EARLY WARNING RECEPTIVITY IN THE UN AND US

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By

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ABSTRACT

The prevention of deadly, armed conflict avoids significant humanitarian catastrophe and crisis, and is preferable to intervention after the outbreak of violence. Prevention is divided into two major phases, warning and response; however, while there is a growing industry of conflict early warning systems, there has been significantly less growth in early response. This thesis examines the capacity for early response at the United Nations and the United States. It seeks to understand why, given the abundance of early warning systems, more conflicts have not been prevented. I argue that while the UN and the US receive warnings of crises and have begun to develop mechanisms for early response, there are several factors that hinder prevention. These include limited institutional support, both political and fiscal, lack of strategic leadership, and issues of coordination. The thesis identifies some initiatives that may help to strengthen the early response capabilities of both actors.
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1. Introduction

In the fifteen or so years since the boom in conflict prevention literature within academic and policy circles, what progress has been made? Conflict prevention scholars agree that preventing the outbreak of violent conflict before it occurs is the most practical choice for policymakers. The international community will inevitably find itself pressured to intervene in conflict situations, and catching conflicts earlier rather than later avoids significant humanitarian catastrophe and crisis.\(^1\) Given the advantages, prevention would seem to be the natural choice for policymakers.

With an abundance of early warning systems, both public and private, at the local, national, regional and international level, the international community is well aware of potential and developing crises. However, the abundance of warning is necessary, but not sufficient enough for preventive action. Existing literature only notes the occurrences of ‘missed opportunities’ and fails to rigorously explore this failing of the warning-response cycle. The majority of research on warning has focused on forecasting techniques, while research on response has been the ‘when’ and ‘how’ of operationalizing prevention. However, considerably less research has been done on the warning-response process.

Early warning is more likely to lead to preventive action when matched with clear mandates and feasible capacity for action. Warnings that do not consider the capabilities of targeted actors will find implementation difficult to come by. How does the early warning message affect a targeted actor’s willingness to respond with preventive action? Does the identity of the warner (e.g. is the organization providing a warning considered a credible source?) and the framing of the message that is informed and structured by existing policy and operational realities (response-oriented)\(^2\) affect an actor’s willingness to engage in prevention?

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\(^1\) William Zartman, *Cowardly Lions: Missed Opportunities to Prevent Deadly Conflict and State Collapse*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2005).

Integral to prevention are the early warnings that identify the various crises of the day. These warnings exist and are readily available, there is not a need for more warnings, what is needed now is more early response. In an attempt to formulate a conceptual framework for the warning-response cycle, this paper begins with a pair of common conceptions in prevention literature: 1) the credibility of the warner, as well as the framing of a response-oriented warning, will affect a targeted actor’s willingness to engage in prevention on the part of the targeted actor, and 2) institutional prevention mechanisms and organizational experience in prevention make policymakers more receptive to early warnings.

The problem is not the lack of early warning, but the lack of early response. In determining how to bridge the warning-response gap this thesis explores the second premise through case studies of the United Nations (UN) and the United States (US). Prevention units within both entities would, in theory, make early response more likely. However, examination of both reveals that while prevention mechanisms exist at the UN and the US, several factors make early response difficult. These include limited institutional support, both political and fiscal, weak leadership, as well as issues of coordination.

Preventing the outbreak of violent conflict is advantageous on several levels. Acting early to prevent conflict not only prevents humanitarian catastrophe, but also costs significantly less than it would to intervene once a conflict has erupted. Like it or not, as major global actors the UN and US will inevitably find themselves involved in crisis situations, on a humanitarian, strategic, or diplomatic level, or a combination of the three. Both the UN and the US must increase support for their early response capabilities in order to make prevention a more workable option.
2. Conflict Prevention

It is an easy claim to make that ‘prevention is better than cure’; however, there have been few concerted attempts at the prevention of armed conflict within the international arena. Despite the many advantages of prevention, it is more common to see the international community intervening in a crisis once it has reached levels of humanitarian catastrophe. The recognition of the benefits of conflict prevention has led to the growth of a prevention cottage industry and the beginnings of a shift towards a ‘culture of prevention’.

In addition to being the more cost efficient\(^3\) option, institutionalizing prevention would consume comparatively fewer resources. A report from the Secretary-General in July 2005, *Progress Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict*, noted that the allocation of just 2% of the annual peacekeeping budget to the prevention of armed conflict would constitute an enormous step forward in enabling prevention work.\(^4\) And despite studies such as the Human Security Report that report that conflict worldwide has been on the decline since the end of the Cold War, there is still a great need for prevention. Cases of protracted and latent conflict would benefit from preventive efforts.

The assessment of the progress and challenges for preventing violent conflict has mixed results. Most advanced has been the recognition that conflict prevention should be a part of the policy making process. However, the transition from rhetoric to reality has made considerably less progress. Growth in institutional capacities for prevention has been slow and while more is known now about the causes of conflict than was known ten years ago, less is known about the components of effective prevention strategies.

Theoretically the prevention of armed conflict as a normative approach was legitimized by the international community in the UN World Summit Outcome

\(^3\) In his cost-benefit analysis of six case studies, both retrospective and prospective, Malcolm Chalmers of the University of Bradford determined that for every $1 spent on prevention the international community would save $4.10. This includes a range of $1.2 to $7.1. See Malcolm Chalmers, *Spending to Save? An Analysis of the Cost Effectiveness of Conflict Prevention versus Intervention after the Onset of Violent Conflict* (Center for International Cooperation and Security, 2005).

However, this has largely been considered more rhetoric than reality despite being touted by experts as a successful and desirable model. Prevention was found to be practically feasible with the success of the UNPREDEP mission in Macedonia and other assessments of prevention successes (e.g. Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Cambodia) and failures (e.g. Rwanda, Bosnia) reveal that prevention is a feasible strategy for peace.

2.1 Defining Conflict Prevention

In considering where conflict prevention fits in terms of conflict resolution, it is generally agreed that prevention can occur both at the beginning of the conflict cycle—to prevent the outbreak of violence—and at the end of the conflict cycle—to prevent a relapse of violence. In Preventing Violent Conflicts Michael Lund visualizes the conflict cycle, identifying various strategies for each stage of a conflict:

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6 Macedonia’s recognition of Taiwan prompted China to veto funding reapproval in the Security Council and UNPREDEP was cut in 1999. While the mission prevented the outbreak of conflict during its deployment, 1993-1999, violence broke out on the Kosovo-Macedonian border in 2001 between the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) and government forces. The preventive deployment provided for border security (operational prevention) and its removal allowed for a growth in transborder organized crime which is largely believed to have used the NLA as a front for illegal activity.
The Carnegie Commission on the Prevention of Deadly Conflict clarified the definitional strategies for prevention in its groundbreaking report *Preventing Deadly Conflict*. Prevention at the structural level addresses the root causes of conflict and employs long-term economic and political measures meant to forestall the outbreak of violence, or the reoccurrence of violence.8 “Structural” prevention aims to build domestic, regional and international capacities for the management of conflict by launching initiatives to facilitate governance, maintain stability—economic, political, and societal—promote the adherence of human rights, and build civil society.9 In terms of the instruments and tools available for implementing structural prevention, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty identified a variety of methods within the political, economic, legal, and military spheres in their report *The Responsibility to Protect*, which include:

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### Table 1: Structural Prevention\(^\text{10}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Cause</th>
<th>Structural Prevention Measures</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Political**    | • Democratic institution and capacity building  
                    • Constitutional power sharing, power-alternating and redistribution arrangements  
                    • Confidence building measures between different communities or groups  
                    • Support for press freedom and the rule of law  
                    • Promotion of civil society |
| **Economic**     | • Development assistance and cooperation to address inequities in the distribution of resources or opportunities  
                    • Promotion of economic growth and opportunity  
                    • Better terms of trade and permitting greater access to external markets for developing economies  
                    • Economic and structural reform  
                    • Strengthening of regulatory instruments and institutions |
| **Legal**        | • Strengthening the rule of law  
                    • Protecting the integrity and independence of the judiciary  
                    • Promoting honesty and accountability in law enforcement  
                    • Enhancing protections for vulnerable groups, especially minorities  
                    • Support for local human rights institutions/organizations |
| **Military**     | • Enhance education and training for military forces  
                    • Reintegration of ex-combatants  
                    • Strengthening civilian control mechanisms, i.e. budget control  
                    • Ensuring accountability of security services  
                    • Adherence to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation |

At the same time, preventive action will only be partially successful when addressing the structural causes of conflict. A fully multi-pronged prevention strategy will also include “operational” prevention, sometimes referred to as direct prevention. These are short-term measures employed in the face of immediate crisis, see Table 2 for specific examples. Done with the express purpose of tempering imminent violence, responses

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include early warning and early response; preventive diplomacy; economic measures, such as sanctions and inducements; and the use of force.

Table 2: Operational Prevention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Operational Prevention Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Political/Diplomacy   | • Positive: Direct involvement of the UN Secretary-General, fact-finding missions, friends groups, eminent persons commissions, dialogue and mediation through good offices, international appeals, and non-official “second track” dialogue and problem-solving workshops  
                         • Negative: Threat or application of political sanctions, diplomatic isolation, suspension of organization membership, travel and asset restrictions on targeted persons, and “naming and sharing” |
| Economic              | • Positive: Promises of new funding or investment, favorable trade terms  
                         • Negative: Threats of trade and financial sanctions, withdrawal of investment, threats to withdraw IMF or World Bank support, curtailment of aid and other assistance |
| Legal                 | • Positive: Offers of mediation, arbitration, or adjudication; deployment of monitors  
                         • Negative: Threat to seek or apply international legal sanctions through specialist tribunals or the International Criminal Court |
| Military              | • Positive: Stand-off reconnaissance  
                         • Negative: Preventive deployment, threat to use force |

The various definitions of conflict prevention highlight the debate in the literature regarding the proper scope of prevention. This debate has centered around the disagreement on where exactly conflict prevention is meant to take place on the conflict cycle, i.e. pre-conflict, during conflict, post-conflict, or a combination of all three. Several prominent definitions for conflict prevention illustrate the range from the broad to the narrow:

“It [conflict prevention] is a medium and long-term proactive operational or structural strategy undertaken by a variety of actors, intended to identify and create the enabling conditions for a stable and more predictable international security environment.”

11 ICISS, 24.  
12 Carment and Schnabel, 11.
“Action [taken] to prevent disputes from arising between the parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.”\(^\text{13}\)

“Those factors or actions which prevent armed conflicts or mass violence from breaking out”\(^\text{14}\)

“Action taken in vulnerable places and times to avoid the threat or use of armed force and related forms of coercion by states or groups to settle the political disputes that can arise from the destabilizing effects of economic, social, political and international change.”\(^\text{15}\)

This inconsistency is further revealed in the variety of terminology used: “peace-building,” “pre-conflict peace-building,” “preventive development,” “preventive deployment,” “preventive disarmament,” “preventive peace-building,” “structural prevention,” and “operational prevention” have all been used to describe the field.\(^\text{16}\) Lund uses a narrow definition of conflict prevention—operational and pre-conflict—while others include both operational and structural prevention; others, still, expand the definition to apply to pre- and post-conflict situations. Lund’s strict definition of prevention is too narrowly focused on the pre-conflict stage and fails to identify and maximize the potential for prevention within all stages of conflict. Leatherman comments on the narrow conceptualizations of prevention and observes that “preventive actions are located along the entire spectrum of conflict, from latent tensions through the culmination and resolution of conflict to the post-conflict peace-building…In making this choice, one faces a trade-off between the conceptual clarity and the relevance of the approach.”\(^\text{17}\)

Lund’s definition has its merits as an analytical tool that sets specific parameters, however his approach does not accurately reflect the realities of application. Talentino

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\(^\text{14}\) Miall, Rambsbotham, and Woodhouse, 107.


\(^\text{17}\) Janie Leatherman et al., *Breaking Cycles of Violence: Conflict Prevention in Intrastate Crises* (Kumarian Press, 1999), 98.
offers a more applicable conception of prevention noting that “it is worthwhile even in the midst of ongoing protracted conflict,” and that the process is rehabilitative and resolutive in addition to being preventive. The ideal is to act at the earliest stage in order to avoid the outbreak of violent conflict altogether. However, given the political reality this remains a goal to strive for rather than a common reality. The fact that there seems to be fewer new conflicts starting does not imply that there is less of a market for prevention. There is a need to conduct preventive work at all conflict stages. An ongoing conflict situation requires interventions that aim not only to manage, mitigate, and resolve, but also aim to prevent more crises.

The growing consensus is that structural and operational prevention must be integrated to effectively ensure the prevention of armed conflict. The two are complementary and the current manner of differentiating the two types of prevention based on dimensions of timing creates inflexibility. Conceptually, structural prevention is perceived as a long-term strategy and operational prevention as short-term, however this distinction is more beneficial for analytical purposes. Conflict prevention actors should instead draw distinctions based on the objectives of combined structural and operational approach. This would shift the emphasis away from a temporal classification—when to employ specific prevention types—and avoid limiting prevention measures to various points in the evolution of conflict—a shift in focus to the what. This would better reflect the concept of the potential for prevention at all conflict stages.

Holistic approaches to prevention are best informed by existing frameworks and models. Assessing whether or not US and UN mechanisms for prevention reflect a holistic approach necessitates review of these frameworks and models for action. The following frameworks only offer a categorization of the different tools available and do

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20 Hampson and Malone, 83.
21 Ibid., 84.
not rank them. Without knowledge of which tools work best, and under what conditions, decision makers are seriously hampered in their ability to ensure that prevention succeeds.

The earlier discussion on definitional scope notwithstanding, Lund’s work on conflict prevention has provided much of conceptual foundation for conflict prevention and his preventive diplomacy toolbox (Table 3) outlines various several preventive instruments.

Table 3: Lund’s preventive diplomacy toolbox

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. MILITARY APPROACHES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Restraints on the use of armed force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Threat or use of armed force</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. NONMILITARY APPROACHES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Coercive diplomatic measures (without the use of armed force)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Noncoercive diplomatic measures (without armed force or coercion)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE APPROACHES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Policies to promote national economic and social development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Promulgation and enforcement of human rights, democratic, and other standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. National governing structures to promote peaceful conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diplomat Jan Eliasson presents a ladder of increasingly coercive actions that can be taken by international actors (Table 4). Similar to Lund’s model, Eliasson’s framework focuses mostly on diplomatic measures and does not adequately address both direct and structural prevention.

