

Early and Late Warning by the UN Secretary-General of Threats to the Peace: Article 99 Revisited

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ABSTRACT

The only independent political role that was explicitly given to the UN Secretary-General in the UN Charter is that of warning. Under Article 99, he/she may warn the Security Council about any matter that may threaten the peace. But is warning, especially early warning, by the UN Secretary-General likely, or even possible? By digging into the mines of UN history, I have sought to identify instances of early (and late) warning. For over 100 conflicts in which the Secretary-General intervened, only a very few (e.g., East Pakistan/Bangladesh 1971, Macedonia 1992) can be classified as early warning. There have been three explicit invocations of Article 99 in the Security Council (Congo 1960, Iran 1979 and Lebanon 1989) and about a dozen implied invocations, but most of these were late warnings or statements of support for warnings already provided by a member state. Given that there was no early warning in a great many cases (e.g., the conflicts in Korea (1950), Falklands/Malvinas (1982), Yugoslavia (1992) and Rwanda (1994)), one might rightfully ask why warning is so infrequent and so difficult.

This paper summarizes the Secretary-General's constraints and opportunities for early warning in each of its three stages (information gathering, analysis and dissemination) and makes suggestions about how some of the obstacles can be overcome. For technical and political reasons, the UN Secretary-General is now in a better position to carry out early warning than ever before but certain improvements are called for, namely: better targeting and gathering of necessary information, easier access for on-site observation, increased intelligence-sharing, tighter confidentiality systems, a stronger analytical capacity (including scenario building), quicker feedback at headquarters and a more proactive approach in issuing warnings and undertaking response measures. This may be a tall order, but the goal of early warning for conflict prevention is worthy of all such efforts.

HISTORICAL REVIEW

Even in the depths of World War II, some nations and people were already thinking about how to build a durable peace and a stronger international organization after the War. There was widespread agreement that the international civil service, introduced with the League of Nations, needed to be retained and strengthened. Lamenting that states in the League had always sounded the alarm too late, in 1943 Lord Viscount Cranborne of Great Britain proposed that this vital job be given to the “chief permanent official” of the new organization.

*[He] should be empowered to bring before members on his own initiative, any potentially dangerous development at an early stage before an aggressor has time to gird himself for war ... If the Earl, Lord Perth [the League's first Secretary-General, Sir Eric Drummond], had enjoyed this power as Secretary-General of the League, the history of the League might have been a very different one.*¹

He reasoned that:

it is always embarrassing ... for a nation, and especially a small nation, to attribute aggressive intentions to a neighbouring country with whom it is ostensibly in friendly relations. Consequently the tendency ... was for Member States of the League to raise a question of this kind when the situation was already so acute that there was no way of averting armed conflict ... [T]he chief permanent official... will be an international official and therefore not open to the same embarrassment as Ministers of individual states.

The need to give a warning role to the League Secretary-General had, in fact, been recognized by the League Assembly as early as 1920, but the notion was never enshrined in the League's Covenant, nor actively implemented.²

In June 1945, the 50 nations which gathered in San Francisco to prepare and sign the UN Charter decided to include in it a novel provision which gave the UN Secretary-General, who was to be accountable to no nation in particular but to the organization as a whole, a right that heretofore had only been conferred upon states: the ability to convoke a meeting of the Security Council on his own initiative in order to issue a warning on a matter that was not yet on the Council's agenda. In Article 99, the Charter states:

The Secretary-General may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

Sir Eric Drummond, the first Secretary-General of the League, commented on this new provision:

The Secretary-General of the League could only act through and at the request of a Member of the League; the Secretary-General of the UN can act on his own initiative. In view of this difference in functioning, the method of approach of the two officers is or was necessarily of a different character.

The Preparatory Commission in San Francisco itself commented on the new Article 99 as follows:

Under Article 99 of the Charter, moreover, he [the Secretary-General] has been given a special right which goes beyond any power previously accorded to the head of an international organization, viz, to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter (not merely any dispute or situation) which, in

*his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. It is impossible to foresee how this Article will be applied; but the responsibility it confers upon the Secretary-General will require the exercise of the highest qualities of political judgement, tact and integrity ...*³

As it turns out, Article 99 has been invoked infrequently. The major explicit and implicit invocations of Article 99 are described in Table 1 (see below) which covers the period 1946-92. The only ones that qualify as rigorous invocations are those dealing with the crises in the Congo (1960), in Iran (1979) and in Lebanon (1989).⁴ The first and third instances constituted “late” warnings but are nonetheless important cases. In the Iranian hostage case (1979), however, Article 99 served merely as a means to address the Security Council on a crisis that was already in the spotlight but which the Council had not taken up formally. In all other cases in Table 1, the matter had already been placed on the agenda of the Council by one or more Member States before the Secretary-General addressed it, though he may have been the first to speak to the issue at the meeting. A closer look at these invocations gives indications about the practical and political constraints on the Secretary-General in early warning.

The first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie, never explicitly invoked Article 99 before the Security Council, which had become a platform for Cold War oratory and rivalry shortly after the UN was created. Still, Lie set an important precedent by asserting his right to speak on his own initiative during Security Council debates, acting in the spirit of independence of Article 99 (without being so requested by a Member State), even if he was not warning of new threats to the peace.⁵ In 1950, Lie did sound the alarm about a threat to the peace: the invasion of South Korea. He was the first to speak in the Council at the crucial meeting of June 25, 1950, shortly after the North Korean attack, but since the Korea item was placed on the Council's agenda by the US, which had called the urgent meeting, it was not a clear cut case of Article 99 invocation (because the matter had been brought to the attention of the Council by the US). In any case, Lie's address was hardly even a “warning.” The massive invasion had begun over 12 hours earlier. Furthermore, Lie had learned about the attack from a US official, the US Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization, in a midnight call on June 24. After receiving confirmation from UN field observers in Korea, the Secretary-General did validate the allegations of aggression (a useful contribution in itself) and implored the Council to take action, which it did because the Soviet Union was absent and therefore unable to assert its veto right.

It was only with the arrival of the proactive Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld that Article 99 was applied rigorously and vigorously. The most important case was in the Congo. In January 1960, Hammarskjöld made a tour of many African states, especially the newly emerging states. He personally found that the Congo, due to receive its independence from Belgium a few months later, was ill-prepared for self-government.⁶ Furthermore, the UN's Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations raised serious doubts about “the future of the new republic as an integrated nation.”⁷ Demonstrating his ability to “meet trouble half way,” he sent his capable Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, Ralph J. Bunche, to represent the UN at the Congolese independence ceremonies on June 30. Using intentionally vague wording, Hammarskjöld gave Bunche a broad mandate to “be available to the [Congolese government] for consultations and discussions on matters relating to the United Nations interest ... [and] to report directly to me, with such recommendations as you may consider suitable.”⁸

When Bunche cabled back his first-hand observations of the outbreak of violence almost immediately after the independence ceremonies—he himself had been held at gun point—and described his frequent discussions with the new government leaders, Hammarskjöld had an excellent source of on-site information.⁹ On July 12, when the Congolese leaders appealed to Hammarskjöld for UN military assistance, he was already quite familiar with the situation. He called an urgent meeting of the Security Council for July 13, 1960, where he described the situation and presented his proposal. At the meeting, he said: “I believe the UN may be able to save this situation, chaotic as it is rapidly becoming.”¹⁰ The danger had broad, global

implications since the superpowers supported opposing factions in the Congo and the country could easily have become a flash point for a larger conflict. At Hammarskjöld's recommendation, the Security Council created a peace-keeping force, called ONUC (Force de l'Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo) which played a difficult but stabilizing role over the next four years. Tragically, Hammarskjöld was to lose his life while trying to resolve the Congolese conflict. His successor, U Thant of Burma, carried on the task of conflict resolution in the Congo in an able manner.

Secretary-General U Thant was a strong proponent and practitioner of "quiet diplomacy," never invoking Article 99 explicitly. At times he was urged to do so by various governments and outside observers (e.g., in the Biafran/Nigeria conflict 1967-70), but he resisted because he felt that matters should only be brought before the Council if agreement on actions was likely to be achieved, something which was not easy in the polarized Security Council of the Cold War. He insisted that "nothing could be more divisive or useless than for the Secretary-General to invoke Article 99 in a situation where there is no real possibility of the Security Council agreeing on any useful positive role."¹¹ Nevertheless, his sense of urgency grew steadily during the East Pakistan/Bangladesh conflict of 1971.

