



**SAFERWORLD**  
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# Early warning and response to violent conflict

## Time for a rethink?



David Nyheim  
October 2015

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**COVER PHOTO:** Villagers attend a meeting of regional community officials in the village of Dan Bako, Niger. Engaging communities and local actors such as these in multi-stakeholder partnerships can help to enhance the effectiveness of early warning and response. © DAVID ROSE/PANOS



**UK OFFICE**

The Grayston Centre  
28 Charles Square  
London N1 6HT, UK

Phone: +44 (0)20 7324 4646

Fax: +44 (0)20 7324 4647

Email: [general@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:general@saferworld.org.uk)

Web: [www.saferworld.org.uk](http://www.saferworld.org.uk)

Registered charity no. 1043843

A company limited by guarantee no. 3015948

ISBN 978-1-909390-35-5

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**Time for a rethink?**

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## Author

This report was researched and written by David Nyheim. David Nyheim is a member of Saferworld's Conflict Prevention Working Group (CPWG) and is a peacemaking strategist. He has extensive experience in early warning and risk assessment, dialogue process design and facilitation, stabilisation strategy development, and work on armed violence reduction. In 2003, David established International Conflict and Security (INCAS) Consulting Ltd. He is considered a leading thinker and practitioner of modern conflict early warning and response. Prior to joining INCAS, he served for six years as the Director of the Forum for Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER) and has held several policy and research positions in the European Commission and universities in Belgium and the United Kingdom. As a consultant, David has worked for governments, United Nations agencies, and corporations in the North Caucasus, West Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and the Pacific.

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## Acknowledgements

Saferworld would like to thank the members of the CPWG (Mariam Kemple, Robert Parker, Sheng Hongsheng, Xue Lei, and Zhang Chun) and the group's advisor, Christopher Langton, for their contributions towards the briefing. Special thanks are also extended to Dr Xue Lei, a research fellow at Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, for writing the Afterword.

The briefing paper was copy-edited by John Newman and designed by Jane Stevenson.

Saferworld is grateful to the United Kingdom Department for International Development for providing financial support for this project.

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# Executive summary

## **EARLY WARNING IS UNDENIABLY A VALUABLE CONFLICT PREVENTION TOOL.**

It functions to predict conflict trends, alert communities of risk, inform decision-making, provide inputs to response strategy formulation, and initiate responses to violent conflict. However, with the changing nature of warfare and the emergence of new security challenges alongside a relatively underfunded global peace and security architecture, it is important to consider whether existing early warning systems are still relevant, and if so, whether they are equipped to deal with such an evolved security context.

This briefing paper has been written for the Chinese and British policy communities by a member of Saferworld's Conflict Prevention Working Group (CPWG).<sup>1</sup> The CPWG is at the heart of Saferworld's 'Conflict prevention partnership for the 21st century: China and the UK' project,<sup>2</sup> which aims to improve constructive dialogue between the Chinese and UK policy communities on issues related to conflict prevention, and to increase knowledge of the two countries' respective efforts towards conflict prevention in conflict-affected and fragile states (CAFS). Early warning is an important element of conflict prevention, and is a key component of the UK's Building Stability Overseas Strategy.<sup>3</sup> Within China, experience and knowledge relating to early warning is comparatively undeveloped, yet it is an emerging area in which China is expressing increasing interest. For this reason, the CPWG has begun to explore whether and how early warning systems might act as an entry through which China-UK dialogue and cooperation on conflict prevention could focus.

This briefing intends to contribute to this debate by stimulating discussion about the future direction of early warning and response systems. The author, David Nyheim, is a member of the CPWG and a peacemaking strategist with extensive experience in early warning and risk assessment, including in the six years spent as Director of the Forum for Early Warning and Response (FEWER), and in his current role as Chief Executive of ECAS (Europe Conflict and Security) Consulting.

He highlights how existing early warning and response is beset by numerous unresolved challenges. Many of these, Saferworld is already working to counter. For example, 'Capacities for Peace'<sup>4</sup> is a project undertaken by Saferworld and Conciliation Resources which involves working with local actors to enhance the effectiveness of early warning and early action in 32 conflict-affected contexts. David Nyheim argues

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<sup>1</sup> Saferworld, Conflict Prevention Working Group. [ONLINE] Available at: [www.saferworld.org.uk/where/conflict-prevention-working-group](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/where/conflict-prevention-working-group). [Accessed 15 July 15].

<sup>2</sup> Saferworld, 'Conflict prevention in the 21st century: China and the UK' [ONLINE] Available at: [www.saferworld.org.uk/china/conflict-prevention-in-the-21st-century-china-and-the-uk](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/china/conflict-prevention-in-the-21st-century-china-and-the-uk). [Accessed 15 July 15].

<sup>3</sup> UK Government (2011), 'Building Stability Overseas Strategy'. [ONLINE] Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/67475/Building-stability-overseas-strategy.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67475/Building-stability-overseas-strategy.pdf). [Accessed 15 July 2015].

<sup>4</sup> Saferworld, 'Capacities for Peace' [ONLINE] Available at: [www.saferworld.org.uk/what/capacities-for-peace-1](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/what/capacities-for-peace-1). [Accessed 15 July 15].

that moving forward, it is important to further address these challenges and to reboot early warning and response to improve its efficiency and increase its relevance in the current security climate. This will be vital to ensuring that early warning continues to play a useful role in preventing violent conflict.

One key suggestion is to redefine the concept of early warning to encourage the transition away from a focus on conflict towards a focus on peace. 'Peace early warning' involves the monitoring and analysis (for a given conflict) of the factors that sustain peace; of the ongoing local, national, regional, and international responses to promote peace; and of the actors involved in making and building peace. It also involves the formulation of 'peace ripeness' theories to outline what needs to happen in conflict and stakeholder dynamics for conflicting parties to be ready to engage in meaningful peace talks.

The governments of China and the UK share an interest in strengthening the global peace and security architecture and have pledged to work together to prevent conflict. The UK has engaged in early warning and response systems since the 1990s, and values the need for timely early warning. The UK Government is in the process of piloting a new early warning system in order to help it monitor and respond more swiftly to crises and early warning signs. Meanwhile, as another CPWG member, Dr Xue Lei, argues in the Afterword, the Chinese Government and business community have demonstrated an increasing interest in early warning and risk assessment, particularly following the eruption of unrest in Libya in 2011, which took China, and most other countries, by surprise and led to a costly mass evacuation of Chinese nationals from that country. It would appear, therefore, that both countries recognise the need for more effective early warning and response systems and that the promotion of peace early warning, as proposed by David Nyheim, could therefore be of value to both countries.

Both authors acknowledge that China-UK cooperation in early warning will not be without its challenges. However, according to Dr Xue Lei, the recent warming of China-UK relations could provide momentum for expanding the two countries' bilateral cooperation into the area of early warning. Any prospective China-UK cooperation related to early warning is likely to be gradual and, to ensure sustainability, should be accompanied by an initial period of mutual confidence building. It could germinate within the existing parameters of the United Nations (UN), for example through the use of UN Security Council communication channels as a means of information sharing. Alternatively, trilateral approaches could be taken to support existing regional and/or sub-regional security initiatives within the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), or the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in their early warning efforts. At the non-governmental level there is also scope for civil society and the business communities from both China and the UK to play a role in promoting conflict prevention. Interest from Chinese business in early warning is evident, albeit in the early stages of development. British companies often have more experience of working within CAFS, and so in its initial stages, cooperation could revolve around information sharing and training, for example on conflict sensitivity and insurance for potential political and conflict risks. Engagement at each of these levels should be encouraged, and both countries should make efforts to ensure that early warnings are efficient, relevant, and inclusive of peace analysis.

# 1

## Introduction

*“Music, when soft voices die, vibrates in the memory.”*

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, peacebuilding organisations in the United Kingdom (UK) were keen to see conflict prevention integrated into governmental national security policy. The thinking was simple: connecting the peacebuilding agenda with how government approaches security will positively affect security policy and ensure that peacebuilding becomes a long-term government priority.

The events of 2001 and subsequent ‘war on terror’ boosted these efforts in unexpected ways. It began a process in the UK (and a few other countries) of securitising the peacebuilding sector. Funding arrangements for the sector, for example, shifted from being driven by the Department for International Development (DFID) (with a pro-poor agenda) to an inter-agency funding pool (‘the Conflict Pool’, which involved DFID, Ministry of Defence, and Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and today the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) under the direction of the UK’s National Security Council (NSC).<sup>5</sup>

The securitisation of the peacebuilding sector, along with human rights violations and the use of torture by some Western democracies involved in the ‘war on terror’, has deeply impacted the practice of conflict prevention, including early warning.

Three impacts are particularly clear. First is the integration of peacebuilding into the stabilisation toolbox. Many peacebuilders are now working alongside military forces in different theatres of war, with the obvious dilemmas this presents. Second, peacebuilding has become increasingly seen as the projection of Western ‘soft power’ by governments (and insurgent and other armed groups) of countries where such projects are implemented.<sup>6</sup> Some governments (e.g. Russia) have placed strict controls on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who receive foreign funding, and attacks by non-state actors on institutions seen as the delivery mechanisms of Western soft power (such as the United Nations) have increased. And third, stricter and more politically guided funding by several Western governments (including the British) of peacebuilding has led to greater scrutiny of the ‘impartiality’ and ‘neutrality’ of the non-governmental organisations who receive this funding.

Another important impact is in the language and terms used in peacebuilding. For early warning, which is the focus of this paper, terms such as ‘open source’ and ‘open

<sup>5</sup> See the Saferworld, International Alert, and Conciliation Resources position paper, ‘Investing in Peace’, [www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/834-investing-in-long-term-peace-the-new-conflict-stability-and-security-fund](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/834-investing-in-long-term-peace-the-new-conflict-stability-and-security-fund)

<sup>6</sup> See Joseph Nye’s interesting 2004 article, ‘Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics’, available at [http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/joe\\_nye\\_wielding\\_soft\\_power.pdf](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/joe_nye_wielding_soft_power.pdf)

source intelligence' are now often used to describe sources and early warning as an activity. Early warning systems in governments and multilateral agencies are today more and more referred to as 'crisis rooms' or 'situation centres'. And the repertoire of early warning analytical methods has also expanded, with new methods borrowed from the commercial and intelligence sectors.

