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Major Research Paper: Preventing Mass Atrocities Through Early Warning

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Abstract

Mass atrocities do not occur overnight, meaning that warning signs are often identifiable. By detecting structural and dynamic risk factors early on, it is possible for states to take appropriate action early on. From there, these risks can plausibly be mitigated to prevent atrocity crimes from being committed. Based on three bodies of literature, I investigate policies governing contemporary early warning systems and states' responses to these warnings. The first body of literature includes an overview of the global humanitarian protection regime, including the history of atrocity prevention and the conditions that led to the creation of early warning systems. The second body of literature includes a discussion of particular types of early warning mechanisms, while the third body of literature assesses the overall record of response to early warnings. The primary question my research seeks to answer is: what are the strengths and weaknesses of existing early warning mechanisms and responses? From my analysis of their strengths and weaknesses, I ask a secondary question: how can early warning mechanisms and responses be improved to better prevent atrocity crimes? My research is of use to students and scholars of international relations, particularly those interested in the global humanitarian protection regime, and will offer valuable insights about the intricacies of early warning systems – how they are operationalized, as well as their strengths and their weaknesses.

Problématique

In his 2000 Millennium Report, then United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, lamented that “if humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica, to gross and systematic violations of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?” (United Nations, n.d., para. 2). Preventing and reacting to systematic violations of human rights and mass atrocities became a prominent issue of international concern in the wake of the atrocities committed during WWII and the Holocaust, which catalyzed the establishment of various conventions and institutions governing the protection of human rights (Ibid).

According to the United Nations Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes (UNFAAC), a mass atrocity encompasses the legally defined international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing (United Nations, 2014, p. 1). These crimes are considered to be the most serious crimes against humankind and are referred to as atrocities because such acts affect the core dignity of human beings (Ibid). Each atrocity crime is defined as follows. Genocide is a crime committed against members of either a national, ethnic, racial or religious group and is aimed at the destruction of that particular group (Ibid). Crimes against humanity include widespread systematic attacks directed towards a civilian population (Ibid). War crimes encompass acts that target combatants and non-combatants and involve breaches of the Geneva Conventions and acts targeted at persons protected under international humanitarian law (Ibid). Finally, while ethnic cleansing is not recognized as an independent crime under international law, it refers to acts that constitute serious violations of international human rights that ultimately amount to genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes (Ibid). Ethnic cleansing is defined by the United Nations as “coercive practices” used to remove a

civilian population of a particular ethnic or religious group from a specific geographic area (n.d., para. 3).

Given the severity of these crimes, preventing mass atrocities is of utmost importance, primarily due to the moral imperative to avoid significant losses of life, and prevent human suffering, physical and psychological damage in those affected (United Nations, 2014, p. 2). Additionally, atrocity prevention contributes to national, regional, and international peace and security, given that atrocities pose significant destabilizing effects that threaten the wellbeing of the international community as a whole (Ibid). Prevention is also significantly less costly than intervention or post-conflict reconstruction given that countries require significant and extensive international support in the aftermath of a mass atrocity (Ibid).

A host of legal frameworks exist to protect populations at risk for atrocity crimes, including the Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the Geneva Conventions (p. 3). Notwithstanding the ever-growing body of international rules and institutions dedicated to preventing atrocities, many groups are still subjected to human rights abuses and gross violations of international humanitarian law (Jacob and Mennecke, 2020, p. 22). Given the pervasiveness of violent conflict and mass atrocities, it is clear that the practices and policies governing atrocity prevention remain imperfect.

I will investigate the challenge of preventing mass atrocities in conjunction with mechanisms that support preventive action. In particular, I will examine early warning systems and assess how they function as well as how they are applied. The concept of early warning is premised on the idea that “atrocity crimes do not happen overnight,” instead, they require planning and preparation, meaning that warning signs are often identifiable (United Nations, 2014, p. 1). Early warning systems enable policymakers to detect structural and dynamic risk

factors to then take measures to prevent atrocity crimes from being carried out (Ibid). Since garnering widespread attention, an array of early warning systems have been implemented throughout the international community and include risk forecasting models, monitoring systems and expert reports. Through a thorough investigation of early warning frameworks, my aim is to establish a series of recommendations by which early warning for mass atrocity crimes may be improved. Another aim of my analysis is to explain the “warning-response gap”, which refers to a pattern whereby warnings are dismissed but atrocities are still allowed to happen (Grünfeld and Vermeulen, 2014, p. 6). This issue is not one of limited information but an overall failure to act upon the information that is available; it is therefore worthwhile to identify some explanations for the disparity between timely warnings and delayed actions.

Research Questions

My research questions each emerge from an acknowledgment that there are a variety of risk factors that materialize before the actual commission of mass atrocities. As previously mentioned, the purpose of early warning is to detect potential threats to peace and security and subsequently identify an appropriate course of action. My first question asks: what are the strengths and weaknesses of early warning mechanisms and responses? My second question asks: how can early warning mechanisms and responses be improved to more effectively prevent atrocity crimes? My analysis of future improvements will follow directly from my analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of early warning mechanisms and responses. It is worth noting that, when referring to early warning mechanisms, I plan to discuss specific early warning techniques which include risk forecasting models, experts’ reports, and public monitoring systems. Additionally, early warning responses will refer to states' reactions to early warnings and the specific steps taken to prevent and/or respond to such threats.

Review of Literature

My research emerges from an engagement with three main bodies of literature. The first body of literature traces the development of the atrocity prevention regime throughout history, including the legal mechanisms and international norms underpinning the regime. Engaging with this body of literature illuminates the conditions that led to the creation of early warning systems. The second body of literature discusses early warning systems and the specific mechanisms employed to support early warning. Finally, the third body of literature examines the record of states' responses in order to evaluate how states have reacted to early warnings and identify strengths and shortcomings within these courses of action.

It is first necessary to discuss the historical and contextual foundations of early warning systems by examining the global humanitarian protection regime and its development over time. The practice of humanitarian intervention began during the nineteenth century, during which there were military interventions in Europe for "proto-humanitarian" reasons (Mills, 2015, p. 32). Scholars view the foundations of the global atrocity prevention regime as being largely rooted in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Genocide Convention, hereafter), which entered into force after Second World War and the Holocaust (Simon, 2021, p. 186). Ramesh Thakur and Gareth Evans both note that, while the emergence of the Genocide Convention catalyzed the widespread recognition of human and group rights, states remained reluctant to intervene in matters of other states' domestic jurisdiction (Evans, 2015, p. 17). As such, the norm discouraging states from intervening in the internal affairs of other states remained dominant in spite of the codification of human rights under international law.

The norm of non-intervention prevailed until the 1990s when policymakers began to consider ways to consolidate information about threats to peace and security through early

warning systems. In 1992, former UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros Ghali committed to strengthening the UN's early warning capabilities, which led to the creation of the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) (Harff, 2009, p. 509). HEWS compiled information about natural disasters as well as common political indicators to assess "whether a threat to peace exists" and what action can be taken by the United Nations to mitigate such threats (Ibid). Barbara Harff highlights that, in the early stages of early warning systems, no organizations focused specifically on risk assessment or early warning for genocide and mass atrocities, instead they focused primarily on general conflict situations (Ibid).

The 1990s also saw mass atrocities committed in both Rwanda and Srebrenica, Bosnia. Evans notes that the crimes committed in Rwanda and Bosnia precipitated a debate between proponents of "humanitarian intervention" and proponents of immutable state sovereignty (Evans, 2015, p. 18). Humanitarian intervention is the doctrine that refers to the "right to intervene" militarily, against the will of the state in question (Ibid). Conversely, state sovereignty refers to the obligation states have not to intervene in one-another's domestic affairs (Thakur, 2015, p. 191). Developing countries remained attached to the notion of sovereignty due to the trauma of the colonial experience and as such, discredited the practice of humanitarian intervention on the basis of neo-colonialism (Ibid).

However, the commission of mass atrocities in Rwanda and Bosnia underscored the need to take protective action in response to such crimes and precipitated a fundamental normative shift in international relations (p. 190). Despite calls from at least 133 states rejecting the legality of humanitarian intervention, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was developed largely in reaction to the international community's failure to prevent or appropriately respond to the genocide in Rwanda which led to a "re-examination of the conceptualisations of sovereignty and

the principle of non-intervention,” according to Stacy Henderson (2018, p. 326). R2P stipulates the following pillars of responsibility:

- 1) Every state has the Responsibility to Protect its populations from four mass atrocity crimes: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.
- 2) The wider international community has the responsibility to encourage and assist individual states in meeting that responsibility.
- 3) If a state is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action, in a timely and decisive manner and in accordance with the UN Charter. (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, n.d., para. 5)

As such, R2P embodies a greater recognition of human and group rights and a commitment, throughout the international community, to humanitarian protection. Many scholars, including Ramesh Thakur, echo Henderson and hold that the adoption of R2P marks a fundamental reconceptualization of the concept of sovereignty; under R2P, sovereignty was framed as a responsibility that states have to protect their own populations, as well as foreign populations from mass atrocities (2015, p. 191). While initially controversial, R2P was unanimously adopted at the World Summit in 2005 (Henderson, 2018, p. 327). The operationalization of R2P is inextricably linked to early warning and response because of its importance as an international policy instrument governing preventive action.

However, a debate exists among scholars who believe in R2P’s ability to guide states’ behaviour vis à vis humanitarian emergencies and those who doubt its influence. Scholars including Evans, Thakur and Henderson argue in favour of R2P’s normative significance.

However, in his book *Hollow Norms and the Responsibility to Protect*, Aidan Hehir counters that R2P has limited significance as an international norm (2019, p. 4). Hehir terms R2P as a “hollow norm” because it does not raise the cost of non-compliance with existing international human rights law and argues that its popularity is based on the fact that it demands “negligible change,” rather than because it actually regulates states’ behaviour (Ibid). Monique Law similarly asserts that R2P remains a “policy aspiration” and argues that it will not hold the influence of a legal norm for the foreseeable future (2017, p. 88). This debate broadly reflects the tension between scholars who conceptualize state behaviour as primarily shaped by national interest and those who believe states are guided by collective interests and humanitarian concerns. Hehir’s argument accords with that of Paul Bartrop and Samuel Totten, as well as other scholars who address the incompatibility between the realpolitik nature of the international system and humanitarian intervention. Within this community, scholars believe that external interventions are shaped by realpolitik patterns of behaviour, which will inform later discussions about the warning-response gap.