In the first part of 1971, the Secretary-General found himself limited to a humanitarian role as millions of refugees fled to India from East Pakistan. Neither India nor Pakistan (supported by the USSR and the US, respectively) wanted the UN to intervene politically, considering the matter an "internal affair." But U Thant recognized the serious potential for international armed conflict and on July 20, in a written, private memorandum, he urged the Council to intervene, despite the slim chances that the Council would act. "The crisis is unfolding in the context of the long-standing, and unresolved, differences between India and Pakistan — differences which gave rise to open warfare only six years ago. ... [A] major conflict in the subcontinent could all too easily expand ... [T]he present situation [is] a potential threat to peace and security ... It is for these reasons that I am taking the unusual step of reporting to the President of the Security Council on a question which has not been inscribed on the Council's agenda."¹² A few weeks later, U Thant made this memorandum public after the Council had ignored it, as a means to further prod the executive body. But the Council (led by the superpowers) avoided dealing with the situation until the beginning of war in December 1971.

Perhaps the greatest failure and the greatest success in early warning took place during the tenure of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In Rwanda in 1994, many signals of impending genocide went unheeded by the UN and important avenues were left uninvestigated, leading to the UN's unpreparedness and helplessness in the face of a brutal slaughter of unprecedented intensity that led to over half a million deaths within one hundred days. (Some of ignored signals in Rwanda are described later in this paper.¹³)

By contrast, the signals of danger in Macedonia were not ignored. Here, the main credit for sounding the alarm goes to the Republic's President, Kiro Gligorov. He raised the issue with the Secretary-General in the fall of 1992 and lobbied the Council's leading members to promote an active UN response. The new state, born in September 1991 out of the break up of the former Yugoslavia, was immediately faced with enormous internal and external threats. The country possessed a diverse ethnic mixture: three-fifths Macedonian, one-fifth Albanian, and the rest Turks, Greeks, Gypsies, Serbs, Vlachs, Muslim Slavs and Bulgarians. The land-locked nation of 2 million was "surrounded by countries with a historical claim to the territory, a political claim to protect an ethnic minority, or, in the case of Greece, a diplomatic claim to the very name Macedonia."¹⁴ Should one neighbor intervene, others likely would follow, leading to a European war that could find NATO partners Greece and Turkey on opposite sides. The deployment of UN monitors along the Macedonian border served as a deterrent to aggression from the outside and a stabilizer internally. It also constitutes 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.¹⁵

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 to warning (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.”¹⁶

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 attention on the part of governments and academics, under the name of early warning.¹⁷

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 used:

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 going 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.

The above definition covers only early warning of armed conflicts. In other studies, it could be broadened to include any political threats (not just threats of armed conflict) and, even further, to natural disasters. This study, however, is concerned only with the potential for armed conflict.

What constitutes “early”? The practical answer follows from the definition: in time to make an effort at conflict prevention. If there is not sufficient time to take potentially preventive action, then the term “late warning” is appropriate. If the conflict is already rapidly escalating, the term “warning” may not even be applicable at all. For conflict prevention and preparedness, early warning should be done as far in advance as possible. However, it is harder to make accurate predictions over the long range and, unless the threat is both immediate and evident, states are unlikely to respond to an early warning. The character of an early warning can be measured on the scales of time (how early the warning) and intensity (how strong the warning). A balance point has to be reached in practice between these two, which will depend largely on the nature of the threat. A desirable early warning period for most conflicts would be one to six months, although strategic early warning can be done two to three years in advance.

In spite of the logical link between early warning and preventive action, it is not necessary that a conflict be successfully prevented for early warning to have been achieved.

Early warning can take place even if preventive action was not taken. It is only important that the warning be made early enough that prevention *can be attempted*.

Early warning can best be illustrated in relation to a generalized conflict, with its escalation, crisis and descending phase as shown in Figure 1. Usually, the Secretary-general intervenes in a conflict only after it has escalated, and a large number of lives have been lost. In current thinking (if not current efforts) more emphasis is, fortunately, being placed on preventive action and early warning has taken on new importance. Early warning is an activity that is done in advance of the steep escalation of conflict.

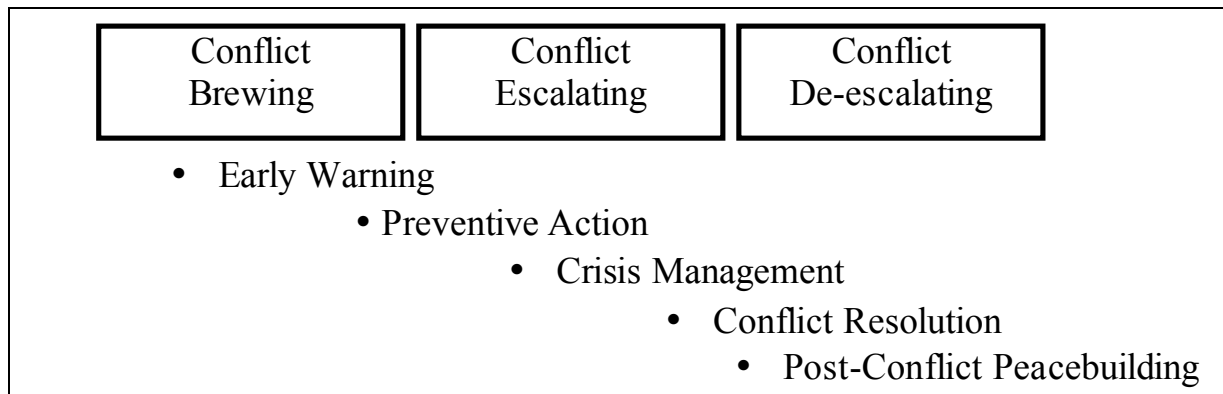


Figure 1: The early warning function in the conflict-response timeline.

Even if early warning fails to produce a response and the conflict escalates, the effort at early information gathering should help the Secretary-General (and his staff) to be more effective in handling with the conflict in the later stages, also illustrated in Figure 1. In relation to the three stages of conflict, six roles for the Secretary-General are easily identified: early warning, preventive diplomacy/deployment, crisis management, conflict resolution, peace-building and peace enforcement. Before the conflict begins or escalates, the UN could and should exercise its powers of prevention, through diplomacy or preventive deployment. If escalation is probable, the Secretary-General or another UN body has a duty to issue an early warning to a larger body. In the second stage of conflict, as fighting is occurring, the UN takes on the conflict/crisis management role. When parties are ready to reach a negotiated settlement, then the UN works for conflict resolution. Thus, information-gathering and analysis for early warning should be seen in the spectrum of the Secretary-General's roles and needs. Because there is so much overlap in the information requirements, it would be efficient to make early warning just one part of a larger information/intelligence capacity under the Secretary-General.

A list of conflicts in which the Secretary-General has intervened has been prepared¹⁸ and his roles analyzed using the above framework of roles. It shows that in the first 50 years of the UN, the number of early warning cases is fewer than five percent of conflicts handled. In addition to the examples of the Congo (1960) and East Pakistan/Bangladesh (1971) mentioned above, one can add the early warning cases of Bahrain (1970) and Macedonia (1992). In both these latter cases, as it turns out, effective preventive action was also taken. The record shows that early warning is not a frequent activity of the UN Secretary-General, despite his Charter mandate. What, then, are the difficulties associated with early warning and how can the possibilities for early warning be improved? Especially after the Cold War, one would expect that an expansion of the Secretary-General's role in this area would be both desirable and possible.

OLD CONSTRAINTS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The dilemma faced by a Secretary-General before warning of a new threat to the peace is much like that faced by a person wondering whether to pull a fire alarm. As the signs of fire appear, a number of people are usually in a position to sound the alarm. In the UN, member states also have the right to bring threats to the peace to the attention of the Council.¹⁹ To sound the alarm, the Secretary-General must either have new and unique information on the danger or, once the danger is seen by several actors, he must be bold enough to choose to act quickly. The two main reasons for the dearth of warnings from the Secretary-General are pinpointed in this analogy. He rarely has more information than the most powerful members of the UN (or states closest to the conflict) and, when a conflict becomes obvious, he often prefers that states take the initiative in sounding the alarm because they will then be more motivated to mount a response. This does not mean that his early warning role is unimportant, but rather it shows that it can be difficult to implement.

The difficulties in obtaining unique information and fostering political will can, again, be illustrated by historical cases. In Korea (1950), the Secretary-General received the initial information about the invasion from the US, and so from the beginning he was behind on knowledge about events. Even the UN Commission on Korea (UNCOK), stationed in Korea, drew most of its information from US diplomatic and military staff in the country. When originally informed of the invasion, the Secretary-General did offer to invoke Article 99, apparently feeling confident enough about the authenticity of the US information, but he was told that the US itself was planning to call an urgent Council meeting.

In the East Pakistan/Bangladesh conflict (1971), the Secretary-General, after waiting months for states to raise the issue in the Council tried to push the Council into deliberation. He did not want to call a formal meeting of the Council but rather sought to “nudge” the Council towards deliberations and action. There was, however, no political will in the Council to initiate discussions until the war broke out some five months later. In the Korea case, the Secretary-General was limited by a lack of early information. In the East Pakistan/Bangladesh case, it was the lack of political will (both on his part and on that of the Council) that inhibited the Secretary-General from invoking Article 99.

