, UN system-related, early warning, analysis and response capacities could be for dealing with potentially deadly conflicts of these sorts, capabilities that are both necessary, desirable and feasible to attain. Such a vision ought to be projected sufficiently far out in the future to orient more fundamental restructuring efforts within that future world, and
sufficiently articulated to include strategies how to get there. Within the present context, at the editors’ suggestion, the future point of reference will be the next 60 years, bringing us close to 120 years after the founding of the United Nations.

Having commenced with a brief review of current and recent UN-related performances and capacities in this regard, the present paper will set up this vision as a commentary on three primary sources. First, I shall comparatively contrast of two current, often similar frameworks for identifying related specific preventive objectives and sociohistorical dynamics pointing either towards and away from violent inter-group conflict. As a third primary source, I shall summarize the recommendations in the UN Secretary-General’s just cited Report on improving the capacities of states, societies and the UN system for realizing these preventive goals. The vision itself will be an incomplete one, but one whose five elements give roughly equal attention to macropolitical, systemic, and operational, institution-specific perspectives. As for how to get from now to then, allowing that an initial set of more or less “best practice” strategies for moving from analyses to (coordinated, multiple) active responses can’t be precisely identified, I shall briefly suggest an idealized, humanized evolutionary process of less random and unenlightened, or “More Intelligent Redesigns” for conceptualizing feasible movements towards such a vision.

Two frameworks for response-oriented early warning information collection and analysis

As a concrete introduction to the conceptual and evidentiary richness of the early warning, analysis and response problematique, and as background material for better understanding the Secretary General’s potentially far-reaching reform proposals, I shall summarize here two recent UN-relevant schematizations of early-warning-early-response oriented knowledge. The first comes from a late 2005 “Early Warning & Early Response Handbook” (CPR Network 2005); the second comes from a contribution to an “Early Warning and Preventive Measures” (EWPM) joint project of the UN Department of Political Affairs (now considered the UN’s lead agency for conflict prevention) and the UN Staff College (Cockell 2003). If the later is evidently UN-centered, the former is somewhat
broader in its orientation, being the work of “an informal network of senior managers of bilateral donor
countries and multilateral agencies dealing with the complex issues of conflict management and
response” including several of those entities sponsoring or contributing to the former study. These include
a post-conflict reconstruction manual from the U.S. Army and an USAID planning and performance
monitoring manual, a “Compendium” of “Operational Frameworks” of Peacebuilding Donors, the Forum
on Early Warning and Response (FEWER), the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANET), the
European Commission, the World Bank, OECD and various other national research centers and UN
Departments and agencies. (CPR Network 2005:3-4).

Conforming to the operational imperative of “putting it all on one page” for busy decision
makers, the Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Reconstruction (CPR) Network’s “Conflict Diagnostic
Framework” is schematized in Table 1 above. The Handbook itself mostly outlines the use/revision of
such a framework in 7 steps: after an overview, the next 3 steps suggest lengthier outlines and definitions
for constructing entries to Table 1. These steps begin with assessing conflict-exacerbating and peace-
promoting “factors,” what are called “stakeholder dynamics,” and continue with a process of filling out
different scenarios and defining “peacebuilding objectives”. The final 2 steps “help define strategic
issues and choices, as well as key entry points for response.” (CPR Network 2005: 5)

Because they represent an important difference between the frameworks of the CPR Network and
the EWPM project, the explicit treatment of the actions, agendas/needs, alliances and synergies of
stakeholders in Table 1 and “stakeholder dynamics” throughout the CPR Handbook deserve special
attention. Defined as “primary, secondary, and external parties,” individuals or groups “with a stake in
maintaining the conflict and/or building peace”, stakeholders are profiled in order to understand their
“potential and actual motivations” and “the [peace or violent conflict promoting] actions they may take to
further their respective interests.” Urging attention to the “relative importance of the various actors and
interrelationships”, the Handbook and Table 1 tell us to study both conscious and unconscious
“synergies,” in particular note that the “combined effect[efforts?] of stakeholders can produce an effect
that enhances, or reinforces, the effect of individual actors.” (CPR Network 2005: 12)
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<th>Peace Factors</th>
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**Scenarios:**
- Best Case –
- Middle Case –
- Worst Case –

