

THE GHOST OF WARS PAST

- Analogies, misperception and the challenge of strategic early warning systems-



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Abstract

Early warning systems are institutionalized hypothesis of an adversary's behavior. Such systems are mere models of our bias perception, not the real world. At best they describe casual relationships and employ predictive validity within the cognitively constructed analogies of the systems constructor and operator. An analogy is an experience used to create a generalizing model of analysis where a current case is being approached through the knowledge on a historic case in order to support decision making. Depending on the selection of analogy the model of analysis differ effecting the decision derived thereof. The strategic early warning is therefore most vulnerable against its actors' coercive experiences and subjectivity, rendering a system's preciseness impossible.

However in the absence of a critical academic discourse on the validity of early warning systems the oversimplified and bureaucratic approach to fact and prediction prevails in early warning communities and among decision makers. In this thesis I state propositions on a social constructivist critique of the overconfidence in early warning systems. I will illustrate how analogies and perceptions override decision makers' objectivity and how early warning systems are misaimed in correspondence to the actors' beliefs and perceptions rather than the information presented.

Key words: Early warning, Perception, Analogy, Prediction, Rationality
Words: 9943

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1 Introduction and disposition

Historical analogies play a vital and natural part in our perception of the world. However analogies must not be mistaken for records of reality and the information gathered from analogies must not be mistaken for facts. Analogies create *models* of our world. Actors establish causal relationships and identify threats within the models provided by analogies. Through these constructed models states employ systems of early warning to warn of perceived threats based on the experience and expected casual relations identified through similar cases of the past. The results and signals from the system are then cognitively categorized, prioritized and evaluated by decision makers through the use of analogies. Experience tells us not only what to look for but how evaluate the information given. Therefor analogies may be seen as playing a double role, firstly of establishing where to aim the early warning systems, secondly as a filter of perception determining how to interpret the signals from the early warning system itself.

This thesis will provide a social constructivist critique of a positivistic approach towards early warning system and the thereto derived confidence in such systems. This thesis aims to describe the risks with overconfidence in early warning systems, analogies and one owns objectivity. I will argue that early warning systems must be approached with the same academic skepticism as were they academic publications on any positivistic causal relationships and prediction. Discussions on the utility of early warning systems must not be left solely to the agencies concerned in their use. The consequences of faltered early warning systems and overconfidence could be catastrophic. Early warning systems are being institutionalized at an ever increasing degree and their role in decision making is immense and of great concern to us all. Many an armed conflict past and future will be triggered by alerts in early warning systems. The study of early warning systems fundamentals and risks are therefore an important feature in the fields of political science, peace and conflict studies, strategic studies as well as of political psychology and cognitive research.

Decision makers show different tendencies towards different analogies in their approach to current events. Some analogies are stronger in certain groups or contexts. These analogies are the analogies that the decision makers and constructors of early warning systems are vulnerable towards. Such analogies can be coercive, and thus may create an actor bound rationale. Yet, in a constructed world we cannot identify analogies as false or true in their ability to match our current situation. In many cases we are not even aware of their impact on our perception. Consequently actors cannot, with positivistic certainty, construct a system that warns them of danger outside their perception. Actors can only build socially constructed models and they can only observe models and consequently only construct systems to warn of threats within that model. The model is itself of no harm. It could indeed be much helpful. It becomes harmful when decision makers treat it as reality instead of a model.

1.1 Disposition

Initially I will declare my research questions, aims and limitations. In chapter two I will describe the theory of early warning and the operational challenges to early warning derived from the theory. In the same chapter I will state the propositions illustrating my arguments. In chapter three I will precise my own ontological and epistemological position, in contrast to the positivistic approach. I will also shortly present the method of my illustrative case study. In chapter four I will conduct an illustrative case-study of the Korean War based on the propositions presented in chapter two. In chapter five I will discuss my finds.

