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## **A Political Early Warning - Response System to Address Global and Regional Threats\***

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# **A Political Early Warning - Response System to Address Global and Regional Threats**

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## **Introduction**

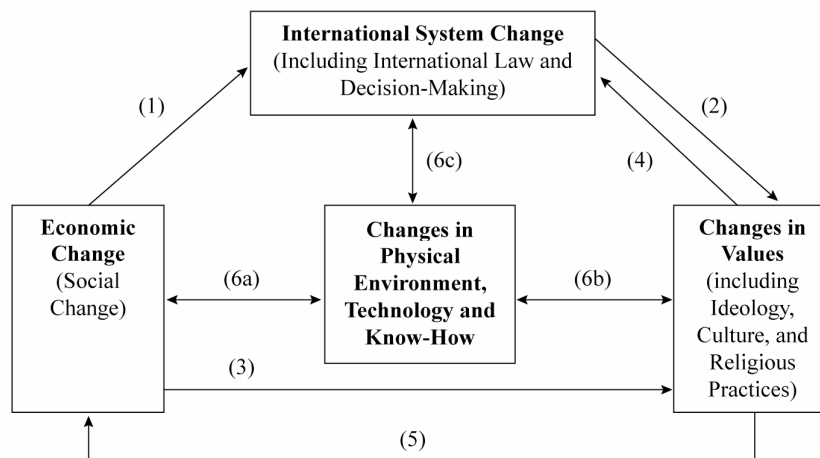
In this essay I discuss how the international community could conceptualise, understand and react to global and regional threats. The recent United Nations' (UN) High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, and other world commissions, have outlined the increased threats to humanity in the 21st century, as also discussed briefly in this article. In relation to that I first present a simple framework to assess the trends of the future with illustrative examples of its application. Secondly, I discuss how this framework could be more systematic, or quantified, based on the history of similar efforts in economic, social, environmental and political fields. Finally, I present a tentative global response system, based on the framework, to react to emerging threats to the international community in the years and decades to come.

## **Conceptual Framework**

We usually approach the future in an intuitive way. Our implicit mental models are not made explicit and we tend to change the variables of this perceptual lens from time to time. The results of an ever-moving mental environment better support – we tend to think unconsciously – our secret agendas, political preferences, hidden or pronounced values and moods of the day. If this is part and parcel of the art and science of the future it reduces its credibility and claim to be taken seriously in the field of research and analysis.

I believe we should reduce this haphazardness by making explicit the inherent assumptions, variables and relations we use. I am proposing here a generic conceptual framework of analysis for assessing future trends, globally and regionally. An overall framework could help us to formulate our questions about the future in a more credible and comprehensive way than before. Furthermore, a relatively simple framework as proposed here could assist in reducing the complexity of the future to manageable means.

First, let us take a look at the figure below. Its major parameters and relations could help us to better understand the forces shaping the future:



**Figure 5.1 A simple framework to analyse the future: relations between economic, systemic, environmental and ideological change**

In order to discuss the future we have to be speculative. It is best to do this in an economic and transparent way, and thus a more credible and useful way for most people, by applying only a relatively few key concepts and relationships. If we can play only with a limited number of categories this increases the usefulness of the framework as everyone can use it,

experiment with it and test it in practice. An overly complicated model tends to confuse rather than illuminate.<sup>1</sup>

A central argument here is that the parameters and relations described in figure 5.1 – economic change in key countries and regions; ideological change in the international community; international systemic change; and change in physical environments including advances in communications, educational systems and technology – provide a useful evaluation framework for assessing the future. It should be powerful enough to explain major trends and their expected interactions: what has happened during previous decades, what is happening at the moment and what will happen if such trends are described in broad terms.

Key questions in using the framework are: what are the units of its application, what is the level of analysis and what are the actors involved: a state, a regional or intergovernmental agency, an international or non-governmental organization, a corporation, a network? The framework is meant to be all-encompassing, and still heuristic – and thus useful for creating a global early warning-response system as later explained in this essay. To specify the level of analysis or a specific actor is not necessary at this broad conceptual level. Rather, it is the combined effect of all actors which makes the biggest difference. Of course, when the framework is used for a given purpose actors should be identified. In the examples that follow the country level is mostly used as a unit of analysis. As many futurologists see a network emerging as a more powerful unit of analysis than a nation-state, the framework could easily be adopted for network-based scenarios as necessary.

The framework is not a theory in a strict scientific sense of the word but a pre-theory, a conceptual model. As shown later in the paper this is enough for our purpose, based on

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<sup>1</sup> The original version of this model was presented in my 1990 Ph.D. dissertation *Leadership and Reform: The Secretary-General and the UN Financial Crisis of the late 1980s*, published by Kluwer Law International in 1995, The Hague, pp. 252 – 253. In order to explain the repeated financial crises of the World Organization, and predict them in the future, I created a comprehensive model of all the variables and relations affecting the financial situation of the UN. The only new variables in the model in this essay are the changes in physical environment, technology and know-how.

historical evidence, to create a new response system for monitoring and responding to global and regional threats. In the longer run, however, a more sophisticated theory for global monitoring and reaction could be developed.

### *Examples of the Use of the Conceptual Framework*

The section that follows gives examples of some tentative assumptions about the future based on this framework. It then describes factual situations in the world of yesterday, today and its future by outlining some of the major global and regional threats associated with interactions between the variables of the framework. The test of the usefulness of the framework is:

1. Whether it helps in understanding world problems in a comprehensive, interrelated manner;
2. Whether it leads us to think about the key variables and their relations, or chain reactions, in a way which we would not be intuitively inclined to do;
3. Whether it could be used as a checklist of the most pertinent variables and their relations in order to make a reliable analysis of future trends; and
4. Whether it could provide a useful agenda for the global and regional monitoring of trends, threats and their required responses by decision-makers.

I use selected examples to illustrate the use of the framework. Many of them are taken from the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change Secretary-General Kofi Annan established in 2003 (UN 2004). These 16 wise men and women, and its research secretariat, represent the thinking of the United Nations about the future challenges facing the world at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many of its findings were reiterated in the Secretary-General's own report *In Larger Freedom* (Annan, 2005) and many, but not all, were included subsequently by the heads of State and Governments at the 2005 World Summit Outcome document approved in September 2005 (UN General Assembly 2005b).

Another person might describe the facts inside each box and along each arrow in figure 5.1 differently than is done here. The point is not to make a case through the power of facts but rather to illustrate the usefulness of the framework. Variations between the facts while still using the same framework will provide another useful analysis. A case made in the last section of this essay is that we need a relatively simple conceptual framework in order to create a systematic early warning-response system for global monitoring. Better data will follow automatically – if history is our guide – when a proper framework is first created. But a long term goal should indeed be the creation of a more standardized framework at the international level for global reporting that will ultimately make the collection of the data more systematic and reliable, as explained in more detail later.

The future direction of the relations of the boxes in figure 5.1, linked by the arrows, is argued to be developing along the following lines:

**Arrow 1, Economic Change<sup>2</sup> in Relation to International Systemic Change.** *Will Emerging Economic Powerhouses and Regions Press for a Larger Role in the World's Political Decision-making?*

*The Hypothetical Assumption of Trends*

Paul Kennedy (1987), among others, has provided arguments on the predominance of the economic base in determining the relative power of nations in the world system. Those great powers that overstretch their reach and dominance will eventually shrink. The changes taking

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<sup>2</sup> Social change, such as caused by migration or the dramatic outbreak of infectious diseases, is an additional layer in this box. It will affect economic change directly, and vice versa, but also have an impact on other variables in the framework. It is not taken, however, as an independent variable because we wish to keep the framework simple. Another assumption is that economic change is a more powerful variable than social change in explaining future trends. But if reality proves otherwise the framework could be changed accordingly. Theoretically, international economic, financial and trade laws, standards and regulations also affect economic development (a feedback loop from international systemic change to economic change) but these relations are not considered the most important ones in understanding the future and are not discussed here.

place in national and regional economies will gradually affect the whole international system<sup>3</sup> and, over time, the global international system will evolve to reflect the multipolar character of world relations and their economic base. Multipolarity and economic interconnectedness also mean more complex international relations in which no major actor can totally dominate the world political scene. Regional actors might, through economic integration, also strengthen their roles in the world system.