The obvious conclusion one can draw about those early efforts to embed peacebuilding thinking in UK government security policy is perhaps best expressed in Latin: *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes intulit agresti Latio* (Conquered Greece took captive her savage conqueror and brought her arts into rustic Latium). Or more plainly put, efforts to influence national security agendas through peacebuilding have led to securitised peacebuilding, with significant consequences for the latter and few visible ones for the former.

The securitisation of peacebuilding is cause for alarm. Related dilemmas (e.g. 'peacebuilding at gunpoint') and operational restrictions [e.g. restrictions on engagement with groups on the terrorist lists of the European Union (EU) and US] raise questions about the effectiveness (and some would argue, about the viability) of peacebuilding.<sup>7</sup> For early warning, which is an integral part of peacebuilding, these questions are particularly important, given that, narrowly defined, early warning is the collection and analysis of information in securitised environments.

At the same time, the global peace and security landscape has evolved significantly over the last decade. There have been changes in how warfare is conducted, new threats have emerged, and a relatively underfunded global peace and security architecture has struggled to keep up. These changes also have important implications for the relevance of current early warning and response systems. Are these systems equipped (coverage, methodologically, operationally, etc.) to deal with an evolving peace and security landscape? Are they as relevant to contemporary conflicts?

And finally, there are some fundamental and largely still unaddressed issues that continue to affect the effectiveness of early warning and response. The most basic ones include the elusive link between warning and response, and whether evidence really matters in conflict decision-making. Others are the consequences of country- and grievance-centric analysis and a conceptual focus on *conflict*, rather than on peace.

So does this mean that early warning and response has lost its relevance and is dead? Is it, as Shelley puts it, destined to 'vibrate in memory'? To answer this question and shed light on the potential futures of early warning and response, this paper discusses the evolution of the field, reviews the emerged global conflict and security landscape, and discusses existing debates and challenges in the field. As a policy report for Saferworld's China-UK project, the paper concludes by charting a course towards a more relevant early warning and response field, and proposes parameters for a UK and China partnership on early warning and response.

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<sup>7</sup> In other words, and the words of Christopher Langton, one of the peer reviewers of this paper, "the securitisation of peacebuilding is in the interests of the securitiser, and not necessarily the securitised".

# 2

## A retrospective

*“We look back on our life as a thing of broken pieces, because our mistakes and failures are always the first to strike us, and outweigh in our imagination what we have accomplished and attained.”*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in *Maxims and Reflections*

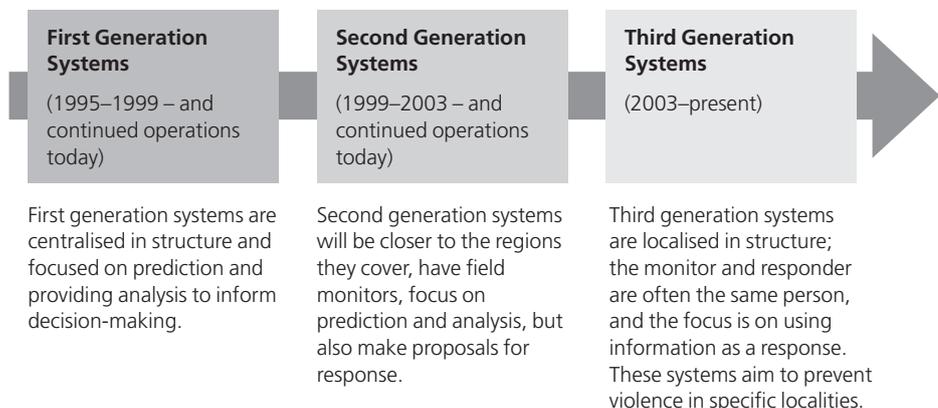
It is not the intention of this paper to do a complete retrospective of the conflict early warning and response field, as this has been done better elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> However, a short review of types of early warning systems and how definitions have evolved, along with a reflection on lessons learnt from early warning and response over the last two decades, is useful to understand how the sector has grown and what challenges remain.

### 2.1 Three generations of early warning systems

The 1994 Rwandan genocide was a key trigger for the evolution of the conflict early warning field. Over time, it led to three generations of early warning systems, each with a specific mandate, organisational set-up, information sources/analytical methods, links to response decision-making, and strengths and weaknesses.

Figure 1 is borrowed from a 2014 EUISS study<sup>9</sup> on crisis rooms and is adapted to outline the defining characteristics of three generations of early warning systems seen today. However, the differences can be summarised as follows:

**Figure 1: Summary of differences between early warning systems**



<sup>8</sup> See, for example, [www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC%282008%2968&docLanguage=En](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC%282008%2968&docLanguage=En)

<sup>9</sup> See [www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Crisis\\_Rooms.pdf](http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Crisis_Rooms.pdf)

Today, all three generations are still in existence and have multiple uses for their host institutions and clients. They provide:

- A regular feed of information/analysis on evolving crises that partly informs crisis management decision-making;
- A crisis prediction capacity, in the form of watch lists and ‘at risk’ countries, that is used to guide priority setting and programming;
- A basis for a shared problem definition of crisis and conflict-affected countries, which sets the stage for improved coherence in response;
- A set of options or recommendations for response that may be considered by decision makers who manage early response instruments and mechanisms;
- A local-level warning mechanism that enables communities and local authorities to seek safety or prevent the outbreak of violence; and
- A platform for (mostly) local organisations to monitor and analyse sub-national conflicts and initiate programmes to address the causes of violence.

**Figure 2: Three generations of early warning**

Source: Nyheim, D (2014), ‘Crisis rooms: towards a global network?’, EU Institute for Security Studies, p 15

	<b>Mandate</b>	<b>Organisational set-up</b>	<b>Information sources/ analytical methods</b>	<b>Link to decision-making and response</b>	<b>Strengths and weaknesses</b>
<b>First generation</b> <i>Often exclusive focus on providing internal client with crisis information/ analysis (e.g. EU Crisis Room)</i>	Crisis prediction Evidence for decision-making	Centralised/ HQ-based Information management team Analysts Information/ analysis infrastructure	Mixed (open, grey, black) sources Quantitative and qualitative methods	Internal client base Warning and analytical products	Stronger institutional ownership of information and analysis Information sharing outside institution is difficult due to information used Limited integration into response decision-making
<b>Second generation</b> <i>Broader set of internal and affiliated clients that require crisis information/ analysis and options for response that speak to specific response instruments (e.g. ECOWAS/IEWS)</i>	Crisis prediction Evidence for decision-making Priority-setting inputs	Centralised/ HQ-based and field networks Information management team Analysts Information/ analysis infrastructure	Mixed (mostly open) sources Quantitative and qualitative methods GIS applications	Internal and external client base Warning and analytical products Watch list products Provision of response options Operational link to response instruments	Quality of information improves because of field networks Information sharing with partners is easier due to use of mainly open source data Response options may not reflect response capacities; response mechanisms are slow
<b>Third generation</b> <i>Internal and external clients that are drawn into crisis response strategy formulation and micro-level response role for information network (e.g. IGAD/CEWARN)</i>	Crisis prediction Evidence for decision-making Priority-setting inputs Active support of response	HQ team and strong field units Combined information and response teams Analysts Information/ analysis infrastructure	Open sources Quantitative and qualitative methods GIS applications	Internal and external client base Warning and analytical products Facilitation of response strategies Field-level responses	Stronger ability to capture real time information on sub-national conflicts Stronger field-level reach and ability to respond fast Geographical coverage is limited; cross-border conflict systems may remain unaddressed

Research on what constitutes good practice across generations of early warning systems flags six key elements:

1. **Nurture field networks** Given the extensive use by opposing groups of misinformation and disinformation in conflict areas, a good early warning system is based in proximity to (if not in) the conflict area, has strong field networks of monitors and uses multiple sources of open source information.
2. **Use only open source information** The use of open sources only seems to facilitate collaborative (and integrated) responses to conflict. Grey or black (secret) information is not easily shared and systems using such sources have mainly an internal client base. Good practice in response-focused systems is therefore the exclusive use of open source information.
3. **Mix methods** Response planning is best informed by qualitative analysis. However, trends monitoring is also useful and is best done by using quantitative methods. As such, a good early warning system normally uses a mix of qualitative and quantitative analytical methods.
4. **Use technology** Technology (particularly the use of mobile phones) enables speed in information collection (images, etc.) and in sharing information and alerts. The judicious use of mobile technology, but also data access and processing technology in the running of an early warning system is good practice.
5. **Report regularly** Regular monitoring of conflict situations differentiates the work of an early warning system from ad hoc conflict analysis exercises. It is important as conflict dynamics evolve rapidly and are fluid. A good early warning system monitors and reports regularly to its client base, with a menu of different types of reports and briefings.
6. **A two-way connection between warning and response** Most early warning systems are focused on catalysing response and their legal bases often include operational linkages to response mechanisms. However, most response mechanisms do not aim to be informed by early warning. While some early warning systems reach out to response, that reaching out is not met by a 'reaching in' by early response mechanisms. As such, good practice is to practically interconnect warning with response; that is, by drawing early warning analysts to brief response planners (second generation), or using field monitors as first responders (third generation).

## 2.2 Evolving definitions

Early definitions (which continue to underpin first generation systems) emphasised a role for early warning that was about predicting violence and informing decision-making for preventive action. The 1997 definition by the FEWER of early warning is, *“The systematic collection and analysis of information coming from areas of crises for the purpose of: a) anticipating the escalation of violent conflict; b) the development of strategic responses to these crises; and c) the presentation of options to critical actors for the purposes of decision-making.”*

Today, with greater appreciation of the application of early warning to different phases of conflict (outbreak, escalation, and resurgence) and the role of information and analysis as a response in itself, the 2009 OECD/DAC definition reads,

*“Early warning is a process that (a) alerts decision makers to the potential outbreak, escalation and resurgence of violent conflict; and (b) promotes an understanding among decision makers of the nature and impacts of violent conflict.”*

Early warning systems (also from the 2009 OECD/DAC study), then, “Involve regular and organised collection and analysis of information on violent conflict situations. They deliver a set of early warning products (based on qualitative and/or quantitative conflict analysis methods) that are linked to response instruments/mechanisms.”<sup>10</sup>

Definitions of early response or early action have not changed significantly since the mid-1990s.<sup>11</sup> Early response refers to “any initiative that occurs as soon as the threat of potential violent conflict is identified and that aims to manage, resolve, or prevent that violent conflict”.<sup>12</sup> These responses or actions are delivered by early/rapid response systems, which “are one or several preventive instruments and mechanisms (political, economic/financial, social, security) informed by an early warning that are deployed to manage, resolve, or prevent the outbreak, escalation, and resurgence of violent conflict”.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.3 The evolution of thinking on early response

Thinking on early response has gone from mapping the response ‘toolbox’, to understanding what is required for effective responses to conflict, and how response instruments/mechanisms work.