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Leading figures in shaping the earlier conflict analytical frameworks of the FEWER network, David Nyheim and Kumar Rupesinghe have commented revealingly about the importance of attending to stakeholders in an earlier essay which appears to underlie and explain Kofi Annan’s potentially radical, almost anti-interventionist advocacy, quoted above, of fostering “home-grown self-sustaining infrastructures for peace.” The guiding principles for the locally led and implemented early warning networks these authors report on are: ascertaining local perspectives on causes, dynamics and solutions to violent conflicts are heard by other (often non-local) policy makers, promoting inter-organizational synergies with (more quantitatively and computationally oriented, often far away) monitoring efforts in North America (and Europe), and linking warnings to appropriate responses and a peace “owned by” local, regional and international stakeholders. (Rupesinghe and Nyheim with Khan 2001:410). Arguing against an “interventionist paradigm” and those seeing only local perspectives as biased $\uparrow$ they conclude that “Top-down or select interventionist approaches do not work… [E]ffective responses to conflict require integrated action, and action that is owned by communities in conflict prone/affected areas.” Hence the need to communicate local perspectives upwards and outward. (ibid: 418f). A detailed and concrete example of such assessments, based on insights from both global and local organizations in the Georgian Republic (of the former Soviet Union) is given for the Javakheti region of the former Soviet Union. (See also Ivanov and Nyheim 2004) Besides the clearly decentralized power-sharing considerations implied by such an emphasis on local perspectives and interests, and a contemporarily relevant concern with sustainable peacemaking seen as often antithetical to politically motivated short-term Great Power or Security Council-legitimated interventions in far away places, I find the distributed, extended network character of a globally effective knowledge repository of this sort visionary, as well as mind boggling, and shall say more about it below.

Although much more could be said about the CPR Handbook’s framework and its construction and implementation, I want now to discuss a second framework, basing my discussion of John Cockell’s excellent, detailed account of the EWPM project (Cockell 2003). His paper attempts to get beyond the paralyzing view that early warnings too often fail to produce timely and effective responses entirely
because of failures of political will. The UN’s capacities also need improving. He outlines “the basis for an organizationally specific redefinition of conflict prevention” pointed towards its needed “strategic and proactive application in situations of protracted internal conflicts.” (Ibid: 182) Like the CPR Handbook, a document of similar length, Cockell’s article is focused on providing concepts and an analytical language for a 9 step process of multi-sectoral, inter-organizational applied policy planning beginning with early warning analyses (not the earlier, locally-oriented information collection issues discussed above) and ending with strategically chosen action responses. Cockell’s 9 basic steps are:

1) Analyze key causes of conflict and conflict dynamics.
2) Prioritize sectors for strategic and comprehensive responses.
3) Define specific operational objective(s).
4) Identify range of potential preventive measures for each operational objective.
5) Assess the UN’s comparative advantage.
6) Determine required combinations of preventive measures.
7) Integrate participation of key UN departments and agencies.
8) Coordinate operational implementation of preventive measures.
9) Monitor preventive action and determine exit criteria. (Cockell 2003: 189)

Beyond the obvious (and less obvious) similarities of this action-oriented, applied planning framework with that of the CPR Handbook, I see as the most distinctive difference this list’s intentional emphasis on the UN’s central, non-local, organizational specific requirements. Stakeholders are not explicit, important parts of the picture, although of course they are part of the “required combinations of preventive measures). Items 5 (the UN’s comparative advantage), 7 and 8 (integrating and coordinating the activities its departments and agencies), and item 9 (monitoring actions and thinking hard about exit criteria) have this, strategic, institution-specific character. There is nothing wrong, I emphasize, with research projects focused on improving the
UN's capacities, but as Annan synergistically recognized, that success is interdependent with the enhancement of more national and local preventive capacities. Written with more inputs from conflict early warning NGOs, the CPR Handbook focuses much more centrally on local, regional (and international) stakeholders, mostly both short- and long-term players, rather than what appears to be the promotion of more efficient successes and the diminution of resource-and-legitimacy-depleting failures of the UN.

But a conceptual reorientation with both reformist and transformative implications is also visible here. These success and failures appear to be judged relativistically, vis-à-vis other organizations, agencies and individual great powers trying to achieve semi-anarchic adaptive success in an evolution-like struggle for organizational survival. This thematic helps to motivate the discussion below of accelerating the intelligent, partially synoptic redesign of global conflict prevention capacities up to the point where new species of preventive early warning, analysis and response are born.