Are the changes in national economic variables increasing the political power of some countries and regions in the international system in today's world when using the nation-state as a unit of analysis? Are we moving away from political unipolarity to multipolarity and increased multilateralism based on the economic performance of the superpowers of the future?

#### *The Exploration of Facts*

A good example of the evolving relationship of the two variables – economic vs. political – is the strengthened relative economic power of Japan and Germany and how this new role is reflected in the past, present and future international system. Both countries have been convinced since the early 1990s that their economic world power has increased to the level which should entitle them a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. However, the Council is not an economic institution but the most influential political body in the world according to international law and the UN Charter. Economic power has to be recognized in the political system of the world, Japan and Germany seem to argue.

In fall 2004 and spring 2005 Japan and Germany teamed up with Brazil and India – rising economic and political powerhouses in the developing world – to make a joint effort to

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<sup>3</sup> The international system refers here to the international order that was first created by the League of Nations and then more conclusively in San Francisco in 1945.

propose a package deal before the World Summit in September 2005 in the aftermath of the proposals of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel (UN 2004). The High-level Panel had suggested that Security Council decision-making should be reformed so that the representations of those that 'contribute' most to the United Nations should be substantially increased. Japan has been for a long time a top contributor to the UN regular budget – 19.5 per cent – after the U.S., 22 per cent, and Germany at 8.7 per cent close to the top. From the permanent members Russia pays only 1.1 per cent and China 2.1 per cent and the shares of the U.K. (6.1 per cent) and France (6.0 per cent) are below Japan's and Germany's percentages (UN Secretariat 2005).

The efforts of 'the Group of Four' – as they were called – failed in summer 2005 but similar efforts will most likely be tried in the future. Most analysts think that it was not the U.S. who blocked the reform but the Africans who could not agree on joint candidates for the permanent members from their continent. The Group of Four – which suggested two permanent members for Africa – needed their votes for the reform in the General Assembly. As enough votes for the proposal were not assured, the effort was not pursued to the end in 2005. A new struggle might still lie ahead as some Japanese Parliamentarians have threatened to cut the country's funding to the UN and there is considerable uneasiness among the Japanese that they contribute much to the UN budget without adequate political representation.

Another example of the economic-political nexus is China's rising economic power which has brought about a clear increase in its political influence in world affairs. The U.S. has recently made major political efforts to contain and modify China's influence in Asia (Perez 2006). China and other Asian states have been the bankers of the U.S. trade deficit which makes the U.S. and China more interdependent economically, as well as politically. The potential vulnerability of new global-regional financial arrangements between American and Asian economies could be a major threat for future financial relations within the world,



affected as much by political as well as financial considerations. (*A Grand Strategy to Reinvigorate US Leadership* 2005)<sup>4</sup>.

The increased multipolarity in the world system is demonstrated by the fact that, although the U.S. has maintained its military superiority the other economic centres in the world – China, Japan and the EU in particular – have forced the U.S. to take into account the wishes of other major global economic players. In the 2005 reform effort of the Security Council, although the U.S. was less than enthusiastic about the reform in general – as an enlarged Council will reduce or at least complicate its major influence in the body – it had to back Japan’s bid for the reform. Earlier the U.S. had been a supporter of Germany’s permanent membership as well but Germany’s initial stand on the Iraq war caused at least a temporary suspension of American support.

Italy has opposed the permanent membership of Germany and many Asian countries have been reluctant to give such a membership to Japan. A proposal to create a joint European permanent seat for the EU, as a compromise, has been opposed by France and the U.K. But a more democratic and regionally representative Council might be one of the trends in future reform efforts, an issue we return to later in this essay.

Regionalism was a major trend at the San Francisco Conference in 1945 in order to oppose globalism or universalism, which was seen as a less ‘democratic’ approach to international affairs as it granted veto powers to the Security Council for the winners of the Second World War. (Graham and Felicio 2006, Schlesinger 2003)<sup>5</sup>. There are signs of its gradual re-emergence as a major factor in the international system based on the economic integration of regions and subregions. A number of previously solely economic unions such as the EU, the

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<sup>4</sup> ‘In 2005 Stanley Foundation Strategy for Peace Conference, noting the extraordinary degree of US interdependence with China, a participant said the two were locked into “mutually assured depression” ’ (*A Grand Strategy to Reinvigorate US Leadership* 2005).

<sup>5</sup> On monitoring regional integration, see <[www.cris.unu.edu](http://www.cris.unu.edu)>.

Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have transformed into political organs exerting influence both in the regions and – in the case of the EU in particular – in the world.

**Arrow 2, International Systemic Change in Relation to Ideological Change.** *Increased Economic Multipolarity Requires Better Coordination but Multilateral Measures Have to Bring about Credible Results: Will the UN's and the Regional Agencies' Ideologies Change Accordingly?*

*The Hypothetical Assumption of Trends*

As political and economic factors are more intertwined than before – partly as a result of multipolarity and economic interconnectedness – they provide new breeding grounds for conflicts. The end of the Cold War meant the re-emergence of many regional conflicts as the only remaining superpower was unwilling or unable to create Cold War types of constraints for local disputes. Regional threats increasingly require preventive and management efforts by actors other than the big powers. These new managers might be emerging economic powers, middle powers, regional agents and international organizations, or influential non-governmental organizations like the Carter Centre, former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari's Conflict Management Initiative (CMI) and the Community of Sant'Egidio. The existing superpower, the U.S., no longer has such a unilateral, bilateral or multilateral leverage as before. The UN, on the other hand, has come under pressure to do more and do it more effectively.

At the same time, as the ideological and cultural climate in the world changes as a result of systemic change, it puts more stress on multilateralism and on related values in order to

respond to increased global multipolarity.<sup>6</sup> Values will gradually change accommodating the need for better international coordination and crisis management. This puts even more pressure on UN management reforms. Regional organizations, such as the AU and OAS, and intergovernmental organizations, such as NATO, have to deliver better results as well.

### *The Exploration of Facts*

The UN could be seen as one of the key managers of the international system although by far not the only one. Its political activities and scope of assistance to member states have clearly increased over the years. Any new values and ideological changes in the world will also affect the leadership and management of the World Organization.

The recent criticism of the management of the United Nations – coming mostly but not exclusively from the Americans – could be seen in this light.<sup>7</sup> As a result of a gradual relative power change in the international system the U.S. needs more than ever before the UN as a global or regional manager of conflicts and other problems that the U.S. does not want to handle, as well as on occasion, to legitimize its actions. But if the UN is given more important tasks it has to be more efficient, transparent and accountable; it has to be a more credible conflict and world issues manager than before.

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<sup>6</sup> Values and culture are related: values create a pattern of behaviour in a society which could be called a specific 'culture' in that society. A pattern of coherent values forms an ideology. Values in this essay are deeply-held beliefs and normative standards for behaviour.

<sup>7</sup> One of the strongest criticisms comes from Claudia Rosett, a journalist in residence with the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. She says: 'Now the UN, in contravention of its own charter, is rapidly evolving into something larger, more corporate, and more menacing: a predatory, undemocratic, unaccountable, and self-serving vehicle for global government... Unwieldy, gross, inefficient, and incompetent...' (Rosett 2006). For some critics, whatever the UN has done or will do is probably analysed from this perspective. This criticism could be seen as an illustration that the UN has become politically more important and, on the other hand, also a creator of economic activity of tens of billions of dollars. As the UN has been given more tasks, its expanded reach provides more employment for its staff, consultants, vendors and other businesses benefiting directly or indirectly from the UN activities, as well as creating more jobs for its proponents (like the staff of national UN Associations all over the world) and some, although still very few, for its critics. The larger the organization is, the more opportunities it also provides for corruption and mismanagement.

