

**TOWARDS RESPONSE-ORIENTED EARLY WARNING ANALYSIS:
POLICY AND OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

The connection between conflict early warning and early response is here explored as a problem of policy-relevant analysis. The paper argues that while many advocates and researchers in the early warning field decry the absence of "political will", the fact remains that much of what currently exists as early warning is not adequately presented to policy-makers. This involves both clear analysis of critical trigger factors, and better targeting of these analyses such that they are readily utilised by policy end-users. The paper argues that current conflict early warning practices are not effective in presenting dynamic analysis that prioritises factors and presents practicable options for preventive peacebuilding. To illustrate this argument, a framework for early warning analysis is outlined in brief. Based on ongoing research in the Canadian foreign ministry, this framework focuses on seven political early warning categories: status of governance/political process; polarisation/potential for conflict; structural/societal tension; human rights violations; military/arms supply; external support; and context-specific considerations. Improvements in policy response-oriented analysis will demand better interaction between early warning researchers, field monitors, and policy analysts in governments, aid agencies, and regional and international organisations. The paper concludes with some observations in this regard, and a brief review of some existing initiatives which perhaps embody this sort of interaction. Written from the perspective of a conflict analyst in the Canadian foreign ministry, the paper is informed by current policy and operational requirements for "early response" and preventive peacebuilding.

**The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily
represent the policies of the Government of Canada**

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Early warning researchers and advocates increasingly seek to influence policy-makers more effectively so that preventive action is taken to de-escalate intrastate conflict situations. In this endeavour they must seek to answer four basic questions: 1) what are the actors/organisations 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, which correspond to each organisation's policy frameworks and mandates?; 4) by what processes, and in what format, should early warning be disseminated to these operational actors? This does not address, of course, the issue of what elements must be combined to constitute an effective preventive engagement operation, but such an understanding must inform this specific *strategic targeting* of actors. Let it suffice to note here that preventive peace operations, and particularly preventive peacebuilding, are understood to be much wider in scope than the perhaps outdated concept of "preventive diplomacy" suggests.¹ Inter-agency coordination between governmental foreign and defence ministries, intelligence units, development aid agencies, the UN system and its specialised agencies and funds, regional organisations, and NGOs in both donor countries and (most significantly) in conflict zones is the new operational reality for preventive peace operations. This complex and evolving policy environment demands a higher degree of routinised interaction between "early warners" and operational actors, and this paper seeks to outline some preliminary considerations which arise from the four questions posed above. While governments have an important role to play in facilitating and deploying responses, early warning must also be made more *response-oriented* - in other words, more fundamentally informed and structured by existing policy and operational realities.

I. Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Policy

While there are a number of sources (including academic/research, non-governmental, and media) of early warning information on internal conflicts, such information is rarely presented in a format relevant to policy-makers. As the 1996 joint donor evaluation of the Rwanda conflict found, what is needed is not so much information but policy-oriented analysis that will suggest logical operational responses. One could add, by stating the issue more sharply, that the debate on early warning has not yet moved forward to deal with the issue of the *process link* between early warning analysis and effective preventive action. This may be because existing early warning praxis is not effective in producing analysis (as distinct from reporting or monitoring) that clearly presents options for effective preventive action and rapid engagement policy.

"Political will" to act on early warning analysis is, no doubt, at least as important as the analysis itself. The Rwanda evaluation is only the most recent of a number of studies which have charged the international community and the UN with failing to confront conflict escalation with both political resolve as well as significant resources to

make a credible impact on conflict dynamics.² But this handy phrase, most frequently employed by non-governmental advocates to simultaneously blast governments and the UN while uncritically absolving themselves of any "downstream" role, obscures complex realities at the policy and operations levels. Policy-makers must work within program frameworks and criteria, adjust operational recommendations according to resource availability, balance operational options against (where relevant) potential competing policy priorities, and provide their political patrons with demonstrable results, sometimes referred to as "deliverables". Rather than decrying these realities, proponents of conflict early warning would do best to examine their underlying detail, as the opening four questions propose. They may also take note of the rapid transitions in international policy development, such as the extent to which the Northern donor community is beginning to identify violent conflict as perhaps the most damaging impediment to sustainable development programs. Early warners concerned with responses could highlight the added value in OECD development agencies stressing to their governments the attendant need for serious progress on preventive action policy mechanisms at both the bilateral and multilateral levels.