**Kofi Annan's “Progress report on the prevention of armed conflict”**

Attempting to articulate a potentially realistic longer term vision, it is prudent to start with expert judgments of the directions of feasible reform, even if one’s goal is to articulate a more fundamentally transformed world. Based on wide consultations among those seriously interested in conflict prevention, Kofi Annan’s impressive, very recent, previously cited 2006 “Progress Report on the prevention of armed conflict” is a timely place to start. Within this more inclusive text, we shall focus on those features that seem most directly relevant to our focus on early warning, analysis and response. Surely the previously mentioned “catch-all” character of the recommendations should also be evident. Table 2 summarizes the mostly incremental recommendations at the end of the report.
TABLE 2: Kofi Annan's 2006 Recommendations for Improving Conflict Prevention

A. Actions addressing tension sources and promoting pacific norms & institutions

1. Global, systemic actions: 98. Member States (hereafter MSs) should support private-sector initiatives on conflict-sensitive business practices, curtail illicit flows of small arms, find common ground against nuclear, chemical and biological weapons use, fight HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, focus on the prevention-migration nexus, try harder to attain Millennium Development Goals, and strengthen respect for human rights. 99. MSs should support international human rights, humanitarian, etc, legal instruments facilitating the prevention of armed conflict. 100. The international community as a whole should embrace the “responsibility to prevent” via peaceful means, as a way of living up to their obligations to protect their populations (the responsibility to protect).

2. Country-specific structural actions. 101. In accord with their Charter obligations, with UN support, Governments should strengthen their capacities for peaceful dispute/conflict resolution by strengthening their capacities to address structural conflict risk factors. 102. A better approach is needed to assisting the building of democracy, constitutional capacities and election conduct. The SG hopes that the two main related intergovernmental efforts – the movement of new or restored democracies and the Community of Democracies – will work together in these directions. Increased support for the UN Democracy Fund is also requested. 103. MSs, with support form the UN and other external sources, should consider creating elements of a national infrastructure for peace. Especially important for this purpose are the potentials for inclusive national dialogue and consensus-building processes, reflecting the views and voices of indigenous groups and women.

3. Operational actions. 104. The SG urges more creative and construction use of fair and clear sanctions. For example, the tracing and rechannel of natural resource exploitation revenues to meeting the legitimate needs of a population, as has been suggested by a Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. 105. The SG urges active and early use of Charter-mentioned means for dispute resolution and the prevention of conflict escalation.
B. Acting in Concert with actors from civil society and individual governments.

106. All relevant actors, from civil society, individual Governments, regional organizations and constituent parts of the UN system should accept and act upon the principles of shared vulnerability and mutual responsibility, thus facilitating support at all levels for the preventive actions proposed in this Report. 107. UN organs, including the new Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, and MSs should likewise deepen their engagement with civil society and other actors important for conflict prevention, as by inviting civil society representatives to provide regular briefings to pertinent bodies. 108. The SG calls for speedy implementation of the UN system-wide action plan re SC Resolution 1325 (on the roles and needs of women in security and peace relevant processes. and gender sensitivity), and for more attention by MSs and the UN system to preventing gender-based violence.

C. Enhancing UN capacities to meet its obligations and commitments

110. The UN needs more resources for a strengthened capacity to prevent conflict, and support for developing a related, system-wide, strategic vision. 111. He calls for Member States to support joint conflict prevention efforts of the wider UN system involving its development, humanitarian, human rights and political arms. Especially the increase of developing MSs’ mediation and prevention capabilities. 112. As a way of supporting MSs’ integrated strategies for addressing root causes of potentially violent conflicts, the SG invites these States to support the Interdepartmental Framework for Coordination (of efforts vs structural sources of violent conflict). 113. MSs should consider deploying integrated offices for enhancing national capacities for conflict prevention, as in Sierra Leone, and, perhaps, Burundi. 114. Bearing in mind the experiences in Haiti, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Timor-Leste, the SG urges MSs not to end UN peace operations prematurely, since peacebuilding can prevent conflict relapses. 115. He requests more financial support for UN humanitarian responses to avert crises and subsequent conflict, especially involving food security, the health and needs of children, refugees and the internally displaced. 116. He calls for Member States and the UN system to launch regular dialogues on conflict prevention, especially re their joint efforts to build relevant national capabilities. 117. Following upon the 2005 World Summit Declaration, more support is needed for the good offices of the Secretary-
General and related mediation partners, including an already approved start-up mediation support capacity. 118. MSs should consider predictably supporting conflict-prevention-activities with, say, 2% of the annual peacekeeping budget.