But it is not only the U.S. that requests changes in the UN's management. The whole international community needs a new and better UN as the number of threats to international peace and security are more severe than ever before and have become manifold. Whoever the key managers of regional threats and world problems are, they should be internally managed more effectively, more competently. The High-level Panel reflected upon this challenge and identified the following threats (UN High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change 2004):

1. Economic and social threats, including poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation;
2. Inter-state conflict;
3. Internal conflict, including civil war, genocide and other large-scale atrocities;
4. Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons;
5. Terrorism; and
6. Transnational organized crime.

These are no small challenges and the Panel concluded that the UN has to reform itself to be able to tackle the threats. These issues were the subject of major debates at the 2005 World Summit. One ensuing response, as far the UN was concerned, was Kofi Annan's management reform proposal in March 2006 (Annan 2006). On the other hand, the UN reforms are continuous, periodic re-emerging exercises that follow similar patterns with some variations, patterns that are found in all large public organizations and even in the private sector (Kanninen 1995, Chapter 2).

The world leaders also declared that regional organizations should be strengthened and that a better distribution of labour with the UN has to be found. The UN cannot do everything alone in conflict prevention, resolution, peace-keeping and peace-building. During the last decade, the heads of regional and other intergovernmental organizations have indeed intensified their

internal cooperation with the United Nations, and decided in 2005 to meet henceforth annually under the chairmanship of the UN Secretary-General instead of the previous biennial cycle.

In changing times, even the key concepts receive new interpretations in order to be able to provide new mandates for organizational requirements aimed at better addressing global and regional threats.

In finding answers to emerging challenges the High-level Panel provided a new interpretation of collective security. In earlier decades, collective security was only seen in military terms. Now – reflecting the new values of the last decades – the Panel first declared that, in order to be credible, collective security should be ‘effective, efficient and equitable’. Following Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s 2001 report on the prevention of armed conflict the Panel also recognized that prevention is an indispensable foundation of collective security. The Secretary-General had suggested in his 2001 report that ‘conflict prevention be the cornerstone of the collective security system of the UN in the 21st century’ (Annan 2001). The prevention concept – whether used in the avoidance of an armed conflict, an ecological disaster or a terrorist attack – is becoming a new multidimensional framework, an overarching concept, a new multilateral religion in the management of world affairs in the 21st century (Kanninen 2003).

The prevention of conflicts and global and regional threats, a fundamental concept already in Article 1 of the UN Charter, might therefore become a re-born ideology of the United Nations. But also regional organizations have placed conflict prevention higher on their priority lists for action. A UNU survey found that prevention was the most unifying common area of interest for all organizations reviewed (Graham, Felicio and Tavares 2006). But other values will also affect the emerging and turbulent international scene, as we see in the next section.

**Arrow 3, Economic Change in Relation to Ideological Change.** *Question 1: Will the Economic Winners Make an Imprint on Global Values?*

The successful economic performance of emerging powerhouses and regions will make an imprint on the business values of other countries and regions reinforcing the values of the management culture of the economic winners. Assuming the continuous economic success of Asian countries these values might be, based on a poll taken in seven Asian countries: *Personal Values*: hard work; respect for learning; honesty; self-discipline; self-reliance – and *Top Societal Values*: an orderly society; harmony; the accountability of public officials; openness to new ideas; freedom of expression; and respect for authority. (Hitchcock 1997).

On the other hand, the promotion of democracy, human rights and other freedoms – another ongoing trend – have been seen as Western values, not necessarily applicable, for instance, to Asian and Arab traditions. But democracy is spreading as a value around the world – at an increasing pace – and two world-wide movements on democracy have spearheaded, with some success, its broader acceptance in new countries and regions. The older movement, the Conference of New or Restored Democracies, started indeed in Asia, in the Philippines in 1988 with 13 countries participating. Its 6th International Conference is scheduled to take place in Doha, Qatar, in October 2006, for the first time in the Arab region, with far over 100 countries expected to attend. Another movement, the Community of Democracies, initiated and sponsored most consistently by the United States, started in Poland in 2000 and has its 4th International Conference scheduled to take place in Mali in 2007. The first movement is open-ended; the latter is a group with a limited membership selected by a small ‘convening group’ of countries. (Dumitriu 2005).

But how would the application of Asian values tested mostly in business practice coincide with the principles of democracy? Not many Asian countries have used democracy widely in the past, or at least not a Western model. But countries in Asia are following the world trend.

China, for instance, issued its first White Paper on democracy in October 2005 emphasizing 'socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics' and the importance of the Communist Party in remaining in charge of the process.<sup>8</sup>

If Asian values are used more widely, would all components of democracy be applied or only a selected few? For instance, would the globally felt pressure for increased transparency and the accountability of large public organizations, including financial and economic organizations, mean that they all would be required to increase their auditing and inspection practices? The UN has recently gone through an expanding number of internal and external inquiries, as have many large private companies in the U.S., as the outrage of corruption has become a priority concern and a value of its own. Would the next inspection wave hit the Bretton Woods organizations, the WTO and the world's other financial and commercial institutions as priorities might change and require closer audits of major multilateral economic actors as well?

**Arrow 3, Economic Change in Relation to Ideological Change. *Question 2: Will Globalization Values Clash with Those of Democratization?***

Privatisation, deregulation, and increased competition, the prominent economic values since the 1980s, have been applied increasingly in the world scene. The world's management culture has changed accordingly. The acceleration of globalization has been one result of the application of these values. The continuous application of privatisation, trade and market liberalization and deregulation principles will, however, require more attention be paid to the harmonization aspects of national, corporate and individual actions at global and regional levels as well as the continuous monitoring of potential cases of corruption and conflict of interest.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <<http://www.china.org.cn/english/2005/Oct/145718.htm>>

<sup>9</sup> Some changes are already taking place. In order to harmonize business ethics to make them better fit the accepted standards of the international community, Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced in Davos in 1999 the creation of the

But there are also severe ethical and social implications with regard to globalization, the result of the continuous use of business values over the last decades: increasing gaps between haves and have-nots within and between countries and regions.<sup>10</sup> Some say that globalization has not markedly changed existing inequalities but has changed the expectations of the have-nots to be more equal with others. On the other hand, the concept of democracy – a value spreading across regions through globalization – stresses the equality of all individuals. Therefore, will there be an emerging new clash between globalization and democratization and how could the values of globalization and democracy better coincide? These are major challenges for the international community in the years to come.

What are the linkages between globalization and democratization? Promoting democracy and free markets are often seen as related undertakings. John Naisbitt, for instance, saw democracy as a ‘free-market democracy’ increasing through globalization (Naisbitt 1995). Jagdish Bhagwati says that globalization promotes democracy while constraining it (Bhagwati 2004). Taking a contrary view to democracy optimism, Heikki Patomaki thinks that democracy is drastically decreasing in countries because the democratic space of decision-making has decreased due to globalization. Similarly, the eminent researchers of the American Political Science Association warned that wide and growing socio-economic inequalities in the U.S. are undermining its practices and the procedures of liberal-democracy (Patomaki 2005).

The use of the values of the two major clusters of recent modernization trends, globalization and democratization, might have opposite effects – at least in the way they are applied today.

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Global Compact. It is a consistent effort to enlist corporations in the world and get them to embrace, support and enact a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption. The UN has also paid more attention to the accountability and transparency of its staff. Kofi Annan recently established an independent Ethics Office as part of his management reform.

<sup>10</sup> Data may vary on the impact of globalization. ‘The problem is that the statistics describe the different stories depending on the methodology one prefers’, (Naim 2006). This observation supports the point made in this essay that there is a considerable need to create a systematic and internationally acceptable framework for monitoring global and regional trends.



Globalization has increased technical opportunities for practicing democracy in an increasing number of countries and regions but has not correspondingly increased economic opportunities for all, restricting the space for the use of democracy. Elections are just a small part of democracy. Inequalities or expectations to be more equal have increased in countries and between countries and regions, with Africa being left far behind other regions.<sup>11</sup> Is it possible that the legitimacy of democracy could decline if this clash in the use and impacts of ‘economic values’ (privatisations, deregularisation, liberalisation) and ‘political values’ (freer and wider participation in elections and all decision-making affecting an individual) is not bridged?