Early thinking on responding to conflict included the work of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, which mapped operational and structural prevention measures,<sup>14</sup> and thinkers such as Michael Lund. Lund’s 1996 ‘toolbox for preventive diplomacy’, illustrated in Figure 3,<sup>15</sup> includes a set of possible actions related to military, non-military, and development and governance approaches.

**Figure 3: Lund’s ‘toolbox for preventive diplomacy’**

- I. Military approaches**
  - A. Restraints on the use of armed force
  - B. Threat or use of armed force
- II. Nonmilitary approaches**
  - A. Coercive diplomatic measures (without the use of armed force)
  - B. Noncoercive diplomatic measures (without armed force or coercion)
- III. Development and governance approaches**
  - A. Policies to promote national economic and social development
  - B. Promulgation and enforcement of human rights, democratic, and other standards
  - C. National governing structures to promote peaceful conflict resolution

While this research helped expand thinking on options for responses to conflict, it was later criticised by Woocher and others as a metaphor that does not adequately capture the dynamic, complex, and political nature of conflict, or reflect on strategy and strategic considerations in formulating responses to conflict.<sup>16</sup>

What then constitutes our current understanding of good practice in responses to conflict? There are again six elements that can be drawn out of the literature.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> OECD (2009), ‘Preventing Violence, War, and State Collapse: The Future of Conflict Early Warning and Response’ (Paris: OECD/DAC).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Diller (1997), “Processes of consultation, policy making, planning, and action to reduce or avoid armed conflict. These processes include: i) diplomatic/political; ii) military/security; iii) humanitarian; and iv) development/economic activity” quoted in Alex P Schmid (1998), *Thesaurus and Glossary of Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Terms (Abridged Version)* (Netherlands: PIOOM).

<sup>12</sup> OECD (2009), ‘Preventing Violence, War, and State Collapse: The Future of Conflict Early Warning and Response’, (Paris: OECD/DAC).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> See [www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a372860.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a372860.pdf) or [www.insightonconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Carnegie-Commission\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.insightonconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Carnegie-Commission_Summary.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Peter Wallensteen & Frida Möller’s ‘Conflict Prevention: Methodology for Knowing the Unknown’ available at [www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/61/61533\\_1prevention\\_\\_\\_knowing\\_the\\_unknown.pdf](http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/61/61533_1prevention___knowing_the_unknown.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Lawrence Woocher’s 2009 article on ‘Preventing Violent Conflict: Assessing Progress, Meeting Challenges’ available at [www.usip.org/sites/default/files/preventing\\_violent\\_conflict.pdf](http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/preventing_violent_conflict.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Joint Utstein ‘Study of Peacebuilding’ available at <https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kilde/ud/rap/2004/0044/ddd/pdfv/210673-rapp104.pdf>

1. **Understand the issues, know the ground truth** There is far more information (and disinformation and misinformation) on violent conflict situations today than previously. This has been greatly aided by the Internet and mobile technology. However, with more information comes also information overload and paralysis. Also, as explained by the OECD/DAC, “What is often lost to agencies outside conflict areas (and even some operating out of capitals in affected countries), though, is the ‘ground truth’ (facts or assessments that are confirmed in an actual *field* check). Decisions taken on assessments that are not ‘ground-truthed’ may cost lives or simply feed into mis-/disinformation campaigns by conflicting parties”.<sup>18</sup>
2. **Invest time in planning and strategy** Building on Woocher’s critique of the response toolbox metaphor, the absence of a strategy or plan that defines the goals of a response and identifies measures and process to reach it means that the resulting approach often remains fragmented. The main caveat, of course, relates to Helmuth von Moltke’s (the Elder) much paraphrased quote (paraphrased again here) that “no plan survives contact with the battlefield”.
3. **Act in concert and according to comparative advantage** A recognition that different agencies and groups (at different levels and sectors) have comparative advantages (networks, access, expertise, funding, insight, etc.) in responses to violent conflict has given rise to notions of ‘integrated’ and ‘coordinated’ responses. In practice, international actors in particular have promoted ‘whole-of-government’ and ‘whole-of-system’ approaches when responding to violent conflict and fragility. However, implementing the principle effectively remains challenging.
4. **Timing, timing, timing** When a response is implemented matters greatly in fluid and dynamic violent conflict situations. If a response is identified as needed through analysis, then actually started six months later (which would be fast for some institutions), its effectiveness is likely to be compromised by changed field realities. Timeliness in responses is therefore critical, but as with integrated and coordinated action, it is rare.
5. **Apply key principles to guide actions** There are several principles identified in the literature that should guide responses to violent conflict. Four can be flagged: (i) ensure that responses are conflict sensitive and do not exacerbate tensions or worsen causes of conflict; (ii) recognise that violent conflicts ultimately are solved through political will – technical solutions should not replace political ones; (iii) maintain flexibility in responses, especially when these are implemented in fast-changing environments; and (iv) ultimately local actors and communities have to live with and uphold lasting peace. Building their ownership of responses and capacity is therefore important.
6. **Monitor impacts of responses and adapt** The extension of Moltke’s insight (“no plan survives contact with the battlefield”) is that no response does either. It is therefore important to monitor the impacts of measures as they unfold and adapt to changing conflict dynamics, much the same way a surgeon adapts a procedure according to the patient’s condition in the course of an operation. At present, this element of good practice is least practiced and early warning systems rarely monitor the impacts of responses on the conflict environment.

The best metaphor to understand how response instruments/mechanisms work is archery; the arrow(s) is the response, the bow the instrument/mechanism, and the archer the institution managing the instrument/mechanism. All three elements (arrow, bow, and archer) need to work well if the target is to be hit; and when we seek to understand the success or failure of a response to conflict, it is in these three elements (and the processes that link them) that one must look.

A process perspective on response decision-making is helpful as it contextualises the role of early warning in response formulation. Figure 4, lifted from the 2009 OECD/

18 OECD (2009), ‘Preventing Violence, War, and State Collapse: The Future of Conflict Early Warning and Response’ (Paris: OECD/DAC).

DAC study referred to above, flags 28 personal, institutional, and political factors (including information and analysis) that influence decision-making on response.

**Figure 4: Personal, institutional, and political factors that influence decision-making on responses to violent conflict**

Personal	Institutional	Political
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Time and decision-making pressure</li> <li>■ Competing priorities</li> <li>■ Personal interest and experience</li> <li>■ Knowledge and understanding of situation</li> <li>■ Training and analytical skills</li> <li>■ Decision-making ability</li> <li>■ Risk taking profile</li> <li>■ Personal relationships</li> <li>■ Personal cost-benefit calculations and accountability</li> <li>■ Available information and analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Institutional and departmental mandate</li> <li>■ Budget availability</li> <li>■ Turf considerations</li> <li>■ Risk taking/averse culture</li> <li>■ Personnel turnover and institutional memory</li> <li>■ Decision-making procedures</li> <li>■ Available mechanisms and instruments</li> <li>■ Accountability considerations</li> <li>■ Security of staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ National/institutional interest and priorities</li> <li>■ Alliances and special relationships</li> <li>■ Enmities and competition</li> <li>■ Party and constituency politics</li> <li>■ Media coverage and CNN effects</li> <li>■ Advocacy pressure</li> <li>■ Political cost-benefit calculations</li> <li>■ Political consensus</li> <li>■ Politicisation of information</li> </ul>

## 2.4 Preliminary implications

There are three main implications that can be drawn from the above.

First, the different uses of early warning by organisations and groups at different levels probably means that charting a course towards more relevant early warning requires a new and updated definition of the term.

Second, there is little doubt that early warning provides value added for different institutions and in a variety of contexts. Early warning is used to inform decision-making, predict and draw conflict trends, feed response strategy formulation, to alert communities of risk, and initiate responses to violent conflict. However, the use of grey/black information, limited links to response instruments, a focus on options (as opposed to strategies) for response, and limited geographical coverage hamper their effectiveness and overall impact.

Third, there is increasing consensus on what constitutes good early warning and good response practice. Good practice, however, is probably more practiced in early warning (as systems are fairly self-contained) than in early response, which is affected by broader institutional, political, and contextual realities.

# 3

## The emerging and emerged global conflict and security landscape

*“We can know only that we know nothing. And that is the highest degree of human wisdom.”*

Leo Tolstoy in *War and Peace*

### 3.1 The changing nature of warfare

It is appropriate to start this section with a quote from Tolstoy for several reasons. Russia, at the time of writing, is in the midst of testing its own version of ‘hybrid warfare strategy’. In an article for Russian defence journal VPK, and rephrased in the *Financial Times*, General Valery Gerasimov (Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces) wrote in early 2013 that war and peace are becoming more blurred and “methods of conflict [now involve] the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other non-military measures”.<sup>19</sup> The combination of hard and soft power, of course, is not new. It has been part of Western military strategy for quite some time and was used in both Afghanistan and Iraq to maintain domestic support for the war on terror, ‘win hearts and minds’, and ultimately try to ‘win the peace’. It has also been practiced in Africa and some would argue that elements of it were and are a defining feature of Rwandese military engagement in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The Gerasimov (or more appropriately, ‘Makarov’) Doctrine, being an extension of the previous doctrine and strategy that dates back to 2001, however, involves the use of the entire toolbox from well before troops are deployed and throughout hostilities. The effectiveness of this doctrine is unlikely to be lost on other groups and we may soon see local variations of this doctrine in other conflict situations.