Source: (Annan 2006: paras. 98-118) relabeled, summarized, quoted and paraphrased.

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Elements of a more comprehensive vision

But there is more going on within, and in the preparation of, the Secretary-General’s Report than its obvious character as a multi-agency, multi-programmatic review. And many things are unsaid, or stated in cautious, unclear terms. What would a more comprehensive vision of improved early warning and early response practices and systems look like circa 120 years after the founding of the United Nations? Several more radical elements of such a vision are suggested by the previous discussion, Table 2 and the rest of Kofi Annan’s “Progress report.”

First, I would stress the transformational character of a global situation where a multi-level “culture of prevention,” seen as derivative from the “responsibility to protect,” had significantly upstaged the “culture of reaction” seen to characterize most Member States’ conceptions of the UN’s role, as well as most of the major Security Council actions of the UN’s first 60 years. Part of the realism of both the CPR Network’s and the EWPM project, and the Carnegie Corporation’s project before them, was their recognition of the reactive, hence “conflict management” (rather than “conflict prevention”) orientation of much of the Security Council’s actions.\sup8(5) Thus all of these studies, like others, conceptualize conflict dynamics in terms of cyclical terms, involving earlier escalatory and later, hopefully, de-escalatory phases; the effectiveness of different coping mechanisms is seen to depend on their particular appropriate for a conflicts particular phase, and perhaps even its history of phase sequences. Encouraging de-escalation and preventing re-escalation are as important as preventing escalation at all in the
discussions of most of these cases. That the UN authorized – as a “first” – the UN Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) for the Former Republic of Macedonia in December 1992 is so regular and lonely a citation of a genuinely preventive orientation of UN action, that one is correct in emphasizing the dominance of more reactive peace-bringing actions.

Think what a difference a multi-level commitment to a global culture promoting the peaceful resolution of disputes and crises would mean. Patriotic heroism – the highly gendered willingness to kill, to die, or even to commit suicide -- for one’s buddies, family, community, nation, state or religious or civilizational way of life -- would have to be redefined and redirected towards global, regional and local preventive practices and authorities. At least for significant minorities in all regions of the globe, war -- still glorified by so many as the highest form of human antagonism and service -- would have to be devalued vis a vis at least some parts of a local-to-global mix of peaceful, life-and-dignity-preserving, justice-approximating conflict management and resolution practices. Whether 60 years hence such reorientations would be primarily focused on vastly more capable, peace-loving communities, national, or regional societies, or the future Member States of the UN is of course unclear, but Annan was certainly realistic and perhaps also quite radical in his emphases on the importance of enhanced local peace-making capacities and pacific “stakeholders” discussed above. Somewhat skeptically, if all the bloodshed and structural violence of the 20th Century was not sufficient to convince large fractions of the world’s populace about the superiority of a culture of prevention, one shudder to think what horrific acts of human carnage, or other “acts of God,” could in the next half-century or so would be most likely to bring about such a transformation.

Here is a rather large, not quite clearly visible elephant in the china shop. Much of the Toynbee-initiated systematic literature on long term hegemonic competition within the European/World system sees the early decades of the 21st Century as likely to witness either a full scale hegemonic war or a fundamental transformation of the patterns of practice of the previous 5 centuries. (Goldstein 1988, Thompson 2001, etc.) Islamist attacks on the United States and the United Nations represent one such
threat to the UN and the current quasi-hegemon, the United States, China is seen as a potential alternative.