1.2 Aim and limitations

I aim in this thesis to describe how the uses of analogies operate within early warnings system and how constructors and operators of positivistic early warning system must prevail under great methodological challenges, which is not always acknowledged by the actors. I will propose a number of theoretical propositions in order to describe the challenges of predictive systems and advocate further research

on the study of the importance of analogies in early warning systems. There are many forms of early warning. This study is on strategic early warning such as used to interpret and detect threats against a state. I have one primary descriptive and theory developing question (Q1) and one secondary, hermeneutic, illustrative question (Q2):

(Q1) What risks are involved in the use of analogies in early warning systems?

(Q2) How did analogies in US early warning systems hamper or effect US decision making, leading up to the Korean War and its escalation against China?

The illustrative case study on the Korean War aims less to give empiric support for my first research question (Q1). Rather it seeks to create availability and hermeneutic understanding of an otherwise complex and abstract dynamic. The illustration emphasizes the importance of the study of analogies and illustrates the theoretical framework better than a clear cut theoretical research design. My hope is that the illustration will serve as a schematic presentation for the reader and leave them more able to access the challenges of early warning systems and the analogies that may rule them.

2 Theory and definitions

In this chapter I will state the theoretical approaches of my research and establish proper definitions of the terminology used in this thesis. The aim of this chapter is to create a theoretical framework able to offer propositions. The propositions will be presented in the text and then illustrated in chapter four. The theoretical framework is an eclectic gathering of viable research.

2.1 Analogies, perceptions and the constructed reality

Human decision making and perception is based on cognitive shortcuts. In most cases we do not have the time or the need to explore every aspect of a situation or an object in order to evaluate it. Our minds let us understand the event or the object through the use of analogies and stored experience from similar situations¹. We ‘move beyond information given’ through the use of analogies, creating information in the gaps of what is presented to us². A simple analogy could be that of a new door. Although we have not used a specific door before our experience of its familiar features as hinges, doorknob and shape leaves us confident in how to use it at first glance. We do not need to measure, weigh or explore the door before operating it. Were we presented with only pictures of these distinguishing features of a door we would not be less confident in our perception of the object we stood before. We create models which fill in the blanks, connecting the familiar specifics with each other. These models are created through experience.³

The cognitive operation of model construction through experience equals the creation of an analogy. The methodological term of the same intellectual operation

¹ Gilovich, 1981:798

² Gilovich, 1981:798

³ Neider, 2005: 34

is hypothesis construction. A model prescribing rules for an early warning is an institutionalized hypothesis. The system itself is an implementation of a hypothesis.

(P1) The real world and its causality do not exist. The knowledge on outcomes is therefore only available in hindsight. A prediction is consequently a hypothesis. All predictive systems are based on a specific perception of the world. Change the perception and the model and hypothesis describing the world changes with it.

The exposure to different analogies may affect how we perceive our current situation when moving beyond information given. Whereas a door is usually just a door, the exposure to different analogies may play a great part in the evaluation of more complex and critical situations. In a renowned experiment by Gilovich the test subjects, consisting of political science students from Stanford University, were to read one of three different descriptions of the same fictive security crisis scenario. The three cases held the same information yet it was differently presented to suggest different analogies with the test subjects. The first case was presented suggesting an analogy to the Vietnam War, the second case to the Second World War and the third case related to a completely fictive war analogy and was presented to the control group⁴.

When the test subjects were to suggest an answer to the described crises the result was almost perfect. Those faced with an analogy to the Second World War perceived a threat to U.S interests and suggested an “intervention policy“ whereas those faced with the Vietnam War analogy suggested a “hands off policy”⁵. The results of the experiment suggest that not only do we use analogies to describe and evaluate our current situation but also that there exists a certain set of analogies that are more dominant and coercive than others to our cognitive understanding and evaluation of a presented situation. Both the Second World War and the Vietnam War are conflicts who came to symbolize success versus failure in intervention. They are probably two already existing analytical models with the test subjects, waiting only to be activated by the presented similarities of the fictive cases. These analogies overtake or dominate other of the test person’s available experiences thus creating a coercive analyzing model in alignment with the case presented. The

⁴ Gilovich, 1981: 802

specific analogy used to present a case seems to be more important than the actual information presented. Gilovich refers to the tendency towards a certain analogy as a *vulnerability to an analogy*.⁶ This can be understood as a specific formative experience or knowledge with the subject, providing the earlier mentioned links between the presented pieces of information thus creating an imagined full picture.