Knowing that the keys to early warning are good information and strong political will, we can identify various means to improve the UN's early warning system. It is apparent that the information should be clear and convincing in identifying an emerging threat. This entails not only the gathering of much information from the field but also a substantial means for thorough analysis. Within the UN there must also be a consultation process to consider the results of such analysis and a means to move critical information quickly to the Secretary-General. In addition to sharing information with Council members, it may also be necessary to disseminate further in order to promote action. Given these three steps, (information gathering, analysis, and dissemination) how could effective early warning be achieved?

INFORMATION GATHERING

We start by asking from where does the Secretary-General obtain his information about emerging crises? The main information sources are members states, UN agencies/personnel, the media and non-governmental organizations. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of each of these sources are summarized in Table 2, see below. Selected historical incidents can illustrate the practical problems and opportunities for the UN. To gain important examples, we focus on the dramatic moments when the Secretary-General first learned about major conflicts and identify the information sources.

Ironically it is sometimes governments who tell the Secretary-General about their own aggressive actions (in justification). But more often they provide information on the actions of other states (in condemnation). In 1948, Trygve Lie learned about the Arab attack on Israel (15 May 1948) through a cablegram from the Egyptian government to the Security

Council President.²⁰ As previously noted, he heard about the North Korean invasion (25 June 1950) in a mid-night call from a US official.²¹ Dag Hammarskjöld received allegations of a Vietnamese attack on Laos in a cable from the Laotian foreign minister (4 September 1959), who apparently magnified the threat. U Thant was informed by a US State Department official about the presence of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba (20 October 1962) two days before Kennedy's public announcement of the threat.²² Perez de Cuellar learned of the US-led attack on Iraq in call from President Bush an hour or so before the bombing began (17 January 1991).

UN officials stationed in the field can be the conveyors of important and dramatic news to headquarters. They are generally the most objective sources, though they are limited in what they can observe, anticipate and report. The arrival of the Six-Day War (5 Jun 1967) was conveyed to UN headquarters by the commander of UN peace-keeping force in the region (UNEF) at 3 am, prompting Ralph Bunche to awaken U Thant at home.²³ Similarly, UN observers stationed near the Suez Canal, whose positions had been overrun by Egyptian forces, informed Kurt Waldheim (6 October 1973) of the start of the Yom Kippur War.²⁴ The news media is sometimes ahead of diplomatic and internal channels. Lie learned of the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia (22 Feb 1948) in a newscast on his car radio.²⁵ U Thant learned of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia (20 Aug 1968) on a radio newscast carrying the Soviet Government's announcement of such.²⁶ He learned of the proclamation of independence of Bangladesh, and the ensuing violence (26 March 1971) in a report of the Indian News Agency (monitored by the Office of Public Information) which, in turn, cited the Voice of the Free Bangladesh Radio.

UN field offices routinely send excerpts or summaries of local press reports to headquarters but these usually focus on how the UN itself is being covered. Realizing that UN personnel who work in over one hundred countries at UN Information Centres (UNICs) and UN Development Programme (UNDP) offices are an untapped source of early warning information, Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar requested "the heads of the UN agencies and field offices throughout the world to inform him, on an urgent basis, of any situation that could give rise to a major humanitarian crisis."²⁷ The Office for Research and the Collection of Information (ORCI), which maintained an early warning mandate during its five-year existence from 1987-1992, requested the UNICs "to supply the office with all relevant, new and reliable information relating to 'political developments' in the region they cover." Information was to be based on "official documents and comments, press analyses, and reports available in the country or countries served by each Centre."²⁸

With the advent of the "information age" and the end of the Cold War, there are new possibilities for information gathering which are just beginning to be explored by the UN. Most of these arise from the rapid progress in technological innovation. Computers, communications, and the Internet provide a tremendous boost to the capacity to gather, share, and store information. Internet searches and electronic news services (the UN relies heavily on NewsEdge²⁹) help the UN to gather an unprecedented amount of information in near real time.

An increasing number of states and even private companies are gaining reconnaissance satellites, which operate above the boundaries of national sovereignty and which can potentially observe all countries of the world. The images obtained from advanced reconnaissance satellites are of sufficiently high resolution to count people in an open market place even at night (using radar). At present, however, the UN does not have automatic access to any satellite imagery. A major priority should be to obtain regular, if not continuous, access to satellite imagery possessed by member states or purchased from private sources. There are not, at present, any agreements for the automatic transfer of satellite information (or any information for that matter) to the UN and only vague responsibilities are recognized by Member States. These responsibilities should be formalized in one or more information-sharing agreements to help the UN better anticipate conflicts.

Aerial reconnaissance can also provide important information. Overflying vast tracts of land, planes with high-resolution cameras and transmitters can send detailed images for

photointerpretation back to headquarters as they are being taken. For border patrols (e.g., as in Macedonia) planes flying on one side of the border can view at least 30-40 km into the opposing territory, which is helpful to identify any threatening troop concentrations.

Perhaps, it is time to reexamine President Dwight Eisenhower's 1960 proposal for a "UN aerial reconnaissance capability ... to detect preparations for attack" to operate "in the territories of all nations prepared to accept such inspection."³⁰ The US President had generously offered to provide planes and equipment, as well as to accept observation on US territory. While such openness and magnanimity towards the UN is unlikely from the US today, it might be possible for some group of nations to commit themselves to developing such a global "confidence-building regime."

Ground-based observation technologies can assist the UN in its field missions having an early warning mandate. In addition to satellite input, UN forces would benefit from night vision devices (which allow peace-keepers to patrol better at night) and various types of sensors and detectors (such as ground sensors and radar to spot moving vehicles and persons). The NATO forces which took over from the UN in the former Yugoslavia were given many advanced technologies, illustrating how, by NATO standards, the UN is much under-equipped. Historically, in many of the UN's field operations, the most advanced observation device employed was the human eyeball, sometimes aided by binoculars.

Information gained by advanced observation technologies (satellite, aerial or on-site) may not be enough to reveal the hidden intentions of leaders. Often the only people to know about a planned escalation of conflict are the plotters and their associates. In the past, some "insiders" have sought to warn the UN, placing themselves at great risk. For instance, in Rwanda in early 1994, several months before the world witnessed the worst case of genocide since World War II, the UN peace-keeping force stationed there (UNAMIR) received information from a Rwandan militia officer that a group of high-ranking Hutus within the government were planning the mass slaughter of Tutsis. The UN Force Commander, General Romeo Dallaire of Canada, requested permission from UN headquarters to provide asylum to the informer. Having no system to handle asylum seekers, headquarters turned down the request. The macabre plot was not uncovered until well after the systematic killings had escalated beyond control. A key element in the extremists' plot was to force Belgian peace-keepers to leave the country at the outset of the slaughter, since they were the best equipped peace-keepers in the country and the only ones remotely capable of putting a stop to the spread of genocide. So troops from the Rwandan Presidential Guard confronted a group of ten Belgian paratroopers and requested them to lay down their arms. Not knowing of the plot, the peace-keepers innocently complied, only to be slaughtered. An outraged Belgium withdrew the rest of its peace-keepers shortly thereafter, just as the coup plotters had desired. During the subsequent fighting, the unprepared UN Force Commander complained about being "deaf and blind" in the field. This story shows that more and better information is necessary at an early stage and that a mechanism should be developed to grant rapid asylum to those who put their lives at risk when they have vital information relating to early warning.

Obtaining information directly from locals who observe or are affected by menacing developments is a key. In addition to face-to-face meetings, electronic mail, available through the Internet, has the potential for easy, cheap, rapid and widespread communication between individuals and the UN. The UN has already established a 24-hour human rights "fax hotline" in Geneva to receive complaints from individuals. In Rwanda, the fax machine at the Mille Collines Hotel was employed continuously by the Hotel manager (who was Hutu) to inform the world about the genocide of Tutsis. By providing an e-mail address for receipt of similar information, the UN should receive even more warnings and vital information. While e-mail (and, indeed, long distance calling/faxing) may not yet be available to many potential "warners" in the developing world, its availability is bound to increase in coming years. With both the Internet and the telephone, however, there remains the challenge of ensuring confidentiality during transmission and after reception.