In a somewhat Spenglerian mood, Samuel Huntington has been particularly worried about the multi-decade threat to US interests and Western civilization of a (to me implausible) Confucian-Islamic civilizational coalition. (Huntington 1996). As is typical in other writings on “early warning and early response,” our choice of the two frameworks for discussion in an earlier section, most of Annan’s 2006 Report -- except for a brief reference to weapons of mass destruction in the rather long list of paragraph 188 -- focuses on smaller, local, development-linked conflicts. Partly responding to the evolutionary or adaptive specialization of UN conflict prevention activities its “comparative advantage” mention above -- we too here have largely eschewed this larger, awesome focus for the present paper. Perhaps it also should be said that Kofi Annan was courageous incrementally to introduce the categories of “systemic causes” and “systemic actions” (in the body of his Report and in its Recommendations, summarized in Table 2). To the extent that better, publically demonstrated capabilities obviously exist, a half-century of such continued improvements and rethinkings at the systemic level might incrementally produce significantly greater shared commitments among Member States to systemic changes in UN conflict prevention practices.

But it should be recalled that the UN was born out of a determination of a generation of world leaders and publics to do better than the League of Nations had done in avoiding disastrous wars like World Wars I and II. Perhaps it suffices to assert – a second key element of our vision -- that the ultimately successful, if perhaps extremely painful, handling of this momentous transition is a necessary presupposition of the visionary stance of the present effort. Surely this is, an optimistic, middle term projection of the future of the next half century or so, one making more plausible the shift in relative attention to a culture of prevention envisioned above.

Like the Carnegie Commission before him, Annan (2006: paragraph 4) talks counter-factually about the savings in conflict management and post-conflict rebuilding costs, in this case peacekeeping costs, made necessary because of inadequate, earlier, less expensive prevention activities. The closing recommendation (#118 in Table 2) of 2% of peacekeeping budgets
regularly contributed towards prevention reflects this thinking. Both the frameworks for early
warning, analysis and response we have reviewed above attempt to make such counterfactual
arguments more plausible. But that is a very hard task, especially if it includes the development of
analytically and politically persuasive action recommendations that will appeal across the many
divisions in cultural, scientific and political orientations apparent in today’s or tomorrow’s world.

Persuasive analyses of approaching conflicts can improve the quality of expectations of
what is likely to happen, because of which systemic, structural and operational causes, and even
how successful what kinds of actions are likely to be, with what effects, costs, savings, and side-
effects. But despite the increase in sophisticated training programs benefiting from early-warning
and response analytical frameworks (like the two reviewed above) and networks within, or
associated with the UN system, there is not now across the globe a widely shared agreement of
the best analytical (or interventionary) practices in this area, especially when computerized
systems, opportunity costs and hypothetical political situations are necessarily part of the
analysis. See (Alker 1993 and 1996; Carnegie Commission 1997: 42f; Davies and Gurr 1998;
Adibi et al 1998; Alker, Gurr and Rupesinghe 2001; King and Zeng 2001; Gordon 2004; Carment
2004; Carment and Schnabel 2004 and Schnabel and Carment 2004; Wodak and Chilton 2005)
for an incomplete but methodologically diverse overview of promising qualitative, quantitative
and textually-oriented representational and analytic strategies. As we have seen from the
discussion of our two existing frameworks for strategic early warning and response analyses and
recommendations, a key goal is the provision of timely, analytically and historically well
supported recommendations of situation-specific “best mediation/intervention practices”.

The construction and use of such knowledge repositories is an enormous task. Surely it
would be part of my vision of an improved world of the 2060s that abilities rationally to discern
the relatives strengths and weaknesses of relevant analytic approaches, and how practically,
technically and organizationally to integrate and improve upon them, would be shared among a
much wider group of pacifically-oriented professional scholars than is the case today, and that
their services were in far greater demand within and outside of operational conflict prevention networks and systems.

In one of his more potentially radical remarks, the UN Secretary-General argued: "If we are to enhance the impact of our efforts and address the root causes of conflict, the thrust of preventive work must shift – as indeed it has begun to do – from reactive external interventions with limited, ultimately superficial impacts to internally driven initiatives for developing local and national capacities for prevention ...[i.e. fostering] home-grown self-sustaining infrastructures for peace." (Annan 2006: paragraph 7) Obviously, the Secretary-General is concerned with the generation of what can be called more generally, a global cum local ("glocal") political will for peace.

But does not this quotation also suggest incredibly rich "informational" and organizational requirements? If we are to gather preventively relevant information as a way of getting beyond "superficial" "interventions" directed by the central components of the international security system – the Great Powers, the Permanent Members of the Security Council – this must mean going beyond our reliance on improved, strategically integrated, centrally oriented information/data collection efforts by NGOs, UN agencies and observer missions\(^8\) to increase our reliance on partly decentralized, multi-perspective "information networks" or "digital formations"\(^8\) as "knowledge repositories" going down to, or up from, local community levels to global system level phenomena.