The exposure to a strong analogy could stop the evaluator from critically seeking and demanding more information prior to a decision. The bulk of the information supporting a decision can in fact be cognitively acquired. Jervis argues that most decision making is based on such subjective foundations that its true exposure would “mortify a logician” as well as the decision maker herself. Jervis instead proposes a terminology of “psycho-logic” instead of logic.⁷ Due to this contextual logic Jervis defines rational as ‘those ways of interpreting evidence that conform to the generally accepted rules of drawing inferences’⁸. Furthermore Jervis argues that states are surprisingly subjective in their evaluation of other actors. Information on threat and belligerence is primarily interpreted through the lenses of beliefs and levels of “affection” connected to the evaluated object⁹.

(P2) Perception is based on experience and case to case translation and generalization of previous cases. The rationale connected to the perception is based upon *which* previous experience being most coercive with the decision maker and the constructor of the warning system. This experience is turned in to an analogy when used to construct and interpret a model of the world.

In this respect the aim of prediction and the search of casual relationships is not less problematic in early warning systems than it is in academia. The similarities with academia also suggest that the early warning community, in comparison to the academic community, would suffer from the same level of failures in its attempts to objectively describe and explain causal relationships, predictions, trends and key actors rationale.¹⁰ Among scholars of intelligence studies it is commonly argued that the problem in early warning and intelligence gathering is that intelligence

⁵ Gilovich, 1981:805

⁶ Gilovich, 1981:807

⁷ Jervis 1976: 118

⁸ Jervis 1976: 119

⁹ Jervis 1976: 122f

¹⁰ Agrell.2008:174

actors approach their profession more as a bureaucratic craft than a scientific trade thus simplifying the inherent methodological challenges of their work¹¹. It seems likely that absence of a critical discourse on prediction leaves the system collared by a positivistic default mode. The attempt to force adversaries into one owns logic and model of rationality can be seen in many cases throughout history. When the CIA was criticized for missing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 the retired CIA celebrity Sherman Kent replied that ‘[It] wasn’t the CIA analysts that were wrong but Nikita Chrusjtjov’¹².

In an attempt to formalize case to case generalization some scholars use the instrumental term Case Based Reasoning (CBR)¹³. This method of decision support is intended to translate information into digital knowledge and to draw experience from events past through “lines of similarity”¹⁴. This means that variables in different cases, past and current, are assigned correspondence thus describing the same event and providing foreknowledge in the latter case. The virtue of a digital system is the rapid results, aiding the system’s ability to detect threats in time. The problem is still, although concealed by the rapid ‘Artificial-Intelligence’ like computer based results, that the lines of similarity and key variables must be identified and given a value which to compare against, by a bias human. The seemingly objective and schematic presentation is thus concealing the subjective operation of such value assignment.

On a tactical, operational or local contextual level the CBR method has somewhat proven its worth after massive digitalization of local experiences. An example of such information is the experiences on riot control in Kosovo. In a case such as Kosovo, the international community has experienced numerous riots and can therefore to a reasonable instrumental extent identify indicators as well as acknowledge warnings¹⁵. On a low tactical level it is, at least, less unreliable to assign values due to the closeness between those variables and the possible outcome of those variables (an angry mob with AK-47’s is more likely to pose a threat than the same mob would if unarmed).