One may also add here that as early warning begins to focus more on response-oriented analysis, this will help enable policy-makers to present their political constituencies with specific options for concrete preventive action. But this can only happen where analyses are targeted for the end-user, the policy community. For early warning to be effective in bridging the current gap between warning and action, it must indeed target those governments, IOs, regional organisations, and NGOs that will be implementing specific conflict prevention programs. In short, know your audience. This will require greater information-sharing concerning the existing capacities and options for rapid responses. Where capacity-building is required at the policy level, this must be reconciled with macro policy priorities and political considerations. In countries such as Canada, the Netherlands, Britain, and Norway, where individual ministers have evinced interest in conflict prevention and peacebuilding priorities, new conflict policy mechanisms and units have been mandated. The trend towards regional arrangements for conflict prevention and early warning (by regional organisations such as the OAU and IGAD as well as regional NGOs) will also hopefully make such cooperative targeting easier.³ The point here is that knowing the specifics of what is *possible* in terms of preventive action will help in framing policy recommendations that will both be user-friendly and facilitate mobilising political commitment for rapid, comprehensive responses.

Given this gap between policy-oriented analysis of root causes and preventive responses, there is growing recognition that an action-oriented approach is urgently required.⁴ In terms of how to craft appropriate analyses, however, the focus should not be "whether" a conflict is escalating into war. This merely has the effect of ringing an alarm - policy analysts are alerted to the problem but are not given any concrete ideas on how to respond at the operational level. The analytical focus should rather be on how

and why there is a potential for escalation. Providing this type of analysis is the first step to identifying priority areas for preventive engagement.⁵ This then raises the second broad aspect of response-oriented analysis, apart from strategic targeting: the *process link*.

What is meant by this process link in analysis? Two elements are important here: 1) analysis should be able to provide dynamic conflict profiles which explain indicators of political instability in relation to existing priority focal points (i.e. thematic sectors such as human rights, political participation, humane governance, democratic development) in conflict prevention policy mechanisms; 2) such profiles should be suggestive of logical operational responses, along various interacting sectors, which could form the basis of an integrated program for preventive peacebuilding. There should therefore be an interactive "meshing" of the analytical framework with the operational response policy-making mechanism. This clearly demands a higher level of coordination between early warning analysts and governmental/IO officers responsible for conflict prevention programs. Some discussions of this are starting to unfold within certain foreign ministries, and considerable advances are being made at the UN Secretariat in linking the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) into the interdepartmental decision-making structure.⁶ But where analysis and operations are carried out at different levels by different actors (either in the classic division between governmental intelligence and foreign policy departments, or analysis by NGOs rather than governments), such processual coordination becomes more difficult. In this way, then, strategic targeting and process link in analysis are really interdependent.

In the Canadian policy context, we are currently proceeding in the reverse order, due to the paucity of response-oriented conflict early warning analysis. Operational priority issues are highlighted for specific situations, and options for peacebuilding support are framed accordingly. This involves a very time-consuming process of "joint" analysis of current conflict zones between functional divisions in the DFAIT Global and Human Issues Bureau (which are concerned with thematic policy development), and DFAIT and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) geographic divisions responsible for bilateral relations and country programs. This process, largely reactive in nature, itself represents a major step forward in (at a minimum), taking a systematic look at peacebuilding priorities and response options on a global scale. The dilemma referred to above, classic for any foreign ministry or aid agency around the world, is exacerbated by the deficit in analysis. The challenge now is to front-load better dynamic, response-oriented analysis into the nascent operational mechanism of the Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative.

Conflict is a dynamic process in which stages of escalation may be identified.⁷ The *dynamic interaction* of factors which cause escalation from one phase to the next demands that priority factors for preventive action (the areas of greatest near-term danger in the interaction dynamic) be identified. Analysis must avoid the tendency to

simply provide a shopping list of the usual suspect causal factors. Specific measures at the policy/project level should be related to the key early warning categories that track conflict escalation. In other words, there should be an effort to link a conflict indicator with a focused preventive policy response, keeping in mind that these factors are interrelated and interact. This then demands an *integrated and systematic approach* to conflict prevention based on early warning analyses that recommend such integrated options for policy-makers. There is also a need to differentiate between types of conflict. One could suggest that early warning should be oriented towards the factors which produce *protracted* identity-based (e.g. ethnic) conflicts over core values such as identity and group security. A structured analytical framework that looks for patterns of deprivation and discrimination will go some way towards such differentiation, separating out non-protracted conflicts and violence such as riots. An exclusive focus on cases of "state failure", which has animated some recent academic research projects, is too narrow and seems to presuppose late-phase intervention.