A second body of literature I rely on assesses early warning techniques employed by states. I intend to address specific mechanisms, including forecasting models and monitoring systems. Fred Grünfeld and Wessel N. Vermeulen define early warning as the “collection and analysis of information about potential and/or actual conflict situations, as well as the provision of policy suggestions to important decision-makers at the national, regional and international levels with a view of avoiding a conflict (escalation)” (2014, p. 9). Similarly, Ernesto Verdeja cites Lawrence Woocher’s criteria for predictive models, which include “a) periodic global risk assessments that produce useful country watch lists; b) sustained, detailed monitoring and analysis of high risk situations; and c) a mechanism for communicating warnings to end users,

such as policymakers” (Verdeja, 2016, p. 13). Early warning is generally intended for immediate and medium term operational prevention rather than structural prevention, which involves establishing longer term preventive policies; practitioners emphasize the importance of taking robust action and formulating policies based on the information gathered.

Having defined early warning, it is worth drawing a distinction between risk assessments and early warning. Barbara Harff highlights that risk assessments are based on analyses of a country’s structural conditions and background, including factors such as ethnic divisions, the political system and other factors that could ultimately lead to mass atrocities (2018, p. 28). Conversely, early warning is based on dynamic factors, including changes to political or ideological dispositions (Ibid). Verdeja echoes Harff and highlights that risk assessments are predictive models, which are primarily concerned with forecasting the probability of an event, while early warning deals with causal analyses, which focus on explaining the process by which certain factors create a particular outcome (2016, p. 14). It is generally accepted that risk assessment and early warning overlap and that both types of analyses are of value for atrocity prevention.

I intend to evaluate the accuracy and timeliness of early warning mechanisms in conjunction with a case study of the atrocities committed in Darfur, Sudan. The atrocities committed in Darfur are widely researched and scholars including Grünfeld and Vermeulen; Hagar Taha; and Greg Austin and Ben Koppelman agree that, while early warning was provided, these alerts failed to generate an appropriate policy response to prevent atrocities from being committed. In evaluating this case study, I rely heavily on Grünfeld and Vermeulen’s book, *Failure to Prevent Gross Human Rights Violations in Darfur Warnings to and Responses by International Decision Makers (2003–2005)*. Grünfeld and Vermeulen provide a comprehensive

overview of the atrocities committed in Darfur, how early warnings were disseminated, which states and organizations knew about these atrocities and their responses to these atrocities.

The final body of literature evaluates states' responses to early warnings. As such, I draw from scholars' assessments of responses to early warnings and examine explanations for potential strengths and weaknesses within these responses. It is worth noting that states have responded to warnings through a variety of different means including through military means and diplomatic measures such as economic sanctions. As stipulated in the third pillar of R2P, "if a state is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take appropriate collective action, in a timely and decisive manner and in accordance with the UN Charter" (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, n.d., para. 5).

Accordingly, R2P requires states to respond promptly to mass atrocities but leaves room for different courses of action to be taken to uphold this obligation once early warnings have been generated.

Some experts argue that humanitarian interventions must include a threat of military action in order to succeed, while others argue that coercive military action can have adverse effects. In particular, Bridget Conley-Zilkic argues that these types of actions are of limited effectiveness because they are "too reliant on consensus to be a realistic deterrent" (2015, p. 31). Additionally, Conley-Zilkic argues that coercive military action reflects a "neo-imperial invitation" to intervene wherever powerful states choose to do so (Ibid). Further, she notes that coercive military intervention detracts attention from actual atrocities and human security issues by directing the focus towards the armed intervention itself (Ibid). Jeremy Moses echoes this in his article, "A pacifist ethos for the Responsibility to Protect: detaching prevention from intervention", in which he argues that non-violent responses to mass atrocities are "morally

consistent” with the aims set out in R2P (2019, p. 229). Instead, Moses posits that such responses be guided by a “pacifist ethos”, which he describes as a “disposition or orientation towards nonviolence”, in contrast to a “dogmatic insistence upon and belief in the necessity of overcoming all violent political conflict” (Ibid).

In a similar vein, Paul R. Williams, J. Trevor Ulbrick and Jonathan Worboys hold that mass atrocity responses should not exceed “low intensity military operations” even when all options have been exhausted and the UN Security Council is deadlocked (2012, p. 474). They argue that this would reinforce R2P’s normative credibility while also fulfilling its primary purpose of preventing mass atrocities (Ibid). Despite criticisms of military intervention, it remains the organizing framework for mass atrocities prevention (Conley-Zilkic, 2015, p. 32). Conversely, Dwight Raymond argues that military intervention can be a viable strategy for preventing and reacting to mass atrocities. Raymond notes that, while military forces are often employed as a “last resort,” they can be employed to shape a preventive environment and further dissuade “would-be perpetrators” from committing atrocity crimes (Raymond, 2015, p. 296).

Other scholars place greater value on preventive diplomacy as a response to mass atrocities. Nathan, Day, Honwana and Brubaker define preventive diplomacy as “diplomatic action taken to prevent conflicts from becoming violent and/or to prevent conflicts with low-level violence from spreading or escalating into large-scale violence” (Nathan et al., 2018, p. 4). They state that successful preventive diplomacy can change a volatile and escalatory conflict dynamic into a dynamic of containment and de-escalation (Ibid). This results from decisions and actions from the following categories of actors: the conflict parties, the preventive diplomacy interveners and other actors with influence over the conflict parties (Ibid). George A. Lopez also advances a defense of preventive diplomacy which he terms as “smart sanctions”; he argues that

policymakers should consider courses of action beyond targeting dictators and perpetrators (Lopez, 2015, p. 380). Instead, Lopez advocates for the use of “in-depth intelligence” to use resources on “constraining the less visible actors and... those processes and products that significantly enable these abuses to occur and sustain the direct perpetrators’ violence over time” (p. 381). Overall, there exists a variety of trajectories for interventions to take. Regardless, contemporary scholarship tends to favour lower-scale military operations and other non-military means of responding to mass atrocities. As such, my analysis will focus primarily on preventive diplomacy and low-scale military intervention as responses to mass atrocities.

Scholars largely agree that responses to atrocities have historically been weak and ineffective. In particular, Dwight Raymond notes that the literature on mass atrocity responses overwhelmingly concludes that states are disposed toward inaction (2013, p. 296). This inaction is attributed to factors such as “competing national interests that dissuade action, risk-averse decision making and bureaucracies that support status quo approaches” among other explanations (Ibid). Grünfeld and Vermeulen’s discussion of early warning in Darfur remains integral to my analysis as their overview of the warning-response gap in Darfur speaks to general patterns in the international community’s responses to atrocity warnings. I intend to expand on the general record of response to these warnings later on.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

My research is underpinned by the theoretical framework of *realpolitik*, a German term for the “politics of reality” (Totten, 2017, p. 8). *Realpolitik* is generally employed to discern the motivations driving states’ behaviour relative to other states (Ibid). It refers to an attitude whereby states have interests, rather than friends (Ibid). Accordingly, states work to preserve their interests in a manner that minimizes potential costs to themselves and from which they can

derive the greatest possible advantage (Ibid). Realpolitik suggests that states assess situations according to the implications for state security as opposed to idealistic considerations which could put them at a political or military disadvantage (Ibid). As such, realpolitik is often incompatible with humanitarian concerns given that acting on these concerns could put a state at risk or compromise its interests in the short and long term.

Realpolitik is the apt theoretical framework through which to examine early warning for mass atrocities as it offers an explanation for why states do not adequately respond to such warnings. Humanitarian tragedies such as Rwanda, Darfur and Kosovo generated inadequate responses because states did not perceive these events as threats to their own security (Campbell, 2017, p. 18). As such, the growing acknowledgement that instability within one state can destabilize the entire international system does not provide enough impetus for states to intervene, given that they are not perceived as immediate threats. Despite the increase in humanitarian interventions in recent decades, realpolitik still dictates the character of the intervention and how it will proceed (p. 14). Inter-state interventions are often characterized by “diffidence, sluggishness, a lack of logistical or manpower deployment, and weak UN mandates” (Ibid). The lack of ambition of these interventions reveals states’ unwillingness to commit sufficient resources. In sum, states’ belief that atrocities committed in other states do not pose a threat determines whether or not international interventions are carried out as well as how they are carried out. Realpolitik will frame subsequent discussions about the warning-response gap and political calculi that inform atrocity prevention policies and practices.

Conceptually, my research will be framed by atrocity prevention which will inform my assessment of early warning mechanisms and responses. It is important to clarify what is meant by atrocity prevention; I employ Scott Straus’ definition of atrocities as the four aforementioned

“constituent crimes” which are qualified by a “deliberate infliction of violence and harm against civilians and other non-combatants,” and quantified by their scale and systematicity (Straus, 2015, p. 26). Accordingly, atrocity prevention policies are designed with a desire to “prevent and respond to a distinctive and odious class of events” (Ibid). My analysis will therefore focus primarily on prevention and response as essential aspects of atrocity prevention.

In examining early warning, I employ the “atrocity prevention lens”, an approach to atrocity prevention put forth by Alex J. Bellamy, in order to situate my analysis and evaluate policies. Bellamy defines the atrocity prevention lens as the “infusion of atrocity-specific analysis and perspective into existing policy frameworks and the tailoring of existing policies and activities to address causes of risk and escalation, support sources of resilience, and prepare policymakers and field missions for future crises and contingencies” (2015, p. 62). It is an analytical and convening capability that provides an atrocity prevention “seat” at the policy table (p. 69). Bellamy’s central claim is that adopting an atrocity prevention lens can improve the international community’s capacity to prevent mass atrocities and in turn, circumvent the challenges that have previously hindered preventative efforts.