¹¹ Agrell. 1998: 180

¹² Agrell, 2008: 275

¹³ Neider, 2005: 43

¹⁴ Neider, 2005: 44F

¹⁵ Neider. 2005:45

Many civil organizations use computerized forms of analysis. It is especially common in financial risk assessment. There are even attempts to computerize qualitative research through the surveillance of behavior and language of renowned experts in order get an early warning of upcoming economic distress.¹⁶

If a positivistic “false” analogy is used then the indicators are forced into a context where they to a greater extent lack *validity in result*. The terminology of validity is somewhat binary in its approach to experience past. Where positivists would seek for the right analogy most valid for explaining the case presented, social constructivists would seek for the analogies most coercive with the receiver of that case presentation. Furthermore the binary approach would assume that cases do not risk being presented subjectively (as in the Gilovich experiment) thus being responded to accordingly subjectively. However it is commonly argued that intelligence actors tend to ‘sex up’ or ‘politicize’ their presentation in order to align them with a certain analogy available with the receiver¹⁷.

To summarize:

The selection of which case is most viable for a translation is an operation most exposed to subjectivity. The operations preciseness risks being hampered by exposure to coercive analogies. An analogy is the knowledge on a current case derived from a perceived similar case in the past. A coercive analogy is an experience shared or advocated by the critical mass of the warning systems creators as well as its operators. The analogy creates an actor bound rationale ever changing due to the perception of the beholder. The rationale or “psycho logic” may differ greatly between the subject and the observer.

2.2 Threats and early warning

A threat is a perception of the sum of an actor’s intentions plus the actor’s ability to carry out his intentions. Knowledge only on presence of intentions *or* ability is not viable enough to raise direct concern. Abilities with an actor with whom one is

¹⁶ Li. 2009: 886

aligned (thus perceived lacking harmful intentions) can instead be reassuring¹⁸. Depending on the assessments of an actor an early warning system could focus on either intentions or ability, or both, if resources are abundant¹⁹. In the early 20th century the British realization of Russia constructing railroads towards British controlled Afghanistan set of an alarm within the colonial British warning systems. A railroad enabled Russia to rapidly and en masse deploy troops against Britain in central Asia. The railroad construction was therefore interpreted as both an indicator of a changed value in Russia's intentions as well as their developing abilities, establishing an increased threat against Britain's interests²⁰.

An early warning system's indicators are in short a number of values being monitored and measured in order to describe the tendency of an object due to the perceived relation between the monitored values and changes in the objects behavior²¹. In many positivistic systems the indicators are divided into subgroups as event "trigger indicators" and "structural indicators" providing different information on the threat when summarized and evaluated by the system operator, the decision maker²². Indicators are, of course, intellectually constructed and designated by the system's constructor, who is not always the latter system operator. Indicators can be described as a number of hypotheses on mechanism or propositions, gathered from cases past, thought able to indicate a change in another value. The information between the threat and the system indicator is generally called a signal. The excessive amount of information, drowning the "right" signals from reaching the indicators is normally referred to as the earlier mentioned noise.

Frequently, an early warning system is constructed by intelligence actors. A common approach among British intelligence scholars is to transform the need for power and information into *surveillance*²³. Yet, such a definition of intelligence comes with a popular disclaimer; the term *surveillance* suggests, falsely, that decision makers always know, in accordance to their goals, which interests to

¹⁷ Fägersten: 2010:223

¹⁸ Jervis. 1976: 117f

¹⁹ Sullivan. 2008:18

²⁰ Jervis. 1976: 36

²¹ Neider. 2005:50f

²² Neider. 2005: 53

²³ Gill. 2009:18

peruse and which values to protect²⁴. In early 20th century a Russian diplomat described the British diplomacy's virtues as follows: 'The whole art of diplomacy is to mask one's intentions. And that is where the English excel. No one ever knows what they intend to do because they never know themselves'²⁵.

An early warning system is not necessarily a strict institutionalized formation. It could also be described, in its loosest form of definition, as a *structural relation between threat, warning and decision*, all of which fit into one single person's intellectual capacity at worst. An early warning system can be much less formal than a ballistic missile warning center. It can be a small ad hoc gathering of cigar smoking staff officers evaluating information from aerial reconnaissance operations or HUMINT sources²⁶. It is not their size but the purpose of their evaluation that defines them.

