

Institution: King's College London
Unit of Assessment: UoA 21
Title of case study: Improving early warning for preventive action by the European Union and Non-Governmental Organisations
1. Summary of the impact <p>The FORESIGHT Research Group on 'Early Warning and Preventive Policy' has influenced a range of different actors involved in conflict and mass atrocity prevention. Its research findings featured prominently in a major report published by the Budapest Centre for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities and many of its recommendations were subsequently endorsed by leading practitioners in the area as well as through a resolution by the European Parliament. Furthermore, FORESIGHT has influenced key officials working on the emergent structures for intelligence analysis in the European Union as well as practitioners in NGOs.</p>
2. Underpinning research <p>The FORESIGHT Research Group was set up in 2008 through an ERC grant award to King's College London, and comprised four researchers all based at King's (Brante, de Franco, Meyer and Otto). It generated the following findings:</p> <p>(A) FORESIGHT studied the much lamented warning-response gap in conflict prevention. It found that the wide-spread belief among scholars and practitioners that political will, rather than the quality and quantity of warning, explains the warning-response gap is simplistic and - in the paradigmatic case of Rwanda - plain wrong. The FORESIGHT team suggested a more nuanced way to measure warning impact and developed a more appropriate yardstick to measure whether a warning-response problem exists. To explain why warnings are being noticed the group emphasises the importance of organizational culture and relationships between producers and consumers of warning as one of the most important factors as to whether warnings are being recognized; far more important than message properties. The content of the warning message could boost impact, but only if certain sources had a chance to be noticed in the first place, making the warning response process people-centred. The most important source in this respect were senior officials who had recently been in the country in question and who were considered by recipients as part of the 'in-group', i.e. someone with a similar ideological background and some personal connections to recipients. High-level diplomats with local expertise and political clout were the most powerful warners. Signals from the bureaucratic and political leadership do matter, but incentives on leaders to respond can and do change, partly as a result of mediatised warnings and advocacy for preventive action.</p> <p>(B) With regard to the EU, the researchers found that it has considerable potential to make preventive action a hallmark of its approach to international security, violent conflict and human rights protection, particularly after the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS). It has, however, fallen significantly short in translating these aspirations into institutional practice and success on the ground. Its long-term policy instruments are not sufficiently geared towards identifying and addressing risks of violent conflict and genocide, whereas its action to address medium to short-term risks is substantially slowed down by the diversion of institutional resources and political attention to the management of immediate or current crises. The EEAS in its current form could lead to lower receptivity and slower responses due to growing information noise, excessively hierarchical relations, role confusion and fragmentation as well as an even tighter bottleneck in information processing and decision-making at the top of the broader pyramidal structure. The FORESIGHT group has produced several recommendations to address these shortcomings, including, strengthening the linkage between warning-producers, policy-planners and high-level decision-makers, integrating warning and response capacities through EU Special</p>

Representatives and devolving some power to respond downwards, enabling fast-tracking of warnings and empowering warning sources through training and career incentives.

(C) With regard to publicly communicated warning, FORESIGHT found that qualitative warnings communicated by NGOs such as the International Crisis Group and journalists writing for quality news media, had a considerably higher impact than watch-lists and other formal warning products produced by intelligence analysts. On the other hand, warnings are often communicated far too late and in a hedged way as journalists cling to objective reporting roles, whereas NGOs are anxious to maximize impact and protect their reputation. It was also found that NGOs are overusing a humanitarian frame, which is considered less helpful or in some cases counter-productive to getting warnings noticed, particularly at the early stage by international organizations or Western governments. Many NGOs in this area harm their reputation for good analysis by formulating recommendations that are seen unrealistic or ill-informed by decision-makers. Hence, the RG has produced a briefing paper tailored to NGOs to advise them on how to build a positive track-record and reputation with potential recipients of warnings, how improve the warning message and when to better avoid making recommendations and concentrate on analysis.