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22 Lund, 203-205.
**Table 4: Eliasson’s ladder of conflict prevention**

| 1. Early warning, react to early signs |
| 2. Fact-finding missions, by UN, by Regional Organizations |
| 3. Stimulate the parties to use the eight measures of Chapter VI, Art 33 |
| 4. Use the new generation of peace keeping operations, incl. preventive deployment |
| 5. Use Chapter VII peaceful coercive measures such as sanctions, not the least targeted sanctions |
| 6. Threaten to use military force, on the basis of UN chapter VII |
| 7. Actual use of military force, on the basis of UN chapter VII |

Moller, Oberg, and Wallensteen categorize prevention measures as *peaceful* and *coercive* instruments and divide these into the various sub-measures shown below:

**Table 5: Moller, et.al.**

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While not a flawed typology in itself, again it does not reflect the categorizations in the pre-existing literature: structural and direct.\textsuperscript{25} Despite the admitted flaws in each model it would be unrealistic to expect a perfect conceptualization of prevention, taken in combination these models are able to provide policymakers with a starting point. Policymakers must not only know how to prevent conflict, but they must also have a clear idea of what their goals are.

\textbf{2.2 Defining prevention as a function of success}

What is successful conflict prevention? How should it be defined and operationalized? When prevention is actually implemented, how is it to be measured and evaluated? There are several definitions of what constitutes ‘success’ and how to measure it but the field still lacks a shared concept of what constitutes prevention as a dependent variable.\textsuperscript{26} Wallensteen and Moller review the current debate in the literature regarding the definition of the dependent variable of “success.”\textsuperscript{27} Some scholars argue for an “either…or” definition of success where prevention either worked, or it did not. However this fails to take into account the nuances found in context-specific studies. These studies are too case specific, which limits their ability to draw broad generalizations. An attempt to bridge the two and offer an alternative conception of the dependent variable would assess prevention on a continuum of short, medium and long-term impacts.

As the goal of conflict prevention is to avoid the outbreak of violent conflict, a short-term impact would be whether or not the case resulted in war or violent conflict. Medium-term impact can be operationalized as the absence of serious dispute between the parties within a five-year time span. Long-term impact would be the initiation of a peace process. In discussing the temporal factor in evaluating success Wallensteen and

\textsuperscript{25} This in itself typifies the problem of scope and definition that has been cited previously (Lund, Ackermann, others) wherein there still exists a degree of terminological confusion.

\textsuperscript{26} Wallensteen and Moller, 7.

\textsuperscript{27} For an extended review of this debate, see Wallensteen (2008), 7-11. The various definitions of success include Sriram and Wermester (2003), “Success must be very context-sensitive and take history, risks and goals into consideration”; Vayrynen (2003), “Success depends on political context and the ability to read it correctly…outcomes will vary between the stages of the conflict cycle”; Miall, Ramsbotham, and Woodhouse (2005) “The conjunction of a de-escalation of political tensions and steps towards addressing and transforming the issue in the conflict”;
Moller draw from Talento’s definition. Talento considers prevention successful when it prevents or ends conflict in the short term and undertakes efforts, developmental or rehabilitative, to alter the relationships and inequalities that produced the tendencies towards violence. When evaluating prevention success and failure in Cambodia and Bosnia, Talento utilizes a checklist of short-term and long-term markers that assume an *accumulative* approach to prevention as outlined below:

1. Have the adversaries engaged in negotiations, truce talks, or any head-to-head meetings? [short-term]
2. Has an effort been made to reduce violence and prevent its escalation? [short-term]
3. Have conflict-generating structures been identified and is there a plan to alter conflict dynamics? [long-term]
4. Has the salience of group identity been decrease in the political and economic realms? [long-term]

Prevention is an accumulative process because the long-term actions (questions three and four) are largely dependent upon the completion of short-term actions (questions one and two). This evaluation of success emphasizes the fact that prevention is a process that requires long-term, committed effort. Evaluating prevention success in this manner emphasizes the fact that prevention is a process that requires long-term engagement rather than quick-fix solutions.

At the end of reviewing all the current definitions of success, Wallensteen and Moller propose that prevention be evaluated in terms of “Immediate avoidance of escalation to major armed conflict (minimum success) and no additional serious dispute among the parties (for at least five years, could be a way of operationalizing this, e.g. a measure of the change in frequency and severity of the following disputes). The initiation of a peace process would be the maximum criterion of success.”

Because peace processes have been known to fail, a modification of this definition would be that the initiation of a *sustainable* peace process would be a maximum criterion of success.

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28 Talento, 72.
29 Ibid., 73.
30 Wallensteen and Moller, 10-11.
2.3 Challenges

In his article “Give War a Chance,” Luttwak argues that conflict is necessary and that sometimes it is better to let it run its course rather than interrupting this process.31 However, prevention does not assume that conflict is unnatural; to the contrary conflict is seen as a natural byproduct of human interaction, resulting from the existence of incompatible goals. Early critiques noted that prevention proponents understated the field’s risks and costs.32 However, the claim that conflict prevention is easy has never been made. To the contrary, prevention scholars and practitioners are very cognizant of prevention’s many difficulties.

Prevention is not without its problems, and overall challenges include issues of scope, conflict analysis, coordination, and political will.33 Lacking is a common theoretical framework that identifies scope, terminology and definitions. As shown by the range of definitions cited previously, the scope of conflict prevention ranges from the broad to the narrow. Although, for the most part, the definition described in the Agenda for Peace has been adopted in both prevention literature and practice. Also needed are templates for early warning analysis and frameworks for empirical analysis.34 Within early warning there is no shortage of information. Non-governmental organizations, the media, and watchdog organizations consistently produce voluminous accounts of human rights abuses, potential crisis situations, and emerging conflicts. Lacking are the early response mechanisms necessary to take this information and effectively translate them into action. Currently efforts to prevent conflict are ad hoc and uncoordinated, institutionalization of prevention has been largely stymied by a lack of political will.35

34 Aggestam, 16.
35 Ibid., 19.
Prevention is political and this is illustrated in the reticence that many Third World governments (e.g. the Group of 77) have had when it comes to moving from rhetoric to reality. The majority of these countries score high on the various warning indices and are in the most need of structural and operational prevention. However, these are also the countries that are the most apprehensive of any perceived threat to their sovereignty. There is the fear that prevention may be a convenient excuse for intervention by the more powerful.\textsuperscript{36}

3. Early Warning and Early Response

The lack of prevention is not due to a lack of early warning. To the contrary, there is an abundance of warning but this is not sufficient enough for preventive action. In his book *Cowardly Lions* Zartmann profiles several cases of missed opportunities for prevention that occurred despite the existence of early warning.\(^{37}\) It is less a problem of inadequate warning than a problem of weak or inappropriate response. The lack of political will has meant that prevention has been ad hoc and uncoordinated. Existing literature largely notes the occurrences of ‘missed opportunities’ and focuses less on bridging the warning-response gap.