An important dimension of hybrid warfare strategy, which is particularly relevant to the early warning field, is the use and dissemination of narratives and counter-narratives. The Russian narrative of the Ukraine crisis, for example, involves a discourse of Ukrainian neo-fascism, a fascist coup, and the West’s unwillingness to make a deal stick. In Western media, the story is about Russian aggression, Putin’s territorial

<sup>19</sup> Jones, Sam. ‘Ukraine: Russia’s New Art Of War’. *Financial Times* 2014. Web. 5 Aug. 2015, available at: [www.ft.com/cms/s/2/ea5e82fa-2e0c-11e4-b760-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3hx3X7Jd1](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/ea5e82fa-2e0c-11e4-b760-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3hx3X7Jd1)

ambitions, etc.<sup>20</sup> Those waging hybrid warfare understand that how a problem is defined through narrative not only sways public opinion but also dictates the solutions sought.

As explained by Alexandra Handal, artist, and Artraker,<sup>21</sup>

*“Conflicts are represented through images, they’re represented through language, they’re represented through text and that also informs how they’re perceived. When you look at Palestine or Jerusalem, the ideas and the perceptions around these places are also dictating the politics of these places.”*

The point here is that warfare is changing; with greater use of soft power as hard power, and a battle of narratives playing a more prominent role. The implications for early warning and response are still unfolding – and need to be watched carefully.

## 3.2 The emerged threats

Much has been written about newly emerged conflict and security threats. There is an increasing consensus that from a peacebuilding perspective, these include criminalised conflict, extremism and terrorism, and climate change.<sup>22</sup>

The World Bank first raised the notion of **criminalised conflict** in 2001 with research on ‘greed and grievance in civil war’. This and subsequent research argues that one (greed) reinforces the other (grievance) and that the political economy of violence further entrenches conflict. A related concept is ‘armed violence’, defined by the OECD/DAC as “the use or threatened use of weapons to inflict injury, death, or psychosocial harm which undermines development”<sup>23</sup> and characterised by the widespread availability of small arms. Conceptually, untangling the difference between a criminalised conflict and an armed violence situation is challenging. In practice, however, we are looking at the difference between some conflicts in the DRC or Somalia and violence in Jamaica or parts of Mexico. Work to understand how to analyse and intervene in criminalised conflict situations is nascent, but a critical area of practice.<sup>24</sup> A definition of criminalised conflict offered here is, “a violent conflict situation characterised by the widespread use by armed groups of illicit economic activities to fund insurgent activities or otherwise derive personal gain”.

There has not been much debate or thinking in the peacebuilding sector on **extremism and terrorism**.<sup>25</sup> The phenomenon is often framed in terms of events seen unfolding in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine – as well as continued manifestations of the ‘war on terror’. However, depending on how we define the term, the list of countries expands or contracts. Two definitions are seen as helpful: one related to ‘terrorism’ and one to ‘conflict terrorism’.

*“A political, ideological or religious act that is meant to inflict dramatic and deadly injury on civilians and to create an atmosphere of acute fear and despair.”<sup>26</sup>*

*“The deliberate, politically motivated use of, or threat to use, violence against civilians or civilian targets by a weaker side in an asymmetrical conflict.”<sup>27</sup>*

<sup>20</sup> See ‘Is Western coverage of the Ukraine crisis anti-Russian?’, available at [www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/04/western-media-coverage-ukraine-crisis-russia](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/04/western-media-coverage-ukraine-crisis-russia)

<sup>21</sup> See [www.artraker.org](http://www.artraker.org)

<sup>22</sup> See ‘Towards a global network of crisis rooms’ by David Nyheim in ‘Crisis Rooms: Towards a Global Network’, available at [www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Crisis\\_Rooms.pdf](http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Crisis_Rooms.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> See [www.oecd.org/dac/incaf/48913388.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dac/incaf/48913388.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Nyheim and Ivanov (2014), ‘Stabilising Areas Affected by Criminalised Violent Conflict: A Guide for Analysis and Stabilisation Strategy’, available at [www.amazon.co.uk/Stabilising-Affected-Criminalised-Violent-Conflict-ebook/dp/B00JGOZIDK/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1399378874&sr=8-1&keywords=Stabilising+Areas+Affected+By+Criminalised+Violent+Conflict%3A+A+Guide+For+Analysis+And+Stabilisation+Strategy](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Stabilising-Affected-Criminalised-Violent-Conflict-ebook/dp/B00JGOZIDK/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1399378874&sr=8-1&keywords=Stabilising+Areas+Affected+By+Criminalised+Violent+Conflict%3A+A+Guide+For+Analysis+And+Stabilisation+Strategy)

<sup>25</sup> One exception here is the Saferworld discussion paper by David Keen, Larry Attree (2015) ‘Dilemmas of counter-terror, stabilisation and statebuilding’. Available at: [www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/875-dilemmas-of-counter-terror-stabilisation-and-statebuilding](http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/875-dilemmas-of-counter-terror-stabilisation-and-statebuilding)

<sup>26</sup> Large J (2005), ‘Democracy and Terrorism: The Impact of the Anti’. Paper presented at the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security, Club de Madrid, Madrid 8–11 March 2005. Available at <http://summit.clubmadrid.org/contribute/democracy-and-terrorism-the-impact-of-the-anti.html>

<sup>27</sup> Stepanova E (2003), *Anti-terrorism and Peace-building During and After Conflict*, available at <http://books.sipri.org/files/PP/SIPRI02.pdf>

Situations where terrorist acts (e.g. mass atrocities, symbolic killings, such as public beheadings, etc.) or violence are used against civilians or civilian targets by armed groups are numerous – and span Africa (Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, etc.), Asia (Afghanistan, South Thailand, Pakistan, etc.), Europe [Russia (North Caucasus)], Central and Latin America (Mexico and Colombia), and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Palestine).

Like with criminalised conflict, analytical tools to understand terrorism and extremism, its drivers, manifestations, and consequences, are still nascent. A grievance-based approach to such an analysis, common in many early warning analytical tools, yields only part of the picture – and not a sufficiently robust one to adequately inform responses.

**Climate changes** are happening and are felt in a variety of ways. We are able to forecast the broad impacts, but not with much precision at the sub-regional or national level. Data weaknesses on climate changes in many countries are a key challenge. However, what is clear is that many (developing and developed) countries are experiencing and will continue to experience changes in food production, temperature increases, soil erosion and desertification, changes in the sea level – as well as slow onset disasters (e.g. drought) and extreme weather events. Environmental and resource conflicts (e.g. over water resources or pastoralist conflicts) are, of course, already part of the conflict and security landscape. However, climate change is a threat magnifier and multiplier – and is likely to worsen environmental and other conflicts.

Key impacts beyond environmental and resource conflicts are forecast to be seen in: (a) loss of territory and border disputes from receding coastlines; (b) conflicts associated to environmentally induced migration; (c) increased state fragility as government capacities in some countries will be stretched; and (d) greater competition for energy to manage climate change.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.3 The global peace and security architecture

The concept of a global peace and security architecture refers to the sum total of the “organisations, mechanisms, [instruments], and relationships through which the international, regional, and local communities manage conflict, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding.”<sup>29</sup> If one accepts that a key element of managing conflict well is an understanding of context, informed by regular analysis and monitoring, and if one accepts that responses are more impactful when informed by such analysis and monitoring, then a key question becomes how well different conflicts are covered by early warning systems. Another and related question becomes how efficient and effective are response instruments and mechanisms?<sup>30</sup>

Figure 5 lists countries currently affected by different types of conflict and violence, and flags coverage by existing second or third generation inter-governmental and non-governmental early warning systems.<sup>31</sup> What it does not cover, however, is coverage of countries by intelligence agencies, HQ-based crisis rooms (e.g. the EU’s SitCen or Crisis Room) or research and analysis centres in foreign ministries.

<sup>28</sup> European Commission (2008), ‘Climate Change and International Security’. Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council, S113/08, Brussels, March. See [www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/librairie/PDF/EN\\_clim\\_change\\_low.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/librairie/PDF/EN_clim_change_low.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Definition drawn from the GSDRC, available at [www.gsdr.org/go/conflict/chapter-5-intervening-in-conflict-affected-areas/international-and-regional-peace-and-security-architecture](http://www.gsdr.org/go/conflict/chapter-5-intervening-in-conflict-affected-areas/international-and-regional-peace-and-security-architecture) Brackets added by author.

<sup>30</sup> There are, of course, many other questions that need to be answered in relation to the global peace and security architecture. However, it is not the scope of this paper to conduct a comprehensive review of this architecture. Hence, this paper limits itself to a short commentary on the early warning and response components of this architecture.

<sup>31</sup> The table is referenced with sources ranging from peace and terrorism indices, to country profiles and articles, as well as news reports. The table is not meant to be exhaustive and rigorous, but rather serves a basic illustration purpose.

Figure 5: Countries affected by types of conflict and violence

#	Violent conflict	Criminalised conflict/armed violence	Violent extremism	Environmental and resource conflicts	Climate change threat multiplier	Early warning coverage
1	Afghanistan <sup>32</sup>	Afghanistan <sup>33</sup>	Afghanistan <sup>34</sup>			N
2			Algeria <sup>35</sup>			N
3	Central African Republic <sup>36</sup>					N
4	Chad <sup>37</sup>					N
5	Colombia <sup>38</sup>	Colombia <sup>39</sup>	Colombia <sup>40</sup>	Colombia <sup>41</sup>		N
6	DR Congo <sup>42</sup>	DR Congo <sup>43</sup>		DR Congo <sup>44</sup>		N
7			Egypt <sup>45</sup>			N
8		El Salvador <sup>46</sup>				N
9				Eritrea <sup>47</sup>	Eritrea <sup>48</sup>	Partly
10				Ethiopia <sup>49</sup>	Ethiopia <sup>50</sup>	Partly
11	Georgia <sup>51</sup>					N
12		Guatemala <sup>52</sup>				N
13		Guinea Bissau <sup>53</sup>				N
14		Haiti <sup>54</sup>				N
15		Honduras <sup>55</sup>				N
16	India <sup>56</sup>		India <sup>57</sup>	India <sup>58</sup>	India <sup>59</sup>	N
17			Indonesia <sup>60</sup>	Indonesia <sup>61</sup>	Indonesia <sup>62</sup>	N
18			Iran <sup>63</sup>			N
19	Iraq <sup>64</sup>	Iraq <sup>65</sup>	Iraq <sup>66</sup>	Iraq <sup>67</sup>	Iraq <sup>68</sup>	N
20			Israel <sup>69</sup>			N
21	Jamaica <sup>70</sup>	Jamaica <sup>71</sup>				N