3. References to the research

- (a) Meyer, C O, Otto, F. (2012) 'Missing the Story? Changes in Foreign News Reporting and Their Implications for Conflict Prevention', *Media, War & Conflict*, Vol. 5, No 3, pp. 205-221.
- (b) Meyer, C. O. (2012) 'Normative, theoretische und praxeologische Defizite der Friedensforschung am Beispiel der Konfliktprävention', *Zeitschrift für International Beziehungen*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 183-196.
- (c) Meyer, C. O., Brante, J., de Franco, C. and Otto, F. (2012) 'Worse, Not Better?' Reinvigorating Early Warning For Conflict Prevention In The Post-Lisbon European Union, *Egmont Paper 48*, Gent: Academia Press, <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/ep48.pdf>, 51 pages.
- (d) Brante, J. (2010) 'Strategic Warning in an EU Context: Achieving Common Threat Assessments', European Security and Defence Forum, Chatham House, http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/International%20Security/1109esdf_brante.pdf, 16 pp.
- (e) Meyer, C.O., de Franco, C. (eds.) (2011) *Forecasting, Warning and Responding to Transnational Risks*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. 304 pp.
- (f) Meyer, C. O., Brante, J., de Franco, C. and Otto, F (2010) 'Re-casting the Warning-Response-Problem: Persuasion and Preventive Policy', *International Studies Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 556-578.

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4. Details of the impact

Members of FORESIGHT were invited to co-chair (Meyer) and co-ordinate (de Franco) the work of

an expert task force on how to strengthen the EU's capacities to prevent mass atrocities and genocide. This task force work was initiated by the Budapest Centre for the International Prevention for Genocide, a newly created NGO and chaired by a former official of the Council of Ministers. The final report identified core problems impeding the ability of the EU and its member states to prevent mass atrocities and made a number of recommendations to address them. In particular, its first substantive chapter on warning and response was closely informed by Foresight research and to a large degree written by Meyer and de Franco, but research also influenced other parts of the report as warning and response are closely linked (see source [1]).

The process of drafting the report attracted considerable interest, advice and feedback from the policy community in Brussels and national capitals in the run-up to and at three major workshops in Berlin, Paris and Brussels (source [8]). A draft of the Task Force's report was circulated widely throughout relevant units in the European External Action Service and some EU member states' foreign ministries in December 2012, resulting in substantive feedback on the report's conclusions. Similarly, the European Parliament's rapporteur on the 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) commented on the TF report and used it to inform the Parliament's own resolution, which was adopted in April 2013 (source [5]). The resolution recommended, for instance, "to strengthen linkages between early warning, policy planning and high-level decision-making in the EEAS and the Council" (1-f) which is a verbatim passage suggested to the Rapporteur by the Director of RG FORESIGHT in an email (source [6]). These suggestions were also taken up when the EP resolution stresses the need, to "include a systematic assessment of the risk factors of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity in regional and country strategy papers" (1-g) and "to ensure that EU Special Representatives uphold R2P whenever necessary and broaden the mandate of the EU Special Representative on Human Rights to include R2P issues" (1-h).

The final report was endorsed in writing and in person by leading practitioners in the field such as the former EU-Commissioner and current Italian Foreign Minister, Emma Bonino, Elmar Brok, Chair of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, and the former UN Deputy Secretary-General Lord Malloch-Brown (source [1]). Moreover, the current UN Special Advisor on Genocide Adam Dieng attended the launch and praised the report as a 'fabulous contribution' toward the strengthening the prevention of mass atrocities (source [2]). The Chair of the UK's All Parliamentary Group on Genocide Prevention wrote to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in support of the report. In response, FCO Minister Simmonds confirmed that FCO officials had been 'closely engaged with the process of finalising the report' and 'agreed' with much of its recommendations, specifically 'strengthening the EU's warning response' (source [11]). The report was downloaded almost 50,000 times, featured in media reports and welcomed by NGOs as strengthening their advocacy in the field (source [3] & [10]). Some of our recommendations, for instance on recruitment of country experts from outside of government, were subsequently taken-up by NGO in the field such as the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), an umbrella organisation of 32 NGOs, networks of NGOs and think-tanks from 14 European countries (source [7]). Similarly, a briefing paper emerging from an Expert Roundtable on R2P organised by the United Nations Association in the UK in April 2013 reflected key insights about the '[t]he packaging of information, credibility of the source, the access and empowerment of the "warner"' in its analysis and recommendations (source [10]).