The majority of early warning definitions incorporate three main components when describing warning, mainly the gathering of information, strategic analysis and communication channel.\(^{38}\) Adelman defines early warning as “the communication of information on a crisis area, analysis of that information, and development of potential, timely, strategic response options to the crisis.”\(^{39}\)

There is a symbiotic relationship between early warning and early response, necessitating the development of response strategies that correspond with institutional mandates, capacities and mechanisms. The assumption being that institutional prevention mechanisms and organizational experience in prevention make policymakers more receptive to early warnings. This advocates for the development of institutional mandates and feasible response capacities for prevention. Currently policymakers are less inclined to demand early warning, let alone take it seriously and respond to it.\(^{40}\) A recent review of early warning models by the Center for Strategic and International Studies noted that

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practitioners often perceive indices of early warning and state weakness as “conventional wisdom watches.”\textsuperscript{41} This perception of early warning systems is less than ideal.

Do existing prevention mechanisms create, or enhance, an organizational receptivity to early warnings? The underlying assumption is that a warning is more likely to lead to preventive action when it frames its message in terms of mandates and feasible capacities for action. If a warning recommends action x, y, z and the targeted actor only has the capacity to fulfill x and y, how likely is that warning to provoke a response? Third party interveners are reluctant enough to prevent conflict, supplying them with recommendations that are infeasible gives them even more reason to pass on prevention. Warnings are often sounded, but response is less than likely in part due to actor’s inability and unwillingness to form a quick and effective response.

When identifying the various warning stimuli, George and Holl observe the importance of the rewards and costs associated with recognizing and correctly appraising warning signals.\textsuperscript{42} Efforts to strengthen early warning must take into consideration the contextual constraints that bind policymakers, e.g. domestic elections, credibility, macropolicy frameworks, international problems, competing agendas, other international actors, budgetary constraints. Policymakers are receiving warning signals in the midst of competing issues and if not properly framed these warnings will fail to make it past several barriers.\textsuperscript{43} On top of it, these warning systems are not uniform in their methodologies and can, at times, be contradictory. It is unlikely to expect that policymakers will take the time to synthesize this information.

Also worth mentioning is the commonly noted obstacle of garnering enough “political will” to engage in prevention. Lund states that it may, in fact, be an “excess of political wills,” noting that the international community is present in much of the developing world in many forms and that the multitude of policy goals is not necessarily

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{41} F. Barton and K. von Hippel, \textit{Early Warning? A Review of Conflict Prediction Models and Systems}, (Center for Strategic & International Studies, February 2008).
  \item \textsuperscript{42} The other warning stimuli identified by George and Holl are the strength of the signal relative to the strength of the confusing or distracting background stimuli (“signal-to-noise” ratio) and the expectations of observers called upon to evaluate such signals.
  \item \textsuperscript{43} Adelman identifies three such barriers to receptivity. \textit{Drowning}: a clear signal of an impending disaster is overwhelmed by other contrary signals. \textit{Crushing}: signals from other crises either push the signal concerned to one side or crush it among the other signals from other hot spots. \textit{Dead-ending}: a signal is received but not sent to an appropriate level for analysis and response.
\end{itemize}
He observes that many actors are already operating in conflict-prone places in the form of “diplomatic missions, development programs such as health, education and infrastructure, trade and commercial activities, military assistance, and efforts to promote democracy, human rights, and civil society,” prevention seems less effective because, as Lund comments, “everyone is busy doing other things.”

Jentleson argues that while political will is a severe constraint, it is a *malleable* one and therefore subject to public pressures. Is it to be accepted that political will is fixed? Jentleson presents evidence that the American public is more internationalist than isolationist and has the potential to be mobilized as a political force for prevention.

Not only is it a matter of producing more response-oriented analysis, the warning-response cycle will also be improved by addressing the institutional reasons for policymaker passivity. George & Holl identify six reasons for said passivity:

1. The relatively low stakes perceived to be at risk
2. Despite efforts to improve early warning indicators there is still the problem of understanding situations well enough to forecast which ones are likely to explode and when.
3. Early warning indicators typically do not speak for themselves and require analysis and interpretation.
4. Policymakers may be reluctant to credit the warning and to take preventive action because they have been subjected too often to the “cry wolf” phenomenon.
5. Warning overload induces passivity.
6. Reluctance to act in the face of warning results not because warning is not taken seriously but rather because decision makers take it very seriously but are deterred by the prospects of a “slippery slope”

When policymakers do finally respond, it is usually in response to the outbreak of violence and the escalation of the conflict situation. This is a paradox of warning and response. Policymakers are more likely to take preventive action in cases of rapid intensification and global attention, but prevention is more likely to be successful in cases

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45 Ibid.
47 George and Holl, 29.
with little attention and protracted intensification.\textsuperscript{48} Outright political disincentives, limited political incentives, and lack of political will impede the closing of the warning-response gap. The development of prevention entities within governments, international organizations, and regional organizations will hopefully enhance the role of prevention.\textsuperscript{49} This would reorient these institutions toward providing policy analysis and developing policy strategies for issues that are not yet pressing but have the potential to escalate.\textsuperscript{50}

In 2003 there were few early warning indicator systems and since then there has been a boom in the number of indices.\textsuperscript{51} When discussing the warning-response gap Cockell notes that policy makers focus too much on the constraints of political will and perception. It would be more constructive to reframe the problem with a focus on closing the gap between warning and action.

Applied early warning should be viewed as a process that connects the content of analysis directly to the operational assessment and implementation of options for action.\textsuperscript{52} If early warning analyses want to effect prevention response they must be adjusted to correspond with existing policy mechanisms. Warning is an exercise in advocacy and every activist knows that they must package their messages to be user-friendly and targeted for the end-user, which in this case is the policy community.\textsuperscript{53} Warnings need to be framed in terms of the macropolicy objectives of the targeted governmental or multilateral conflict prevention program. The presentation of early warning analysis has

\textsuperscript{48} Jentleson, 93.
\textsuperscript{49} The UN Secretariat, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) all have some sort of early warning mechanism in place. At the subregional level the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and South African Development Community (SADC) are all in varying stages of developing their capacity for early warning. The nongovernmental organization (NGO) community is populated with organizations that are dedicated to bringing current and potential crises to the attention of the international community, e.g. the International Crisis Group, International Alert, Human Rights Watch, the Genocide Prevention Network, and Amnesty International.
\textsuperscript{51} E.g. The Political Instability Task Force, the Failed States Index, Brookings’ Index of State Weakness in the Developing World, the Peace and Conflict Instability Ledger, the Global Peace Index, Freedom House’s ‘Freedom in the World’ Index, Transparency International’s Corruption Index
\textsuperscript{53} Cockell (1998), 231.
its own role to play in closing the warning-response gap and structuring analysis so that it focuses on policy and operations.\textsuperscript{54}

Warnings that are informed and structured by existing policy and operational realities (response-oriented) should seek to answer four basic questions:

1. What are the actors/organizations that are responsible for acting on early warning analysis and have the capacity to implement rapid responses?
2. What are the policy frameworks and bureaucratic mandates by which such decisions are made?
3. What are the operational mechanisms, and their resource constraints, that correspond to each organization’s policy frameworks and mandates?
4. By what processes, and in what format, should early warning be disseminated to these operational actors?\textsuperscript{55}

A critique of warnings is that they are too technical and fail to frame themselves in the language of policymakers. Warning, and its communication, is essentially advocacy. Proponents of conflict prevention are trying to influence policymakers to choose a specific action, i.e. acting early. Good advocates craft their message in ways that maximize receptivity on the part of the targeted actor. An ideal warning would incorporate elements of both quantitative and qualitative analysis, and be response-oriented.\textsuperscript{56} How do early warnings phrase their risk assessments and policy advice, and does it match the response capabilities of the target policymakers?