Operationalizing the atrocity prevention lens involves the following four steps, the first of which is providing an ongoing assessment of the situation regarding the risk of genocide and mass atrocities (p. 73). This involves consistently monitoring the situation and providing policy makers with a “detailed and current” understanding of the local environment (Ibid). The purpose is to foster a sense of situational awareness by identifying potential risks and sources of escalation (Ibid). The second step involves identifying local sources of resilience that preventive policies and programs may support (Ibid). Given that early warning assessments focus primarily on sources of risk, this dimension of the atrocity prevention lens seeks to identify local factors

that may mitigate these risks (Ibid). A focus on resilience involves understanding local institutions, dynamics, groups, individuals and other factors that provide safeguards against mass atrocities, as well as what can be done to bolster these sources of strength (p. 74). Third, the atrocity prevention lens identifies and provides advice about consequences of such programs and policies so as not to inadvertently increase risks or undermine local sources of resilience (p. 75). This step seeks to mitigate risks inadvertently posed by external actors and involves assessments of the consequences of past policies and interventions (Ibid). Finally, it provides information about factors that could trigger or escalate a crisis that may give rise to mass atrocities, as well as conduct preliminary planning for potential contingencies (Ibid). Specifically, the atrocity prevention lens should “sensitize” policy makers as to how certain events may escalate towards mass atrocities so that they can develop and implement strategies to navigate these events without escalating existing tensions (p. 76). The atrocity prevention lens is applicable to existing policies, programs, and activities, making it an apt conceptual framework for my research and an appropriate tool with which to measure the effectiveness of early warning mechanisms and responses.

Methodology

This essay has three empirical sections, each employing different methodologies. The first section – evaluating the effectiveness of early warning mechanisms – reviews assessments of the timeliness and accuracy of these mechanisms in forecasting mass atrocity events. The second section – on how states and other actors respond to warnings – examines the record of response and considers two principal explanations for failures to respond: that states act in their narrow self-interests (a reflection of *Realpolitik*) and that the institutional structures of the UN itself impede effective response. The third empirical section is a case study of Darfur, which

poses focused questions about both early warning mechanisms and the international response in that case. This examination provides a concrete illustration of the shortcomings of both early warning and response highlighted, on a broader scale, in the previous sections.

Early Warning Mechanisms

Having established the foundations of my analysis, I will proceed by discussing early warning mechanisms. The question guiding my analysis is as follows: what are the strengths and weaknesses of early warning mechanisms? It is first important to contextualize the historical foundations of these mechanisms. As previously mentioned, early warning systems are established with the overarching belief that there exists a chain of events leading up to the commission of mass atrocity crimes (Straus, 2015, p. 18). A host of early warning mechanisms exist and have been implemented by NGOs, governments, and international organizations including the United Nations. During his tenure as UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan committed to strengthening the organization's early warning capacity by creating the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide in 2004 (Strauss, 2020, p. 434). With this effort, Annan established a five-point action plan for preventing genocide:

- 1) the prevention of armed conflict, 2) the protection of civilians in armed conflict, 3) judicial action in national and international courts to end impunity, 4) the systematic gathering of information and the set-up of an early warning system, and 5) a commitment on the part of states to take swift and decisive action in a range of areas, including military action, to halt ongoing genocide. (p. 440)

This plan was ultimately expanded on by the first special adviser, Juan E. Méndez, who created a framework for analysis; this framework laid the foundation for Méndez's successors to create common and specific categories of atrocity risk factors (Ibid). Within the UN, information

gathering for early warning is now conducted through the Development Programme, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs, the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme, and Global Pulse (Verdeja, 2016, p. 24). The early 1990s also saw the emergence of early warning efforts led by national governments and NGOs (Harff, 2009, p. 510). Accordingly, early warning is conducted by a multitude of stakeholders across governance levels.

I will consider six contemporary early warning techniques: the UN Framework for Analysis of Atrocity Crimes (UNFAAC), the Early Warning Project, the Political Instability Task Force (PITF) Genocide/Politicide dataset, Targeted Mass Killing (TMK) dataset, The Sentinel Project, and Mass Atrocity Remote Sensing (MARS). It is important to note that these systems do not encompass the entirety of early warning mechanisms available and were chosen to provide an understanding of the types of initiatives being pursued to detect and prevent mass atrocities. After providing an overview of these mechanisms, I will examine their overall effectiveness in conjunction with the atrocity prevention lens and proceed with a general assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary early warning mechanisms.

UN Framework for Analysis for Atrocity Crimes

The UNFAAC outlines eight common risk factors that broadly identify the probability of an atrocity crime occurring: situations of armed conflict or other forms of instability; record of serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law; weakness of state structures; motives or incentives; capacity to commit atrocity crimes; absence of mitigating factors; enabling circumstances or preparatory action; and triggering factors (United Nations, 2014, p. 9). The Framework also identifies six specific risk factors, given that atrocity crimes

also contain particular elements related to the type of atrocity crime (Ibid). For genocide, the factors are intergroup tensions or patterns of discrimination against protected groups; and signs of an intent to destroy in whole or in part (Ibid). For crimes against humanity, the factors are signs of a widespread or systematic attack against any civilian population; and signs of a plan or policy to attack any civilian population. For war crimes, the factors are serious threats to those protected under international humanitarian law; and serious threats to humanitarian or peacekeeping operations (Ibid). Accordingly, the UNFAAC combines both risk factors and risk indicators (p. 6). Monitors and analysts then use the risk factors and indicators to inform their assessment of a particular situation and determine the presence of atrocity risks (Ibid).

Early Warning Project

The Early Warning Project is an early warning system that assesses the risks of mass atrocities around the world by using quantitative and qualitative methods to identify places where atrocity risks are present (Early Warning Project, n.d., para. 2). The Early Warning Project is a joint initiative undertaken by the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Dickey Center for International Understanding at Dartmouth College (Ibid). It generates its statistical risk assessments by focusing on historical cases of mass atrocities to identify patterns that distinguish countries where mass atrocities occurred against others where they did not (Ibid). The Project uses publicly available data to assess the likelihood of mass atrocities in over 160 countries. The process for generating these statistical models is as follows:

1. Identifying historical episodes of state - and non-state-led mass killing; since 1945 for state-led, and since 1989 for non-state-led.

2. Compiling data of potential “predictors” or “risk factors”—i.e., characteristics of countries that are thought to be associated with the likelihood of mass killing in the near future—from existing public sources.
3. Training different statistical algorithms on historical data (1945 to 2015) to identify a model that performs well—predicting onset of mass killing within the training set.
4. Testing alternative models and selecting one that maximizes accuracy (as measured on a new dataset, not the one used for training the model), while still allowing for useful interpretation of the model.
5. Using current data on countries to make forecasts two years into the future (i.e. 2018 data for the 2019-2020 forecasts; 2019 data for the 2020-21 forecasts, etc.); this generates an estimated risk (as a percentage chance of onset of mass killing) for each country, and a corresponding ranking. (n.d., para. 2)

The algorithm employed is a logistic regression model with “elastic-net” regularization with a set of 30 variables (Ibid). Based on the model, aggravating factors in the incidence of mass atrocities include the following elements: large population, lack of freedom of movement for men, high infant mortality rate, inequality in civil liberties, previous mass killings, high battle-related deaths, region (Middle East and North Africa), ethnic fractionalization, political killings that are approved or incited by leaders of government, country age, recent coup attempts, not being a state signatory of “First Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights”, power distribution by social group, repressed civil society, and power distribution by socioeconomic group (para. 3).

PITF Genocide/Politicide data set

The Political Instability (formerly State Failure) Task Force (PITF) is an early warning framework established by researchers at the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland, Monty G. Marshall, Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff. The problem set includes the following distinct types of state failure events: revolutionary wars, ethnic wars, adverse regime changes, and genocides and politicides (Marshall et al., 2017, p. 2). The basic structure of the data is the “case-year” format, meaning, there is a separate case-entry for each additional year of a multi-year episode (Ibid). The annual event records include the following information for each case: country, month and year of onset, month and year of ending (unless ongoing at the end of the update year), type of case, and annual codes on magnitude variables; only the first annual record for each event contains a brief narrative description of the event (Ibid).

Targeted Mass Killing (TMK) dataset

The Targeted Mass Killing (TMK) dataset was established by the Atrocity Forecasting Project and led by professors Benjamin Goldsmith and Arcot Sowmya. It examines atrocities including genocide and politicide through quantitative modelling and is designed to stimulate quantitative work on the analysis and prediction of mass atrocity crimes (Butcher et al., 2020, 1525). TMKs are described as “the direct killing of noncombatant members of a group by a formally organized armed force that results in twenty-five or more deaths in an annual period, with the intent of destroying the group or intimidating the group by creating a perception of imminent threat to its survival” (p. 1528). It is also noted that a targeted group is qualified in terms of their political, ethnic, or religious identity (Ibid). This data set identifies 201 mass atrocity instances between 1946 and 2017 and assesses the “severity, precise start and end dates, perpetrator and target groups, and descriptions of triggering events and episode endings” for each

case (p. 1526). It builds on the work of the Political Instability Task Force (PITF), another quantitative genocide forecasting model through the following techniques:

- (1) clarifying ambiguities and measurement problems associated with intent to destroy specific groups, while maintaining a distinction between mass killing, repression, and terrorism;
- (2) enabling users to customize thresholds of intent and severity for particular research questions, for example, to identify genocide/politicide episodes as a subset of TMK events;
- (3) explicitly and systematically identifying state and nonstate actors as perpetrators;
- (4) identifying attempted episodes of genocide; and
- (5) providing extensive documentation of coding decisions and source material. (Ibid)

The Sentinel Project

The Sentinel Project works to address threats of mass atrocities facing communities around the world through early warning. Its early warning system uses information management and decision support systems to assess why genocides occur; this research is supported by a software program (The Sentinel Project, 2018, para. 1). Its software program relies on information gathering through social media websites and other messaging systems; information management; visualization and dissemination of trends and patterns in situations of concern; and prevention, which can be enacted by using mobile devices to document human rights abuses, warning threatened communities and employing GPS technology to guide at-risk populations to safe areas (Ibid). The Sentinel Project's assessments are generated by technology and sustained through direct cooperation with at-risk communities who then provide input on the Project and its programming (Ibid). It monitors atrocity risks through the "Conflict Tracking System" (CTS), a data visualization program that identifies events by relevant early warning indicators (Verdeja,

2016, p. 26). Its early warning system is employed as a continual process with four key phases that each represent a type of information gathering and analysis; this forms a transparent process that satisfies the information requirements for effective early warning and prevention (Ibid). The four phases are as follows: risk assessment, operational process monitoring, vulnerability assessment, and forecasting (Ibid).