The Internet currently provides wide-ranging background information, which can be

useful in exploring the nature of conflicts, current and emerging. The UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (now the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) has already established sites for information-sharing on areas of conflict.³¹ ReliefWeb is an excellent example. This publicly-available database covers countries where disasters (natural or manmade) are actually occurring.³² Because it takes a wide range of media reports, information that could not normally be provided by the UN (e.g., not fully substantiated or embarrassing information) is included on the UN site. The countries covered by ReliefWeb are only those for which a consolidated UN appeal has been made. This requires a request from the state itself and therefore rules out many countries which might be targeted for early warning. In Africa, for example, the conflict-ridden countries currently covered by ReliefWeb are Angola, the Great Lakes countries (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire), Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan.³³

Human rights abuses can be important indicators of emerging or escalating conflict. Several UN human rights agencies provide useful information. The UN Commission on Human Rights has a mandate for global monitoring of human rights. Its special rapporteurs conduct in-depth investigations of human rights abuses. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has among his/her functions "prevention and early warning." In 1994 the 24-hour hot line was established to "allow the United Nations Centre for Human Rights in Geneva to monitor and react rapidly to human rights emergencies, such as the 1994 crisis in Rwanda."³⁴ Input is solicited from victims, their relatives and NGOs to initiate "urgent, potentially life-saving contact" with the Special Procedures Branch of the Centre. The hotline and database are designed to improve the "timely flow of information from and to special rapporteurs from anywhere in the world," and form the basis of an electronic network linking the globe.³⁵

INFORMATION ANALYSIS

The amount of information coming into the UN Secretariat can be overwhelming, including false alarms, which often leads to the concomitant problems of information "overload and underuse." In order to make early warnings, the UN also needs a more sophisticated analytical capacity to use the most important information. Thorough analysis of incoming information is necessary to spot trends, to corroborate alarming reports and to identify further information that must be sought, an extremely important part of the feedback loop. Early warning is more easily achieved when specific information is targeted and deliberately sought out, based usually on "leads" provided in the general information-gathering process. Those who plot an escalation of violence usually try to hide their plans and preparations. Hence, it may require some keen "detective work" to uncover even the general nature of such plots. Two important indicators are the importation of armaments (usually done secretly and illegally) and the control over resources (e.g., mining activities or the drug trade). The UN has a poor monitoring system for such indicators, perhaps reflecting its fear of infringing on "internal affairs." It is also important to identify the vested economic interests within the country as well as outside. For example, in Katanga in 1960-62 it was vital for the UN to know the policies of the mining firms which backed Katangese succession from the Congo.

In order to carry out early warning and contingency planning, the UN needs to constantly develop scenarios for potential outcomes of both international and internal situations in the short and long-term. Most armies have contingency plans for all manner of threats, from conventional wars to nuclear holocaust, so it is only reasonable that the UN should develop contingency plans to respond to armed conflicts. Unfortunately, the UN has not yet developed a system for scenario-building. Now that the need for greater emphasis on conflict prevention is recognized by nations (at least on paper), the time has come to develop realistic mechanisms. Analysis is needed not only to spot negative developments but also to identify positive developments which are to be reinforced.

A strong analytical capacity, of the type needed for early warning, existed until recently

in the Information and Research (I&R) Unit of the Situation Centre, which is part of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO). Though small, with only four officers, it has the greatest “reach” in terms of information gathering and analysis because these officers are “connected” to national intelligence systems, having been seconded from them. Created in 1994 with only a US intelligence officer, the unit soon acquired officers from four of the five members of the Security Council (France, Russia, UK and the USA).³⁶ Their work was not limited to peace-keeping operations. They regularly provide assistance to other departments and to the Office of the Secretary-General. They produced important information/intelligence reports that have gone well beyond the scope of regular UN reports. They have included information on arms flows and other covert assistance from States. They evaluated the motivations of parties, and even began to develop threat assessments and other forecasts. Unfortunately, the I&R unit was dissolved after the General Assembly (at the urging of a group of countries from the developing world) required the UN Secretariat to remove all the gratis officers (who were mostly from the developed world who could afford to pay their salaries). This was a setback for the on-going efforts to develop an analytical capability for early warning within the UN.

CURRENT SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

Before information reaches the Secretary-General, it is usually received and “processed” by personnel in the Secretariat, including his Executive Office. Though the Secretary-General is sometimes informed by government representatives directly, the general flow of information on new developments is from the desk officer (who usually specializes in several countries in a given region) to the division head to the Under-Secretary-General, to the Secretary-General and, in most cases, his Executive Committee on Peace and Security.

Several departments within the Secretariat currently have responsibilities for early warning, as do the various human rights bodies mentioned above. The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) has “primary responsibility” within the UN Secretariat for preventive action and peacemaking.³⁷ This includes a mandate “to identify potential or actual conflicts in whose resolution the United Nations could play a useful role.” The regional divisions within DPA are each charged with identifying “potential crisis areas and providing *early warning* to the Secretary-General on developments and situations affecting peace and security.”³⁸ In 1998 a Prevention Team was established within DPA to review each month a selected case which might necessitate preventive measures.

Another indication of the growing interest and commitment to early warning is the project, begun in 1998 under DPA, on “Early Warning and Preventive Measures: Building UN Capacity.” It features a training program run by the UN Staff College in Turin, Italy, and carried out at various locations world-wide. Some 500 staff members from two dozen UN agencies, departments, offices, funds and programs as well as international NGOs have taken courses. Participants develop their skills in identifying the causes and stages of conflict, structuring early warning analysis, considering and coordinating a range of preventive measures. This is an important long-term initiative to create an enduring institutional capacity for early warning and prevention.

One of the earlier and most ambitious early warning systems established was the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) of OCHA. It involves a few (three or four) professional staff and a significant computerized capacity. The system incorporates a multitude of indicators and information sources (statistical and textual) to allow monitoring of deterioration in over 100 nations. However, over its first few years, the system has yet to produce a single “early warning” of armed conflict which often lead to humanitarian emergencies, though it has been operational since July 1995. The initial efforts were deficient in that too much reliance was placed on statistics, computer databases and automated computations for pattern recognition and neural networks, without linking this to more practical human analysis. In colloquial terms, HEWS relied too much on a “black box”

approach but a more “hands on” proactive approach, guided by human experience, intuition and curiosity is currently being taking, involving field trips and detailed reporting.

It is generally recognized that, traditionally, different sections of the UN, as with many large bureaucracies, lacked effective coordination and information flow.³⁹ In order to address this problem within the Secretariat, an OCHA/DPA/DPKO Framework for Coordination was developed after the creation of the Department for Humanitarian Affairs (DHA, now renamed Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA) in 1992. This expanded over time to include managers from the United Development Program (UNDP) and other UN agencies (UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO, WFP, FAO and the World Bank). One goal is “joint analysis of early warning of a looming crisis, within a broader framework for the coordination of operational planning and implementation among the three departments.” This includes “early warning information gathering and analysis, planning of preventive action, fact-finding, etc.” Desk officers are to exchange “early warning signals, staff reports, internal meeting notes, maps, assessments, agency situation reports, etc.”⁴⁰ An Interdepartmental committee meets regularly to facilitate the Framework for Coordination, to prioritize countries for review, decide on further monitoring measures and, finally to make recommendations to the Secretary-General’s Executive Committee on Peace and Security (and on Humanitarian Affairs). There is said to be “agreement as to the responsibility and criteria for ‘sounding the alarm’ in impending crises.” Even still, participants are hard pressed to describe any success stories achieved to date.⁴¹

An earlier manifestation of inter-agency level coordination was the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), which held consultations from 1992 to 1996 on “Early Warning of New Flows of Refugees and Displaced Persons.” The Consultations, held with varying regularity (e.g., monthly), were organized and chaired by DHA/OCHA and included many UN agencies (FAO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, WHO, WFP, IOM), UN Secretariat sections (e.g., DPA and the Centre for Human Rights Affairs), as well as the ICRC as an observer. Consensual reports from the meetings are prepared for the executive heads of the agencies and offices represented, as well as the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. In these reports, short lists of cases of urgent situations that might give rise to new flows were presented along with possible preventive/preparative measures to be taken by the Secretary-General or other high officials. The cases have been classified in terms of both the timing of the expected crisis and the estimated size of the displacement. The Ad Hoc Working Group also collaborated with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which was also given an early warning role.⁴² The IASC usually develops the terms of reference for inter-agency appeals for international support in response to a natural or man-made disaster. So far, it has confined itself almost entirely to disasters that have already occurred, not complex emergencies that are forecast.

DISSEMINATION AND THE POLITICAL WILL OF MEMBER STATES

Even the most progressive early warning body, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Early Warning of Refugee Flows, has complained that too frequently warnings are not acted upon or even not considered:

The effectiveness of the Ad Hoc Working Group’s access to the executive level has, regrettably, remained a serious concern of every participant. While the reports of the Consultations on Early Warning reach the offices of executive heads, there is uncertainty as to whether the message contained in these brief alerts is received and acted upon. Everybody is aware of the information-overload problem of senior managers and of the self-evident need of senior officials to attend to the pressing issues of the moment. Still, if the costs in human lives and resources of today’s megacrises are to be lowered markedly, the current neglect of early warnings for preventive purposes must be

*reversed.*⁴³

The Secretaries-General, similarly, have complained for decades about the lack of interest displayed by member states in receiving specific early warnings.