In the absence of a systemic early warning-response regime, regional early warning approaches appear more likely to develop. The development of early warning systems within government foreign ministries and development aid agencies would help structure, identify and prioritize options for preventive response.\textsuperscript{57} This would create a systematic, rather than ad hoc, approach to prevention by desk and field officers. The possibility of a UN early warning system has been raised by commentators within the UN and without, but this prospect has met with continued resistance from member states that

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 239.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 230.
\textsuperscript{57} Cockell (1998), 234.
are reluctant to allow reporting on their international and external policies and actions. \(^{58}\) Last and Cockell both examine the UN’s potential for early warning but their arguments do not take into account the practical constraints for the UN Secretariat given the reticence of Member States towards granting the UN the power to “name and shame.”

In terms of who should warn, there is a growing body of NGOs that focus on the need for conflict prevention. Watchdog organizations like the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International consistently monitor potential crises. But the warning bells rung by these NGOs do not always reach those actors who are best positioned to act. When the warnings do manage to reach these actors they are often in a form that is difficult to apply given operational and political challenges. \(^{59}\)

Early warning is an essential component of conflict prevention, and NGOs are often the first actors to become aware of conflict escalation and the risks that it poses. Because NGOs can enter conflict zones quickly and with flexibility, they are increasingly complementing the role of governments. NGOs fill various roles in the prevention dynamic: they facilitate communication channels, foster peaceful dialogues between disputing parties, counter hate propaganda, and provide documentary evidence and specific case materials on human rights abuses. \(^{60}\) In addition to this, there are countless NGOs whose focus is economic development, addressing the structural issues that can lead to conflict. Barnes notes that civil society as a whole influences conflict dynamics via several strategies that include:

- Early warning of emerging crises through monitoring, analysis, and communication strategies to raise awareness and generate attention
- Mobilizing political will, developing options and strategies for response
- Developing and strengthening constituencies for peace
- Facilitating communication, generating alternatives, and building relationships
- Violence reduction, peace monitors, and zones of peace \(^{61}\)

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\(^{59}\) Hampson and Malone, 91.

\(^{60}\) Aggestam, 16.

While the primary responsibility for building capacities for conflict prevention comes from national governments, states have been slow to institutionalize prevention strategies. NGOs offer an alternative source for the spread of information and the raising of public awareness. The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is one organization that works to create networks of civil society organizations dedicated to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. They represent the growing recognition among civil society actors of the need for the establishment of strategic conflict prevention networks and partnerships. In describing how regional networks would apply to conflict prevention, Serbin writes that:

“If early warning systems were established at the national level and coordinated on a subregional or regional level through regional civil-society networks, they could serve as important elements in a larger effort to implement proactive preventive measures from the bottom up. With the involvement and commitment of CSOs, it would then be possible to warn other actors and to encourage them to take preventive action at an early stage. Such partnerships could play especially useful roles responding at an early stage to local conflicts where there is a very real risk of regional spillover.”

Already contributing to early warning systems, NGOs are in a position to strengthen conflict prevention partnerships and develop global systems of early response. Coordination with NGOs would provide conflict analysts with better data, improved analysis, and technical support. However, it should be mentioned that there are limitations to NGOs role in early warning. The information that NGOs provide also reflects the interests and views of whatever population is being served, as well as the NGOs themselves. Because they often have to negotiate for local access early warning activity has the potential to undermine the perception of NGO impartiality. Coordination and agreement from a diverse set of NGOs is also difficult to attain, which potentially crowds a limited space with multiple suggestions for policy action.

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63 Clarke, 80.
4. The Responsibility to Prevent

Early warnings need to be response-oriented, but what is the status of those response capabilities? Institutional prevention mechanisms and organizational experience in prevention make policymakers more receptive to early warnings. Do major global facilitators such as the US and the UN have these characteristics? Recognition that conflict prevention should be a part of policy making has increased and prevention has developed its own cottage industry. At times, however, this has been more of a commitment to rhetoric than to reality, and the field has been afflicted with mandates without resources.

The steady progression towards a culture of prevention has seen the most advancement in the acceptance of the ‘responsibility to protect’ (R2P). The concept that state sovereignty is not a carte blanche for governments grew out of the debate on the right to intervene and incorporated a human security approach to international politics. Growth in institutional capacity, however, has lagged behind the recognition of the importance of conflict prevention and the R2P. Both concepts are closely linked, in their theoretical grounding, as well as their proactive approach to the resolution of conflict. It is important to note that the ICISS report on the R2P noted three main tenets of the theory—the responsibility to prevent, to react, and to rebuild—and identified the responsibility to prevent as the most important.64

2005 saw the endorsement of the responsibility to protect by the Member States of the UN in the UN World Summit Outcome Document. Specifically identified were crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide and ethnic cleansing and Member States acknowledged that they must not only act to protect populations from such crimes, but prevent them as well.65 A major step forward in the implementation of the R2P norm, but Member States have since missed several opportunities to act on the R2P, the most recent case being the ongoing genocide and violence in Darfur. Member States’ reluctance to actively pursue the R2P suggests that the drive for this movement will not come from this

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constituency. More likely is that this push will come from an increasingly active civil society.  

The R2P also enjoys its own cottage industry of organizations working to prevent violence and protect populations from conflict (e.g. Holocaust Museum/USIP, Carr Center, Stimson Center, Human Rights Center at Berkeley) and the most recent addition to this community is the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. The launch of this new organization has been well received by several distinguished international figures and aims to pursue research on refining and applying the R2P concept. In this capacity, the Global Centre will serve as an information clearing house and resource for governments, international institutions, and civil society.

Darfur was seen the first test of global commitment to the R2P and the resultant half measures and quick fix solutions deemed it a failed application. Recently, commentators have identified the political and diplomatic intervention following the outbreak of ethnic violence in Kenya as a successful application of the R2P and early response. Dispelling the perception that acting on the R2P equates military intervention, Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s use of personal diplomacy backed by the quiet diplomacy and soft power of the United States and other countries resulted in the brokering of a power-sharing agreement between President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga. Praising the peace efforts, Archbishop Desmond Tutu stated that “The place to start is with prevention: through measures aimed in particular at building state capacity, remedying grievances, and ensuring the rule of law…It is by preventing, rather than reacting, that we can truly fulfill our shared responsibility to end the worst forms of human rights abuses.”

Operationalizing the R2P and early response is clearly feasible and, with concerted effort, can yield positive results. It is hoped that the continued success of the application of the R2P will strengthen the argument for prevention. However, success is also dependent on having the capacity to engage in early response. The following

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66 Ibid., par. 138-140.
67 These include Javier Solana, Desmond Tutu, Bill Clinton, and Ban-Ki Moon.
sections explore the extent to which conflict prevention has been institutionalized within the UN and the US, both major global facilitators.
5. The United Nations’ Capacity for Early Response

The evolution of the conflict prevention within the UN can be traced through the literature published on the topic. The publication of the *Agenda for Peace* in 1992 emphasized the UN’s role as a peacekeeper and framed the organization’s mission in terms of the human security approach. A key subsection of this document focused on the importance of preventive diplomacy. The Brahimi Report, or the *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operation*, followed in 2000 with a review and critique of the organization’s progress in the area of peacekeeping. The next year Secretary-General Annan presented his *Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict* to the 55th Session of the General Assembly. This report, commonly known as the Annan Doctrine, shaped the discussion on prevention when it explicitly called for a change from a ‘culture of reaction’ to a ‘culture of prevention’, highlighting the prevention of armed conflict as a primary responsibility of the UN. Soon after this, the UN Security Council reaffirmed this responsibility by formally recognizing the UNSC’s key role in the prevention of conflict by passing Resolution 1366.