In seeking answers to these problems we have to examine the feedback loop in arrow 4, the impact of ‘ideological change’ on ‘international system change’, an issue to which we now turn.

**Arrow 4, Feedback Loop. Ideological Change in Relation to International Systemic Change.** *Will Globalization and Its Effects on Inequality Bring Pressure to Increase Global and Regional Democracy?*

Increased multipolarity, complexity and multilateralism combined with the application of efficiency, deregulation and privatisation principles will bring about more pressures for enhanced coordination and the harmonisation of the international system, including its economic and financial base. The negative effects of globalization have to be managed and rectified.

We already discussed the overall linkages between globalization and democratization but more specifically, what is globalization’s impact on democracy? Joseph Stiglitz says that because globalization has been mismanaged millions have not enjoyed its benefits and

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<sup>11</sup> See footnote 10.

millions have even been made worse off. He uses the term ‘democratic globalization’ which means that the decisions on globalization must be made with the full participation of all the peoples of the world. ‘Our system of global governance without global government can only work if there is an acceptance of multilateralism,’ he says. (Stiglitz 2003, p. 258). Would this mean that major decisions on globalization should be made in the future more democratically than at present?

### *The Exploration of Facts*

As far as the UN is concerned there have been repeated calls to democratize the Organization. Regional and country representation, plus the veto powers of the permanent members of the Security Council are not democratic in the usual meaning of the word. The decision-making structures of the Bretton Woods institutions are not democratic either. Following this line of argumentation, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1996) wanted to extend democratization from traditional democracy promotion in countries to regional and international democratization. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM), a group of 116 countries, has for its part promoted a version of global democracy as it has spoken for a more democratic UN and Security Council, including the elimination of the veto powers of the permanent five on the Council.<sup>12</sup> Civil society has also been demanding more global democracy for some time. A Network Institute for Global Democratization, established in 1997, was created solely for this purpose.<sup>13</sup>

Another aspect of globalization has been its impact on cultures and civilizations. Globalization has provided the technological means for all countries, cultures, religions and ideologies of the world to be in constant communication. If, however, values, lifestyles and

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<sup>12</sup> The Cartagena Summit of October 1995 declared that the veto power was contrary to the aim of the democratization of the UN and must therefore be curtailed with a view to its elimination.

See <[www.globalpolicy.org/security/reform/egypt.htm](http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/reform/egypt.htm)>.

<sup>13</sup> See <[www.nigd.org](http://www.nigd.org)>

economic benefits clash there has to be an effort to promote intercultural and inter-civilizational tolerance and dialogue. This goal should also lead to a search to find ways and means to bridge the gap between Arab, Asian, African and Western forms of democracy, as necessary, or at least to understand better the differences between various models of democracy.

The UN announced 2001 as the year of the dialogue of civilizations and developed a programme of action to promote such a dialogue. The most recent effort is an Alliance of Civilizations initiative, a high-level panel spearheaded by Spain and Turkey. The initiative will give its report to the Secretary-General, with recommendations for future measures, at the end of 2006. The UN has therefore already become a forum for discussing the 'clashes, dialogues and alliances of civilizations'. The next logical step would be a discussion on 'clashes between globalization and democratization'. This trend of expanding the agenda of democratization and globalization's effects on democracy was already seen in the discussions of the Ulaanbaatar Conference of New or Restored Democracies in 2003.

In order to alleviate the impact of globalization's negative aspects there might be a need to increase the space of democracy, globally, regionally and nationally. Would this mean that we need discussion on how democratic values could be used in decision-making that is truly at the centre of globalization: in the Bretton Woods institutions, the WTO as well as the multilateral corporations that are in fact much bigger than many UN member states? Joseph Stiglitz (2003, p. 214) expresses this unresolved concern in the following way: 'Part of the problem lies with the international economic institutions, with the IMF, World Bank, and WTO, which help set the rules of the game. They have done so in ways that, all too often, have served the interests of the more advanced industrial countries – and particular interests within those countries – rather than those of the developing world'.

The demand for democracy has both global and regional aspects: In terms of regional democracy the Seoul Plan of Action adopted at the 2nd Community of Democracy Conference in the Republic of Korea in 2002 and the Ulaanbaatar Plan of Action, adopted at the 5th International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Mongolia in 2003, set up ambitious plans for deepening democracy in the regions. Regional plans for democracy will be discussed at the next International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Doha in October 2006. Two Asian countries and an Arab country have been, or will be, at the centre of the international discussion on deepening democracy in the world, a sign of changing times.

The movement of New or Restored Democracies has also broadened the scope of its participants beyond governments and its periodic conferences now include separate forums for civil society and parliamentarians. Whether regional organizations should also have a separate forum of their own is a question for the future: Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1996, p. 23) expressed his view on their role in the international system in the following way: ‘The integration of regional organizations into the United Nations system is a cornerstone of democratization internationally’.

Arrows 5 and 6 are not discussed here in detail as they would require much longer explanations. Some illustrative examples and questions are only meant to give some broad outlines of the relationships involved.

**Arrow 5, Ideological Change’s Feedback Loop to Economic Change.** *Will There Be a Backlash Against Globalization and the Promotion of Democracy Based on Their Unequal Economic Impact?*

The promotion of democracy by major powers, the UN and regional agencies might in some regions increase economic growth but in other regions the linkage might be more problematic. Initiatives such as the American ‘Greater Middle East Initiative’ to promote

democracy in the Arab world also have economic impacts. Political and military actions have recently made elections possible in the new political landscape of the Arab world, for instance, in Iraq and Palestine. At the same time the democratization process has had a major regional economic impact in terms of reconstruction, the price of oil or changing patterns of foreign assistance. Would one type of democracy or another fit well in the culture and traditions of the Middle East and how quick could the pace of democratization be? Should the proposals for more democracy come only from the region? Would rapid democratization bring political and economic instability or stability in the area where conducting elections – without broader societal acceptance of the new values – might have an additional impact on the world economy, especially, when one is dealing with a region containing the most proven oil resources of the world?

More generally, the use of globalization principles and free-market democracy has given cause to anti-globalization movements as globalization has brought greater inequality or higher expectations for equality, to many parts of the world. The nationalisation of energy industries, as happened in Bolivia in May 2006, might be a sign of a new anti-trend within some Governments that have recently come to power. The rise of international militant fundamentalism and global terrorist movements, with their new deadly ideologies, also has had and will have a direct impact on economic development. For instance, the terrorist actions of the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2001 have had a major economic world-wide impact. If the potential clashes of civilizations and those between globalization and democratization are not alleviated the failure might have a major impact on the world economy as well.

**Arrow 6 (a), The Impact of Changes in the Physical Environment and Technology on Economic Change and Vice Versa. *Will the Debates on the Limits to Growth Re-emerge?***

The physical environment and its resources place limits on economic growth, as reported already in the early 1970s by the authors of *Limits to Growth*. (Meadows et al. 1972). But

they also provide incentives for economic innovation. Technological advances stimulate economic growth. On the other hand, economic investment in technology and education, part of economic change, promotes forward steps in technology which in turn promotes economic growth and might solve environmental and resource depletion problems as technology and know-how advance. Would technology prevail so that solutions are found to the 'limits to growth' in the years and decades to come? Or is the 'technology optimism' unjustified when population increase, industrial output, pollution, natural disasters, resource constraints and other global and regional trends start to interact on a more dramatic scale and at a more rapid pace than at present? These are the major unknowns of the future.

**Arrow 6 (b), The Impact of the Changes in the Physical Environment and Technology on Ideological Change and Vice Versa.** *Will the Debates on the Viability of Continuous Economic Growth and the Dangers of Technology Re-emerge?*

The emergence of ecological disasters and signs of global warming created the concept of 'sustainable development' which gave values and a code of conduct for a new kind of ecologically-sensitive development. But if old values are not enough to prevent the deteriorating trends, will these values be questioned, including the almost universal belief in continuous and infinite economic growth? Will alternative belief systems be created to better fit the realities of the 21st century?