Some recent studies on early warning have argued that the UN should stand at the centre of any global early warning network.⁸ The desirability of having an effective political early warning system (PEWS) located in the UN Secretariat is without question, even given the serious resource and political constraints the organisation currently faces. Like-minded countries should continue to push for this. The fact remains, however, that there is vigorous opposition from the G-77 to any PEWS capability within the UN, and that is not likely to change in the near future. As a result, conflict analysis for early warning purposes will continue to be a decentralised, ad hoc, desk-level exercise within the political departments of DPA and DPKO. The Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) in DHA has some elements of political early warning, but the orienting purpose of the HEWS database remains humanitarian intervention rather than a focused and standardised tracking of political instability. There has also been some recent effort to improve the early warning capacity of the DPKO Situation Centre, but here again the operational goal (support to ongoing peacekeeping operations, or perhaps preventive deployment) is limited and linked to later phases of conflict escalation. Early warning advocates are thus left with having to consider alternative approaches, and the regional organisation option would appear to hold significant promise, particularly where this can be coupled with cooperative project delivery by regional and local NGOs, backed up with international technical expertise and ODA. Such a proliferation of regional early warning approaches would appear to be more likely at this time than a single comprehensive and authoritative system.

II. Towards an Early Warning Analytical Framework

In the absence of a systematic conflict early warning capacity in the UN Secretariat, and in view of the long period that would precede the actual implementation of early warning centres in regional organisations, it may be proposed that government

foreign ministries and development aid agencies evolve internal frameworks for standardised early warning analysis. Such frameworks can help structure the usual reporting from desk officers and field personnel, and can more precisely identify and prioritise options for operational responses. Such internal initiatives will also help to orient thinking on early warning towards the crucial process link between warning and response, as this connection is easiest to make if both functions are carried out within the same bureaucracy. This does not presume, of course, that early warning analysis should remain the sole preserve of governmental and intergovernmental bodies. The non-governmental sector, particularly the large humanitarian relief NGOs with field operations in conflict-prone regions, can provide valuable independent information on political instability and governance crises, as can some academic networks. This inter-agency coordination on early warning is an important issue, and recent initiatives such as the Forum for Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER) hold much promise in this regard.

A response-oriented early warning framework must strike a balance between a number of difficult choices. There must be a measure of *flexibility* so that officers will not feel constrained in their analyses, yet enough structure in the indicator categories to provide effective analytical guidance. In other words, a balance between a general "model", and detailed context/case specificity. As noted above, there is a need for early warning to be more than simple reporting, but generic models are unlikely to offer real insight into actual conflict dynamics on the ground. So a balanced approach is necessary, and there will be much need here for countries to share views on what form this balance should take for maximum effectiveness. It may also be argued that conflict typology varies from region to region to such an extent that it may not be possible to come up with an effective early warning framework that applies as well to Central Africa as it does to Central America. It may be preferable to devise region-specific analytical frameworks in concert with regional capacity-building for preventive action. Such regional capacity-building, widely understood to be among the best options for conflict prevention, should be targeted as an important area for ODA programming.

Another difficult issue is how to provide a concise, clear framework that does not overburden officers with too many categories to track, yet covers the dynamic "trigger factors". A long, unwieldy listing of indicators that are not set into an analytical framework, or that are too general to be of real use (e.g. poverty, infant mortality, dictatorship), is not going to be used by officers that are burdened with competing demands for their attention. Thus, an effective early warning system will focus on near-term trigger factors rather than the broader structural/background factors that may contribute to societal tension. One might also add, however, that such structural indicators (see C below) can be incorporated with parsimony if they are viewed as factors which must interact and overlap with other trigger indicator categories to be relevant for early warning. Abandoning reference to structural tensions altogether risks losing important contextual elements, such as unresolved inter-group disputes over land ownership, which is common in sub-Saharan Africa, for example.