The fifth, and last element of this vision is, of course, both obvious and difficult. If one sees enhanced early warning, analysis and response capabilities as a desirable goal, and recognizes that multi-sectoral, multi-integration helps make early responses more effective (CPR Network 2005; Ivanov and Nyheim 2004), the need for greater financial and political support is still clear. My midterm future vision therefore includes the significant development within Member States, UN Departments and Agencies, and associated actors, of a coherent set of commitments, and associated resources, for preventively-oriented early warning information collection, analyses and response recommendations. Tactfully but ambiguously, Kofi Annan similarly refers to a key feature of political will in terms of the need within and outside of the UN for "strategic leadership" in the development of relevant capabilities; a key task for
that leadership would be the encouragement, sustained by and supporting a culture of prevention, of a
glocal will to peace.

In a future when the hegemony of the United States and the alliance of Anglo-American (past and
present English-speaking) hegemons may still exist or be seen as things of the past, it is uncertain exactly
what the most likely and realistic prospects are for such a transformation in political capabilities,
consciousness and commitments. But the uncertainties concerning future power relations relevant to
armed conflict prevention goals, and to related early warning, analysis and response capabilities and
practices, are greater than that. If local stakeholders are to be empowered by their related efforts at
communal, societal or national capability building, this would mean a radical, decentralizing change in
order-producing capabilities even more significant than the many extant proposals for increasing different
classes of Security Council membership and/or changing their voting rights.

In a world of perhaps 10-12 Billion people and much fewer nonrenewable energy resources
(except nuclear power, and hard to access coal and oil reserves), green-encircled cities or megacities may
be the most “natural” population units seeking direct representation in some Third Tier of the UN’s
governing institutions. Functionally oriented regional and global networks are likely also to have greatly
proliferated, hopefully including those related to the different but related tasks of preventing armed
conflicts within a continuously developing world system. Not wishing to go further into such feasibility-
related complexities here, and keeping an open mind as to what future power distributions, power-related
institutions of public order, at what levels of the global system, and in what distributed networks or
alliances, will have further developed 50-60 years out, I shall rather turn to the analytical question of how
to map movements towards or away from the future vision I have articulated.

Mapping Possibilities for More Intelligent Redesigns of International Institutions

Rather than attempt a fuller prognostication of the early warning, analysis and response world of
50 years hence, I would like in this, the concluding section of this paper, briefly to suggest an idealized,
humanized evolutionary process of “More Intelligent Redesign of International InstitutionS” (MIRIIS)
for conceptualizing feasible movements towards, and away from, the vision I have just articulated. Optimization and "best practices" in such a complex process are very hard to conceptualize; it is clearly impossible conclusively to demonstrate their optimality. But "better practices" can be incrementally assessed, precedential learning can occur, and small reforms, if somehow "strategic," can eventually produce transformations in global practices, better historically informed rationalizations and repositories of these practices, and new, more robustly performing, species of international institutions.

If God is sometimes credited with the "Intelligent Design" of the universe and the different species within it, notwithstanding Kant's pioneering efforts, it is not at all plausible to ascribe the same degree of synoptic knowledge, omnipotence and benign intelligence to the design or redesign of international institutions on our particular planet. Neither does pure Darwinian "natural selection," the reproductive flourishing of the environmentally most fit among randomly generated mutations, make adequate sense in this domain. Individually and collectively we humans must unequally accept credit or blame in this domain. Thus we remember Pearson and Hammarskjold for their contributions to preventive diplomacy, Boutros-Ghali for a courageous effort to rewrite the Charter's "Agenda for Peace" at the end of the Cold War to include more within-state peace-building activities. Collectively the Carment and Schnabel collaborators and the CPR Network participants have helped institutionalize multi-agency-sector synergies and pacific stakeholder ownsipships in the planning of timely and effective responses to early warnings of armed conflict.