At the UN 60th Anniversary World Summit in 2005, the General Assembly renewed commitment to the prevention of armed conflict in the UN World Summit Outcome Document. Most recent in this body of literature has been the Secretary-General’s *Progress Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict* in July 2006. The report renewed the call for the shift to a culture of prevention and noted that there is still an unacceptable gap between rhetoric and reality in terms of the institutionalization of prevention. One clear case where the UN has managed to match action to rhetoric has been the deployment of the first preventive peacekeeping mission to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 1992. A successful test of conflict prevention, the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) was able to prevent the outbreak of violent conflict in Macedonia during the Balkan Crisis.69

The 2006 *Progress Report* reiterated the argument that prevention is a chief obligation of the UN as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, while primary

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responsibility rests with national governments.\textsuperscript{70} A capacity review of the organization noted that UN had made progress in its response to preventing armed conflict but several gaps in the system remained.

### 5.1 Strategic Leadership—UNDPA

The UN still lacks system-wide strategic leadership in the area of conflict prevention. The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) is identified as the focal point, but is significantly under-resourced and is at times without the capacity to respond with and coordinate meaningful diplomatic interventions.\textsuperscript{71} No existing system-wide strategic framework has made implementation of prevention activities on the ground difficult and country teams fail to systematically integrate prevention strategies into their country approaches.\textsuperscript{72}

A system-wide mechanism for early warning has not come to fruition and the UN still lacks the capacity to analyze and integrate data into comprehensive early warning reports and strategies.\textsuperscript{73} This largely stems from the reticence of Member States to allow the UN to cultivate the ability to “name and shame.” However, given the already large number of pre-existing early warning systems of information and analysis, perhaps there is little need for the UN to develop this capacity. The alternative would be to utilize (and what is more likely the working reality) these existing systems in order to identify and prevent conflict. This would allow the UN to focus on building a comprehensive repository for the knowledge gained from prevention activities.\textsuperscript{74} The report notes that institutional memory in the field of prevention is fragmented and incomplete. The creation of a repository of knowledge and a forum for regular discussion on prevention within the system would signal a move away from the institutional tendency towards ad hoc responses.\textsuperscript{75}

As always, funding is one of the gaps listed in the capacity review. To date funding has been insecure, with contributions for prevention mostly voluntary and often

\textsuperscript{70} Progress Report, par. 2.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., par. 90-91.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., Appendix.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., par. 94.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., par. 94-95.
earmarked for specific projects. The report states that “Even an amount equivalent to 2 per cent of what we spend annually on peacekeeping would represent an enormous step forward in investment in prevention that would surely yield real dividends in terms of peace preserved.”

There has been marked progress in pursuing prevention initiatives since the report and the UN appears to be making an effort to follow-up on the recommendations of the Progress Report. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated that “Strengthening the UN’s capacity to step in – to resolve conflicts earlier rather than later – is among the smartest investments we can make,” when unveiling his proposed budget to the General Assembly in October 2007. A proposed budget increase of $21 million for the reorganization of the DPA would cover the costs of adding 101 staff over next two years in an effort to increase its capacity to be “more proactive in averting crises and conflicts before they can emerge.” This budget increase would also include travel costs for officials to enable easier access to areas of conflict or potential conflict. The Secretary-General also proposed the establishment of a limited network of regional offices, identifying Central Asia, Central Africa, Central America, South-East Asia and South-Eastern Europe as potential regions. It is hoped that the budget increase and reorganization will reduce chronic resource shortages and allow the DPA the staffing it needs in order to assist the Secretary-General in identifying and responding to potential crises.

Also new within the DPA is the launch of the UN Standby Team of Mediation Experts in March 2008. Supported by the Norwegian government through the Norwegian Refugee Council, the six-member team will fill one-year terms with the DPA and spend 80% of their time in the field. Mr. Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, noted the importance of using political means to prevent and resolve conflict as evidenced with the outbreak of violence in Kenya and stated that this new unit will “help carry out the Secretary-General’s efforts for fast and effective mediation through the use

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76 The 2005/06 UN peacekeeping budget was $5.2 billion. Ibid., par. 96.
of top-flight expertise.”

Lead by Dr. Joyce Neu, the Standby team currently has two members of the team in Kenya and northern Uganda, and it is expected that team members will assist special envoys or special representatives with their expertise.

Efforts to reorganize the DPA were also evidenced with the December 2007 United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Building on past DPA assistance to the region and a follow-up to the 2002 UN Forum for Conflict Prevention in Central Asia, UNRCCA is an collaborative initiative on the part of the UN and all five Central Asian countries. Working closely with existing UN programs and regional organizations the centre will aim to build capacities to peacefully prevent conflict, facilitate dialogue, and catalyze international support in an effort to combat terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, environmental degradation, and other issues in the region. The centre has an initial budget of $2.3 million and will have a small international staff headed by a senior Representative of the Secretary-General.

The appointments in the past year of Francis Deng as the Special Representative for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities and Edward Luck as Special Advisor for the Responsibility to Protect signals a move by the Secretariat to focus the UN towards prevention. These positions will hopefully reduce the uncertainties stemming from the absence of a semi-permanent office advocating for the responsibility to prevent and protect.

DPA has also partnered with UNDP on several occasions, specifically the Joint UNDP-DPA Programme on Building National Capacity for Conflict Prevention. UNDP’s Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery highlights the integration of conflict prevention into development programs. UNDP-BCPR has worked towards mainstreaming prevention into its work, within the department and with its partners.

79 For example, UNDP early warning projects in South East Europe aim to strengthen national capacities for the provision of early warning. In partnership with UNIFEM, UNDP conducted a gender assessment in the Northern Border Zone of Ecuador from a conflict prevention perspective and developed from this a comprehensive interagency gender mainstreaming strategy “Eight-Point Agenda for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality in Crisis Prevention and Recovery.” See http://www.undp.org/cpr/we_do/8_pa.shtml
Through the UN Secretary-General Annan created an organizational platform that advocated, among other things, the commitment to the prevention of armed conflict. Annan commented in his reflections on his time as Secretary-General that his main goal was to make human rights a ‘third pillar’ of the United Nations.\(^8^0\) In doing this, he promoted organizational behavior consistent with human security norms, including the responsibility to protect and the prevention of armed conflict. During his tenure as Secretary-General Annan shaped the UN into a institution for the advancement of a culture of prevention. The Annan Doctrine was a milestone document that articulated this need to move from a ‘culture of reaction’ to a ‘culture of prevention’. The passing of UNSC Resolution 1366 soon after is evidence of the direct causal effects of Annan’s work as a prevention advocate.