Human rights monitoring and reporting is already one area in which diplomats and development agency field personnel work cooperatively to share information. This should be extended to conflict analysis for early warning. Development agency, UNDP, UN Centre for Human Rights, and UNHCR personnel, in particular, are often based in more remote/rural areas than diplomats, and thus have the advantage of closer proximity to emerging causes of internal conflict. This field proximity should be used to full advantage, while keeping in mind that development/relief workers will perhaps be concerned that this will jeopardise their neutrality. The insight that comes only from sustained contact with local communities in conflict zones is a critical component of effective early warning, and development aid personnel are an excellent source for this. The need then is to produce a systematic, rather than unstructured and ad hoc, approach to early warning analysis by desk and field officers.

The following categories of early warning indicators are proposed as an example of what such a balanced analytical framework could look like.⁹ What must be stressed in such an approach is that it is the "overlap" or concurrent interaction of two or more of these categories that creates the conditions for imminent protracted violence - the greater the severity, frequency, and number of categories in combination, the greater the potential for conflict. The presence of only one category of indicators will not, in most cases, herald the onset of *protracted* conflict. What is important for the officer to discern is the *dynamic interaction* of these categories, where present. In particular, the presence of the first (A) category, which focuses on the trigger factor of paralysis in the political process, is almost always associated with an escalation in internal violence and conflict. As well, it must be noted that these indicator categories may be present over the country as a whole (increasing possibility of total state collapse) or confined to certain regions only, where the threat of insurgency is greater. Finally, the reference to specific examples of indicators in each category is meant to be illustrative rather than comprehensive:

***A) Status of Governance / Political Process**

This category addresses the medium- and near-term breakdown of legitimate avenues for dialogue and non-violent dispute resolution. Is the government representative of a legitimate and participatory political process? What is the internal political environment like for ethnic and religious minorities? Are there laws which limit or prohibit minority language use, or minority community, religious, or political organisations? Are there constitutional provisions (e.g. official language and/or religion) which clearly put certain identity groups at a disadvantage, which are discriminatory? Are there constitutional provisions or laws which prohibit the access to and representation in governing institutions (e.g. parliament) by minority nationalist parties?

Paralysis and closure of the political process (democratic or non-democratic alike)

can also be indicated by the onset of specific immediate events: e.g. imposition of special emergency/internal security laws in minority and/or frontier areas, electoral/plebiscite results declared void by the state, removal/dissolution of local or regional governments in minority areas, banning of minority and ethnic nationalist political parties and associations, arrest of minority and nationalist political leaders, attacks on and arrests of press reporters, banning of independent and minority media outlets, and the use of state-controlled/official media to promote nationalist and xenophobic intolerance of identifiable minority (ethnic, religious) groups. Such events can indicate the presence of a deep disagreement between groups over the very political structures and identity of the state itself, the closure of avenues for dialogue, and the final preparation for violent oppression and resistance.

B) Polarisation / Potential for Conflict

This category includes the longer-term, historical conditions which provide the fertile soil for inter-group hostility and conflict. In terms of the political mobilisation of marginalised groups, common indicators are: strong ethnic group cohesion/solidarity and ethnic nationalist leadership, politicisation of ethnic collective identity (e.g. clan, tribe) by nationalist elites, the proliferation/fragmentation of such elites and allied militant organisations. In many cases there is a history of violent inter-group conflict, and collective group memories of victories and defeats, which will be invoked by elites to accelerate polarisation. Recent riots and massacres where perpetrators have gone unpunished, or where government inquiries were insincere, can greatly inflame enmity and provide the context or "excuse" for massive retaliation. Another important indicator here is the presence of refugees and/or internally-displaced, and the camps that sustain them. Un-integrated, un-repatriated refugees are often a sign of a conflict that is merely in a dormant phase, and camps often become the staging ground for militancy and extremism (e.g. Rwanda and RPF, Palestine and HAMAS).

Some early warning approaches refer to this category as "accelerating factors", an intermediate stage between conflict trigger incidents and the structural conditions referred to below. The HEWS system at DHA, for example, makes this distinction in its methodology. Such delineations, however, are ultimately arbitrary, and in actual cases of conflict escalation the factors that one might group under "accelerating factors" versus "triggers" could be almost interchangeable with each other depending upon the specifics of each situation. It may be, particularly for the conflict analyst or desk officer concerned with setting operational priorities, that a broad distinction between near-term/dynamic and longer-term/relatively static factors is quite adequate.