In principle, governments are in support of an expanded early warning role for the Secretary-General. The Security Council and the General Assembly have passed several resolutions to promote early warning and have even encouraged the Secretary-General to employ Article 99 in general. For instance, they did so in relation to the Secretary-General's 1992 Agenda for Peace and several times since then.⁴⁴ The General Assembly did so in its resolutions on the "Protection and Security of Small States,"⁴⁵ and through various declarations it has approved.⁴⁶ In the 1992 Declaration on UN Fact-finding, the General Assembly endorsed an even expanded mandate:

28. The Secretary-General should monitor the state of international peace and security regularly and systematically in order to provide early warning of disputes or situations which might threaten international peace and security. The Secretary-General may bring relevant information to the attention of the Security Council and, where appropriate, of the General Assembly. [emphasis added]

Unfortunately, a regular and systematic global forecasting system, producing periodic reports on potential or actual threats to the peace, has not been created.

The crux of the problem for early warning and Article 99 invocations has been that the major powers will themselves alert the Security Council to threats to the peace if and when they see the need; if they do not bring such matters up, it usually means that they do not want them brought up. If the Secretary-General "forces" the matter on the agenda of the Council by invoking Article 99, he risks raising the ire of one or more members of the Council. He may be dissuaded by them in advance or may simply fear that there will be little chance of action, since the Council members have already decided not to handle the matter. The only case where the Secretary-General can claim to have special privilege is when he possesses unique information, not available to the major powers, which will galvanize the Council to action. But it is rare that the Secretary-General will know about a new dispute before the major powers.

The "solution" of this political problem is to develop a new norm or standard for early warning, in which the Secretary-General regularly draws attention to potential conflict at an early stage in spite of the reluctance of some members of the Council. This would be the natural exercise of Article 99 and has even been requested and encouraged by UN Member States (e.g., in the 1992 UN Fact-Finding Declaration). Such early warning entails a more proactive approach on the part of the Secretary-General, even when a UN response is not immediately possible. It also requires that the current early warning system be augmented, so that better information and analysis is available to the Secretary-General. A number of possible means of improvement are included in the next (recommendations) section.

Some of the "old constraints and new opportunities" for early warning are summarized in Table 3 (see below). Recent breakthroughs in information gathering, analysis and dissemination have been possible, thanks mostly to the rapid increase in computing power and the availability of the Internet. Still, this increase in information collection and handling has not yet resulted in a functioning early warning (EW) system for armed conflict. No unit within the UN Secretariat, including the office of the Secretary-General, has yet produced a series of early warnings about impending conflicts. While the UN is not expected to match the major powers in the ability to gather and process information about impending threats, in order to do early warning, its capabilities need to be substantially increased.

RECOMMENDATIONS: TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE UN EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

The constraints on developing UN early warning systems have been financial and managerial, as well as political and technical. The past decade has been characterized by deep financial cuts, loss of posts and institutional retrenchment. Still, with the UN reform process being constantly pushed, there is reason to hope that an effective early warning system, perhaps in the Framework for Coordination process, can become part of effective conflict prevention and preparedness within the UN. The following recommendations with commentaries are suggest ways to build a strong early warning system for the UN. The proposals can conveniently be divided into those dealing with organizational aspects, information-gathering, analysis and dissemination.

ORGANIZATION OF EARLY WARNING

A single body should be designated with overall responsibility for the function of early warning (EW). This EW unit should be accountable for failures at early warning.

Currently, the responsibility for early warning is spread among several departments. As such, it is easy for each body to ignore the early warning responsibility, and evade the risks to be taken by issuing early warnings. It is proposed that one unit be held accountable for any lapses. While early warning can continue to be included in the mandates of several departments, one person (e.g., the unit chief) should be given the primary and coordinating role and made accountable. This will put the onus on that person/unit to produce early warnings. It should be accountable for both missed opportunities and for false alarms, though it should be understood that early warning is not an easy task. Still, it should be possible to establish a track record for early warning. This kind of responsibility for early warning combined with accountability has never before been institutionalized in the UN.

A learning mechanism should be part of the early warning system (EWS).

Failures to issue early warnings, which can be expected to be frequent, should be reviewed in order to determine if there are deficiencies in the system, improvements to be made and, more generally, lessons to be learned. In this way, the early warning system and individuals involved should “learn from experience” over time.

The officer in charge of early warning should not be responsible for proposing response options, though s/he may contribute to this important task. This overall responsibility for preventive action should be held by a different body.

Imposing a requirement that the early warning coordinator or unit also recommend potential responses to looming threats will slow down, or make impossible, the early warning process. While such recommendations can be attached to the warning, the “early warners” should be unencumbered from that obligation. Their warning should, however, provide an analysis of the threat with as much information as possible that could be useful in the consideration of responses. By listing possible “accelerators” and “decelerators” of future conflict, the early warners can contribute to the development of preventive actions.

More broadly, the UN should consider the creation a Strategic Information Centre or Unit with a responsibility for handling information at all stages of the conflict, from prior to escalation (leading to early warnings) to the post-conflict peace-building stage. Early warning could be one important task of such a body.

This integrated approach has much to commend it. It would allow for information

gathering through the life cycle of a conflict and across the military/civilian divide. This will help smooth the transition between early warning and peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building. There is a strong need for a body within the Secretariat which is dedicated to information gathering and analysis. In the past, a number of large peace-keeping operations (PKOs) included a distinct military information branch (MIB) in the field. Various UN operations (from the Congo⁴⁷ to the former Yugoslavia) have shown the utility of dedicated information bodies (MIBs) in the field. The need for strengthened informational procedures, both at headquarters and in the field, has been recognized. Both the Secretary-General and the Council have stressed the need for improved information capacity.⁴⁸ The Information and Research Unit of the DPKO Situation Centre assisted considerably in many non-peace-keeping tasks, including early warning. In an Information Centre, the capacity for analysis could be used in the spectrum of UN roles (including, early warning, peace-keeping, and humanitarian assistance, as well as possibly arms control verification).

INFORMATION-GATHERING

The priority information and potential information sources should be actively identified.

Currently, UN early warning systems work in a passive information collection mode, which is only the first stage. As part of the feedback loop in the information system, analysis of incoming information should result in the identification of further information requirements. Often, these are crucial facts which must be “sought out.” It is important to follow up leads and “hunches” in the second stage. Of course, the early warning unit should be aware of limits imposed by international law and UN policies on its information-gathering activities.⁴⁹

The early warning unit should be able to draw upon national information and intelligence agencies.

National agencies sometimes have the most crucial information (e.g., on current troop positions, obtained by satellite, and illicit arms imports, obtained from “assets”). The Information and Research (I&R) Unit of the DPKO Situation Centre maintained useful links with national intelligence services. HEWS, which is currently tasked with an ambitious EW mandate, lacks any such contacts. It is vital that the proposed EW unit be in communication with such bodies, since they often have crucial information necessary for early warning. Of course, it may be necessary to corroborate reports from several agencies and sources to avoid inaccuracies and national biases.

Bring UN human rights agencies into close contact with the early warning unit.

Human rights violations are important indicators of potential conflict. It is desirable to maintain an on-going dialogue with the UN's human rights and refugee agencies (which are mostly based in Geneva).

Develop partnerships with NGOs, especially those engaged in early warning.

Similarly, there will be great benefit to working more closely with groups that can provide some of this much needed information gathering and analysis capability. NGOs often have people in the field able to observe situations first hand and with many local contacts. They are often more than willing to provide warnings to the UN because of the risk to the safety of their staff in the event of an escalation of conflict. In addition, there are several NGO groups which are now forming with the mandate for early warning (e.g., the Forum on Early Warning and Response, of which the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs is already associated), with whom the EW unit should be in close contact.

Monitor early warnings issued by other organizations.

In some cases, early warnings will already have been sounded, often from sources within the country in question and sometimes from outside groups. The early warning unit should keep track of such warnings to prompt further investigation, and to corroborate or discount the reports.

Explore the possibilities for new information-gathering agreements and norms.

There have been significant advances in on-site inspection standards for arms control and peace-keeping. The 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention, for instance, provides for the most intrusive system of inspection of any treaty yet, based on an “any site, anytime” approach, qualified by “managed access” provisions.⁵⁰ In the not so distant future, similar “challenge inspection” provisions could be considered for incorporation a global on-site inspection system favoring transparency in military affairs. Eisenhower’s proposal of 1960 for a UN aerial reconnaissance system (made five years after his first open skies proposal), described earlier, could be re-examine by governments and others. This should be done in relation to the current Open Skies Treaty in Europe and the capacity of reconnaissance satellites. In addition, the UN should consider developing the capacity for aerial surveillance in its peace-keeping and other missions.