5.2 Strategic Leadership—Secretary General

Other signs of Annan’s influence within the organization can be found in the shifts in mission focus found in the various departments of the UN. Notable are the UN Development Program’s Crisis Prevention and Recovery office and the UN Department of Political Affair’s focus on conflict prevention—the 2006 Progress Report was compiled by the UNDPA. However, there are those who caution that the most persuasive sign of changes in policy are major changes made in resource allocation by the Fifth Committee of the Assembly.\(^8^1\)

The organization will certainly retain some of its commitment to the prevention of conflict as it has been institutionalized to a degree into the structure of the organization—as exemplified by the UNDP and the UNDPA. In a statement to the General Assembly at his swearing-in ceremony Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon pledged to strengthen the three pillars of the UN: security, development and human rights.\(^8^2\)

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The UN has made considerable contributions to the formation of the networks for conflict prevention. The organization’s close ties with NGOs has led to a relationship of mutual influence. Annan stated in his 2001 report that,

“I urge NGOs with an interest in conflict prevention to organize an international conference of local, national and international NGOs on their role in conflict prevention and future interaction with the United Nations in this field.”

In direct response to this call, the European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP) launched the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) with the purpose of creating a regionally integrated network for conflict prevention. The research program of the GPPAC is designed to specifically respond to Annan’s recommendations in his 2001 report and focuses on three areas: the role of civil society in conflict prevention; UN-civil society integration—including analysis and recommendations for reform; and regional organizations and civil society.

However, the UN is only able to go so far in shaping the conflict prevention networks despite the literature that has been published thus far. The UN has not released consistent research and development due to the fact that it does have strong research facilities. This analysis gap is a result of minimal research capacities and resources as the organization lacks a culture of research. UN policy is driven more by precedent, mandates, and politics. Also, there remains the problem of political will. As mentioned in previous sections a major obstacle to the continued institutionalization of conflict

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84 The mission statement of GPPAC states that:

1) To create a sustainable network of individuals and groups committed to prevention and peacebuilding at global, regional, and national levels.
2) To articulate and work towards the implementation of a policy change agenda.
3) To generate and mobilize diverse public constituencies around the world who are informed about the need for prevention and peacebuilding and the important role of civil society in achieving it and who actively support human security as an alternative to militarism.

85 In the *Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict* Annan calls for the articulation of the roles and capacities of CSOs in the prevention of armed conflict, as well as the further definition and proposal of modalities for future interaction with the UN.

86 Mack and Furlong.
prevention has been that support has been more rhetoric than reality. This was explicitly recognized by Annan in his Progress Report:

“One of the chief obligations set forth in the Charter of the United Nations is the prevention of conflict, and the primary responsibility for it belongs to national Governments.”

Hardly a new concept, the need for national governments to build capacities for conflict prevention has been a repeated recommendation made by both Annan and academics. The UN has generated a lot of impact but its end goal in promoting conflict prevention is to persuade national governments to do so as well. Institutionalization of conflict prevention within the UN is a means to an end but not the end itself.

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88 See also the Report of the Secretary-General (2001), p.1: “My second aim is to present specific recommendations on how the efforts of the United Nations system in this field could be further enhanced, with the cooperation and active involvement of Member States, who ultimately have the primary responsibility for conflict prevention.”
6. The United States’ Capacity for Early Response

When discussing the overriding issues in conflict prevention a major conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that the US has yet to match rhetoric with clear mandates and feasible capacity. The question of authority is one that is plagues the field of conflict prevention, who or what organization can be considered the focal point for prevention, if at all? A quick assessment of the major players shows that few have stepped up to fill this role. The USG has focused almost entirely on restructuring its bureaucracy to address post-conflict reconstruction and transformational development and has paid considerably less attention to building its capacity for conflict prevention. Lacking a focal point for prevention, the USG has instead chose to create a smattering of prevention related positions within various bureaus. These include Conflict Prevention Program Officers in the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) and the Conflict Mitigation and Management Bureau of USAID.

The 2006 National Security Strategy presents prevention as just one element in a larger strategy to defuse regional conflict, favoring structural prevention over direct prevention. In lieu of a coordinated and targeted conflict prevention strategy, prevention is to be pursued in a piecemeal fashion. The NSS cites conflict prevention as one of three levels of engagement that the US can use to defuse regional conflicts. The other two levels are conflict intervention and post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization. The impetus being that although the US may not have a direct take in a particular conflict, the resulting humanitarian and security crises will ultimately affect our interests. Remaining regional challenges include Darfur, Colombia, Venezuela, Cuba, Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and Nepal. The report goes on to say that any prevention on the part of the US will be “no substitute for bold and effective local leadership.”

The NSS devotes a considerable amount of attention to the task of expanding the circle of development as a means of reinforcing diplomacy and defense. Effective development not only improves the lives of those mired in poverty but also advances our national security through the promotion of responsible sovereignty. States that face

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economic collapse and widespread poverty are more susceptible to state failure and exploitation. Development is part of a larger scheme to build the democratic capacities of states qualifying loosely as a commitment to structural prevention that addresses the root causes of conflict.

Likewise, the emphasis on democracy promotion can also be assessed in light of its potential for structural prevention. The promotion of democratic institutions is touted as a panacea against state failure. Effective democracy is offered as a means by which the US can provide a counter to those factors that bred terrorism; listed as alienation, festering grievances, sub-cultures of conspiracy and misinformation, and ideology that justifies murder.

If a ranking were to be given to the levels of engagement listed earlier, priority would be given to post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction. Priority is best evidenced by action and while the NSS commits the US to improving the Department of State’s capacity for transformational democracy, the creation of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization was not matched with creation of a comparable prevention post. Although the argument can be made that effective post-conflict reconstruction will in turn prevent future conflict, the difference in situational dynamics between the prevention and recovery stages necessitate different actions. The new position of the Director of Foreign Assistance signals that the focus of conflict prevention will be on the structural side, rather than the direct side.

The focus of the NSS is on countering terrorism and effective democracy promotion therefore it is unlikely that conflict prevention initiatives will receive as much attention unless they are designed in light of these priorities. It may, then, be wiser to press for prevention initiatives that utilize the language of international security rather than human security. However, conflict prevention is most effective as a multi-method approach, combining the use of both direct and structural prevention strategies. The NSS favors a structural approach that aims to prevent the conflicts of tomorrow rather than those of today.
6.1 Political Will

The argument can be made that the US is hesitant to engage in prevention because of fears that the domestic constituency will be against it. This, however, pertains largely to the use of military force, and several academics, (e.g. Jentleson, Zartmann, Rubin), have argued that, in fact, the American public is more disposed to the US engaging in prevention that the government claims. This argument, that the public is not in favor of prevention or intervention, also presupposes a narrow execution of prevention, mainly that of military force. This, however, is most certainly not the only prevention strategy available to policy makers. In fact, successful prevention is a result of mediation, diplomacy, and development. By and large the American public remains largely unaware of these kinds of initiatives. How many among the average American can honestly say that they are aware of the extensive list of programs that USAID is engaged in, let alone have an opinion on it, for instance?