C) Structural / Societal Tension

This category of indicators is closely related to those noted above under B, and addresses the presence of structural inequality and discrimination in society, or "relative deprivation", particularly when state-sponsored.¹⁰ Common indicators would include: unequal access of ethnic groups to resources (land, water, credit), opportunities (education, commercial/managerial/professional positions, employment in civil service, recruitment into police and armed forces), and government services. The inter-group tensions created by such inequality are particularly acute during periods of rapid political and economic transition, such as during liberalisation or structural adjustment programs. Minority groups concentrated in a specific region will often have markedly lower levels of over-all economic development, limited local economies, and face environmental/ecological exploitation. These factors combine to increase the volatility of the sociopolitical atmosphere, making violence appear more inevitable.

In order to narrow the focus on conditions which may actually indicate a high potential for conflict, officers should look for an over-all pattern of deliberate structural inequality *linked* to political closure and marginalisation (A above). This is a difficult analytical task, and one that is largely absent from quantitative, computer models of structural conditions, given that it clearly relies on a strong dose of human acumen. It is, however, critical for the purposes of policy relevance. The more that dataset-based systems lack this analytical component, the less they are able to present results in a manner suggestive of logical operational responses, which is perhaps the pre-eminent interest of the policy-maker. Proponents of these projects argue that they are not intended to provide such analysis, but rather to suggest priorities for closer monitoring and interpretation of specific conflict dynamics - in other words, as context-setting for response-oriented early warning.¹¹

D) Human Rights Violations

Violations of fundamental human rights and civil liberties are often the first clear warning sign of escalation. The focus here should be on certain *key violations* of core rights: right to life, freedom from torture and extrajudicial execution, freedom from arbitrary arrest, *habeus corpus*/disappearances, freedom of expression and association, freedom of religion, freedom of movement. Other indicators here are the severity of coercive force used by government (army, security forces, paramilitary groups) and militant rebel groups, arrest of human rights activists and banning of human rights NGOs (particularly those focusing on ethnic minority issues), restrictions on the independence of the judiciary to investigate violations, and the use of collective punishment to target identifiable ethnic and political/ideological opposition.

As above, the important analytical point here is that officers should look for a *pattern* of serious violations of these core political rights which indicate specific targeting on the basis of group identity (ideological, ethnic, religious, clan). This can indicate the

deliberate coercion of civilians or "state terror". Cordon, search, and destruction of entire neighbourhoods and villages in the name of counterinsurgency, indiscriminate retaliation by security forces, and destruction of cultural and religious symbols (e.g. places of worship) is often indicative of such targeting. Massacres and genocide are the most extreme forms of this.

E) Military / Arms Supply

This category tracks the decisive shift from dialogue to coercive tactics by both the state and militant opposition. Have there been recent indications of a sudden increase in the internal deployment of security forces, and/or an increase in recruitment to such forces? Is there a concentration of such internal deployment to a minority and/or frontier region? Are there paramilitary militias or death squads which are suspected of being government-backed and -controlled? Has the government recently increased its imports of light and medium weapons (e.g. assault rifles, land mines, armoured personnel carriers, RPGs) which are more suited to the demands of waging a counterinsurgency campaign? Is there a ready supply of light weapons in the immediate region (perhaps in a neighbouring state) because of recent or ongoing internal wars? Arms supply to insurgent minority groups is particularly likely where such weapons are available across an international border from related ethnic/religious groups, or where a single ethnic group is divided by international borders. Another indicator of ascendant militancy is the removal and/or exile of moderate political leaders (who perhaps have advocated dialogue and compromise) and their replacement with militant leaders bent on military solutions.

F) External Support

The more numerous and committed the sources of external support for anti-state militants, the greater the likelihood of protracted conflict. Identity-based conflicts often involve an irredentist element, where a single ethnic or religious group may be present in two neighbouring sovereign states. This can create the conditions for the external support of a "proxy war": transborder encouragement (diplomatic and political), and supply of training, materiel (arms and supplies), and base camps for militant insurgent groups. The international status of the government under attack is also an important consideration in this calculation, as neighbouring states may feel a certain "obligation" to support the destabilisation of a pariah regime. Regional security and geopolitics is the context for the consideration of these indicators.