Explore the possibilities for technology.

The UN has traditionally been technophobic, both in the field and at headquarters. As mentioned, there are many technological possibilities still waiting to be explored, from remote sensing technologies (such as aerial and satellite monitoring) to ground sensors (such as miniature-seismic detectors). While there has been an expressed interest in technology within certain quarters of the UN (e.g., in the Peace-keeping Committee and in UN expert reports on verification) there has not been even a detailed study about how technology can have a positive impact on peace and security and play a role in UN's tasks, including early warning.

ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION

The EW unit should be provided with sufficient analytical skills to carry out its mandate.

None of the bodies currently tasked with early warning have a sufficient analytical capacity. For the ambitious mandate of early warning, much information must be analysed and corroborated, leads must be followed and new information requirements identified. Formulations of potential scenarios and their continual modification, after checks against reality, are necessary. The Information and Research (I&R) Unit of the DPKO Situation Centre has demonstrated the capacity for this. This positive experience should be useful to the proposed EW unit.

Issuing reports on early warning should become a regular activity both within the Secretariat (i.e., reports to the Secretary General) and to the Member States (i.e., in reports from the Secretary General).

To establish a new “early warning” norm, which will help to make the UN a more proactive body, reporting should be regular, even if there are no early warnings to make. One possibility would be to include a section on potential threats to the peace in the Annual Report of the Secretary-General. In addition, regular EW reports should be made by the Secretary-General to the Security Council, both in the formal and the informal sessions. This

is the essence of the responsibility imposed on him by Article 99 and as part of the UN's overall responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. The early warning function should become a regular part of his service.

CONCLUSION

The UN Secretary-General is now positioned better than ever before to engage in early warning. There are early warning mandates from the Security Council and the General Assembly. The UN possesses better information systems than ever before. In addition, there appear to be progressive movers within the UN's international civil service and a Secretary-General (Kofi Annan) who is thoroughly familiar and experienced with the UN's role in peace-keeping and conflict management. All current attempts to establish an early warning capability should be encouraged so the UN can improve upon its past record.

Will the UN maintain its habitual pattern of *reacting* to conflicts instead being *proactive* by warning about them and preempting them? If the Secretary-General and member states seize the possibilities for new peace mechanisms in the new century, and recognize that the time is ripe for an expanded and earlier UN role, then there is every possibility for hope. Then Article 99 will be not merely a theoretical possibility, seldom used, but a living provision of the UN Charter and an additional tool that might help save the world from much misery and suffering. UN early warning is surely an idea whose time has come.

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ENDNOTES

1. Lord Viscount Cranborne, 1943. *House of Lords, Parliamentary Debates, Official Report, 5th Series*, vol. cxxvii, 15 April 1943.
2. On 10 December 1920 the League Assembly adopted a resolution stating: "[i]t shall be the duty of the Secretary-General to call to the attention of the Council to any facts which in his opinion show that a member of the League has become a Covenant-breaking State within the Meaning of Article 16. Upon receiving such an intimation, the Council shall, on the request of any of its members, hold a meeting with the least possible delay to consider it..." Records of First Assembly, Plenary, 1920, 400.
3. As quoted in Rovine, Arthur W., 1970, *The First Fifty Years: The Secretary-General in World Politics, 1920-1970*, Leyden: A.W. Sijthoff, p.205.
4. The rigorous application of Article 99 entails a declaration to the Council that there may exist a new (not

- currently considered) threat to the peace. In UN procedural terms, this means adding a new item to the agenda of the Security Council. The Provisional Rules of Procedure (Rule 2) of the Council further state that “[t]he President shall call a meeting of the Security Council ... if the Secretary-General brings to the attention of the Security Council any matter under Article 99.”
5. The right to provide input to the Council was enshrined in rule 22 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council which states: “The Secretary-General, or his deputy acting on his behalf, may make either oral or written statements to the Security Council concerning *any question* under consideration by it” [emphasis added].
 6. Urquhart, Brian, 1973. *Hammaraskjold*. New York, New York: Knopf, p.389.
 7. Ona B. Forest, 1960, Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations *Belgian Congo: Summary and Outlook* (Draft Report) June 1960, UN Archives, Dag-1/2.2.1.35.
 8. Letter of Designation, Secretary-General to RJB, 20 June 1960, UN Archives, Dag-1/2.2.1-35.
 9. For instance, on July 9, Bunche cabled the warning: “Powder keg here. But full explosion may be avoided.” Urquhart, Brian, Ralph Bunche: An American Life. New York, New York: W.W. Norton, pp.308-9.
 10. Ibid, p.311.
 11. Cordier, Andrew W. and Harrelson, Max, 1977. *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations*, Volume VIII (U Thant, 1968-1971), New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977, p. 386.
 12. *Text of Memorandum to the President of the Security Council, 20 July 1970* in Cordier and Harrelson, *Public Papers* (Ibid), Volume VIII (U Thant, 1968-1971), p. 563-66.
 13. A detailed study of early warning in Rwanda is provided in Dorn, A. Walter, and Matloff, J., Preventing the Bloodbath: Could the UN have Predicted and Prevented the Rwanda Genocide, *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. XX, No. 1 (Spring 2000), p.9.
 14. “U.S. troops in Macedonia seen as positive foreign policy step”, *The Washington Post*, 11/12/93.
 15. The mission, however, lacks the means and skills to gather and analyse data about intentions (political intelligence).
 16. Hammaraskjold, Dag, The International Civil Servant in Law and Fact: Lecture Delivered in Congregation at Oxford University, May 30, 1961, in Cordier, Andrew and Foote, Wilder, *The Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations*, Volume IV (1958-1961), Columbia University Press, New York, p.477.
 17. The term “early warning” had been used in the humanitarian and disaster management fields for some time before it was applied to human conflict.
 18. The list is to be published in the near future.
 19. Article 35 of the UN Charter states: “Any Member of the United Nations may bring any dispute, or any situation of the nature referred to in Article 34, to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly.”
 20. Lie, Trygve, 1954. *In the Cause of Peace*, MacMillan Co, New York, 1954, p.178
 21. Lie, Ibid, p.327.
 22. U Thant, 1978. View from the UN. Doubleday, New York, New York: Garden City, p.155. A State Department official informed U Thant through his military adviser, Indar Jit Rikhye.
 23. U Thant, Ibid, p.253.
 24. Urquhart, Brian, *A Life in Peace and War*, p.237.
 25. Lie, Ibid, p.231.
 26. U Thant, Ibid, p.382.

27. Bourloyannis, Christiane, 1990. Fact-Finding by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, *Journal of International Law and Politics*, vol. 22(4), Summer 1990, pp.641-669.
28. Review of United Nations Public Information Networks: Note by the Secretary-General. *U.N. Doc. A/44/329*, 1989.
29. *NewsEdge* Corporation of Burlington, MA, claims to the world's largest independent news integrator.
30. Furthermore Eisenhower pledged that "the United States is prepared not only to accept United Nations aerial surveillance, but to do everything in its power to contribute to the rapid organization and successful operation of such international surveillance." *Documents on Disarmament* 1960, "Events incident to the Summit Conference (May 16, 1960)," Washington: US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, p.226.
31. Examples of this are ReliefWeb and the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), the first one having been established for the Great Lakes.
32. Reliefweb has provided information about on-going emergencies and crises in the a host of states/regions, including Afghanistan, Angola, Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Russian Fed./Chechnya, Great Lakes (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire), Iraq, DPR Korea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tajikistan. In addition to covering complex emergencies in over 20 states, there is information on (short-duration) natural disasters in many others.
33. ReliefWeb can be found on the Internet at <http://www.reliefweb.int>.
34. The Hot Line fax number in Geneva, Switzerland was given as 41-22-917-0092.
35. Mr. Ayala Lasso, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, quoted in UN Doc. DPI/1550/HR of September 1994.
36. The composition of the I&R unit, consisting only of seconded nationals from four of the permanent five members of the Security Council, did pose the potential problem that incoming information may be biased towards the interests of the UN's most powerful states. In practice, however, such natural biases can be taken into account and found acceptable because more information is generally better than less.
37. UN Secretary-General, 1996. *50th Anniversary Report on the Work of the Organization*, United Nations, 1996 (UN Sales No. E.96.I.19) — see section on "preventive diplomacy and peacemaking", p. 193. DPA was created in March 1992, and was officially given responsibilities for preventive diplomacy and peacemaking one year later. Prior to that, such functions were performed by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. (See General Assembly resolution A/47/120 for the mandate of the Department of Political Affairs.) A good summary of DPA responsibilities is provided in *DPA overview* ("<http://www.un.org/smlogo.gif>"): "The DPA has five main responsibilities in support of preventive action and peacemaking. First, it must monitor, analyze and assess political developments throughout the world. Next, the Department identifies potential or actual conflicts in whose control and resolution the United Nations can play a useful role. It then prepares recommendations to the Secretary-General about appropriate actions in such cases. Fourth, the Department executes the approved policy when it is of a diplomatic nature. Finally, it assists the Secretary-General in carrying out political activities decided by him and/or mandated by the General Assembly and the Security Council in the areas of preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace-keeping and peace-building, including arms control and disarmament."
38. UN Secretariat, "Department of Political Affairs Overview" at <http://www.un.org/smlogo.gif> (as of March 1997). Italics added.
39. In fact, the previous Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, wrote in his "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace", submitted to the General Assembly on 3 January 1995, that "in an international bureaucracy interdepartmental cooperation and coordination come even less naturally than they do in a national environment."
40. Department of Humanitarian Affairs, *The DHA/DPA/DPKO Framework for Coordination*, DHA, July 1996 (includes flow chart).
41. The Framework for Coordination process has, however, started a process to address the root causes of conflict. One potential recent success in early warning is the Fergona valley in central Asia. The Secretary-General also agreed to send a special envoy to the Central African Republic as a result of the Framework review. According to those involved, the framework process is becoming more effective in recognizing potential conflict situations and creating interdepartmental response.
42. The IASC was created by the General Assembly in resolution 46/182. It is composed of the executive