Regarding technology's impact on ideology the possibility that terrorists with extreme ideologies would acquire the know-how for building nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, or less powerful tools such as dirty bombs, will increase over time. A new phenomenon in terrorism has been the emergence of ideologically-oriented suicide bombers which might cause more damage as the power of detonation increases through the spread of technology. Any major success might, once again, also attract more attention and more followers.

**Arrow 6 (c), The Impacts of the Changes in the Physical Environment and Technology on International System Change and Vice Versa. *Will the Question of Improving the Efficiency of the World's Environmental Management Intensify?***

After ominous trends in environmental degradation and the depletion of the earth's resources were recognized in 1960s the international community had to find organizational responses to environmental threats. After the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 a multitude of global and regional environmental agencies, the most prominent being the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), were created as well as other conference mechanisms. However, if the global and environmental problems, including those related to energy intensify the question will be asked why the current international decision-making system is unable to change negative environmental trends. The challenge is then to identify the key decision-makers regarding environmental deterioration and change the corresponding decision-making patterns – another major challenge for the future.

In terms of the impact of technological change on the international system, technological advances have made internationally standardized elections and polls possible, and immediate news reporting on human rights violations and corruption have become part of global accountability, transparency and international law as almost everywhere in the globe people can have rapid access to breaking news. But the same applies to environmental threats as well. Almost every day there is news about global and regional climate change. These trends will gradually increase the pressure on international and regional decision-making to make more drastic adjustments. If 'things really go bad' the previously-tried reactions of the international community to organize global conferences or create new regulatory bodies on the environment might not be a sufficient response any more. The search for new global and regional responses should therefore intensify, which is an issue to be discussed in the last section of this essay.

### *Concluding Remarks on the Framework*

Ideally, the major trends elaborated upon in this essay – globalization, democratization, regionalism, the increased need for multilateralism and the prevention of global and regional threats – should be discussed jointly, at the same forum, through the same mechanisms and by all stakeholders involved, for maximum efficiency. Whether this kind of discussion on the trends and responses required countering global and regional threats will become part of the international agenda and decision-making process is yet another set of the unknowns about the future.

A question could also be asked which force in figure 5.1 is ‘running the world system’? Is it the economy, technology, environment, education or ideology – or networks as some futurologist claim? As the framework is a dynamic, cybernetic system the question is not that relevant. It is rather the combined effects in which we are interested. As there are hundred of potential factors involved the key is to select only some major variables in order to show the broad trends. One cannot easily see the ‘global forest’ through the ‘local trees’; a broader picture is crucial – the details could be filled in later.



## **A Global Early Warning and Response System**

### *Quantifying Conceptual Frameworks*

After we have built a comprehensive framework for describing major global trends and threats the question of how this framework should be applied in practice with a credible and positive impact on the world arises.

A traditional approach in predicting the future over the past decades has been the creation of monitoring systems or frameworks based on scientific theories and conceptualisations in different sectors of human life – whether in economic, social or environmental fields. In some cases the theories were sophisticated as were Keynesian macroeconomic theories forming the basis of national accounting. In other cases a heuristic, conceptual framework sufficed. But in every case there was the internationally and nationally felt need to create frameworks and data gathering methods for forecasting and planning purposes, in other words, for reducing the harmful risks of the future (see the table in the annex).

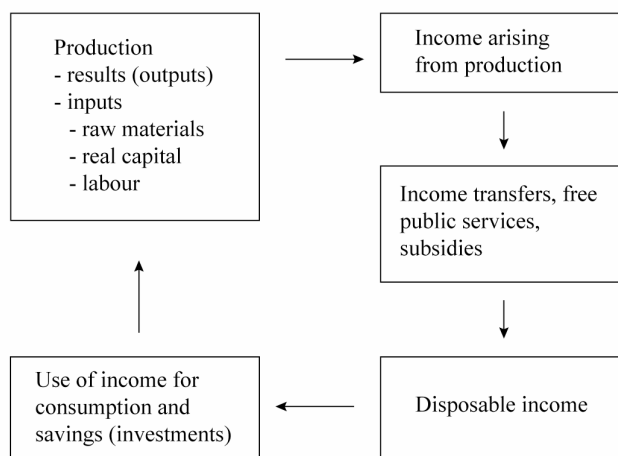
Computer simulations of the future, like those provided to the Club of Rome, can describe the development of a number of variables and relations but they need systematic statistics as a basis for predictions. Missing data has been one of the problems over the decades in making scenarios and forecasting more reliable, more comprehensive in scope and less contested by the users. The lack of internationally acceptable and standardized statistics, on issues such as on globalization's effects, seriously hampers the development of an efficient set of international responses.

The United Nations has played a major role in quantifying economic, social and environmental activities and creating corresponding standardized statistical systems and accounts which are the basis, for example, for all economic projections and comparisons

among countries. Prof. Richard Stone received the Nobel Prize in economics in 1984 for his pioneering work in creating a UN system of national accounts (SNA) in the 1940s and 1950s. He also later worked for the UN Statistical Office in developing a similar system for social accounting (see the table in annex).

The development and use of SNA and the aggregates derived from the system – the most important being Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – are instructive. The world-wide collection of data according to SNA recommendations has enabled economists to develop the practice of forecasting into a powerful tool. With the help of national input-output tables and economic models, such forecasting constitutes the basis of today’s economic and financial decision-making. For instance, the budget deficit reduction strategies of the U.S. (the country with the greatest impact on the future of global economy), plus strategies in any other country, are based on SNA-based economic forecasts. Critics might question global warming data but they hardly ever criticize – rightly or wrongly – the reliability of GDP and economic growth figures as a basis for major policy decisions.

The basic economic model behind the SNA is relatively simple. O.E. Niitamo (1978) describes it as follows:



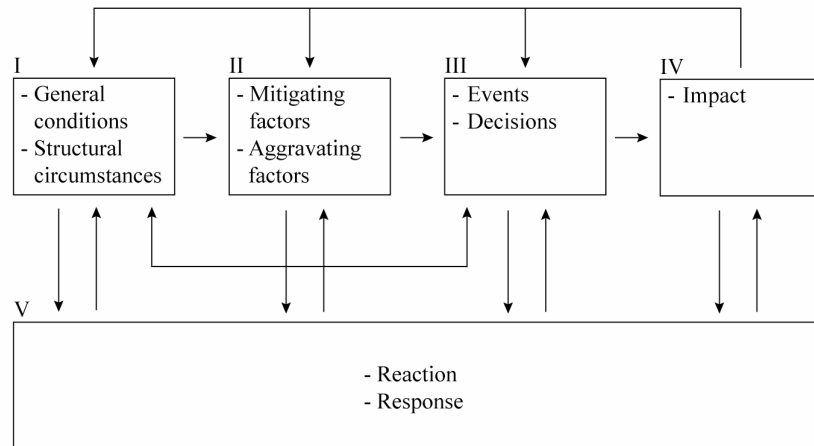
**Figure 5.2 The cycle of the system of national accounts**

The near phenomenal success of the application of an economic theory to quantify and forecast economic activities led to similar efforts in other fields; from social and environmental to political monitoring. Those earlier efforts over the decades are summarized in the table in the annex, which was prepared already in 1989 (Kanninen 1989, annex). The development of the Human Development Index, published by the UNDP since 1993, was a later illustration of the continuous application of monitoring, quantification and standardization trends in the UN system.