32 Vision of Humanity (2014), 'Global Peace Index – Afghanistan', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2013/AFG/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2013/AFG/OVER)

33 *Ibid.*

34 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Terrorism Index – Afghanistan', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/AFG/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/AFG/OVER)

35 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Terrorism Index', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/DZA/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/DZA/OVER)

36 Vision of Humanity (2014), 'Global Peace Index – Central African Republic', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/CAF/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/CAF/OVER)

37 Vision of Humanity (2014), 'Global Peace Index – Chad', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/TCD/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/TCD/OVER)

38 Vision of Humanity (2014), 'Global Peace Index – Colombia', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/COL/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/COL/OVER)

39 *Ibid.*

40 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Terrorism Index – Colombia', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/COL/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/COL/OVER)

41 Sebastian Castaneda (2009), 'Land, Colombia's Natural Resource Curse', available at <http://colombiareports.co/land-colombias-natural-resource-curse/>

42 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Peace Index – DRC', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/COD/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/COD/OVER)

43 *Ibid.*

44 Burnley C (2011), 'Natural Resource Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: A Question of Governance', available at <http://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1492&context=sdip>

45 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Terrorism Index – Egypt', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/EGY/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/EGY/OVER)

46 Vision of Humanity (2014), 'Global Peace Index – El Salvador', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/SLV/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/SLV/OVER)

47 Reveny R (2007), 'Climate Change-induced Migration and Violent Conflict', available at [www.csun.edu/~dtf46560/630/Misc/Reveny-ClimateChangeMigration-2007.pdf](http://www.csun.edu/~dtf46560/630/Misc/Reveny-ClimateChangeMigration-2007.pdf)

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.*

51 Vision of Humanity (2008), 'Global Peace Index – Georgia', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2009/GEO/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2009/GEO/OVER)

52 Vision of Humanity (2014), 'Global Peace Index – Guatemala', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/GTM/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/GTM/OVER)

53 Vision of Humanity (2014), 'Global Peace Index – Guinea Bissau', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/GNB/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/GNB/OVER)

54 Vision of Humanity (2014), 'Global Peace Index – Haiti', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/GNB/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/GNB/OVER)

55 Vision of Humanity (2014), 'Global Peace Index – Honduras', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/HND/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/HND/OVER)

56 Vision of Humanity (2012), 'Global Peace Index – India', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2012/IND/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2012/IND/OVER)

57 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Terrorism Index – India', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/IND/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/IND/OVER)

58 Kugelman M (2012), 'India's Nexus Between Resource, Climate Change, and Stability', available at [www.nato.int/docu/review/2012/Food-Water-Energy/India\\_Nexus\\_Climate\\_resources\\_stability/EN/index.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2012/Food-Water-Energy/India_Nexus_Climate_resources_stability/EN/index.htm)

59 *Ibid.*

60 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Terrorism Index – Indonesia', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/IDN/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/IDN/OVER)

61 Simon Levin et al (2014), 'Conflict, Climate Change and Conflicts', available at [www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8825.pdf](http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8825.pdf)

62 *Ibid.*

63 Vision of Humanity (2010), 'Global Terrorism Index – Iran', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2010/IRN/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2010/IRN/OVER)

64 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Peace Index – Iraq', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/IRQ/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/IRQ/OVER)

65 *Ibid.*

66 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Terrorism Index – Iraq', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/IRQ/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/IRQ/OVER)

67 Klare M (2014), 'Twenty-first century energy wars: how oil and gas are fuelling global conflicts', available at [www.energypost.eu/twenty-first-century-energy-wars-oil-gas-fuelling-global-conflicts/](http://www.energypost.eu/twenty-first-century-energy-wars-oil-gas-fuelling-global-conflicts/)

68 Holthaus E (2014), 'Hot Zone: Is Climate Change Destabilising Iraq?', available at [www.energypost.eu/twenty-first-century-energy-wars-oil-gas-fuelling-global-conflicts/](http://www.energypost.eu/twenty-first-century-energy-wars-oil-gas-fuelling-global-conflicts/)

69 Vision of Humanity (2008), 'Global Terrorism Index – Israel', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2008/ISR/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2008/ISR/OVER)

70 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Peace Index – Jamaica', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/JAM/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2014/JAM/OVER)

71 *Ibid.*

#	Violent conflict	Criminalised conflict/armed violence	Violent extremism	Environmental and resource conflicts	Climate change threat multiplier	Early warning coverage
22			Jordan <sup>72</sup>			N
23			Kenya <sup>73</sup>	Kenya <sup>74</sup>	Kenya <sup>75</sup>	Partly
24			Kyrgyzstan <sup>76</sup>	Kyrgyzstan <sup>77</sup>	Kyrgyzstan <sup>78</sup>	N
25			Lebanon <sup>79</sup>			N
26	Libya <sup>80</sup>	Libya <sup>81</sup>	Libya <sup>82</sup>			N
27	Mali <sup>83</sup>		Mali <sup>84</sup>			Y
28			Mauritania <sup>85</sup>			N
29		Mexico <sup>86</sup>				N
30	Morocco <sup>87</sup>					N
31	Myanmar <sup>88</sup>	Myanmar <sup>89</sup>		Myanmar <sup>90</sup>		N
32				Nepal <sup>91</sup>	Nepal <sup>92</sup>	N
33	Nigeria <sup>93</sup>	Nigeria <sup>94</sup>	Nigeria <sup>95</sup>	Nigeria <sup>96</sup>		Partly
34	Pakistan <sup>97</sup>	Pakistan <sup>98</sup>	Pakistan <sup>99</sup>	Pakistan <sup>100</sup>	Pakistan	N
35		Papua New Guinea <sup>101</sup>		Papua New Guinea <sup>102</sup>		N
36	Philippines <sup>103</sup>		Philippines <sup>104</sup>			N
37	Russia <sup>105</sup>	Russia <sup>106</sup>	Russia <sup>107</sup>			Partly
38	Senegal <sup>108</sup>					Partly
39	Somalia <sup>109</sup>	Somalia <sup>110</sup>	Somalia <sup>111</sup>	Somalia <sup>112</sup>	Somalia <sup>113</sup>	Partly
40		South Africa <sup>114</sup>				N

72 Vision of Humanity (2005), 'Global Terrorism Index – Jordan', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2005/JOR/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2005/JOR/OVER)

73 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Terrorism Index – Kenya', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/KEN/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/KEN/OVER)

74 Asaka J (2012), 'Water and Land Conflict in Kenya in the Wake of Climate Change', available at [www.newsecuritybeat.org/2012/09/water-land-conflict-kenya-wake-climate-change/](http://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2012/09/water-land-conflict-kenya-wake-climate-change/)

75 *Ibid.*

76 Galdini F (2014), 'Kyrgyzstan violence: four years on', available at [www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/06/kyrgyzstan-violence-2010-201463016460195835.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/06/kyrgyzstan-violence-2010-201463016460195835.html)

77 *Ibid.*

78 *Ibid.*

79 Vision of Humanity (2013), 'Global Terrorism Index – Lebanon', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/LBN/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/terrorism-index/2013/LBN/OVER)

80 Vision of Humanity (2012), 'Global Peace Index – Libya', available at [www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2012/LBY/OVER](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2012/LBY/OVER)

81 *Ibid.*

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#	Violent conflict	Criminalised conflict/armed violence	Violent extremism	Environmental and resource conflicts	Climate change threat multiplier	Early warning coverage
41	Sudan <sup>115</sup>	Sudan <sup>116</sup>	Sudan <sup>117</sup>	Sudan <sup>118</sup>	Sudan <sup>119</sup>	Partly
42	South Sudan <sup>120</sup>			South Sudan <sup>121</sup>	South Sudan <sup>122</sup>	Partly
43	Syria <sup>123</sup>		Syria <sup>124</sup>		Syria <sup>125</sup>	N
44		Tajikistan <sup>126</sup>	Tajikistan <sup>127</sup>			N
45		Thailand <sup>128</sup>	Thailand <sup>129</sup>			N
46			Tunisia <sup>130</sup>			N
47	Turkey <sup>131</sup>					N
48		Uganda <sup>132</sup>		Uganda <sup>133</sup>	Uganda <sup>134</sup>	Partly <sup>135</sup>
49	Ukraine <sup>136</sup>					N
50			Uzbekistan <sup>137</sup>	Uzbekistan <sup>138</sup>	Uzbekistan <sup>139</sup>	N
51		Venezuela <sup>140</sup>				N
52	Yemen <sup>141</sup>	Yemen <sup>142</sup>	Yemen <sup>143</sup>	Yemen <sup>144</sup>		N
53				Zimbabwe <sup>145</sup>		N

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There are several implications of the above. The first is derived from Tolstoy. It is very difficult to know much about the variety of conflicts and violence phenomena in the countries listed unless one is directly involved in them. The fact that many conflicts today are hybrid and display characteristics of several emerged threats (criminalised conflicts, extremism and terrorism) complicates an already complex picture. The second is that from an early warning system perspective, coverage of conflicts is limited to at best 20 per cent of the countries affected by different types of conflict. A more detailed review of what current early warning systems cover would show, for example, that CEWARN (Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism, Horn of Africa) covers mostly pastoralist conflicts (environmental and resource conflicts only), while the ECOWAS Early Warning System is mandated only to look at conflicts with trans-boundary implications in West Africa (excluding, for example, resource conflicts in the Niger Delta or violent extremism in Northern Nigeria), and the East Africa Community's system is still nascent and limited in capacity. And third, analytically, most tools are grievance-based and not able to provide an adequate understanding of greed-driven (criminalised) conflicts or violent extremism and terrorism. If the data is poor and the analytical tools are weak, then there is little scope to effectively inform decision-making and responses.

What then about response instruments and mechanisms? This, of course, is a big topic and saying something meaningful in a short policy brief is difficult. But some headlines and basic observations can be usefully made. As mentioned in Section 2, the conflict prevention and peacebuilding response 'toolbox' today is far more developed than, for example, at the time of the Rwandan genocide. Beyond research on good practice in response and reviews of the tools that are in the toolbox, there is no comprehensive analysis of the toolbox. If we were to give institutional examples of Lund's toolbox for preventive diplomacy (Figure 3 above), these would include the instruments of the United Nations and the Security Council (including peacekeeping operations, diplomacy, and political missions); those of the regional organisations (EU, AU, ECOWAS, ASEAN, etc.) with diplomatic, economic, policing, and military measures; large multilateral funding instruments [including the EU's Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) with a budget for 2014–2020 of over €2.3 billion, to the smaller UN Peacebuilding Fund, etc.] and bilateral funding instruments (such as the UK's CSSF); and conflict-sensitive development and peacebuilding programmes implemented by bilateral and multilateral agencies (including the International Financial Institutions).

