

from the outside and a stabilizer internally. It was an early warning system in itself. The monitors could detect probing missions that would suggest preparations for a frontal attack, and could help the UN Secretary-General to sound the alarm, either through Article 99 or in a less dramatic fashion at an early stage by passing information to influential member states.¹⁴

Though there have been few formal invocations of Article 99 before the Council, it is regularly used as the legislative justification for a host of independent activities by the Secretary-General. Some of these activities are quite relevant to warning, such as monitoring and fact-finding. For instance, Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar justified his independent investigations of Iraqi chemical weapons use in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war using the Article 99 legislative authority. (He preferred not to use the contentious General Assembly resolution 37/98 because the vote on that resolution was far from unanimous.) Other activities are justified, in part, by Article 99 but are only indirectly related (e.g., "good offices" functions such as mediation). Dag Hammarskjold asserted that the "necessary implication" of Article 99 is "a broad discretion to conduct inquiries and to engage in informal diplomatic activity in regard to matters which 'may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.'"¹⁵

Over the past fifty years, a succession of UN Secretaries-General have applied Article 99 to enhance the powers, stature and authority of their office. Thus, its value in practice has gone far beyond warning. However, its original intent remains: to alert the Council to emerging threats to the peace. At the end of the Cold War, this role has again become the focus of much attention on the part of governments and academics, under the name of early warning, a term adopted from the humanitarian and disaster management fields.

II. Early Warning Defined and the Typology of Conflict Management

The definition of early warning is the subject of debate among academics and practitioners. For the purpose of this paper, the following definition is proposed:

Early warning is the act of alerting a recognized authority (e.g., the UN Security Council) to the threat of a new (or renewed) armed conflict at a sufficiently early stage for that authority to attempt preventive action.

By this definition, early warning by the Secretary-General need not necessarily involve interventions before the Security Council. Warnings can also be made before other bodies such as the General Assembly or one of the UN's committees or commissions, or even to selected governments in private or public. In this work, however, we consider only those warnings which are made in writing in an official UN document.