As "adaptively" interpreted above, the development of glocal institutions has a mixture of naturalistic, humanized, and divine-like properties. Immensely complex mixtures of local, national regional and global level actors and practices, they embody partly anticipated or designed elements of collective intelligence, while at the same time their practices have a profound, incrementally changing historical character, whose present and future inevitably contain traces -- sometimes historically understood as precedential lessons -- of their ancestral past. Their functioning can be both surprising (as if random or unanticipated), frustrating (rigid, stupid, nonoptimal) and profound (with emergent, systems-
level effects). Outcomes can be seen to contain the designs or redesigns of a distributed kind of human, organizational intelligence, nonoptimal skeletal incapacities, and hard-to-control natural tendencies.

In (Alker 2005), relying on (Axelrod and Cohen 1999)’s complex adaptive systems framework for harnessing organizational complexity and change, I used Equations (1a,b) below to suggest some possible future redesign changes in early warning and response networks. Modestly revised, Axelrod and Cohen’s framework of analysis can be summarized as follows:

[A population of Various types of ]

Agents, using Artifacts, according to strategies, in Spaces, lead to interaction patterns[&resulting events] within systems.

(1a)

Performance measures are used by agents/designers in selection processes, resulting in changed agent/strategy application frequencies, or success criteria, thru processes of copying and recombination within systems

(1b)

ED: I HAVE KEPT THESE EQUATIONS SINGLE SPACED TO GIVE A MUCH CLEARER VERSION OF WHAT A PUBLISHED VERSION SHOULD LOOK LIKE.

The mortal, more or less intelligent, and certainly fallible institutional redesigners, some of whom may not think of themselves in such terms, are the agents/designers indicated in Equation (1b). Two paragraphs above there is a very incomplete list of some particularly impressive agents/designers.

Without here going into definitional details, I would like to suggest here that this schematization of a kind of humanized evolutionary process in which Lamarkian learning can happen, and systematic success/failure lesson-drawing is a central subprocess, is particularly relevant for historically describing actual practices as well as proposals for reforming/transfomring UN-related early warning, analysis, response processes. It has repeatedly been used implicitly in the present chapter whenever “adaptive” or humanized “evolutionary” conceptualizations have been discussed.

Given that evolutionary processes seem to be unending, “best practices” are in the armed conflict prevention domain cannot not be conclusively, universally and timelessly defined. The counterfactual inferences needed rationally to defend even more modest “better practice” claims are very tough ones to
be reasonably sure about. Until relevant data-making, analysis, and recommendation-making practices have been institutionalized within good, multi-perspective, multi-sectoral record-keeping information systems subject to comparative lesson-drawing post-mortem analyses from a variety of political and historical perspectives, I think the judgments of experienced professionals in the conflict prevention domain (like Kofi Annan, the CPR Network and the EWPM project) are the best evidence we have to go on, as first approximations to relevant “better practices,” Hence I have emphasized such primary sources in this paper.

But in my earlier studies, I have found that institutional memories based on relevant, distributed knowledge repositories are weak, high level professionals often keep their deepest understandings on such questions to themselves, they sometimes disagree, and their memoirs, if they ever get recorded or published, are frustratingly incomplete, often rather selective, and sometimes incompletely self-critical. Middle level practitioners, like the CPR Network and the EWPM project participants, can be much more forthcoming. I believe that a transformative level of institutional learning or enlightened, knowledge-based evolution will have to go beyond the very imperfect, incomplete, and not-easily-compared written record in this regard. Indeed that greatest contribution of the series of studies reported in (Alker, Gurr and Rupesinghe 2001) was a hard-achieved, modest one. A multi-disciplinary international team of preventively-oriented contributors collectively developed a prototypical comparative, multi-paradigmatic historical framework and schematization for improving useable institutional memories in this regard. Since that framework has, to my knowledge, been little used, that remains one such evolutionary possibility.
Notes