In order to fill the gap in the table of the annex regarding political activity I presented the following overall framework for monitoring political activity at the International Studies Associations Convention in London in March 1989. (Kanninen 1989, p. 30). It was based on a careful review of the relevant political science literature of that period. At the same time, efforts were taken in the political sector of the UN to build a more sophisticated system of monitoring political events.<sup>14</sup>

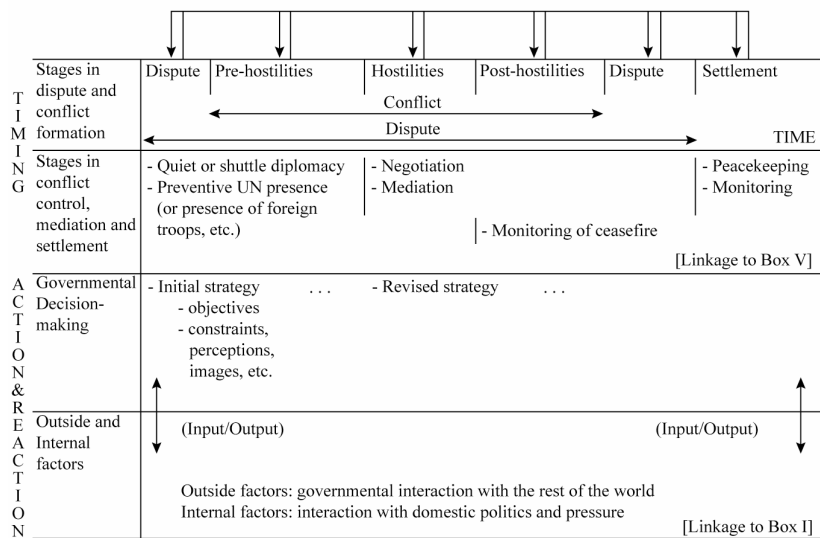
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<sup>14</sup> In a major reform of the political sector of the UN in 1988, Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar established the Office “for the Research and the Collection of Information” (ORCI) to assist him in his political functions. Dr. James Jonah, first head of ORCI and a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology established contacts with MIT professors Lincoln P. Bloomfield and Hayward Alker to enlist their support in creating a modern data system for the Office and the UN. Dr. Peter Brecke, Alker’s student, now professor at Georgia Tech, was hired for the job. But the proposed system was not implemented as the UN was not ready for using more sophisticated methods. Alker also chaired the panel at the 1989 London ISA Convention for which the above paper was commissioned. Prof. Howard Adelman from York University, Canada, was at the same time also separately assisting in ORCI’s early warning efforts (see footnote 15) and was later involved in developing the early warning and response system for IGAD – explained in the next section of this essay. In 1993, another unsuccessful effort for an integrated political data system was tried for political, peacekeeping and humanitarian departments. The third proposal for an integrated information system was made by an outside body, the so called Brahimi Panel on UN Peace Operations with the same kind of result. However, recently the General Assembly has become more positive about these efforts (see Kanninen and Kumar 2005).



**Figure 5.3 A conceptual framework for political monitoring<sup>15</sup>**

All the boxes in figure 5.3 are explained in the ISA paper and box III looks as follows:



**Figure 5.4 The situational analysis of conflicts<sup>16</sup>**

<sup>15</sup> The basic framework had some similarities to the model developed by the Refugee Crisis project at York University, Canada, under the leadership of Prof. Howard Adelman and Prof. Michael Lanphier. Their model drew upon Neil Smelser's work on the development of social movements. A 'value added' (a term borrowed from SNA) technique is applied, in which each element (conduciveness, belief, strain) adds to the one previously enunciated until finally the refugee movement is brought to its control stage. If an element is missing, the incipient movement is stalled and or aborted. Likewise, the sequence is incremental. Source: Seminar at York University, April 15, 1988.

In the 1990s a number of efforts indeed took place to create conceptual frameworks and monitoring systems for political activity. This meant, for instance, the development of indicators, checking lists and templates for political analysis. A specific model of the conflict cycle, combining the work of a number of earlier efforts and close to the framework described in figures 5.3 and 5.4, was used as a base for creating an early warning system for two regional organizations as discussed in the next section. (See Mwaura and Schmeidl 2002). At the same time, national governments, corporations and international organizations started to use more sophisticated political risk analysis methods and peace and security related commercial databanks, newswire research engines and special services (such as Lexus, Oxford Analytica, Economist Intelligence Unit, NewsEdge). More sophistication in global modelling and the monitoring of events also increased.<sup>17</sup> Innovations in technology helped in the creation of easily available online databanks about current events.

Still, in political analysis and advice work, we have had great difficulties in bringing the field a step further – in creating an effective political response system for data gathering and analysis as was done for the economy and some other areas. Part of the problem is the ‘time’ factor, for example the necessity to react instantly to rapidly evolving events; the ‘urgency-mode-of-action’ usually has no such luxury as to be able to allow for much strategic planning and analysis based on carefully compiled data.

The experience at the UN and elsewhere showed, in the 1980s and onwards, that although the quantification, systematisation and standardisation of data is important for political decision-making, it is less important than to guarantee that whatever analysis was done it is used in decision-making. The linkages between *data-gathering – early warning - analysis –*

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<sup>16</sup> Kanninen 1989, p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> Dr. Doug Bond from Harvard University has been leading the efforts for creating such events based data systems for some UN departments and agencies as well as for IGAD, ECOWAS and the African Union; see also Bond and Meier 2005.

*decision-making – action* are still works in progress. Much in political decision-making is by its very nature based on intuition, individual experience, the personal advice of trusted aides, political urgency and the availability of news reports. An additional challenge is to find quick solutions to sudden political problems and at the same time develop measures to address the structural causes of conflicts. (Kanninen and Kumar 2005). All of this has to be coordinated in the bureaucratic environment of large organizations.

How to present an early warning, analysis and prognosis in a clear simple, understandable and ‘actionable’ manner to decision-makers has therefore been a key issue. A new publication ‘Human Security Report 2005’, published by the Human Security Centre of the University of British Columbia, is closely following the tradition started by the UNDP’s Human Development Report.<sup>18</sup> It gathered research and statistics made by political scientists and presented the results in an understandable, non-scientific format – for politicians, scholars and the public at large – thus breaking new ground for systematic political reporting. An annual Global Monitoring Report by the World Bank and IMF, started in 2004, is another effort in the same tradition – in this case to monitor progress in attaining Millennium Development Goals.

Human Development and Security Reports, and Global Monitoring Reports, the innovations of the last 16 years targeting wider and politically important audiences, were to an extent based on earlier quantification efforts in the social sciences, social indicator publications of the 1970s and 1980s and the ‘level of living’ work of the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).<sup>19</sup> While the Global Monitoring Report has as its target audience a Ministerial-level Development Committee of the World Bank and IMF the other two reports do not have a direct, immediate and regular linkage to global and regional decision-making, a

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<sup>18</sup> Although the report is not a UN publication it was developed by the first Director of the UN Secretary-General’s Strategic Planning Unit, Prof. Andrew Mach, with a lot of input from his former colleagues.

<sup>19</sup> The UNDP has published Human Development Reports since 1990 and the Human Development Index since 1993.

major deficiency in addressing the challenges of the future. In addition, the Global Monitoring Report addresses a much more limited number of global issues than suggested in this essay.

*Conclusions: Consolidating the Early Experience of Building Monitoring Frameworks*

The conceptual framework presented at the beginning of this paper for global and regional monitoring is multidisciplinary and heuristic. It is a combination of the theories and conceptualisations of previous decades. It includes parameters related to changes in values, ideology and culture which have not been part and parcel of earlier frameworks. Gradually its items and relationships should be systematised and even quantified and an indicator type of publication could be published based on the framework. What it still needs and needs more than anything is for a political response system to have a real impact on the world. But first there has to be a real need to create such a response system for global and regional trends. These are the questions to be discussed in the last section of this essay.

## **Building Up a Comprehensive Global Response System**

In countering the emerging threats of the 21st century it is not necessary to create a very sophisticated theory and highly detailed monitoring system. Rather, the challenge is to create a relatively simple conceptual framework for explaining basic global and regional variables and their relations; and secondly, to gather data and serious scientific research according to the framework's variables and relations. But the most difficult challenge is to present this, in a very understandable form, to busy political decision-makers and the public at large and ensure that it makes a political impact. Otherwise, it can not be called a political response system at all.

I call this new system a 'comprehensive global early warning and response system'. Some interesting partial efforts have been ongoing in various disciplines and parts of the world to create such a system. This trend already augurs well for eventual success.