Mass Atrocity Remote Sensing (MARS)

Mass Atrocity Remote Sensing (MARS) is the use of high-resolution satellite imagery analysis to track mass atrocity events (Baker et al. 2014, p. 33). As of the early 1990s, the United States Government has allowed the commercial sale of high-resolution satellite imagery, which has enabled NGOs and international agencies to employ this technology and document mass atrocities (Ibid). Remote sensing can provide unique information about events in non-permissive environments over large areas and across long timeframes, given that regions where mass atrocities occur are typically inaccessible to outside observers including civil society groups and international organizations (Ibid). Academic research institutions, international agencies, and intelligence services within national governments have expressed interest in improving early warning and response techniques and have since employed MARS-type analyses of remote sensing data (p. 34).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Early Warning Mechanisms

Overall, the timeliness and accuracy of these early warning mechanisms is mixed and none are without limitations. Early warning mechanisms generally have a proven track record of identifying high-risk situations even though their predictions are not always precise. While these mechanisms are imperfect, they have previously highlighted areas at higher risk of atrocity crimes despite their shortcomings of precision. By demonstrating reasonable levels of accuracy,

their imperfect predictions do not diminish their overall utility as part of the wider project of atrocity prevention. As such, I argue that a strength of early warning mechanisms is their general capacity to identify some high risk situations.

The UNFAAC has significant merit as an analytical tool given that it recognizes common characteristics of atrocity crimes, including the planning, coordination and resource mobilization required to carry out these crimes, as well as the common and specific risk factors that materialize before such crimes are committed (Dieng and Welsh, 2016, p. 11). Although it is impossible to draw a direct causal link between the presence of risk factors and the occurrence of atrocity crimes, they are rarely committed in the absence of all of the factors identified by the UNFAAC, making it a reasonably accurate analytical tool (Ibid). It is therefore anticipated that through systematic application, the UNFAAC can contribute to alerting stakeholders before risks escalate (Ibid). Similarly, the accuracy of the Early Warning Project's predictive model is measured by its ability to identify the onset of new mass killings and depends on accurately identifying the timing of such events (Early Warning Project, n.d., para. 5). The Project attributes its "lack of precision" to the fact that mass killings are "statistically rare"; as a result, they consider its early warning tool to be a "starting point for further analysis" (Ibid). Accordingly, it is acknowledged that its assessments necessitate subsequent investigation by external practitioners, meaning that it is not a stand-alone mechanism. Regardless, both the UNFAAC and the Early Warning Project present valuable resources for policy practitioners by providing a point of departure for analysis.

The PITF model has also produced accurate forecasts of onsets of genocide and politicide, having predicted 85% of instability onsets globally between 1995 and 2004 (Hendrix and Kang, 2019, p. 1). Although it did not achieve perfect prediction for its forecasts between

2011 and 2015, its true positive rate, the proportion of correctly predicted positives (also referred to as recall or sensitivity) was 50%, while its true negative rate (also referred to as specificity) was 90% (Goldsmith and Butcher, 2017, p. 98). Regardless, the PITF correctly forecasted the following true positives: Syria and Sudan in 2011; Myanmar and Syria in 2013; and Myanmar, Syria and Yemen in 2015 (p. 100). While imperfect in terms of predictive ability, the PITF has a demonstrated ability to identify high risk situations. While the TMK dataset currently only contains retroactive analyses of mass atrocity cases, the model detected 147 onsets of targeted mass killings between 1946 and 2017, revealing its potential to forecast future mass atrocities (Butcher et al., 2020, p. 1537).

The Sentinel Project's innovative use of technology, along with partners on the ground, is said to show promise for generating information for early warning analysis (Verdeja, 2016, p. 26). In a similar vein, MARS' use of satellite imagery has also been useful for forecasting atrocities. In its case study of the war crimes committed in Abyei Town in South Sudan, there were several observable objects detected by analysts using remotely sensed imagery (Raymond et al., 2014, p. 37). These "observables" include vehicles, aircrafts, artillery, military infrastructure, civilian infrastructure, humanitarian infrastructure and transportation infrastructure (p. 37-39). The MARS analysis of the Abyei Town incident demonstrates that MARS can be employed to systematically warn stakeholders about mass atrocity risks (p. 45). In sum, these mechanisms have each demonstrated a clear capacity to generate at least somewhat accurate forecasts and generally show promise as valuable early warning techniques, notwithstanding that their predictive capacity is imperfect.

In order to create more effective early warning systems, it is important to address their shortcomings. Unlike some other mechanisms, the UNFAAC does not draw on quantitative

markers of risks, making it conceivable that their predictions lack in terms of systematicity. Harff argues that early warning systems that rely only on qualitative data cannot produce reliable predictions about whether the presence of risk factors will ultimately degenerate into a mass atrocity (Harff, 2009, p. 509). Quantitative approaches are also more open to testing and falsification and, as a result, some scholars and policy practitioners caution against relying too much on qualitative data and privileging expert knowledge that is largely anecdotal (Verdeja, 2016, p. 24).

Despite employing quantitative methods, the Early Warning Project is equally susceptible to data-related obstacles. The Early Warning Project measures the accuracy of its risk assessments by examining the following factors: how much higher than average risk scores were in the years immediately prior to the mass killings; what proportion of mass killings were identified by the Project's Top-30 list; its ability to correctly forecast atrocities that did occur, and how often it incorrectly forecasted atrocities that did occur (Early Warning Project, n.d., para. 1). The Project's analysis of its accuracy identified the following trends:

- the average risk for years with mass killings (avg = 8% risk) is nearly three times higher than the average risk for years with no mass killings (avg = 3% risk)
- about two of every three (64%) of mass killings onsets since 1994 were captured by our Top-30 list in the two years prior to onset
- 71% of mass killing onsets since 1994 occurred in countries whose risk scores were 4% or higher in the year or two prior to onset
- if we classify countries with risk scores of 4% or higher as "high risk" countries, the model generates twenty "false positives" for every mass killing onset. (Early Warning Project, n.d., para. 4)

As such, the accuracy of its predictions have been mixed.

Notably, the PITF model failed to predict the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011 as well as onsets of instability in both Mexico and China, revealing that the model's predictive power declined significantly in the past decade (Hendrix and Kang, 2019, p. 1). It is also argued that the PITF relies on a problematic definition of genocide. Specifically, the inclusion of the "intent to destroy 'in whole or part' a political or communal group" is said to produce less accurate results (Butcher et al., 2020, p. 1527). This definition is problematic because it assumes that the ultimate intent is to eliminate a group (even in part), which is difficult to achieve (Ibid). The PITF judges the intent to destroy as violence "directed against a political or communal group for longer than six months, resulting in the killing of a 'substantial portion' of that group" (Ibid). As a result, the PITF data set captures episodes of implemented genocide but excludes episodes that were attempted and thwarted by peacekeepers or other interveners (Ibid). They cite the cases of East Timor (1999), Libya (2011), and Côte d'Ivoire (2011), which were at risk of genocide but not included in the dependent variables (Ibid). As such, the PITF underestimates some genocidal risk factors and its composition raises the potential to overlook certain independent variables within its assessments.

While the Targeted Mass Killing Data Set (TMK) sets out to build upon the shortcomings of the PITF, it also has some key limitations. The TMK quantifies a targeted mass killing as "twenty-five or more deaths in an annual period" and describes events with those low death thresholds as "nascent episodes of genocide or politicide" (Mayersen, 2020, p. 96). However, this measure differs from normative conceptions of the scale of genocide or mass atrocities (Ibid). Including smaller events such as these decreases the accuracy of forecasts produced

through this model (Ibid). Models would likely predict these types of events of limited outbreaks of violence as being “major incidents”, thus diminishing the utility of the forecasts (Ibid).

Notably, the Sentinel Project focuses on a small number of cases, meaning its monitoring assessments are not considered broad-based early warning (Verdeja, 2016, p. 27). The Sentinel Project also relies heavily on social media and online sources of information, making it difficult to verify the quality of data as well as its accuracy and relevance to the situation, considering the breadth of available information (Heldt, 2012, p. 22). MARS’ limitations are also attributable to its reliance on technology. In particular, analysts’ assessments are vulnerable to the quality of imagery, temporal resolution, and the level of corroborating non-imagery data available, which determines whether an observable object can be typed and thereby the accuracy of the assessments produced (Raymond et al., 2014, p. 40). Additionally, MARS analysts are faced with a diverse set of potentially relevant data in a variety of languages given its interdisciplinary nature (Ibid). As a result, analyzing this data may necessitate a host of quantitative and qualitative approaches, making it less useful given the time sensitivity of mass atrocities (Ibid). These limitations are also conceivably applicable to the Sentinel Project given that it also relies on satellite imagery to monitor high-risk areas.

Because of their mixed accuracy, early warning systems generally fall short in terms of translating warnings into tangible preventive measures. Scholars have also identified deficiencies within warning systems that contribute to uncoordinated and insufficient responses. In many cases, warnings have been weak in terms of their “specificity, clarity and actionability” (Meyer and Otto, 2016, p. 24). When evaluating these mechanisms against Bellamy’s atrocity prevention lens, it is apparent that they generally provide an assessment of the particular mass atrocity risk factors and foster a sense of situational awareness of the environment in question (Bellamy,

2015, p. 72). The UNFAAC, the Early Warning Project, the PITF and the TMK each foster this situational awareness by evaluating a clear set of risk indicators and how they materialize in a variety of environments. The Sentinel Project and MARS both evaluate atrocity risks with the use of visual observations and advanced monitoring technologies in order to achieve acute awareness of potentially contentious environments. These mechanisms lack, however, in their respective abilities to identify and support local sources of resilience, as well as provide information about factors that could trigger or escalate a crisis. While it is conceivably beyond the scope of these early warning mechanisms, it is also worth noting that they do not provide advice about unintended consequences associated with preventive programs and policies.