While investment in this response capability is sizeable (see Figure 6 on OECD country spending from Development Initiatives<sup>146</sup>) at US\$16.5 billion in the period 2007–2011, global defence spending for the same period stood at \$10.493 trillion.<sup>147</sup> This means that the international community spends over 635 times more money on preparing for (and waging) war than the wealthiest countries spend on trying to prevent it.

Another challenge with current response instruments and mechanisms, which follows the metaphor of the archer in Section 2, is that they are as effective and efficient as the institutions that manage them. These institutions, mostly large bureaucracies with cumbersome processes, are expected to respond (through funding peacebuilding initiatives, diplomatic processes, deployment of peacekeeping forces) to rapidly evolving and changing situations. This has led to some debate among practitioners about how early or rapid responses to conflicts actually are. It also raises important impact questions when considering the criticality of timing in responses to conflicts. However, it should be noted that there is an increasing body of institutional knowledge on how to best manage and deploy these instruments and mechanisms, which is steadily improving their efficiency.<sup>148</sup>

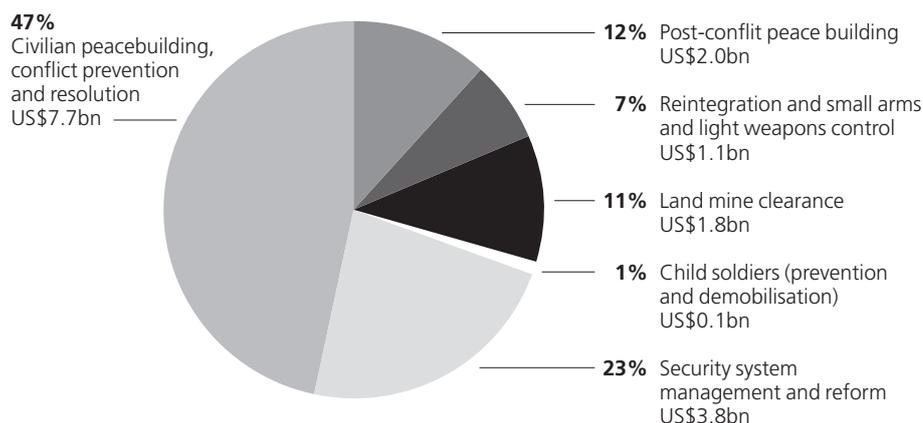
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<sup>148</sup> See, for example, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/67931/ev647s.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67931/ev647s.pdf) and [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/documents/ifs\\_programme\\_level\\_evaluation\\_2011\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/documents/ifs_programme_level_evaluation_2011_en.pdf)

**Figure 6: Bilateral ODA from DAC countries to conflict, peace, and security**

Source: Development Initiatives based on OECD DAC CRS data



### 3.4 Preliminary implications

The above discussion has several implications for early warning and early response.

First is the importance of recognising how little is known about the burden of conflict and violence. Although progress has been made in bolstering the global peace and security architecture, there remains a staggering deficit in understanding, capacity, and investment.

Second, the role of early warning in contexts affected by hybrid warfare is probably one of providing a ground-truthed narrative, while also analysing how soft power is used in warfare and what dominant narratives mean for response. The challenge for early response, however, is even greater. How does one build peace with existing tools (Gerasimov’s “political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other non-military measures”) in contexts where those same tools are also used to wage war?

Third is to adapt early warning analytical methods to the emerged reality of “hybrid conflicts”, which are defined here as “violent conflicts or situations of widespread violence where elements of grievance, greed, and/or extremism are intertwined – and where climate changes may play a role”. This also means that research and monitoring approaches have to evolve. And as with warning, response thinking too has to change. There are significant differences, to oversimplify, between programming a response to support talks between opposing groups that are mainly motivated by political aims, and doing so between criminal groups driven by financial interest.

Fourth, and again if one accepts the value provided by early warning systems to evidence response, then coverage (depth and breadth) of early warning globally has to be strengthened. This requires much more thinking on an architecture level to assess the actual contributions of different systems, and a concerted effort to move from a patchwork of systems to an interwoven one, which covers regions and conflict systems more effectively. An even greater blind spot is what the current response instruments and mechanisms actually add up to. How are available resources deployed, what changes are required to enhance efficiency and deployment speed, and is there scope to create alternative and more nimble response delivery systems?

# 4

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## The debates and challenges

*“Although men are accused of not knowing their own weakness, yet perhaps few know their own strength. It is in men as in soils, where sometimes there is a vein of gold which the owner knows not of.”*

Jonathan Swift in *Thoughts on Various Subjects from Miscellanies*

There are many debates and challenges in the early warning and response field. Some have been discussed extensively (such as the warning-response link), while others have been raised more recently. Here only four are discussed, with a view to assessing status and implications for the field.

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### 4.1 The warning-response link

The warning-response link challenge is rooted in an assumption (accepted here) that the *raison d'être* of current early warning systems is to catalyse informed and effective responses to violent conflicts. The following observations on state of play can be made:

- Most first and second generation early warning systems have not been able to effectively establish a warning-response link. Efforts to connect generated information and analysis with decision-making in response mechanisms and instruments are institutionally well-received, but not operationally acted upon – often because the process of response decision-making is a negotiated one, where information and analysis ultimately plays a limited role.
- The most effective warning-response links have been established by third generation early warning systems. These systems often merge the functions of information collector and responder, and operate on the principle of subsidiarity; that is, that responses are implemented at the lowest possible level first and if ineffective, then escalated. Third generation systems, however, are often thematically or geographically limited to relatively small areas. This reflects an operational realisation that violent conflicts are indeed ‘local’. But as only a handful of third generation systems are operational, their contribution towards denting the overall burden of violent conflict (see Section 3 above) is limited.

Beyond the current state of play, the sections above provide pointers on how to link warning and response, associated challenges, and aspects of the link that remain neglected:

- Good practice indicates that the best way of linking warning and response is to foster an exchange between warners and responders (ideally by placing them in the same room). Such an exchange is not one where options for response are discussed, but rather where strategy for response is discussed.
- Good practice also flags the importance of timely responses. If institutions are not set up to enable quick responses to warnings, then impact is likely to be reduced.
- A key, but neglected function of early warning systems is to monitor the impacts of responses to violent conflict, and inform changes in strategy.
- Early warning (and an understanding of context) is only one of a myriad of personal, institutional, and political factors that determine response. This raises the question of whether evidence really matters, which is discussed below. However, it means that the strength of the warning-response link depends on how well the value added by early warning is understood in an institution, the proximity to and quality of the operational interface of an early warning system with response instruments/mechanisms, and the role of the system in helping define (and monitor the impacts of) responses.
- Most early warning systems will be designed to inform and promote response instruments and mechanisms. However, most response instruments and mechanisms will not be designed to respond to warning or draw on early warning systems for guiding analysis.
- Changes in the conduct of warfare have significant implications for the warning and response link. It raises questions about whether early warning and response are instruments for peace or for war or both.
- Early warning system coverage of the global (emerged) threat landscape is at best limited and uneven. Methodological and information access challenges means that our understanding of emerged threats is generally weak. The complexity of hybrid conflicts (affected by multiple violent phenomena) requires nuanced responses and there are questions of whether the global peace and security architecture is adequately resourced to deliver such responses.

The bottom line is that the warning-response link remains fundamentally weak. And this continued weakness calls into question whether early warning systems are able to contribute to better responses to violent conflicts.

## 4.2 Does evidence matter?

A key assumption (also raised earlier) in this paper is that responses based on an understanding of the context in which they are to be implemented are likely to be more impactful. Evidence-based responses, it is argued, are more effective.

However, most decision makers involved in response decision-making will say that 'evidence' goes beyond an understanding of dynamics where responses are to be implemented. Evidence-based decision-making also involves understanding the personalities involved in response, the intra- and inter-institutional context (mandates, budgets, turf issues, capabilities, etc.) of the responder(s), and critically, the politics and political interests that determine how responses are crafted.

Another key aspect of the evidence challenge is the widespread use by opposing groups of information as a tool of war. This involves misinformation and disinformation campaigns, which are targeted at a variety of constituencies. It includes rumour mongering to stir up anger and orchestrate localised outbreaks of violence, the fabrication of evidence to move public opinion, and the promotion (as raised above) of certain narratives that encourage favourable responses by national, regional, or inter-

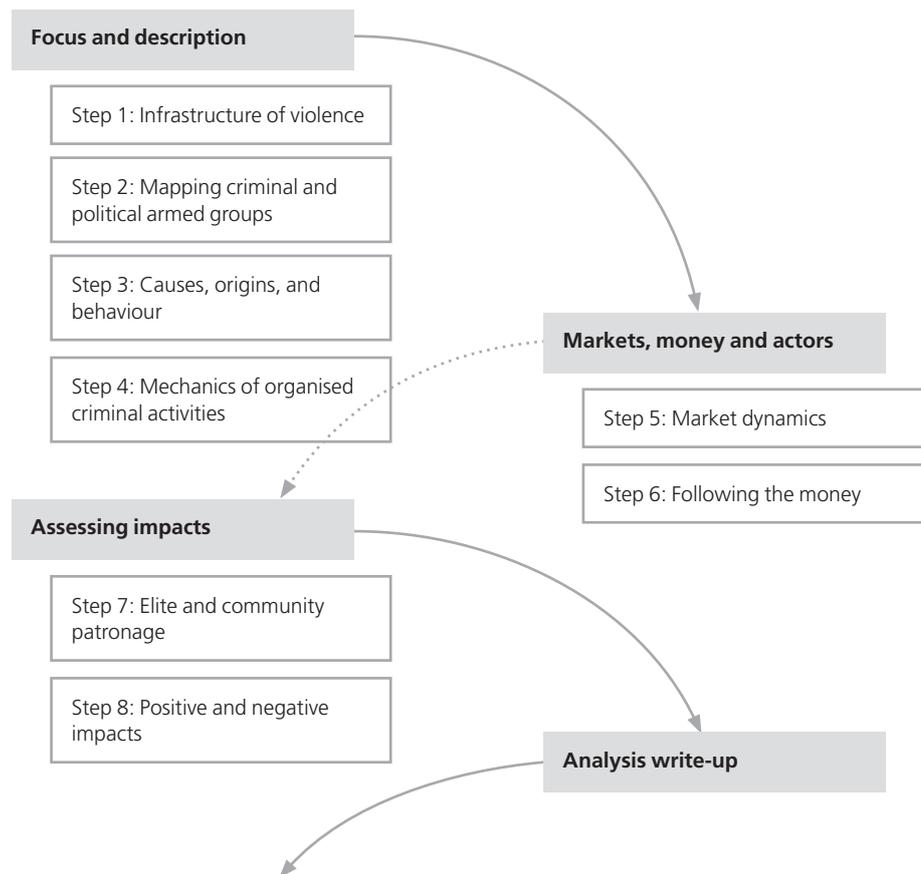
national actors. Sifting through what constitutes information, mis- and disinformation is tasking and difficult. All types of information, however, are useful in informing analysis of and responses to violent conflict.