G) Other Context-Specific Factors

There will always be some measure of factors which are specific to the conflict

being analysed. It is thus very important to include a consideration of conflict-specific indicators such as local political history, unique political groups that may be organised around ideological identity (such as some millenarian religious movements), the variations in popular support for different factions/groups, and overall trends in inter-group cooperation vs. hostility. In a sense this is a residual category, but it is very important for some consideration to be given to possible local exceptions to the "rule".

To recap the main points made above, officers should orient their analysis in terms of discerning: 1) patterns of relative deprivation and sociopolitical discrimination; 2) the dynamic interaction/overlap of indicator categories; and 3) the critical presence of category A - political process breakdown. A dynamic conflict profile which presents these elements, rather than an unstructured listing of multiple unranked indicators, should provide a reasonably clear warning of high potential for escalation and protracted violence. This approach prioritises certain conflict factors such that they may be targeted for specific operational responses, and matches indicator categories with common current policy frameworks, such as those in use in the DFAIT Global and Human Issues Bureau. This addresses the process link issue by matching analysis with operational capacity. Where such response-oriented early warning takes place in the context of inter-agency coordination, strategic targeting of analysis at the relevant operational organisations will be crucial for the promotion of effective early action.

ENDNOTES - TOWARDS RESPONSE-ORIENTED EARLY WARNING ANALYSIS*

* This paper incorporates material from an earlier draft presented at the CIDCM, University of Maryland Workshop on Risk Assessment and Crisis Early Warning Systems, College Park, 14-16 November 1996. The views expressed in this paper do not represent the official views or policies of the Government of Canada.

1. This was one of the primary points of common understanding at consultations held by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) with the Canadian nongovernmental peacebuilding community, 7 February 1997, Ottawa. These consultations, which discussed both preventive and post-conflict peacebuilding policy, were part of an ongoing enabling process for the new Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative. Background briefs and concept papers may be downloaded from < www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca >, or obtained from the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee, Ottawa.

2. See in particular Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, with Bruce Jones, *Early Warning and Conflict Management*, Vol. 2 of *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide. Lessons from the Rwanda Experience* (Copenhagen: DANIDA/Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, 1996). The authors argue that "Early warning was less critical in the Rwanda crisis than the willingness and ability to respond. Nevertheless, the failure to respond adequately was in part influenced by the failure to collect and analyze the data that was available and to translate this information into strategic plans. Information and analysis is critical, not only in assisting in anticipating a crisis, but in determining the appropriate response in a particular situation" (80).

3. For further discussion on this issue, see the Canadian chapter on "Regional Approaches to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding," in *DAC Policy Orientations for Development Cooperation in Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Recovery* (Paris: OECD Development Cooperation Directorate, 1997 forthcoming), the final report of the OECD-DAC Task Force on Conflict, Peace, and Development Cooperation. See also S. Basseby Ibok and William G. Nhara, eds., *OAU Early Warning System on Conflict Situations in Africa* (Addis Ababa: OAU Conflict Management Division, 1996). This does not, of course, sufficiently address the problem that in several crisis-prone regions, such as South Asia, the regional organisation in question is either too weak or non-existent. Where present, it may only have a social and economic mandate, or where political, only inter-state issues may be addressed in the context of regional security.

4. This point was argued in the Netherlands 1996 draft paper for the OECD-DAC Task Force on Conflict, Peace, and Development Cooperation, "Early Warning and Encouraging Coordinated Action on Analyses of Violent Conflict Potentials" (Working Group I - Topic Area IV). A revised and abbreviated version of this paper appears as part of the chapter "Sources of Violent Conflict: The Scope for Early Warning and Preventive Assistance" in *DAC Policy Orientations*, op.cit..

5. UN Secretariat staff from various relevant departments held a series of meetings as an early warning working group in the early 1990s, and concluded that what was important

was not so much information itself, but the "combination of skills to recognise early indicators of impending tension, anticipate the likely course of events, and make political judgments about the consequences of recommending a course of action to the decision-making organs and bodies ... [this] stresses the importance of analysis in relation to information management and policy advice." See Juergen Dedring, "Early Warning and the United Nations," *Journal of Ethno-Development* 4, 1994, 102.

6. See United Nations, Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), *Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS): Progress and Prospects* (New York: UN-DHA, 1995).