A primary weakness of early warning mechanisms is that their effectiveness is hindered by low credibility, including that of warning sources and additional data gathering and data verification challenges. As such, I argue that a central weakness of early warning mechanisms is that their accuracy and timeliness is vulnerable to credibility issues within the warnings themselves. Through their analysis of the following cases: Estonia 1991, Rwanda 1993-1994, Kosovo 1998-1999, Macedonia 1999-2000, Darfur 2002-2004, Turkey/North-West Iraq 2003-2004, and Georgia 2007-2008, Meyer and Otto determine that policy makers expressed low confidence in the warnings generated as well as their capacity to forecast violent conflict (2016, p. 4). The clarity of warnings is further distorted by unclear messaging, specifically the conflation of “warning signs” and “indicators” because warning signs are intangible, while indicators require interpretation and judgment about how a situation will develop in the future (p. 6). While the use of the phrase “warning signs” may raise public awareness about a situation, it is insufficient for prompting action from the relevant decision makers (Ibid). Further, the perception of warning sources characterizes the overall impact of the warnings, consequently,

sources should consider how their messaging will be received by recipients. Generating a response from hierarchical foreign affairs bureaucracies is a challenge as even warners who are confident about their expertise and evidence will not succeed in getting past software filters within the bureaucracies (Ibid). Overall, warning sources will not be given full credence from policy makers unless they are deemed as fundamentally trustworthy, meaning warners should work to establish themselves as credible sources from the outset.

Early warning systems rely on an amalgamation of information from a variety of sources, which are sufficient for the purpose of identifying and tracking cases, however this information is not always appropriately systematically compiled and interpreted (Heldt, 2012, p. 22). Large collections of information exacerbate data verification issues particularly with regard to accuracy and relevance (Ibid). As previously mentioned, early warning systems suffer from imperfect accuracy which can create additional credibility issues (p. 23). New information technologies including social media have also given policymakers the opportunity to observe crises as they unfold (Verdejea, 2016, 28). This surfeit of information increases the challenge of verifying the accuracy and relevance of data; information gathered may be unrepresentative, unverifiable, or wilfully misrepresented (Ibid). While compiling sources and cross-referencing information would likely redress this issue, it is difficult to do so in rapidly changing and often volatile political environments (Ibid). Early warning mechanisms themselves also lack transparency as to how they are designed and used; most organizations publish little information about how their models reach conclusions, which makes it difficult for scholars and policymakers to assess their strengths and weaknesses (Ibid). As such, information on how violence triggers and accelerators are framed, as well as how evidence is interpreted, is necessary so that forecasts are deemed credible by recipients (Ibid). Overall, early warning mechanisms are weakened by

communication-related challenges between sources and recipients as well as obstacles resulting from the abundance of available information.

In order to support effective atrocity prevention, early warnings must also be actionable. Without a mechanism with which to mitigate risks, the utility of early warning for atrocity prevention purposes is diminished (Matveeva, 2006, p. 30). Consequently, I argue that a weakness of early warning mechanisms is that they lack actionability because of their limited capacity to mobilize authorities after atrocity risks have been identified. Bellamy and Lupel refer to this as the “prevention dilemma”, which they describe as the “difficulty of persuading governments and publics to commit attention and resources (political and material) to addressing crises that have not yet arisen” (2015, p. 7). Early warning alerts should be “actionable” in order to translate these warnings into a preventive response (Verdeja, 2016, p. 28). Despite whether or not alerts are timely and accurate, early warning mechanisms often do not generate a comprehensive response plan, thus shrinking the window during which these crimes can plausibly be prevented.

Early warnings are not actionable primarily because of the persistent warning-response gap, wherein the collection and analysis of data is not directly followed by its examination for atrocity prevention purposes at the UN (Bellamy and Lupel, 2015, p. 9). The gap between analysis and utilization is due primarily to the multiplicity of departments analyzing data that could warn of atrocities and their inconsistent mandates (Ibid). This issue is further exacerbated by the “devolved nature” of UN engagement with states where there is a limited field presence, as well as the lack of a defined UN body capable of analyzing information from the field and providing authoritative advice (Ibid). Although the UN generates analyses about future atrocity risks, the construction of its atrocity prevention system makes it difficult to translate these

analyses into actionable alerts. It is worth noting that due to the nature of these crimes, it is impossible to generate highly specific predictions as to when and where violence will occur, as this assumes a scientific level of accuracy that is unattainable (Ibid). The focus, therefore, should not be on perfect forecasting but rather on disseminating credible warnings with a clear framework for pursuing early action. In sum, early warning will be more useful if it can provide decision makers with timely and accurate information such that it can inform policy decisions about how to respond appropriately.

Early Warning Responses

Having discussed early warning mechanisms including contemporary early warning systems and their strengths and weaknesses, I will now proceed by examining early warning responses. The question informing my analysis is: what are the strengths and weaknesses of early warning responses? In this section, I assess the record of responses to early warnings and posit a set of strengths and weaknesses that generally characterize states' responses.

The global atrocity prevention landscape is ever-changing and there remains work to be done to bridge the gap between timely and accurate early warnings and appropriate early responses. It is important to note that successful prevention is measured by what does not happen, given that it is premised on timely predictions and early engagement. This, therefore, complicates the process of evaluating the early response record (Akhavan, 2011, p. 4). Despite the clear progress made towards detecting mass atrocities, it has been difficult for policy-makers to translate ambitious commitments into effective international action (Bellamy and Lupel, 2015, p. 2). Responses to early warnings are often acted upon belatedly rather than proactively, meaning that atrocities have already been committed and violent conflict has escalated before a response was coordinated (Matveeva, 2006, p. 30).

The cases of Sri Lanka, Iraq and Syria all generated insufficient responses from states despite clear warnings from the UN (Bellamy and Lupel, 2015, p. 2). In Sri Lanka, the UN failed to respond adequately to advance warnings from the Department of Political Affairs about potential impending atrocity crimes (Ibid). It also failed to mobilize timely collective action at the beginning of the crisis in Syria in 2011 or prevent attacks carried out by the Islamic State in Iraq (Ibid). As such, the UN has failed to mitigate some atrocity crimes that could plausibly have been prevented. Similarly, it has been argued that the UN's current atrocity prevention regime generally resembles the pre-Rwanda and pre-Srebrenica regime due to the failure to prevent the atrocities committed against the Rohingya in Myanmar (Simon, 2021, p. 186). Some lessons from the Rwandan genocide were applied in this case as observers were not hesitant to label the violence as atrocities, the extent of the violence was widely reported and statements were issued by a multitude of actors (p. 211). However, the UN undertook few concrete preventative measures other than supporting refugee camps in neighboring countries (Ibid). The atrocities committed in Darfur, which will be discussed in greater length in the following section, also mark a widespread failure of the international community to respond appropriately. The international community's poor record of response is attributable to a multitude of factors, among the most significant being the lack of political will exhibited by states and the bureaucratic and structural barriers within the UN's atrocity prevention system.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Early Warning Responses

Despite key limitations within many early warning mechanisms, it is worth noting that the warning-response gap is perpetuated by states' unwillingness to intervene in potential mass atrocity situations. The failure of states to intervene appropriately in Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur is attributable to a lack of political will, as states displayed an unwillingness to "expend blood

and treasure” where their vital national interests were not directly concerned (Akhavan, 2011, p. 2). States perpetuate a culture in which not acting is preferable to intervening in such cases because it is perceived as safer and avoids them running the risk of making a mistake and “losing face” on an international scale (Matveeva, 2006, p. 30). As such, states’ decisions regarding whether or not to intervene revolves around a desire to safeguard their national interests and avoid taking political risks. It is therefore conceivable that early warning and response are not tailored towards the realities of political decision-making and the factors that inform states’ perceptions of mass atrocity risks. Consequently, I argue that one weakness of early warning responses is that they are shaped by the political will of states, which is often lacking in cases where intervention does not serve these states’ own interests.

Bellamy and Lupel highlight that “prevention is political,” in that it is both “enabled and constrained” by politics (Bellamy and Lupel, 2016, p. 5). States “jealously guard their sovereign prerogatives and are sensitive about perceived incursions on their rights or criticisms of their conduct or domestic conditions” and, as a result, are apprehensive about assistance or external efforts to intervene within their jurisdictions (Ibid). The composition of the international community and the overarching significance of state sovereignty creates structural issues for preventing atrocities. These political calculi create a problem in which states assess that their interests are safeguarded by not intervening in such contentious situations (Ibid). The UN has previously struggled to influence powerful states, including the five permanent members of the Security Council (P5), to intervene in potential impending atrocities. Another dimension involves states' desire to prioritize the wellbeing of their own citizens, making them unlikely to commit extensive resources to intervene in atrocity crimes in other countries (p. 6). Supporting

atrocities prevention in other countries often involves a perceived trade-off with domestic objectives and states have historically been inclined to choose the latter.

Insufficient political will accords heavily with the central tenets of *realpolitik*. There is a shortage of political will given that states, specifically powerful Western states, have the power to deploy resources to mitigate atrocities risks in other countries and often choose not to (Campbell, 2017, p. 31). Citing the atrocities in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and Syria, Kenneth Campbell holds that states continue to exhibit insufficient political will despite having codified a commitment to prevent atrocities in the Genocide Convention (p. 32). *Realpolitik* shapes the political will, or lack thereof, of states given that their responses are characterized by an assessment of political benefits (p. 36). States attempt to safeguard political benefits by calculating whether their domestic population will “punish them politically” for a failure to respond and whether this would exceed the cost of not responding altogether (Ibid). In sum, states are primarily driven by *realpolitik* considerations rather than the moral imperative to prevent mass atrocities which, at least in part, explains the persistence of the warning-response gap.