6.2 Capacity

In *Blood on the Doorstep* Rubin notes that, “The main need for prevention, however, is elsewhere: in creating, training, and sustaining corps of civilian monitors, police and humanitarian workers”.90 There is unlikely to be success in conflict prevention until rhetoric is matched with clear mandates and working capacity. What is the current status of the US capacity for prevention? Analysis of the 2006 National Security Strategy reveals that while prevention is at least on the agenda the efforts of the USG are largely focused on building its capacities in the areas of post-conflict reconstruction and “transformational development.” A proposed Civilian Reserve Corps will finally be launched this year, although it is still in the process of acquiring funding for the next fiscal year. However, this corps will be largely focused on managing and mitigating conflict and not prevention.91

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90 Rubin, 194.
S/CRS is an interagency office that comes close to the hybrid system of implementation that Rubin proposes, one that attempts a middle ground between mainstreaming and the creation of specific offices, however prevention is only a small component of this understaffed and overstretched office; the primary staff member on prevention is currently Cynthia Irmer, Senior Conflict Prevention Program Officer. The USG lacks a holistic approach to prevention that incorporates known frameworks and models. Related to the issue of capacity is the need for the USG to develop repositories of knowledge that instill a culture of institutional memory. Any major humanitarian crisis or violent conflict is followed by a precipitation of analyses and reports that detail “lessons learned.”

6.3 Warning-Response Gap

In *A More Secure World*, the High Level Panels notes that there is a major institutional gap in identifying countries under stress and countries emerging from conflict. The USG will be unable to close the warning-response gap unless it makes more of an effort to link intelligence analysis and warnings to policy planning response mechanisms. Several private and government contracted predictive and descriptive indices of weak and failing states exist, in fact Brookings is the most recent organization to add its own index to the list with the launch of the “Index of State Weakness in the Developing World.” However, there exists no formal mechanism for early warning and analysis in the USG. In 2006, USAID released its analysis of “Measuring State Fragility” that proposed thirty-three indicators for the ranking of weak states. This promising endeavor was suspended that same year along with the entire USAID Fragile States agenda, which was absorbed into the State Department’s “transformational diplomacy” strategy. Although cut short, this initiative showed a positive step forward in the agency toward the analysis and identification of weak and failing states. An in-house index

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92 Currently, S/CRS staff comes from the State Department, USAID, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Central Intelligence Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, Joint Forces Command, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Treasury Department.
93 Other indices include the Failed States Index, the Peace and Conflict Instability Ledger, the Global Peace Index, the State Fragility Index, the Human Development Index, Corruption Perceptions Index, ‘Freedom in the World’ rankings
would have ideally placed analysis and early warning close to the policy mechanisms that would have enabled response.

Zartmann makes a statement that is striking in its pragmatism, that the US, and the international community, will by and large become involved and pressured to intervene in a conflict sooner or later. The record has shown that the US has a penchant for intervening later. It is the nature of conflicts that the longer they persist the more complex they become, and the harder it is to mediate and manage, and the more costly. Given this the US would be better served intervening earlier when the costs are significantly less and the job is relatively easier. The US has chosen to place itself and its interventions on the far end of the spectrum, and while there is potential for prevention at all stages of the conflict cycle there is no denying that prevention would be more successful, and would benefit the US more, if it was initiated earlier.

The credibility of the US has taken a severe beating in the past few years and it remains to be seen if the country can still claim a credible standing when engaging in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. With its budgetary, diplomatic and military capacities stretched thin it is necessary for the USG to identify innovative and alternative avenues of international engagement. The silver lining in this cloud may be that the US will be forced to consider and invest in more subtle and varied forms of influence. The US cannot flex its muscle in any part of the world anymore, nor does it have the capacity to. One recent example is the manner in which the US contributed to international engagement in Kenya. The US concentrated its most visible support in humanitarian aid for internally displaced persons, while engaging in quiet diplomacy on the political front that bolstered the good offices of Secretary-General Kofi Annan from the backseat. Overt US support is now viewed with suspicion, evidence in a long list, and the country may be better off remaining quietly behind the drivers seat rather than abusing the wheel.
7. Other Actors: Civil Society and Prevention

Civil society has been identified as an important component in promoting conflict prevention and the R2P and several organizations have pursued active partnerships with governments and international organizations. Civil society has also been an active participant in early warning, constituting an ever-increasing global watch. These organizations include Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, International Crisis Group, ENOUGH, as well as the various indices that assess peace and conflict.

As previously mentioned the European Centre for Conflict Prevention which launched in response to Secretary-General Annan’s acknowledgement of the role that civil society had to play in prevention in his 2003 Interim Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict: “Civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should be further encouraged to join the United Nations in developing and implementing conflict prevention and recovery strategies and to ensure that their own mandates focus on the prevention of armed conflicts.”

Committed to the promotion of effective conflict prevention and peacebuilding, the Centre now holds the secretariat for the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and works to “promote effective conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies, and actively supports and connects people working for peace worldwide.”

The various programs that the ECCP houses are: the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the Searching for Peace program, the People Building Peace anthologies, as well as The Power of the Media handbook.

Research at GPPAC covers three areas: the role of civil society in conflict prevention; UN-civil society integration—including analysis and recommendations for reform--; and regional organizations and civil society. The People Building Peace program is one key project that has documented and published cases of civil society peacebuilders, a second anthology was launched in 2005 at the ‘Global Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict’. As an international network the GPPAC is broken down into 15 regions, each managed by a Regional

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95 See www.conflict-prevention.net
Initiator responsible for regional network-building and the active facilitation of the aims of the organization. The GPPAC is heavily influenced by the United Nations’ position on the prevention of armed conflict. Its research program is designed to address recommendations offered by the Secretary-General in his *Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict* that urge the articulation of the roles and capacities of NGOs in the prevention of armed conflict, as well as the further definition and proposal of modalities for future interaction with the UN.\(^\text{96}\)

\(^{96}\) Report of the Secretary-General (2001).
8. Moving Forward: Strengthening Early Response

An excess of warning and relatively little response has plagued the warning-response cycle. Given the assumption that institutional prevention mechanisms and organizational experience in prevention make policymakers more receptive to early warnings, this thesis focused its attention on assessing the preventive capacity of two global actors, the UN and the US.

Under Secretary Generals Annan and Ban, the UN has steadily, albeit at times slowly, advanced the institutionalization of prevention mechanisms. Increased funding for the DPA, as well as continued coordination between several UN bodies reveals an increased commitment to prevention. However, when highlighting the importance of prevention it is continually noted in UN documents that the primary responsibility lies with national governments. This is a responsibility that the US has largely avoided. Prevention received scant attention in the 2006 National Security Strategy, and constitutes a minor section of US foreign policy.

Prevention requires a global strategy, but currently there is no global strategist. While the world is waiting for an entity to fill this leadership vacuum, in the meantime it may be more constructive to work on closing the gap between warning and response. As reviewed above, there is a need for continued institutionalization of prevention mechanisms that will in turn breed receptivity. Staff training, education and professional development—paired with feedback, analysis and evaluation—would serve to further mainstream prevention within global actors.

Also needed is a system of early warning analysis that has sophisticated mechanisms of reporting feasible roadmaps of prevention to the appropriate actors. Early warning is essentially advocacy, and good advocates craft their message in ways that maximize receptivity on the part of the targeted actor. Providing response-oriented recommendations and findings would serve to move warning indices beyond their designation as “conventional wisdom watches.” In addition to the moral imperative, there are clear advantages in acting early to prevent conflict. Both the UN and the US will inevitably find themselves caught up in conflicts across the globe, and would be better served in engaging parties before the outbreak of violence.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