In a rudimentary form, a good local early warning-response system is weather forecasting. Predictions are made, then effectively broadcast to the public and we subsequently adjust our clothing for the day. A hurricane forecasting system is a regional application of the concept. On the national scale, another effective early warning-response system is the issuance of official national forecasts of economic growth and other economic variables, based on the System of National Accounts (SNA), and the immediate political response is received. SNA-based aggregates are the basis for budget deficit reduction strategies, the decisions on mortgage rates and other economic measures. The SNA also makes international comparisons possible on variables such as economic growth and GDP/capita. When published, they have a broad and immediate political impact in national capitals across regions.



To cite other examples of effective early warning-response systems, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has a food security early warning system. With regard to natural disasters, new warning systems are being developed in the aftermath of the tsunami in Asia of December 2004. Immediate action based on an early warning is a must in each case. In the political field two African subregional organizations, IGAD (The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development in East Africa) and ECOWAS (The Economic Community of West African States) have taken steps to institute interesting, even ground-breaking political early warning-response systems in their regions. In both systems civil society and independent research institutions have a major role to play. Civil society monitors collect early warning data, feed it to decision-makers and political authorities immediately react. In the ECOWAS case, civil society actors also take independent preventive action based on same early warning.

In the case of the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism of IGAD, the system (CEWARN) is designed to monitor and analyse pastoral conflicts with the aim of providing early warning on the escalation of violence along with recommendations for action. The development of CEWARN started with cross-border early warning and management along the borders of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Success was only possible when all actors – including local and national authorities and civil society – worked together. (Mwaura and Schmeidl 2002, Bond and Meier 2005).

For the functioning of the system each IGAD Member State is required, through the decisions of the Governments of the regions, to establish a CEWARN Unit. The units are composed jointly of the government, the military, non-governmental organizations and research institutions. Their functions are to verify, analyse and comment on information coming from independent field monitors. A central unit located in Addis Ababa acts as a clearing house and manages a database and Internet communication centre. At the highest political level, the system is coordinated by the ‘Permanent Secretaries Steering Committee’

of IGAD Member States Governments. An important feature of the system is its immediate linkage to decision-makers in IGAD countries and IGAD's Executive Secretary. The early warning system has already been used to respond to potential conflicts at local levels.

While CEWARN has so far only covered rural conflicts, ECOWAS has more ambitious plans including reporting on such incidences as governance collapse, human rights violations, small arms proliferation and conflicts over resources. A new system is also being built on the interplay between governments and civil society.

In the summit of Lome in 1999 the heads of State and Governments of ECOWAS first adopted a protocol for conflict prevention and established four subregional centers (zonal bureaus) and the Observation and Monitoring Centre at ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja for a new early warning and response system. The field monitors are independent civil society representatives (selected by the West African Network for Peacebuilding, WANEP) who periodically send their field reports to four zonal bureaus. These subregional centres have both civil society and governmental representatives. The information is analysed by the staff of the bureaus and submitted to the Abuja Center at ECOWAS headquarters. But civil society also has an independent information centre in Accra and could initiate preventive action independently from governments. It might also issue press releases to the media. WANEP is already actively using the early warning system to head off disputes at the local level.<sup>20</sup>

But the biggest challenge of today and tomorrow goes beyond any single regional and political conflict. A daunting task is to create an effective political early warning-response system to address global and regional threats to humankind as described in this essay and

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<sup>20</sup> 'Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in the Regional Context', a seminar organized by the UN University's Comparative Regional Integration Studies programme and the UN Department of Political Affairs in Bruges, Belgium on 28-29 April 2006; presentations by Colonel Kone Yoro of ECOWAS, Jacop Eben-Enoh from WANEP and Prof. Doug Bond from Harvard University; see <<http://www.cris.unu.edu/admin/documents/20060901153539.O-2006-20.pdf>>

other pertinent literature. Such a body of literature is already vast and expanding but also confusing as there are no organizing principles to summarize disjointed data and key findings gathered by public and private agencies, research institutions, corporations and the media.

The 1972 book *Limits to Growth* opened with the quotation by UN Secretary-General U Thant (Meadows et al. 1972):

*I do not wish to seem overdramatic, but I can only conclude from the information that is available to me as Secretary-General, that the Members of the United Nations have perhaps ten years left in which to subordinate their ancient quarrels and launch a global partnership to curb the arms race, to improve human environment, to defuse the population explosion and to supply the required momentum to development efforts. If such a global partnership is not forged with the next decade, then I very much fear that the problems I have mentioned will have reached such staggering proportions that they will be beyond our capacity to control.*

In the '30 Year Update to *Limits to Growth*' Donella and Dennis Meadows and Jorgen Randers concluded that this global partnership is not in evidence. They say that the highly aggregate scenarios of the original model – showing drastic global disruptions in areas such as the economy, population, industrial output, pollution and resources starting in the years from 2010 to 2030 – still appear after 30 years to be surprisingly accurate, and better supported by the data and examples that have been gathered since 1972. Humanity is in overshoot and the authors offer a wealth of data and analysis that contradicts prevailing political pronouncements that mankind is on the correct path for its twenty-first century. Whatever lies ahead, the authors say, its main dimensions will emerge over the next two decades. The global economy is already so far above sustainable levels that, they claim, there will be little time left for the fantasy of an infinite globe. The authors concluded that the

adjustment will be a huge task entailing a ‘revolution as profound as the agricultural and industrial revolutions’ (Meadows et al. 2004).

Whether we believe this group of scientists – and many do because of the deepening climate changes all over the world – or any other group what we badly need is more information and projections dealing with global and regional trends. And, most importantly, we need a new system forcing the global decision-makers – whether politicians, corporate executives, world opinion leaders or builders of international networks – to make regular adjustments (sometimes gradual ones and in other cases drastic ones) to change the course before it is too late.

At the moment the world has a rather haphazard global early warning –response system of reporting, discussing and acting on global and regional threats – whether political, economic, social, humanitarian or environmental – and even less of a system regarding their interaction and the multidisciplinary solutions required to address them before they spin out of control.

We have more or less every year:

1. Periodic global commissions, panels or high-level working groups on sectoral issues and challenges (disarmament, the environment, UN reforms, or on special occasions such as the millennium celebration). The reports of these eminent groups and bodies are issued practically every year in one form or another. There is subsequently some discussion at the UN, in regional agencies or at policy or academic conferences and then each issue moves gradually to the background, re-emerges, disappears, and the cycle goes on;
2. Periodic sectoral UN reports or publications such as the UNDP’s Human Development Reports, the World Bank’s reports, UN Economic Surveys. These reports are usually discussed by the UN and regional bodies, benchmarks of a long standing tradition but without a deep impact on international or national decision-making.

The publication of the following reports and related newscasts has even less systematic and long-term follow-up by the international community:

1. Periodic reports and newsletters by policy or scientific institutes such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group and climate change panels and institutes;
2. Periodic reports by governmental agencies on human rights, the status of the arms trade, terrorism, the environment and many other fields;
3. Media reports on TV, radio and in newspapers on global and regional threats; and
4. Articles, books and movies on the same.

The major problems are that:

1. The discussion and search for solutions about global and regional threats are both dispersed, ad hoc and short-term – moving from one popular issue to another, from one year's issue to another;
2. The setting of the agenda of the world's attention regarding global problems is basically government-driven in which national interests dominate;
3. There is no systematic way for the international community to understand and project the interactions of the world's problems and see the interdependent world from a long-term perspective – as a comprehensive, interconnected system;
4. There is no credible way for the international community to find out what the most urgent threats are, particularly if the earth and its regions' carrying capacities in some areas is approaching, or has passed, the limits of no-return and
5. The reaction of the international community to emerging threats is delayed as there is no broad agreement on the validity and reliability of critical data (such as on global warming); this problem calls for urgent efforts to internationally standardize statistics, research findings and monitoring systems on global and regional trends.