Other researchers contend that institutional limitations and the composition of the UN’s atrocities prevention strategy is another explanation for the international community’s response record. Notably, the UN is a universally legitimate institution that remains “unquestionably the principal institution for building, consolidating and using the authority of the international community” (Mayersen et al., 2011, p. 8). Given its integral role in shaping the global atrocities prevention regime, efforts to prevent mass atrocities continue to focus on capacity building through the UN to respond to these events (Ibid). However, despite this universal legitimacy, its

institutional capacity and vulnerability to political constraints within its membership make early action difficult to put into practice (Matveeva, 2006, p. 30).

The UN system is vulnerable to a series of systemic limitations that impact its ability to coordinate preventive responses. Some of these challenges include a resistance to inter-agency information sharing, a mistrust of quantitative data analysis among policy makers and a fear among member states that enhanced monitoring capabilities will compromise their sovereignty (Matveeva, 2006, p. 41). Additionally the UN's internal bureaucracy and its hierarchical structure have proven to be incompatible with early response due largely to its failure to accommodate the dynamics and motivations that influence state behaviour. In several cases, the UN Security Council has failed to respond appropriately to impending threats of atrocities. As the organ primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council has the capacity for preventing and responding to mass atrocities by issuing resolutions, authorizing peacekeeping operations and military interventions and imposing sanctions (Mayersen et al., 2011, p. 17). However, the cases of Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur are particularly infamous instances of the Security Council's insufficient action (Ibid). The Security Council's veto power is a contentious issue; the failure of all P5 members to reach agreement on appropriate reactive measures and their use of the veto has caused the Council not to respond decisively to early warnings (Mayersen et al., 2011, p. 18). Calls to limit the P5's use of the veto in such cases (called the Responsibility Not to Veto or RN2V) have been advanced by a host of scholars and policy practitioners (Banteka, 2016, p. 392). These calls for reform within the Security Council further reflect the shortcomings of the UN's atrocity prevention system.

In a similar vein, the UN is constrained by finite resources, which further exacerbate the institutional limitations of its atrocity prevention strategy. The issue of limited resources is

compounded by financial austerity; the UN has continually cut its budget and the Secretary-General has asked the entire system to “find savings,” primarily by cutting personnel and reducing the budget for special political missions (Bellamy and Lupel, 2015, p. 4). Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that UN member states have reached their collective capacity to contribute to peacekeeping and other UN missions, which ultimately shapes decisions about preventing “imminent atrocities” in marginal cases, meaning that preventive efforts ultimately rely on resources dedicated to other fields of work (Ibid). There is also no UN decision-making organization devoted to deploying rapid preventive action or that has an incentive to act upon early warnings (Matveeva, 2006, p. 41). Overall, the insufficient allocation of resources for atrocity prevention is another institutional deficiency within the UN system that negatively impacts states’ ability to respond to early warnings.

Notwithstanding these crucial weaknesses, it would be remiss to disregard an important strength of early responses. As mentioned, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of preventive action, however, there have been some relatively successful cases of early responses in recent decades. I argue that a strength of early responses is that they have demonstrated the capacity to mitigate atrocity risk factors in some instances. Accordingly, I examine the following relatively successful cases of early response: Côte d’Ivoire and Burundi.

In the case of Côte d’Ivoire, the death of long-time autocratic President Félix Houphouët-Boigny in 1993 catalyzed a conflict that erupted due to pre-existing ethnic tensions (Akhavan, 2011, p. 26). After Boigny’s death, an economic crisis eroded the clientalist system he had built which then resulted in an extended succession dispute (Ibid). Afterwards, a military coup replaced Boigny’s successor, President Henri Konan Bédié, with President Laurent Gbagbo in 1999 (Ibid). A war eventually began in September, 2002 driven heavily by competing

ideas of nationality (Ibid). The civil war continued to escalate and a campaign of ethnic hate propaganda was introduced on national radio and television (p. 27). These broadcasts incited ethnically motivated crimes including murder, torture, sexual violence and looting by militias (Ibid).

In response, the UN replaced its small political mission with peacekeeping forces (Ibid). The UN Security Council also adopted Resolution 1527 to impose an arms embargo and condemn all human rights violations, focusing specifically on the radio broadcasts that were exacerbating the conflict (Ibid). The UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide also wrote a letter to the UN Secretary-General, expressing his concern about the broadcasts and recommending that the UN expand its troop presence (p. 28). In his letter, the Special Adviser warned that the situation could be referred to the International Criminal Court; the broadcasts stopped after these actions were taken (Ibid). To reiterate, “enabling circumstances or preparatory action” is a common atrocity risk factor identified by the UNFAAC, as well as other early warning frameworks, and manifests in “increased inflammatory rhetoric, propaganda campaigns or hate speech targeting protected groups, populations or individuals”, among other indicators (United Nations, 2014, p. 16). Accordingly, taking actions to stop the broadcasts demonstrates that the UN’s response in Côte d’Ivoire was effective such that it mitigated an established atrocity risk factor.

Burundi is another case of relatively effective early response. Through preventive diplomacy, the country did not descend into genocidal violence in the wake of the Rwandan genocide despite the presence of several key risk factors. Similar to Côte d’Ivoire, ethnic tensions permeate Burundi’s political system, largely due to cleavages among Hutus and Tutsis (Akhavan, 2011, p. 29). In the decades prior to the Rwandan genocide, Burundi experienced a

government-sponsored genocide against Hutu elites as well as additional mass killings and ethnic violence that led to mass displacement (Mthembu-Salter et al., 2011, p. 3). After the Rwandan genocide, international attention on Burundi grew as ethnically based attacks and counter attacks were carried out; multiple actors then focused on brokering a peace agreement (p. 4). Burundi has also experienced long-term economic instability, further exacerbating the situation (Ibid). Despite its contentious circumstances, Burundi benefitted from sustained peace-brokering efforts by regional officials including mediation and civil society engagement which ultimately quelled some pre-existing tensions (Ibid).

Burundi has willingly benefited from international efforts at preventive diplomacy as Nelson Mandela and Julius Nyerere, former Tanzanian president, mediated negotiations to install a transitional government and establish the 2000 Arusha agreement (Akhavan, 2011, p. 29). Howard Wolpe of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars also developed the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) to “help build a socially cohesive, sustainable network of 100 key leaders capable of working across the lines of ethnic and political division in Burundi’s highly polarized society”, as well as “to advance the country’s postwar economic reconstruction” (Ibid). The BLTP successfully advanced diplomatic efforts including adopting a new Burundian constitution, holding multiparty elections, achieving an equitable ethnic balance in the military, socially integrating ex-combatants, advancing transitional justice, strengthening civil society and establishing a 2007 UN peacebuilding mission (Ibid). The BLTP’s response to the situation in Burundi had a positive impact on the country’s trajectory given that it did not experience onsets of genocidal violence at the scale originally anticipated. While the international community’s record of response contains many missed opportunities, the cases of

Côte d'Ivoire and Burundi reveal that some early responses have been effective at circumventing atrocity risks.

When analyzing these responses against the atrocity prevention lens, it is clear that decision makers in both cases provided an ongoing assessment of the situation given that they retained awareness of existing threats as well as potential escalatory factors. In Côte d'Ivoire, stakeholders noted that the growing hate rhetoric communicated through radio broadcasts could escalate tensions, while in Burundi, there was a general awareness that the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, coupled with economic difficulties, could cause raise the threat of violence. In both cases, decision makers also identified local sources of resilience to better tailor preventive efforts to the environment in question. Efforts at preventive diplomacy in Burundi were advanced by Mandela and Nyerere, two influential leaders within the region. In this case, local will to address threats also advanced preventive efforts given that there was no resistance to the mediation and diplomatic initiatives. In Côte d'Ivoire, decision makers also retained awareness of local factors in order to establish appropriate solutions. In particular, checks on executive power as well as the country's international openness meant that the UN, France and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were able to coordinate a response to the violence (p. 26). Like Burundi, the Ivorian government supported a more ambitious peacekeeping mission, further reinforcing the importance of local will in shaping the outcome of preventive responses (Ibid). In sum, these relatively effective responses reveal that coordinated early action has successfully quelled atrocity threats in some cases.

Case Study: Darfur

Having now examined the strengths and weaknesses of both early warning mechanisms and responses, it is valuable to also discuss these findings in conjunction with a case study. I will

discuss the atrocities committed in Darfur, Sudan to broaden my analysis of how early warnings are generated and acted upon. It is worth noting that this case is not officially considered genocide because it lacks the presence of clear genocidal intent (Lopez, 2011, p. 58). However, it still reflects a systemic case of violence against a particular population and has been widely studied within this scholarly community. This case study was chosen because it is a contemporary mass atrocity case; these crimes were largely committed after the establishment of R2P which provides a clear view of how early warning has been operationalized in the context of the current atrocity prevention regime. In analyzing this case, I pose the following questions: how were early warning mechanisms employed in Darfur? I also ask: how did decision-makers respond to these warnings? I begin by providing a brief overview of Darfur and the basic facts of the case. I proceed by discussing how and when the warnings were disseminated and how they were received and acted upon.

Darfur, or “Land of the Fur,” is so named because of its rule led by a royal Fur family (Grünfeld and Vermulen, 2014, p. 51). It is located in the west of Sudan and borders Chad, the Central African Republic and South Sudan (p. 50). Along with the Fur, Darfur is home to the Zaghwa and Masalit, as well as other smaller African groups who have inhabited the area for centuries (Ibid). Arab tribes also inhabit Darfur but they are said to have arrived to the region later than the African groups; regardless, they were present in the region as early as the fourteenth century (Ibid). The diversity of the region is attributable to its location on old trade routes in Africa and the many nomadic groups that traveled into the region (p. 51).

Under colonial rule the British excluded Darfur from central administration due to its remoteness (p. 52). Darfur became susceptible to yearly climatic draughts, disease epidemics and pests and plagues on crops, largely due to the lack of investment in education and healthcare (p.

53). After WWI, a path towards independence from Britain was established, however most of the infrastructure development aid was sent to the Sudanese capital in Khartoum and the surrounding regions (Ibid). This pattern of aid concentrated around Khartoum endured throughout the multiple regime changes and revolutions (Ibid). As a result, local political representation and organization in Darfur was established along tribal lines (Ibid). Sudan experienced a drought in 1984-5 which caused a famine across Africa; death totals in Darfur were exacerbated because of the central government's negligence (p. 53). Its remoteness further exacerbated delays in emergency aid to the region (p. 54).