Since its inception in 2008, FORESIGHT members closely collaborated with EU and national officials active in shaping the organisation's emerging warning and intelligence structures. The former head of the EU intelligence hub, William Shapcott, (SITCEN, 2001-2010), joined the Foresight advisory board and made clear at various meetings that exposure to Foresight's findings helped him to reflect on and develop effective communication of warnings within the EU context. This included pre-announcing warning products, making clear that they are warnings or which parts of them include warning elements to avoid misunderstandings and limit the possibility for blame-shifting. Mr Shapcott's reflections on the specific challenges of warning in a multi-national settings and how to address them are contained in a chapter he contributed to book (source [4]). Foresight findings also strengthened internal advocacy for better warning and preventive policy within the emerging organisational culture and structures of the European External Action Service,

the EU's new diplomatic corps of 3000 officials drawn from EU Commission, Council and member states.

Finally, FORESIGHT research influenced NGOs active in the field of early warning and peace-building. Foresight members were consulted by the PAX project in the inception and feasibility phases. PAX is an NGO-start-up supported, inter alia, by Google, which aims to use ICT to improve warning performance about violent conflict. The FORESIGHT group advised against placing the emphasis on advocacy for action as this was already done better by other organisations (ICG) and to concentrate on those areas where they could add most value. This recommendation was taken-up. FORESIGHT members also highlighted the importance of source credibility and expert evaluators of the data and highlighted the unintended consequences/potential abuses of new communication technology in warning about violent conflict. This aspect was strengthened further in the feasibility study (source [9]).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [1] Meyer, C.O, Smith, K.E., et al. (2013) *Report on Strengthening the EU's Capacities for the Prevention of Mass Atrocities and Genocide*, pp 98, available from <http://www.budapestcentre.eu/> .
- [2] Recordings of TF launch-event in Brussels, with comments from Adam Dieng (UN Special Advisor on Genocide Prevention) at minutes 24-25 here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulDBEhNc2TE>, similarly at an event in the European Parliament (minutes 43-45) http://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLMT_9aYQ1o3_Y_G6Gk-UwFRMPAXw_UwWm&feature=player_embedded&v=WhGwtlLifJw#!
- [3] Endorsements from NGOs, Dr James Smith from the Anti-Genocide NGO the Aegis Trust can be found at minutes 29:00 and 30:30-33:30) in the following recording. https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=mhJM9OH1Ggk
- [4] Chapter by William Shapcott (Head of EU Situation Centre, 2001-2010) titled 'Do They Listen? Communicating Warnings: An Intelligence Practitioner's Perspective', in Meyer, C.O., de Franco, C. (eds.) (2011) *Forecasting, Warning and Responding to Transnational Risks*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 117-126.
- [5] Resolution of the European Parliament, A7-0130/2013
- [6] Documentation of how the previous version of this report has been changed and the email exchange that led to the changes. Available on request.
- [7] EPLO Statement on the EEAS mid-term review: An opportunity to strengthen the EU's capacity to prevent conflict and build peace, see in particular recommendations on page 2 (our report p. 91). Available on request.
- [8] List of officials and policymakers that were directly consulted in the drafting process. Available on request.
- [9] Email correspondence with Brian Lapping and Catherine Dempsey [see factual statement] & [PAX project website with testimony](#)
- [10] The future of the Responsibility to Protect: finding a way forward. UNA-UK roundtable on the responsibility to protect, 16 April 2013
- [11] Letter from FCO Minister to APPG on Genocide Prevention [see factual statement]