### *A Possible Solution*

Based on the earlier discussions of lessons learned in creating early warning and response systems in various fields and regions, there might be a possible way to proceed in establishing an effective monitoring and reaction system to counter regional and global threats. The experience of IGAD and ECOWAS, for instance, shows that an intergovernmental organization and civil society organizations and research institutions can work closely together to create and implement an efficient early warning and response system.

One solution, but only one, is to institute a yearly report from an independent, rotating group of high-ranking scientists of a multidisciplinary background as an annex to the UN Secretary-General's Annual Report on the Work of the Organization. It could be entitled: *Global and Regional Threats, their Interaction and Solutions* or just *Global Report*. The Secretary-General should have no control over the results of the work of the group but he or she could and should ask various parts of the UN system, and regional and other bodies, to comment on the findings and ask how their work is affected by the analyses and scenarios of the future.

The Annual Report of the Secretary-General is one of the most important – if not the most important – regular reports of the UN. Mentioned in the Charter as the only report the Secretary-General has to prepare it defines his/her leadership of the Organization.<sup>21</sup> Diplomats study it carefully as do decision-makers in capitals and its publication in early September usually hits the headlines in the media. Secretary-General Kofi Annan started a new practice by introducing it to the General Assembly in person shortly before the U.S. President speaks ensuring maximum world media attention. Afterwards the report is debated

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<sup>21</sup> Article 98 of the UN Charter: ... 'The Secretary-General shall make an annual report to the General Assembly on the work of the Organization.'

by the General Assembly. But until now it has not led to any immediate effects and certainly not long-term major policy changes by the international community.

The role of the Annual Report and its Annex could change if the Secretary-General intends to promote and expand its role in UN decision-making. In addition to the debates in the media and recommendations of the General Assembly the Secretary-General has the right to bring such matters in the report that threaten international peace and security to the attention of the Security Council, according to Article 99 of the Charter. If the Council acts, the decisions of the Council are binding and have a high degree of legitimacy. The Security Council has recently moved beyond strictly political issues to discuss areas such as HIV/AIDS.

The benefits of the proposed system might be that:

1. Top scientists would gradually start to contribute more seriously than before to the shaping of the world's agenda bringing the attention of decision-makers to global and regional threats – both short-term, medium and long-term – and their interactions in the future and the measures required to alleviate them;
2. As the scientists would change every year each report would have a surprise element which would both attract attention and make sure that no school of thought would dominate the findings of the report;
3. As the scientists are independent both from the UN and governments one could be relatively confident that the quality of analysis would be high and not dominated by national interests;
4. Although the results might not affect the agenda of the international community, corporations, media and ordinary citizens in the short term, the ensuing debates by politicians, diplomats, corporate leaders, media and civil society might change priorities in the medium and long term and bring more seriousness to the search for solutions to global and regional problems;

5. An important side effect might be the initiation of a project to internationally standardize data and research methodology in the most critical areas so that disagreements on data and research findings would not sabotage efforts to find effective solutions to most urgent and persistent threats.

The foreseen change of the proposed early warning-response system would be a gradual move away from the world's media driven agenda-setting, which at the moment focuses on immediate events (for example the chain reaction: *rapidly evolving events – reporting by media – reaction from decision-makers – new media analyses – reaction by politicians – a series of decisions are taken*).<sup>22</sup> What we need is a new kind of agenda-setting where immediate events – no matter how tragic they might be – would not totally overshadow and sap the energy from efforts to address the longer term threats and their interactions.

The conceptual model presented in the first section of this essay gives a tentative framework as well as an agenda for the threats to be discussed in the preparation of the global report. It also has a high degree of flexibility, and might help in giving guidance for the collection of information, statistics and research – or the undertaking of new studies – to support the work of the eminent scientists' group. Computer simulations of the future interaction of key variables might also be helpful for stimulating public debate. In addition to any *annual overview of global and regional progress or decline*, one or two issues could be reviewed in more detail in a given year.

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<sup>22</sup> On logistics: The setting up of a group of scientists could be an initiative solely taken by the UN Secretary-General. He or she would have full authority under the UN Charter to do so, namely to prepare the annual report in any way, regarding content and logistics he or she would like to. At least in its the beginning and to make sure that the group was taken seriously, some of the scientists could be Nobel laureates or of similar quality and name-recognition. The group could have an advisory board that would have scientific associations or institutes as its members. The funding for the necessary research, analysis and logistics should become from various sources in order to guarantee the independent nature and quality of the undertaking.



The report would have some resemblance, as a global response, to the social reports and social indicator publications that national authorities started to prepare in the 1970s in order to give a holistic picture of the achievements, shortcomings and challenges of governmental policies. Those publications were not made by independent scientists but governmental agencies. Independence from governmental agendas – or from the parochial agendas of the researchers for that matter – is the key for the system proposed here. Secondly, earlier social reports were not prepared annually as there was no need for such regularity. But the severity of global and regional threats and the need for the earliest possible responses might indeed require a yearly reporting and response system.

### *An Alternative Proposal*

Another alternative is to use an existing organization or to create a new institution without direct links to the UN, headed by a world-class statesman/woman or a small group of former leaders and other eminent personalities or scholars, with easy access to the world's media and decision-makers. The annual agenda, research capacity and the mission of the institution could be the same as in the above proposal. A possible problem with this alternative is that it would not formally be part of the annual political decision-making cycle of the international system, as the proposal above would be. But it still might be a way to start the incremental process, through experimenting with various options, by conducting research on threats and short and longer term measures and mechanisms to address them. Gradually, it might have a more serious impact on the world's decision-making processes, including direct linkages to the UN, regional and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

If the dangers explained by many scientists and practitioners facing the international community in the years and decades to come are true the world urgently needs a new comprehensive system for addressing the threats on a regular, annual basis. The key would be to start the process of thinking about and experimenting with various alternatives and

solutions. This essay has provided a conceptual framework, an agenda, plus two options for proceeding forward.

*The views presented in this essay are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.*

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**Annex: International efforts to standardize the description and measurement of the ‘realities’ of appropriate decades (Kanninen 1989)**

Decade	Historical origins	International measurement response	Theories in the background	International agencies responsible	National agencies responsible
1940-1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To avoid 1930’s types of depressions</li> <li>- To correct economic imbalances</li> <li>- To facilitate growing international trade and other economic relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SNA + System of Material Balances</li> <li>- Input/output models</li> <li>- Econometric models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keynes’ theories (+ Marxist production theories)</li> <li>- Richard Stone’s work</li> <li>- Etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UN Statistical Office (- OECD, CMEA)</li> <li>- (- WB, IMF)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Statistical agencies</li> <li>- Economic Ministries</li> <li>- Universities, research centres</li> </ul>
1960-1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To control social instability</li> <li>- To improve living standard and fight against poverty</li> <li>- To solve problems in labor markets, migration, population growth etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- System of Social and Demographic Statistics</li> <li>- Social indicator movement</li> <li>- Standard of living measurements</li> <li>- Social reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Richard Stone’s work (life cycles)</li> <li>- Theories of basic human needs</li> <li>- Etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UN Statistical Office</li> <li>- UNRISD, ILO</li> <li>- ECE (- UNESCO)</li> <li>- (- OECD, CMEA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Statistical agencies</li> <li>- National agencies dealing with social issues</li> <li>- Universities, research centres</li> </ul>
1970-1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To control international pollution</li> <li>- To avoid depletion of resources</li> <li>- To predict and avoid ecological catastrophes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Framework for Environmental Statistics</li> <li>- System of Materials and Energy Balances</li> <li>- Earthwatch, Infoterra</li> <li>- Club of Rome-types global models</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Environmental Stress-Response Models</li> <li>- Engineering models of pollution and energy/materials flows</li> <li>- Etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNEP</li> <li>- UN Statistical Office</li> <li>- ECE (- UNITAR)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Environmental agencies</li> <li>- Statistical agencies</li> <li>- Universities, research centres</li> </ul>
1980-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All of the above and:</li> <li>- To avoid nuclear war (between superpowers or regional rivals)</li> <li>- To prevent and predict conflicts, especially with escalation potential</li> <li>- Avoid and control nuclear and other terrorist acts</li> </ul>				