A military coup in 1989 ushered in the rule of Omar Hasan al-Bashir, who became president in 1996 (Ibid). His regime introduced fundamentalist Islamic custom and law as part of a precedent set by previous governments' attempts to "Islamise" and "Arabise" the country (Ibid). Arabism in Sudan encompasses a cultural movement as well as a strategic political mechanism (p. 59). Northern Sudan and Khartoum view Arabism as synonymous with pride and status and, as a result, the Sudanese government implemented Arabisation practices and attempted to redefine the country's cultural identity (Ibid). The regime also supported Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait, as well as supported the Lord's Resistance Army, the Hezbollah and the Hamas, prompting the US to name Sudan as a "state sponsor of terrorism" (Ibid). Following an assassination attempt on President Mubarak of Egypt, the UN imposed sanctions on Sudan (Ibid).

Under the al-Bashir regime, tribal conflict intensified in Darfur and became "ideologically racist" towards Arab dominance (p. 55). In response, the Sudanese government reorganized regional governance, giving government positions to allied Arabs (Ibid). As violence continued to rise, a secular mixture of Masalit, Fur and Zaghawa mobilized to plan a counter

attack against the central government, which was increasingly working to empower Arab militias (Ibid). This group was known as the Darfur Liberation Front (DLF) and eventually changed its name to the Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) in 2003 (Ibid). While peace processes between the government and Darfur rebels became established, they were largely half-hearted and everyone had begun preparing for war (Ibid). As such, according to Grünfeld and Vermeulen, the primary causes of the atrocities in Darfur include Darfur's remoteness and subsequent neglect from the central government, as well as its high levels of poverty (p. 57). Additionally, Darfur's susceptibility to severe impacts of climate change, which were also neglected by the central government, are attributable to the heightened tensions that proliferated throughout the region (Ibid).

Another important dimension of the Darfur case is the North-South conflict and peace process which was put in motion to end the civil war (Lopez, 2011, p. 62). As mentioned, the Khartoum government adopted Arabization tactics; its attempt to redefine Sudanese society as purely Arab fueled tensions between the North, who supported these policies, and the rest of the country (p. 59). Coupled with the economic disparities and unequal division of resources between the North and the South, the South rose up against Khartoum in the early 1980s (Ibid). The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), along with southern neighbouring countries, fought for a "new but united Sudan" (Grünfeld and Vermeulen, 2014, p. 56). Fighting came to a stalemate in 1995 but peace talks were interrupted by al-Bashir's coup (Ibid). States such as the US, UK, Norway and other African states raised the pressure to continue these dialogues (Ibid). Negotiations focused primarily on self-determination for South Sudan, defining its borders, and dividing oil revenues; a deal was signed in 2005 (Ibid). In

January 2011, a referendum granted the south the ability to secede from Khartoum which ultimately aggravated the situation in Darfur (Lopez, 2011, p. 58).

Having provided an overview of Darfur's history and the development of the conflict, it is important to address the early warning signs and how they were communicated. By 2004, there were two essential early warning signs. The first sign was the "consistency of major human rights abuses, particularly beginning in 1999" (Austin and Koppleman, 2004, p. 19). These abuses included the government's manipulation of the justice system and security forces in order to persecute and oppress the people of Darfur (p. 20). The second sign was the Sudanese government's commission of "blatant war crimes" in 2003 when the air force attacked and demolished hundreds of Sudanese villages (Ibid). Although the desertification and over-farming in the region contributed to tensions between farmers and nomads, the government wholly attributes this to the cause of the conflict while disregarding other factors (p. 21). NGOs (such as Amnesty International and International Crisis Group) say this is an inaccurate assessment (Ibid). The atrocities committed in Darfur were brought about by a government strategy of Arabisation in an effort to alter the demography of the region and the government's effort to reward the nomadic communities, which served as militia (p. 21). While the precise start date of the conflict is debated, it is said to have begun in conjunction with the emergence of the Darfur Liberation Front (DLF) who claimed responsibility for an attack on a military garrison in Golo on February 26, 2003 (Grünfeld and Vermeulen, 2014, p. 59).

Information about the threat of mass atrocities in Darfur was publicly available by 2003; this information was disseminated by NGOs including Amnesty International and ICG (Grünfeld and Vermeulen, 2009, p. 229). States including the Netherlands, as well as international organizations including the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (OCHA)

were also aware of the situation (Ibid). By 2004, the United States and the European Union had made statements about the situation in Sudan, signifying their knowledge of the atrocities in Darfur (Ibid). While warnings had been disseminated in 2003, the Security Council had still not discussed the issue and between 2003 and September of 2004, the Security Council had not yet made a decision about how to prevent escalation beyond the human rights abuses that had already been committed (Ibid).

In February 2003, Amnesty International issued a press release that warned of the situation in Darfur and its potential to devolve into a civil war; it also stressed the subordination of the conflict to the North-South process (Grünfeld and Vermeulen, 2014, p. 67). Amnesty International called for a Commission of Inquiry by the UN or the African Union (AU) (Ibid). In its initial press release, it addressed the “targeted nature” of attacks against the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa groups (Ibid). This press release marks the first early warning message issued by an NGO. Another timely early warning was issued by Gerhart Baum, the Special Rapporteur on the situation in Sudan (p. 68). Baum’s report marks one of the first authoritative warnings of a potential genocide in Darfur and details the flawed nature of Darfur’s justice system (Ibid). He notes the “serious deterioration of the situation with a high potential of destabilizing the country” (Ibid). He also cites sources within Darfur that reported attacks against civilians, as well as the targeting of local tribes, such that the government was accused of implementing a policy of ethnic cleansing to eliminate African tribes from Darfur (Ibid). Baum also reaffirmed Amnesty International’s call to establish an independent Commission of Inquiry to examine the situation (Ibid). NGOs and humanitarian agencies, including ICG, the Holocaust Memorial Museum, Médecins Sans Frontières issued warnings about the situation in Darfur between 2003 and 2004; Amnesty International also continued to issue periodic warnings (p. 70). Warnings from NGOs

and humanitarian agencies were coupled with warnings from media outlets, including Agence France Press and the New York Times (Ibid). In sum, warnings about the atrocities in Darfur were issued in a timely manner and accurately depicted the extent of the violence.

While early warning was provided in this case, the international response was insufficient for mitigating the conflict. The international community's response to the conflict in Sudan reflects stakeholders' inability to address the underlying political causes of the situation (p. 83). NGOs, international organizations, and state governments responded to the situation in an effort to address the humanitarian crisis, as well as used quiet diplomacy to put pressure on the Sudanese government (Ibid). However, the overall response was insufficient because policy makers were reluctant to disrupt the ongoing North-South negotiations; this also contributed to a reluctance to put the conflict on the Security Council's agenda (Ibid). Austin and Koppelman hold that the international community was privy to the following instruments in 2003 regarding the conflict in Sudan:

- Full and open reporting of the atrocities, released in public
- Dedication of significant, new analytical resources to the problem
- Production of fine-grained analyses for internal use, laying out the motivations of the perpetrators and canvassing both incentives and sanctions/punishments that may affect their individual calculus
- An immediate calling of the UN Security Council
- An immediate calling of the relevant regional organisation
- Immediate application of strong targeted sanctions and punishments against both national level and local level perpetrators

- Declaration that until all violence stops, all formal contact with the perpetrators by international, governmental or commercial interests will be prohibited
- A plan for rapid escalation of application of the measures
- Development or review of contingency plans for military intervention by an international peace force. (Austin and Koppelman, 2004, p. 28)

Despite this set of options available to the international community, no action had been taken as late as June 2004 that may have compelled the perpetrators to stop committing the atrocities (Ibid). Austin and Koppelman stress that the perpetrators had “every reason to believe that the major powers and the major international organizations would not act against them (Ibid).

The first “concrete” action was taken in the June 2004 UNSC Resolution 1547, which addressed the North-South peace process; the resolution mentioned “bringing an immediate halt to the fighting in Darfur” (Grünfeld and Vermeulen, 2009, p. 230). In July 2004, Resolution 1556 imposed an arms embargo on the Sudanese militias, as well as threatened the government of Sudan with sanctions if it did not disarm the Janjaweed, an Arab militia in Sudan, within 30 days (Ibid). Sanctions were briefly removed after a twelve-point action plan for Darfur was established, however the situation rapidly worsened and the UNSC reacted with a resolution to establish a commission of inquiry to investigate whether “genocide” was an appropriate term to describe the situation (Ibid). The threat of sanctions was not reinstated because of the focus on the North-South peace process; the Sudanese government exploited the fears of other states that an intervention in Darfur would jeopardize the completion of the North-South Sudanese civil war (Ibid). The Sudanese government succeeded in obstructing any interference which ultimately resulted in the diminished international willingness to act (p. 231). Sudan’s success in this regard is also, in part, attributable to Russia and China’s voting patterns within the UNSC (Ibid).

Experts also argue that the UN missed an opportunity to declare a no-fly zone in Darfur and fully deploy United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) forces in the region to protect civilians (p. 232).

The African Union was another stakeholder that attempted to intervene in Darfur (Taha, 2009, p. 67). However, the AU's influence was limited due to resource constraints as well as to interference from regional entities such as Chad and Eritrea (Ibid). The AU established a small monitoring mission in Darfur in 2004; the mission consisted of 60 monitors and 300 troops, which grew to 7,000 troops in the following years (Ibid). The troops failed to stop atrocities from occurring in Darfur given their limited funding and capacities, as well as because AU missions are designed to observe rather than proactively protect civilians (p. 69). The Arab League also expressed concern over the crisis in Darfur but their intervention was as ineffectual as well (p. 70). The Arab League rejected sanctions or external military intervention as a response to the atrocities in accordance with the Sudanese government's stance on the situation (Ibid).