heads of the UN humanitarian organizations as well as ICRC, the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies, the International Organization for Migration, and the non-governmental consortia International Council of Voluntary Agencies, Interaction and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response.

43. *Consultations on Early Warning of New Flows of Refugees and Displaced Persons: Report of the ad hoc Working Group*, UN Doc. ACC/1995/24 of 9 November 1995.
44. In Resolution 47/120 of 18 December 1992, the General Assembly “4. Encourages the Secretary-General to continue, in accordance with Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, to bring to the attention of the Security Council, at his discretion, any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security, together with his recommendations thereon.” In 1999, the President of the Security Council stated (S/PRST/1999/34): “the Council encourages the Secretary-General to improve further the capacity to identify potential threats to international peace and security and invites him to indicate any requirements to fulfill these capacities, including the development of the Secretariat’s expertise and resources.”
45. In several resolutions on the *Protection and security of small States*, the General Assembly “4. Urges the Secretary-General to pay special attention to monitoring the security situation of small States and to consider making use of the provisions of Article 99 of the Charter.” (Resolutions 44/51 of 8 December 1989, 46/43 of 9 December 1991 and 49/31 of 30 January 1995.)
46. The 1982 *Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes* (approved in resolution 37/10 of 15 November 1982) provides that “6. [t]he Secretary-General should make full use of the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations concerning the responsibilities entrusted to him.” The 1987 “Declaration on the Enhancement of the Effectiveness of the Principle of Refraining from the Threat or Use of Force in International Relations” (approved in resolution 42/22 of 18 November 1987) states: “31. States should encourage the Secretary-General to exercise fully his functions with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security and the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with the Charter, including those under Articles 98 and 99, and fully cooperate with him in this respect.” The 1988 “Declaration on the Prevention and Removal of Disputes and Situations Which May Threaten International Peace and Security and on the Role of the United Nations in this Field” (approved in resolution 43/51 of 1988) states: “23. The Secretary-General should be encouraged to consider using, at as early a stage as he deems appropriate, the right that is accorded to him under Article 99 of the Charter.”
47. For a description of the first such body, the Military Information Branch in the UN’s Congo operation, see Dorn, A. Walter and Bell, David H., *Intelligence and Peace-keeping: The UN Operation in the Congo 1960-64*, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Spring 1995, pp.11-33.
48. The Council President stated on 22 February 1995: “The Security Council strongly support’s the Secretary-General’s conclusion that peace-keeping operations need an effective information capacity, and his intention to address this requirement in future PKOs from the planning stage.”
49. For an analysis of the limitations of UN intelligence-gathering see, Dorn, A. Walter, *The Cloak and the Blue Beret: The Limits of Intelligence-Gathering in UN Peacekeeping*, Pearson Paper No. 4, Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, Nova Scotia, 1999.
50. The UN Special Commission has also gained much experience from its inspections in Iraq. In Cambodia, the UN peace-keeping force (UNTAC) was given unprecedented powers of inspection (e.g., extending to inspection of files and documents in the offices of the political parties).

Table 1: The Secretary-General Alerts the Security Council.

This table describes the instances in which the Secretary-General (SG) has formally brought to the attention of the Security Council (SC) new matters which posed a threat to international peace and security. Thus, the Secretary-General exercised the substance of the responsibilities conferred upon him by Article 99 of the UN Charter. However, by a strict application of Article 99, formal invocation of the Article has occurred only three times, arising from the crises in the Congo (1960), Iran (1979), and Lebanon (1989). The table covers the period up to end of the term of Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar (December 1991).

<i>Secretary-General</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Situation</i>	<i>Description</i>
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	<i>Date</i>		
Trygve Lie (1946-53)	25 Jun 1950	North Korea attacks South Korea. USA notifies SG of attack. SG obtains independent confirmation and details of attack from the UN Commission on Korea.	At an emergency SC meeting, requested by the US (and boycotted by the Soviet Union), SG speaks first, stating that “military actions have been undertaken by North Korean forces” which were a “direct violation” of General Assembly resolution 293 (IV) and of the <i>UN Charter</i> . He says that the situation was “a threat to international peace ... I consider it the clear duty of the SC to take steps necessary to re-establish peace in that area.” SC passes resolutions condemning attack as breach of the peace. On 27 June, SC calls upon UN Members to furnish assistance to repel the attack. [Lie, pp. 323-33]
Dag Hammarskjöld (1953-61)	7 Sep 1959	Laos alleges Vietnamese aggression and requests SG to send an emergency UN force.	SG asks SC President to “convene urgently” a SC meeting, which President does under his own authority. USA desires to introduce a draft resolution to establish a fact-finding body as a procedural matter, and thus avoid Soviet veto. At meeting, SG states he is not invoking <i>Article 99</i> , which would cause matter to be considered substantial, but is only reporting to SC on agenda item introduced by SC President. He states that he has insufficient knowledge to make judgement as to the facts. US Draft resolution is carried, over Soviet objections, and fact-finding Committee is established. Committee reports that Lao allegations are overstated. No UN force is sent. [UNYB 1959, pp. 62-65]
	13 Jul 1960	Congolese government cables SG with a request for UN military assistance to protect against Belgian paratroops. These had been dispatched to protect Belgian interests (including inhabitants) in the former colony. The country is in chaos.	SG requests urgent meeting of the SC for that evening on “a matter which, in my opinion, may threaten international peace and security.” At meeting, he recommends a UN force be sent to Congo, so that Belgian forces could be withdrawn and to prevent other countries (esp. former Soviet Union) from sending troops. SC authorizes him to send the UN force. UNOC, which at its peak numbers about 20,000 troops, is established to help keep law and order. [Cordier & Foote, vol. V, pp. 16-27; UN Docs. S/4381, S/PV.873]
	22 Jul 1961	Fighting intensifies around Bizerta, Tunisia, between French forces (which occupy the city) and Tunisian soldiers and civilians. Tunisia had blockaded the French naval base at Bizerta.	At the second SC meeting dealing with the Bizerta question, SG speaks to SC: “News reaching us from Tunisia indicates that the serious and threatening development which the Council took up for consideration yesterday continues, with risks of irreparable damage to international peace and security.” In view of the “obligations of the Secretary-General acting under <i>Article 99</i> ”, he appeals to SC to make an immediate call for cease-fire and return of all armed forces to original positions. SC adopts a resolution with these provisions by vote of 10-0, with France refusing to participate. [Cordier & Foote, vol. V, pp. 526-530]