The notion and approach to evidence-based decision-making in responses to violent conflict therefore needs to broaden: from a focus on ground-truthed information, to information about the personal, institutional, and political dynamics behind response decision-making, and the interpretation of mis- and disinformation, and fabrication of narratives to direct responses.

### 4.3 The country-centric and grievance-based analytical bias

Most first and second generation early warning systems will cover countries considered fragile or affected by violent conflict, while third generation systems often focus on distinct sub-national or cross-border conflicts. In terms of the former, the country focus is reflected both in how these first and second generation systems are structured (country-focused media monitoring and/or a few monitors in each country who send information collected on specific indicators to the centre) and the analytical products generated (often country assessments).

Figure 7: Steps for analysing criminalised conflict



The challenge with this analytical focus is that violent conflict is more and more local. So, for example, if a conflict assessment is done of Nigeria, it will probably miss out on specific dynamics that affect the Niger Delta; and if one is done on the Niger Delta (Southern Nigeria), it will not capture the dynamics of the conflict between the Nembe and Kalabari Kingdoms; and if one is done on the Nembe-Kalabari conflict, the particularities of the conflict between the (Nembe and Kalabari) communities of Oluasiri, Elem Sangama, and Soku are likely to be missed, etc. The responses required at each of these levels are also, of course, different. Conversely, if as a third generation system the focus is on the conflict affecting the communities of Oluasiri, Elem Sangama,

and Soku, broader contextual dynamics may be lost, although recommended responses will probably be more tangible and actionable.

Similarly, there are cross-border dynamics associated to most violent conflicts. Another Nigerian example of such a broader conflict system is the case of Boko Haram. The Boko Haram conflict has strong localised dynamics, but also cuts across elite structures in Nigeria, borders with neighbouring states, and global terrorist networks and counter-terror campaigns.

The other analytical bias, which is rooted in the early development sector adoption of the peacebuilding field, is the focus on grievance. The fundamental assumption in most conflict analysis and early warning methodologies is that violent conflict happens because of unaddressed grievances. This has led to great attention to ways in which factors such as poverty and marginalisation, the state's ability to care for its citizens, etc. are analysed. However, whereas a grievance focus is important, it is not sufficient given that we are dealing with an increasing number of hybrid conflicts; conflicts where grievance, crime and greed, extremism, environmental and climate change issues, interact.

Analytically, the approaches taken to analyse grievance, greed and crime, extremism, and environmental and climate change issues do overlap, but are also distinct. For example, a typical (and good) conflict analysis will cover the expressions, proximate and root causes of violent conflict, connectors and resilience to conflict, and stakeholder dynamics. As illustrated in Figure 7,<sup>149</sup> an analysis of a criminalised conflict needs to cover grievance issues, as well as the infrastructure of violence, mechanics of criminal activities, market dynamics and financial flows, patronage systems and impacts of criminal activities, to mention some.

The country focus of many early warning systems, and the limited geographical coverage of others, reduce the scope to capture violent conflict dynamics at the very local level or in terms of conflict systems. With an increasing number of hybrid conflicts, with characteristics that involve not only grievance but also crime, extremism, and environmental/climate change issues, the grievance bias of many conflict analysis and early warning tools is limiting, and there is a need to assess the appropriateness of available methodologies.

#### 4.4 The emergence of peace early warning?

Another significant analytical bias in early warning systems is their focus on the potential outbreak, escalation and resurgence of *violent conflict*. Conceptually, this has two main implications:

1. The focus on violent conflict has meant that the analysis of the factors that sustain peace (systems and institutions, shared values and interests, attitudes and actions, common symbols and experiences, etc.) and put a break on or reduce the spread of violent conflict (conflict management traditions, etc.) has been limited. This is a weakness as it focuses responses on measures to counteract violence, as opposed to on supporting systems that sustain peace.
2. Attention on predicting or drawing scenarios for the outbreak, escalation or resurgence of violence has meant that predicting the outbreak of peace, or when windows of opportunity for peace will emerge, has been neglected. Peacemaking practitioners often speak of (but rarely document) how windows of opportunity or 'ripe moments' for peace have been missed because of lacking preparedness.

<sup>149</sup> Adapted from Nyheim D and Ivanov A (2014), *Stabilising Areas Affected By Criminalised Violent Conflict: A Guide For Analysis And Stabilisation Strategy*, INCAS in Practice, (London: Urban Guru Publishers). Available at [www.amazon.co.uk/Stabilising-Affected-Criminalised-Violent-Conflict-ebook/dp/B00JGOZIDK/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1428355732&sr=8-1&keywords=Stabilising+Areas+Affected+By+Criminalised+Violent+Conflict%3A+A+Guide+For+Analysis+And+Stabilisation+Strategy](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Stabilising-Affected-Criminalised-Violent-Conflict-ebook/dp/B00JGOZIDK/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1428355732&sr=8-1&keywords=Stabilising+Areas+Affected+By+Criminalised+Violent+Conflict%3A+A+Guide+For+Analysis+And+Stabilisation+Strategy)

What then does peace early warning involve that is different from conflict early warning? It involves the monitoring and analysis for a specific violent conflict of three key elements:

1. The factors that sustain peace
2. Ongoing local, national, regional and international responses to promote peace
3. The key actors involved in making and building peace

It also involves the formulation of peace ripeness theories, which outline what needs to happen in conflict and stakeholder dynamics for conflicting parties to be ready to engage in meaningful peace talks.

Practically, of course, peace early warning needs to be rooted in an understanding of violent conflict dynamics. However, peace early warning involves a conceptual addition that is currently missing in existing early warning systems – and in response thinking too.

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## 4.5 Preliminary implications

There are several implications for early warning and response that flow from the discussion on key debates and challenges.

First is that despite grappling with the issue for over 15 years, early warners have not progressed much in linking their systems to response mechanisms. Similarly, decision makers are not effectively reaching in to warning systems to bolster the evidence base of responses. Related challenges include: (a) how to integrate evidence considerations better in what is in fact a negotiated response process; (b) how to ensure greater timeliness in responses to violent conflicts; (c) how to monitor the impact of responses and feed this kind of assessment back to decision makers; and (d) where to best place early warning systems within institutions for effective links with responders.

Second, whereas there is now better evidence (information and analysis) from conflict areas to inform responses, there is also a need to expand conceptually what evidence is fed into response mechanisms. Here greater attention needs to be placed on generating evidence related to the personal, institutional, and political dynamics behind decision-making, the interpretation of mis- and disinformation in violent conflict situations, and how narratives are constructed to influence the crafting of responses to violent conflicts.

Third, the increasing number of hybrid conflicts means that the analytical methods used by many early warning systems are in need of revision, and that the country-level focus has to be better supplemented with approaches to understand local-level conflicts and cross-border conflict systems.

And finally, there is an urgent need to add the peace early warning lens to current warning and response systems. Indeed, it can be argued that the exclusive focus on conflict dynamics by many systems and analysts leaves a critical blind spot in the ability of decision makers to anticipate windows of opportunity for peace and seize upon these opportunities when they emerge.

# 5

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## Conclusion

*“It is only the wisest and the stupidest that cannot change”*  
in the *Analects of Confucius*

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### 5.1 Is early warning and response dead?

This paper has explored whether early warning and response still has a role to play in peacebuilding by charting the evolution of the field, reviewing the emerged global conflict and security landscape, and exploring debates and challenges.

The main conclusion drawn is that despite significant progress since the 1990s, there are a number of deficits that are diminishing the overall relevance of early warning and response to the peace and security challenges we face today.

The good news is that early warning continues to provide a critical value added to a number of institutions. It does so in ways that range from informing decision-making, predicting and drawing conflict trends, providing inputs to response strategy formulation, alerting communities of risk and saving lives, and initiating responses to violent conflict.

Early response instruments and mechanisms have grown both in number and resources. There is a better understanding on what constitutes good practice in responses to violent conflicts, and an increasing body of knowledge on how to better institutionally manage these instruments.

However, the factors that are diminishing the relevance of early warning and response are numerous and significant. Seven are raised in this paper:

1. The securitisation of peacebuilding in general, with the dilemmas and challenges it creates, places serious restrictions also on the ability of early warning systems to operate.
2. The increasing number of hybrid conflicts, juxtaposed with the uneven and patchy coverage of conflict areas by early warning systems, and weaknesses in current analytical methods, means that our real understanding of the burden of conflict and violence in many places is limited. The current inability of early warning systems to better address this knowledge deficit is of concern.
3. Greater complexity in the global peace and security landscape has been met with increased military expenditure in many countries. However, investment in bolstering the international peace and security architecture to better manage this complexity has not been commensurate. Early warning systems and response instruments/mechanisms, which are part of this architecture, have remained inadequately resourced – and unable, therefore, to play an effective role.