7. This observation is now almost standard in the literature on internal conflict analysis. Aside from the Dutch DAC paper (which refers to this as a "dynamic phase model"), recent references would include Ronald J. Fisher, "The Potential for Peacebuilding," *Peace and Change* 18(3), 1993) and his "Pacific, Impartial Third Party Intervention in International Conflict: A Review and Analysis," in John A. Vasquez, et al., eds., *Beyond Confrontation: Learning Conflict Resolution in the Post-Cold War Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Louis Kriesberg, "Preventive Conflict Resolution of Communal Conflicts," unpublished ms, 1995; Gareth Evans, *Cooperating for Peace* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 13-15; and Jean-H. Guilmette, "Beyond Emergency Assistance: Early Warning, Conflict Prevention, and Decision Making," in Government of Canada, *Conflict Prevention. African Perspective*, Proceedings of the International Francophone Meeting, Ottawa, 19-22 September 1995 (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1996).

8. See for example B.G. Ramcharan, *The International Law and Practice of Early Warning and Preventive Diplomacy. The Emerging Global Watch* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1991). The author notes that it may be the case "that the world is evolving in a direction making it almost inevitable that the United Nations maintain and operate systems of early warning and urgent action in the environmental, political, economic, social and humanitarian sectors ... the United Nations ought to be able to rise to the needs of the international community for early warning and urgent action" (170-171). See also Ramcharan, "Early Warning in the United Nations Grand Strategy," in Kumar Rupesinghe and Michiko Kuroda, eds., *Early Warning and Conflict Resolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).

9. This analytical framework draws on several sources dealing with early warning systems and/or conflict indicators. These include: the textual indicator categories of the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations, New York (see United Nations, *Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS): Progress and Prospects*, 5-8); Juergen Dedring, "Socio-political Indicators for Early Warning Purposes," in Rupesinghe and Kuroda, op. cit.; Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Boulder: Westview, 1994), 87-91; The PIOOM Foundation's *Checklist for Country/Conflict Profiles* (PIOOM, Leiden University); Andrei Dmitrichev, "Indicators (Triggers) for Early Warning of Population Movements at a Country Level," internal policy paper (Geneva: UNHCR Centre for Documentation and Research); Human Rights Watch, *Slaughter Among Neighbours* (New Haven: Yale University Press,

1995), 6-12; David Gillies, "Evaluating National Human Rights Performance in the Developing World," Centre for Developing Area Studies Discussion Paper No. 58 (Montreal: McGill University, 1989); Alex P. Schmid, "Repression, State Terrorism, and Genocide: Conceptual Clarifications," in P. Timothy Bushnell, et al., eds., *State Organised Terror: The Case of Violent Internal Repression* (Boulder: Westview, 1991), 23-37. Discussions with Howard Adelman, Juergen Dedring, Jeremy Bristol, and Adeel Ahmed at the Humanitarian Policy Forum on Humanitarian Early Warning (Ottawa, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 17 May 1996) also contributed to my approach here. Juergen Dedring, James Mayall, Charlie Jefferson, Andrei Dmitrichev, and David Carment provided comments and suggestions.

10. For some early warning analysts, the factors grouped in this category appear to be more like "accelerating" factors than structural, background conditions. As alluded to above in the discussion of Category B - Polarisation, this analytical framework focuses on political analysis of dynamic factors in conflict escalation. It thus largely dispenses with macro-level risk assessment of the relatively static elements that make up a country's human development and socioeconomic profile. The quantitative computer modeling and coded datasets typical of this sort of macro analysis are not, in and of themselves, well-placed to guide policy-makers on operational options in specific cases of conflict escalation. Because of this operational orientation here, "accelerators" become the relatively more static, or "structural", indicators. This confusing explanation demonstrates, perhaps, that these distinctions work better in theory than in policy practice.

11. This clarification was emphasised at the November 1996 workshop at CIDCM, U. of Maryland. I am grateful to Ted Gurr for explaining at that time this difference between the purposes of risk assessment as distinct from early warning. Readers will no doubt detect here, however, a definite preference on the part of this author for "small N", case-specific approaches rather than general observations based on "large N" presumptions that statistical significance is necessarily relevant for operational decision-making. Gurr has noted elsewhere that "Risk assessments are based on the systematic analysis of remote and intermediate conditions. Early warning requires near-real-time assessment of events that, in a high-risk environment, are likely to accelerate or trigger the rapid escalation of conflict." See Gurr, "Early Warning Systems: From Surveillance to Assessment to Action," in Kevin M. Cahill, ed., *Preventive Diplomacy: Stopping Wars Before They Start* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 130-138.

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