U Thant (1962-71)	29 Apr 1963	The Imam of Yemen is deposed in a <i>coup d'état</i> by republicans. The UAR recognizes new regime, while Saudi Arabia supports the Imam. Fighting breaks out. UAR sends troops.	SG informs SC of his initiatives to ensure against “any development in the situation which might threaten the peace in the area.” Explains that the three parties have agreed to the stationing of a UN observer mission (UNYOM) and will pay for it. UNYOM is established to observe disengagement and withdrawal of foreign forces, including supervision of a demilitarized zone. At 11 June 1963 meeting Thant warns that “disengagement may be jeopardized if the United Nations observation personnel are not on the spot.” SC passed resolution approving observation force, which conducted operations until 4 Sep 1964. [Cordier & Foote, vol. VI, pp. 328-30]
	20 Jul 1971	Awami League declares the independence of East Pakistan in March 1971. Pakistani President Yahya Khan requests his army to suppress independence activities, resulting in bloodshed. U Thant maintains almost daily contact with India and Pakistan but refrains from calling SC meeting because both sides consider the conflict an internal matter.	SG distributes a confidential memorandum to SC members, “warning them that the conflict could all too easily expand, erupting the entire subcontinent in fratricidal strife, and that the UN must now attempt to mitigate the tragedy.” The memorandum was made public in August. SG describes it as “an implied invocation of <i>Article 99</i> .” Yet SC does not meet in emergency session until the Indo-Pakistan War begins on 3 December, four months after SG’s warning. SC is unable to decide on action. SG confines himself to the humanitarian aspects of the problem, including the organization of international aid for refugees in India. [Thant, p. 423]
Kurt Waldheim (1972-81)	16 Jul 1974	Cyprus crisis is ignited when Greek Cypriot National Guard stage a <i>coup d'état</i> on 15 July against President Makarios, who flees from the Island.	SG requests SC President to convene an emergency meeting, in view of the seriousness of the matter in relation to international peace and security and in view of the UN involvement in Cyprus. The permanent representative of Cyprus also requests meeting. SC endorsed continued UN peacekeeping efforts and authorized SG to attempt to mediate the dispute. However, it was only on 20 July, the day of the Turkish intervention that the Security Council passed a resolution calling for a cease-fire. [UNYB 1974, p. 262]
	30 Mar 1976 & 16 Mar 1978	Ongoing civil war in Lebanon begun in 1975. Israel invades Southern Lebanon on 15 Mar 1978 to destroy Palestinian bases and curb raids into Israel.	In both cases, SG brings to the attention of the Security Council the gravity of the situation in Lebanon, transmits the communications that he has received, and offers his good offices. [UN Chronicle, Apr 1976 and Apr 1978]

	4 Dec 1979	US Embassy in Tehran is invaded by revolutionary Islamic students on 4 Nov 1979, with support of Iran's new government. On 9 Nov, after consultations, SC President calls for the release of the hostages.	SG writes to SC President on 25 Nov drawing attention to the continuing crisis and requesting SC meeting, saying that it was his opinion that the crisis posed a threat to international peace and security. SC meets formally on 27 Nov. SG speaks first, calling upon the USA and Iran to exercise maximum restraint. In resolution of 4 Dec SC calls for release of hostages, restoration of diplomatic immunities and authorizes SG to "take all appropriate measures" to implement the resolution. On 31 Dec 1979 he travels to Tehran. The Iranian government paints his visit as a fact-finding mission to examine cruelties of the Shah's regime. SG's four-point proposal is rejected and he returns empty handed. [UNYBV 1979, pp. 307-312; S/13646]
	26 Sep 1980	From mid-May to mid-Sep SG receives accusations from both Iran & Iraq, indicating a deteriorating situation. Iraq invades Iran on 22 Sep, beginning the Iran-Iraq war. SG appeals to both parties on 22 & 23 Sep for restraint and a negotiated settlement.	SG states in letter to SC President (25 Sep), that fighting had intensified and that the situation undoubtedly threatened international peace & security. SG suggests SC consultations. Mexico and Norway request formal meeting of SC. At meeting on 26 Sep, SG summarizes developments leading to the meeting. SC adopts resolution 479 (1980) calling for a cease-fire and urging parties to accept mediation or conciliation. [S/14196; UNYB 1980, pp. 312-314]
Javier Pérez de Cuéllar (1982-91)	15 Aug 1989	Fighting in Lebanon escalates, especially in and around Beirut. There is danger of further involvement of outside parties.	In a letter to the SC President, the SG notes that violence in and around Beirut "had escalated to a level unprecedented in fourteen years of conflict." He states his belief that an effective cease-fire is imperative: "in my opinion, the present crisis poses a serious threat to international peace and security. Accordingly, in the exercise of my responsibility under the <i>Charter</i> of the United Nations, I ask that the Security Council be convened urgently ..." [S/20789]

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Table 2: UN information sources and their advantages and disadvantages for UN

early warning and conflict management.

Source	Advantages	Disadvantages
Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - governments (esp. Western) have wide information networks (e.g., embassies, agencies) and a moral responsibility to provide information for prevention - governments that are party to conflicts often have specific information not available elsewhere; they are the most interested in providing early warning of threats by adversaries - important for UN to be aware of degree of government knowledge since governments are key actors (e.g., to lead or approve UN actions) - no financial cost to receive such info. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - national bias and self-interest - dominance of Western intelligence capabilities - incomplete and selective info. provided (on a “national interest” and “need to know” basis) - often only analyses are provided without raw data or vice-versa - constraints placed by governments on UN use and dissemination of information provided (e.g., to avoid compromising intelligence sources) - UN may be accused of being used by intelligence agencies or of partiality to the governments providing information
The Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wide-ranging - easily obtained - usually up-to-date about violent events (but poor on early warning before violence) - usually extra information is easily obtained from journalists (but who might expect to be returned the favour) - small financial cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sensationalistic approach; media bias (e.g., toward underdog) - danger that information is factually incorrect (due to rush deadlines and dependence on oral interviews) - Western (US) media dominance
UN Personnel On-site (UN agencies/offices, information centres, peacekeeping operations, fact-finding missions, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - first-hand observation, close physical proximity - generally, more objective than above sources, but usually more cautious - maintain direct communications with locals - often meet directly with protagonists - are tasked to serve UN goals - may be directed to collect specific information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - may overextend capacity and mandate of the UN agencies/centres - is dependent on consent and cooperation of the host state and local authorities - may displease host state, which might accuse UN of spying - may compromise other functions (e.g., development work, UN publicity) - bias may arise because of national or other loyalties of UN personnel (esp. local staff) - requires caution to avoid accepting staged events - may be dangerous for personnel
Regional Organizations (e.g., OSCE, OAU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proximity of RO to conflicts may yield more direct information - RO may provide historical background and regional views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RO may be poorly equipped and inexperienced - domination by regional powers may bias information - confusion may arise in sharing of responsibilities with UN
NGOs and Individuals (e.g., humanitarian aid organizations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - generally less biased (e.g., motivated by humanitarian concerns) - inside sources and grass-roots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - danger of lack of professionalism and accountability - members states may protest to UN of its cooperation or reliance on non-state actors

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contacts - less sensitive to criticism 	
<p>Observation technologies</p> <p>(e.g., aerial/satellite and ground-based systems)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mechanized/computerized systems reduce requirements for on-site personnel and increase efficiency and scope of surveillance - aerial/satellite: possibility for both wide-scan of territory and target-specific information - less intrusive than humans (esp. satellites) - less risk to human life than on-site observers in hazardous zones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expensive, with limited choice of providers (mostly Western) - susceptible to deception and destruction - aerial/ground sensors: permission required to enter national airspace or territory (though not for satellites) - aerial/satellite: difficulty to see inside buildings or underground; weather dependent - machine maintenance may be required - need for professional image/information interpretation and analysis

Table 3: Old constraints and new opportunities in early warning and information management.

	Old Constraints	New Opportunities
Information-Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - questionable accuracy and usual biases of many information sources (e.g., governments, media, NGOs) - UN needs to avoid undue infringement in internal affairs, to keep “clean hands” - on-site presence requires consent of host state and often local authorities - potential threat to safety of observers (e.g., apprehension, physical security) - the “darkest” plans are kept secret - information overload - limited budgets to explore and expand UN capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ever expanding Internet increases accessibility, scope and depth of information; less costly, faster retrieval - new and improved communications technologies (e.g., e-mail) allow more information to be sent faster and easier by more people - better observation technologies (e.g., aerial reconnaissance, commercial satellites with resolution better than one metre, improved ground sensors) - computerized databases used for better information storage - greater willingness of intelligence agencies to share information with UN
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - time consuming, mentally intensive - intentions are hard to guess - new personnel required (desk-officers already overloaded) - predicting future can be hazardous: risk of errors (e.g., “crying wolf”) and being shown wrong - need to follow leads, to find corroborating information and give constant feedback to info. providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - computerized databases for information management, computer forecasting, better graphics for visualization/presentation - technologies provide improved communications with information providers and other analysts (testing ideas, soliciting views, gaining feedback) - greater willingness of intelligence agencies to share their analysis with UN
Dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - risk of breaching confidentiality of sensitive information (e.g., revealing and compromising information sources/methods) - creates pressure, often unwanted, on states to respond to new threats - may cause international embarrassment if no UN response is forthcoming; if a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new means of dissemination to the public (e.g., through Internet) - new and expanded roles of SG at end of Cold War (e.g., good offices, multidimensional peacekeeping) brings new authority for proactive work, new response, especially possibilities for preventive deployment

	predicted disaster becomes reality then UN is seen to have failed at prevention - if preventive action is successful, the accuracy of the predicted threat may be questioned	- Security Council response more likely than during Cold War - greater awareness of need for early warning and preventive action - opportunity to set a new norm for "regular and systematic" early warning
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