1. Although I have given citations indicating the recent tendency in UN system-related discussions to treat conflict early warning issues within the larger functional context of conflict prevention, I shall not attempt to review the history of the addition of “early response” to invocations of the need for “early warnings” concerning potentially large scale violent conflicts. Suffice it to suggest that early warners both on the fringes and at the center of the UN system were repeatedly frustrated by their relative success in calling attention to emergently dangerous situations, somewhat less worried about criticisms of having called “wolf” too often, and frustrated by the resultant lack of adequately authorized and resourced, prompt, responsive, preventive actions. Hence the focus on the need for “political will” supporting “early responses.” The highly invasive and political nature of such “early warnings” has also contributed – along with the broader trend towards thinking of threats to the peace in terms of violations of basic human needs and human insecurities – to a sometimes confusing merging of more classical conceptions of early warnings about threats to the peace with related, often more general, preventive concerns with sustainable development, humanitarian relief or post-conflict reconstruction, and the specific concerns of many different specialized UN agencies and/or their sectoral administrative branches. For evidence on this “catch all” tendency, see the summary of Annan 2006’s recommendations in Table 2 below and the website www.reliefweb.int, “the global home for time critical humanitarian information on Complex Emergencies and Natural Disasters”. Michael Lund (2004:302) has thus provocatively suggested an on-line “PreventNet” for focusing on the conflict prevention objectives more specifically.

2. In addition to previously cited studies, I should also at least mention as highly relevant, but less content-revealing regarding my specific purposes here, the pioneering series of publications sponsored by the International Peace Research Association beginning with (Rupesinghe 1992), (Adelman and Suhrke 1996), (Jentleson 2000), the (Last 2003) chapter in the same Carment and Schnabel volume, a reform-oriented discussion of UN observer missions, and (Kirton and Stefanova 2004), a G8-focused discussion
of individual and collective conflict prevention activities and potentialities of the G8’s highly-resourced members.

3. In the formative discussions of the Conflict Early Warning (information) Systems (CEWS) project (Alker, Gurr and Rupasinghe 2001; Alker 2005) which I coordinated, with Kumar Rupasinghe as co-coordinator, there were repeated references by our contributors from Latin and Central America, Asia and Africa to the non-lasting, media-driven character of such foreign interventions. Methodologically, this meant that the “structured, focused comparisons” methodology of Alex George, relied on by many other Carnegie Corporation of New York projects and ably used by Bruce W. Jentleson (Jentleson 2000) was seen as too focused on single-dimension outcome variables manipulated from a distance, and therefore unacceptable as the general approach of our project. This encouraged me to propose a multi-stage, multi-paradigm approach to generating shareable categories for discursively, computationally and graphically representing conflict elements, phases, factors and interventions, and a more complex, peace-research methodology of “emancipatory empiricism” articulated earlier. (Alker 1996: chapter 10, originally published in 1988) Here is the motivation for the interpretation just given of the CPR Handbook’s linkage with the 2006 Annan Report on synergistically improving the conflict prevention capacities of both national communities and the UN.

4. Cockell’s explicitness on this point is most helpful, and largely corresponds to the CPR Handbook’s similar focus, a far cry from the inter-state focus of much early UN and League of Nations activity and the state-building or peace-building nexus that recent American national administrations have been very ambivalent about. The emphasis on a document written primarily for strengthening the UN’s conflict prevention capabilities in this area, seen as one of its “comparative advantages” vis a vis other international organizations or direct inter-state alliances and relationships clearly sidesteps the veto-hindered capacity of the UN for dealing peaceful with great power competition.

5. After earlier work analyzing voting alignments, their contextual correlates and their coalitional politics, most of my own work on UN “peacemaking” has mostly followed Ernst Haas’s “conflict management” orientation to the UN Collective Security System.” See the discussion and citations in (Haas 1993, and
Alker 1996). This work has tended to show that a collective security system has existed, has undergone significant evolution in its operating rules, and made a limited difference even during the partial paralysis of the Cold War. It has thus argued against frequent American arguments denying value to UN activities, taking more of an incremental reformist orientation rather than a transformative perspective.

6. Tatjana Sikoska and Juliet Solomon (Sikoska and Solomon 2004) suggest a particularly well articulated framework for analyzing the gendered aspects of conflicts and conflict prevention practices.

7. David Last’s chapter (Last 2003) is an excellent statement of how better staffed UN observer missions could help revolutionize systemic, structural as well as operational and instrumental, prevention-relevant, information collection.

8. For this sociologically sophisticated conception of emerging post-modern knowledge formations, see (Latham and Sassen 2005), which includes the most immediate precursor to the present article as a constructively oriented example of such formations (Alker 2005).
References


Ivanov, Anton and David Nyheim, “Generating the Means to an End: Political Will and Integrated Responses to Early Warning,” Chapter 8 in (Carment and Schnabel 2004): 163-1776.