4. Developments in, and likely more widespread use of, hybrid warfare strategy in violent conflict situations calls for a fundamental rethink on the approach taken by early warning systems and response instruments/mechanisms in such contexts. Such reflection among warning and response practitioners is at present largely absent.
5. Weaknesses in linking warning with response (and vice versa) are still prevalent in most first and second generation systems. Whereas there is a better understanding of how such links can be made (i.e. through the institutional positioning of early warning systems in or close to where response decision-making takes place; integration of early warning analysts into response formulation processes, etc.), this understanding is not often put to use.
6. Effectively evidencing responses today has to go beyond providing a contextual understanding of conflict dynamics to decision makers. Most early warning systems remain unable, for example, to provide insights on the response formulation process, the use of mis- and disinformation by opposing groups, impacts of responses, and how narratives (and counter-narratives) influence responses to violent conflicts.
7. Early warning systems are currently unable to warn about windows of opportunity for peace, and this fundamentally reduces their value. There are several other analytical blind spots that continue to affect these systems and reduce the effectiveness of early response. These relate to the analysis of emerged threats, micro-level conflict dynamics, and cross-border conflict systems.

## 5.2 Rebooting the relevance of early warning and response

The weaknesses listed above present an opportunity to chart a course for more relevant early warning and response. Such a new course needs to include: (a) a revised definition of early warning; (b) greater reflection among practitioners on the implications for early warning and response of the securitisation of peacebuilding and impacts of hybrid warfare; (c) efforts to bolster early warning systems and response mechanisms and instruments; and (d) expanding the evidence base and shifting the focus on conflict to one on peace.

Based on the sections above, a **new definition of 'early warning'** is proposed.

*“Early warning is a process that: (a) alerts decision makers and affected populations to the potential outbreak, escalation and resurgence of violent conflict; (b) informs and enables international, regional, and local-level responses to prevent, manage, or mitigate the effects of violent conflict; and (c) alerts decision makers to emerging windows of opportunity for peace and informs strategy and responses to create the conditions for lasting peace.”*

An ‘early warning system’ is defined as one that,

*“Carries out regular and organised collection and analysis of information on violent conflicts and opportunities for peace. It delivers a set of early warning products, involves in some cases direct responses to violent conflicts, and has operational linkages to response instruments and mechanisms.”*

In terms of **reflections on the implications for early warning and response of the securitisation of peacebuilding and impacts of hybrid warfare**, this paper raises two questions:

1. What do emerging dilemmas from the securitisation of peacebuilding and related operational restrictions mean for the effectiveness and viability of peacebuilding generally, and early warning in particular?
2. What role should early warning systems play in contexts affected by hybrid warfare? In terms of response instruments, what are the implications for building peace when existing tools are also used to wage war?

Answering these questions will enhance the relevance of early warning and response, while also helping steer the sector through what are serious and to some extent existential challenges.

In terms of **an early warning system and response agenda**, several fundamental approaches, ways in which systems should equip themselves, and new areas of focus are proposed here.

Five key approaches should be taken by early warning systems to enhance effectiveness and relevance.

1. Avoid the use of grey/black information and focus on open sources in order to foster the sharing of information/analysis needed for multi-actor responses.
2. Review where early warning systems are placed institutionally and ensure a placement close to response decision-making.
3. Move away from providing 'options for response' and focus on engagement with decision makers on the formulation of response strategies.
4. Work with other early warning systems to ensure greater depth and breadth in geographical coverage, as part of strengthening the global peace and security architecture.
5. Encourage multi-stakeholder partnerships and multi-level engagement.

**Early warning systems and response instruments and mechanisms now need to strengthen themselves** in three ways:

First, conduct a knowledge audit: what is known, what is not known, and what can never be known.

- Consider the concept of 'hybrid conflicts' and the need to ensure that analytical methods and the response toolbox is adequate for dealing with not only grievance, but also crime, extremism, and environmental/climate change issues.
- Consider whether a country-level focus has to be supplemented with approaches to understand and respond to local-level conflicts and cross-border conflict systems.

Based on audit findings, focus on your strengths, and seek enhanced capacity in important areas of weakness.

Second, assess whether you are operating in areas affected by hybrid warfare. If you are,

- Determine what value added early warning systems can provide to response decision makers. Does it involve giving a ground-truthed narrative, analysing how soft power is used in warfare, and what dominant narratives mean for response?
- Assess implications for response when existing tools (Gerasimov's "political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other non-military measures") are also used for war.

And third, consider your place in the global peace and security architecture. How can you contribute to a move from patchwork coverage and responses to a challenging threat picture, to one of interwoven capabilities? Whereas we have a sense of uneven early warning coverage, we know little about what current response instruments and mechanisms actually add up to. How resources are deployed, the changes required to enhance efficiency and deployment speed, and what alternatives should be explored to create more nimble response delivery systems, are important questions.

**Early warning systems should expand the evidence base provided** to decision makers in several ways:

1. Provide an analysis of the personal, institutional, and political dynamics behind decision-making.
2. Assist in the interpretation of mis- and disinformation in violent conflict situations.

3. Assess how narratives are constructed to influence the crafting of responses to violent conflicts.
4. Monitor the impact of implemented responses on violent conflict situations.

Critically, the relevance of both early warning systems and response mechanisms and instruments hinges on their ability to identify and seize windows of opportunity for peace. This fundamental blind spot and weakness must now be addressed.

### 5.3 Parameters for a China-UK partnership on early warning and response

A China-UK partnership on early warning and response is likely to be difficult for a number of reasons. The securitisation of the UK's peacebuilding field arguably makes it more difficult for China and the UK to find neutral ground on which to cooperate, and a persisting, incorrect assumption that cooperation in early warning also requires intelligence sharing also acts as a clear disincentive. There are also important differences in foreign policy between the UK and China in several conflict-affected regions. China's actions in CAFS have, to date, been largely reactive rather than pre-emptively responding to warning signs and signals. There is also often an apprehension within Chinese policy circles that through engaging in early warning and response systems China could be accused of intervening in the internal affairs of a given country before a crisis has erupted.

Despite these obstacles, there remain causes for optimism. China is slowly reinterpreting its policy of non-intervention to allow engagement in 'response protection'<sup>150</sup> and if there is regional support for early warning and response initiatives then this might serve to encourage greater collaboration.

A China-UK partnership within the business community could also be a good entry point for cooperation in early warning and response, particularly given that Chinese businesses are increasingly exerting pressure upon the Chinese Government to safeguard their interests in conflict affected and fragile environments. Companies within the extractive sector, including those from both China and the UK, already work within joint ventures to help share information on security-related threats. Participating in joint risk assessment processes would be mutually beneficial for businesses from both countries, and could promote conflict sensitivity within business operations.

<sup>150</sup> See, for example, Garwood-Gowers, Andrew (2015) China's "Responsible Protection" concept: re-interpreting the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and military intervention for humanitarian purposes. *Asian Journal of International Law*.

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# Afterword: Prospect of China-UK partnership in conflict prevention

**Xue Lei**

**BOTH CHINA AND THE UK** have great overseas interests at stake in regions around the world which are particularly vulnerable to conflict. As two permanent members of the UN Security Council, both countries also assume special responsibility in terms of maintenance of international peace and security. This provides common ground for the strategic partnership between the two countries in relation to conflict prevention. The partnership can be manifested in various forms either at the inter-governmental level or non-governmental level.

First, due to certain political considerations, the most suitable forum for cooperation may be as part of multilateral organisations, in particular the UN. As the UN Security Council is the legitimate global organ responsible for maintenance of peace and security, China and the UK need to work within this forum to facilitate respective dialogue and cooperation in addressing threats to, or breaches of, international peace, and with the aim of mitigating differences among the major powers, in particular the P5, so as to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of the UN Security Council. Based on the long-term accumulation of experience and expertise due to both countries' privileged status in the Council, it may be feasible for China and the UK to mobilise all available communication channels to gather country alert information presented to the Council, with special attention on informal communication mechanisms created for the Council members, such as the horizontal scanning report presented by the Secretary-General and meetings convened under the Arria Formula.<sup>151</sup> The two countries also need to strive to foster strategic mutual trust in the Council's deliberation and decision-making processes.

Second, distinct from cooperation at the global level, China and the UK also have greater roles to play in the promotion of peace and security at the regional or sub-

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<sup>151</sup> Arria-formula meetings are informal, confidential gatherings which enable Security Council members to engage in frank and direct dialogue with specifically invited representatives of Governments, international organisations and non-state parties directly involved with issues which fall within the remit of the Security Council. Whilst convened by a member (or members) of the Security Council, Arria-formula meetings do not constitute an official activity of the Council, and are not held in the Security Council Consultation Room.

regional level. Such cooperation needs to be centred on the existing regional and sub-regional security apparatus, for instance, the AU, ECOWAS, IGAD, etc. In accordance with the China-Africa Peace and Security Partnership Initiative presented by former Chinese President Hu Jintao, China has been working closely with the AU to enhance the capacity of African regional and sub-regional organisations in addressing various forms of security threats. China's assistance to the AU includes the training of civilian and military personnel, support for institution building, and funding for the incoming African Standby Force. Through enhancing African capacities in rapid response to crisis, China has contributed to the AU's early warning and response capabilities and to helping the AU's Peace and Security Council to achieve its objective of collective security and effective warning. Based on previous efforts such as these, there is the possibility of a trilateral cooperation mechanism between China, the UK, and an African regional or sub-regional organisation.

Last but not least, at the non-governmental level, there is great uncharted space for corporations and civil society organisations from both countries to fill. In the wake of the Libyan crisis, the protection of overseas Chinese nationals and corporations became a great concern for China. One manifestation of this increasing enthusiasm shown by the Chinese Government and its citizens is the operation of the Overseas Security Service Platform sponsored by the China International Contractors Association. With the establishment of a set of country risk assessment indicators, it has attracted hundreds of large Chinese corporations to join the network. However, despite the efforts made by Chinese corporations and civil society organisations, China's capacity to protect citizens and corporations is still in its infancy. The British business community's comparative sophistication in consultancy, insurance, and financial enterprises could definitely be utilised to help lessen China's gap in experience and specialised knowledge within certain areas such as insurance for potential political and conflict risks, and conflict sensitivity – which in turn could help the Chinese businesses involved to better understand and react to early warning signals.

Nevertheless, we still need to bear in mind the greatest obstacles to potential further cooperation between China and the UK; that is, the great divide in political principles and the political trust deficit. This needs to be put on the agenda of the China-UK Strategic Dialogue. Both sides have a lot of work to do in mutual confidence building in political and security affairs. The good news is that bilateral relations have warmed and there are increasingly frequent visits by leaders from both countries. It is hoped that this may provide greater momentum for the bilateral cooperation to start stepping into the 'deep water' of political and security cooperation.