The insufficient response to the crisis in Darfur reflects a significant gap between the early warnings provided and the actions taken by decision makers. It is useful to apply the atrocity prevention lens to analyze the particular shortcomings of the international response in this case. To reiterate, the atrocity prevention lens involves infusing atrocity prevention into policy frameworks by addressing risk factors, sources of resilience and preparing policy makers and field missions for future related incidents (Bellamy, 2015, p. 62). Based on the international response, it is clear that policy makers did not address the primary risk factors nor the underlying causes of the crisis. In particular, policy makers largely assumed that the situation in Darfur could be mitigated through humanitarian aid and without examining the political causes of the situation (Grünfeld and Vermeulen, 2014, p. 95). Instead, the conflict was viewed as an

“inevitable civil war” or “recurrent tribal conflict” rather than as atrocity crimes perpetrated by the Sudanese government (Ibid). The result of framing the situation as a humanitarian crisis or civil war was that the urgency to act was diminished, as was the potential to address the root causes of the conflict.

As previously mentioned, political considerations have the propensity to impede responses to atrocity warnings. Darfur exemplifies the way realpolitik patterns of behaviour shape states’ responses to mass atrocities. Early reactions to the situation reveal efforts to coordinate a coherent multilateral response to the violence were largely non-existent, specifically because of states’ unwillingness to disrupt the North-South negotiations (Grünfeld and Vermeulen, 2014, p. 92). In particular, the US, UK and Norway, the “Troika countries”, had invested heavily in the North-South negotiations in order to settle the conflict and, as a result, feared that too much pressure on Khartoum to mitigate the crisis in Darfur would jeopardize the negotiation process (Ibid). Not achieving an agreement would have been costly for the Troika countries given the “prestige” associated with their involvement as third parties in the negotiations, as the agreement was anticipated to be a “once-in-a-generation diplomatic breakthrough” (p. 94). Overall, Darfur reveals the pre-eminence of political will in influencing states’ responses.

As mentioned, another weakness characteristic of responses to mass atrocities is the UN’s institutional limitations. The UN’s ineffectual response to the situation in Darfur is attributable to the bureaucratic culture and inflexible rules within its atrocity prevention system (p. 97). The UN Secretariat and Secretary-General were reluctant to establish any concrete policy recommendations and neglected to make use of their ability to refer the situation to the Security Council (Ibid). The UN Secretariat took an overly cautious approach and were thus unable to

compel member states to intervene in Darfur (Ibid). This approach is attributed to a fear of being too “activistic” and can also be explained by a cautious bureaucratic culture whereby it is less costly to ignore warnings and take minimal action, as it reduces expectations of future action (p. 98). There was a concern within the UN bureaucracy that, had the Secretary-General taken a more aggressive approach, this would have led to more robust proposals calling for action within the UN which was seen as suboptimal given that its capacity was already “overstretched” (Ibid). Another institutional deficiency that impeded the UN’s response was its inflexibility of rules and procedures. Given that the UN initially viewed the situation in Darfur as a humanitarian crisis, the primary focus was on providing aid rather than on addressing the political causes of the conflict, which further delayed the UN’s response (Ibid). In sum, the state response to the atrocities in Darfur reveals that realpolitik tendencies shaped the course of the intervention as well as exposed the UN’s limited ability to respond to mass atrocities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, I have discussed the strengths and weaknesses of early warning mechanisms and responses. With regard to strengths, I identified that early warning mechanisms have a proven track record of identifying high risk situations. By examining six distinct early warning mechanisms, I demonstrated that each of these techniques has a proven capacity to accurately detect risk indicators of mass atrocity crimes. I also identified two cases, Côte d’Ivoire and Burundi, to illustrate some effective instances of early response to illustrate that prior interventions have had relative success in de-escalating high risk situations. My analysis reveals that the primary weaknesses constraining early warning mechanisms are credibility issues and their limited ability to prompt preventive action once risks have been identified. Moreover, my analysis revealed two key weaknesses within states’ responses to early warnings: insufficient

political will and shortcomings resulting from the UN's atrocity prevention system. Having established this set of strengths and weaknesses, I contextualized these findings within the case of Darfur which revealed that, while warnings in this case were timely and accurate, the international response was insufficient and ultimately ineffective to prevent the situation from escalating. The above discussion was framed by the theory of realpolitik and drew heavily on Bellamy's atrocity prevention lens to both contextualize political decision making processes and evaluate contemporary atrocity prevention policies, respectively.

Through these strengths and weaknesses, there are some discernible ways that early warning mechanisms and responses can plausibly be improved to support better preventive action. As mentioned, many early warning systems have a demonstrated track record of identifying high risk situations and, as such, there is strong potential for establishing more precise and effective early warning systems. Based on my analysis, early warning techniques can be improved by addressing credibility issues within the warnings themselves as well as by enhancing their ability to prompt preventive action in accordance with the alerts raised.

Addressing the credibility problem will likely involve changing the perceptions of sources, crafting high-quality warning messages and using appropriate communication channels. Per Meyer and Otto, the response generated by recipients of early warnings depends significantly on the relationship between the warning source and the decision-makers receiving the warnings (Meyer and Otto, 2014, p. 212). Warnings should therefore take into account a recipient's worldviews, interests and the policy instruments at their disposal in order to cultivate a stronger relationship (Ibid). Warnings should also be devoid of uncertainty and make use of the communication channels available to ensure their messages reach the intended recipient (p. 209). Research suggests that direct, interpersonal communication provides the best chance of warnings

being understood, given attention and ultimately accepted (p. 210). Given the breadth of available information, navigating this credibility issue may also require additional mechanisms for gathering and verifying data to better filter through unreliable information.

Additionally, improving early warning necessitates more actionable frameworks to translate alerts into tangible responses. Establishing an actionable early warning system means that a clear course of action must be prescribed by warners to coordinate a preventive response. Navigating the actionability issue may necessitate a greater focus on analyses at the local level. Based on the above analysis, it is apparent that contemporary early warning systems lack in support for local sources of resilience as an essential pillar of the atrocity prevention lens. Per Bellamy, the project of “ending mass atrocities once and for all” will primarily be achieved internally within states themselves, meaning that preventive efforts should be attuned to local circumstances (Bellamy, 2015, p. 65). As a result, timely decision-making is contingent on providing actionable information about local escalation and potentially triggering events to decision makers (Leaning, 2016, p. 104). Additionally, making timely decisions will involve supplying relevant information to enable the assessment of rapidly developing circumstances at the local level (Ibid). Warnings should also be supplemented by proposed policies developed with an acute awareness of the situation and additional possible escalatory factors. Overall, a greater awareness of local data and circumstances may raise the possibility that warnings are acted upon in a timely manner.

In terms of early response, the historical record reveals that responses produced by external entities are sorely lacking in their ability to spur preventive action. This inaction is underpinned by realpolitik patterns of behaviour wherein states perceive intervening in mass atrocity situations as a direct threat to their national interest. Given that these behaviours are

shaped by overarching international norms, the impetus to respond may be strengthened by changing the political calculus of atrocity prevention. States are not often guided by the moral imperative to prevent mass atrocities given that they have historically exhibited low political will to intervene in such cases. However, when states perceive atrocities in other countries as threats to their own security or interests, they may be more inclined to intervene, meaning that systemic changes are needed to spur effective prevention. It is also worthwhile to address the persistent negativity bias in atrocity prevention literature as most analyses detail missed opportunities, wrong steps taken and the consequences of inaction (Meyer and Otto, 2014, p. 212). A greater focus on cases of successful prevention may change the political calculus of decision making by changing the collective mindset that responding to early warnings can actually yield positive outcomes.

In a similar vein, early warnings provide valuable analytical and advocacy functions and help raise awareness about atrocity risks (Verdeja, 2016, p. 28). These mechanisms have the capacity to alert members of civil society about impending atrocities who, in turn, are able to mobilize and lobby policy makers to take action and respond to high-risk situations. It is through their lobbying capacity that early warnings can prompt action from policy makers (Matveeva, 2006, p. 31). The atrocities in Darfur further illustrate the public advocacy utility of early warning mechanisms as civil society's involvement in Darfur was the "crucial catalyst for action" in this case (Ibid). While established patterns of behaviour have made generating political will difficult, it is not impossible.

Finally, early responses can be improved through reforms to the UN's atrocity prevention architecture. Some possible reforms proposed by David J. Simon would involve the UN raising the cost of not cooperating with investigative commissions and fact-finding missions; "these

missions should be assumed to be operating on good faith, and thus should be allowed unfettered access to conflict zones and relevant individuals in the course of their work” (Simon, 2021, p. 186). In cases of non-cooperation, countries should face sanctions that involve limitations to their sovereignty (Ibid). Creating more stringent compliance mechanisms may contribute to redressing some aforementioned challenges characterizing inter-state interventions.

The UN is also structured such that atrocity risks are addressed in an ad hoc fashion, meaning that a gap exists between how the UN is expected to respond, the commitments its member states espouse and what the organization is configured to do (Bellamy and Lupel, 2015, p. 18). Bellamy and Lupel recommend what is, in my view, a viable solution: a comprehensive UN strategy for atrocity prevention (p. 19). First, the proposed strategy would establish a more comprehensive approach to early warning and assessment that involves identifying appropriate forms of response (Ibid). Second, it would provide guidance on how the UN can mainstream atrocity prevention into its daily work and integrate prevention concerns into the planning processes (Ibid). Third, it would provide guidance on how to determine at what times atrocity prevention should be prioritized (Ibid). Fourth, it would provide guidelines on how the organization can improve its engagements and partnerships to respond to emerging threats (Ibid). Finally, it would give advice on the most appropriate configurations for the UN’s presence in countries experiencing atrocity crimes (Ibid). A comprehensive organization-wide strategy could conceivably improve the organization’s ability to respond to atrocity crimes.

Overall, my analysis presents multiple implications for students and scholars of international relations. It is clear that contemporary early warning systems possess some key limitations which have the potential to undermine the quality of the alerts that they generate, which in turn can undermine the quality of states’ responses. Additionally, states’ responses are

limited by institutional constraints and shaped significantly by cost-benefit analyses. Finally, preventing mass atrocities and closing the warning-response gap necessitates coordinated efforts between stakeholders across governance levels, as well as matching ambitious commitments with ambitious actions.

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