2.2.1 Early warning failure, decision and sensor errors

In the earlier cited report *Collective behavior and early warning*, from the Swedish defense research agency (FOI), the authors seek a way to in a tactical context predict violent riots through different indicators provided by analogies. The authors' finds imply that such a prediction is possible and viable, in a tactical context, yet not easily systematized and implemented in a system even at that level²⁷. The commonly suggested challenge for such systems is the task of identifying the right indicators as well as separating them from the other flows of information. Furthermore, the indicators are ever changing and fluent in their appearance leaving the "alarm operator" only in hindsight perceivably confirmed of the causal relationship and observable signs²⁸. On a greater level, such as operational or strategic levels, the number of different outcomes, possible variables and interpretations makes such identification even harder and less reliable, possible even bordering on the provocative.

²⁴ Gill. 2009:18, Jervis 1976:410

²⁵ Jervis. 1976:54

²⁶ HUMINT= Intelligence gathered by a human source and sensor.

²⁷ Neider.2005: 49f

²⁸ Neider.2005: 50f

Creating an early warning system has only one purpose, to provide *time* for decision makers to evaluate the situation in order to direct a response and project resources to counter the threat²⁹. In my framework the operation of warning through alerting indicators is called *detection*. Every threat and warning dynamic has a *point of no return*. This is when the systems detection can no longer provide sufficient time for policymakers to change or avoid the consequences of the threat hence the system loses its meaning.³⁰ One of the most ambitious cases of confidence in one's strategic early warning system, in relation to time, is that of Sweden. In the vast military cutbacks raging in 1996 the social democratic government employed a defense policy based on an expected ten year early warning [sic!] of a possible Russian aggression³¹. The paradox of a system must always be understood in relation to time, it can only be proven correct in hindsight yet the acknowledgment of the threat must be done prior to its confirmation. Detection is consequently only meaningful when established prior to the point of no return. If the system systematically detects beyond the point of no return the error is in *machina* and the system is unable on a *sensor level*. This is due to a misperception of where to and against which values to aim the systems indicators.

Threats are being monitored at different levels and in different relations to time. A strategic early warning system might provide insight to enemy intentions of developing nuclear missiles, leaving time for decision makers to counter the threat in different manners. A nuclear missile early warning system gives a nation, and its decision makers, gloomy knowledge of imminent apocalyptic destruction, leaving relatively few decisions available at the time of detection (and none of those decisions available concerns actual survival, only Hammurabian retribution or no retribution).

The relation between time and warning has also dynamics and cognitive paradoxes in the perceived validity of a system, or in the confidence of it as a functional predictive system. Concerning threats of the magnitude of a nuclear attack and the few available decisions connected to detection of such an attack the question of reliability and subjective warning is most sound. For example; the

²⁹ Agrell. 1998: 187

³⁰ Sullivan. 2008:24f

³¹ Agrell, 2010: 88,89

problem with missile “early” warning is the short response time. The short reaction time, perhaps only minutes, calls for a predetermined connection between *detection* and *decision*. Nuclear war is to be declared and retaliation employed based on signals from a radar warning system.³²

A radar early warning system is a hypothetical model of an expected behavior. The available decisions at detection are fearsome and less hypothetical. The risk of a false detection is therefore as catastrophic as failure to detect. However, if decision makers do not have confidence enough to make connected, automated responding decisions to detection, the system has little use because the acknowledgment of the detection will always, in its relation to time, end up beyond the point of no return³³. The early warning system, that includes decision in its definition, then fails on a *decision level*. Jervis argues that decision makers often reevaluate their confidence in decision supporting systems when faced with unpleasant choices and outcomes, such as initiating Armageddon one could presume³⁴.

What Jervis refers to as “message interaction” is what I refer to as confidence in a system’s detection or threat acknowledgment. According to Jervis the message (or the detection in an early warning system system) is subject to the earlier mentioned contextual “psycho logic” of the decision maker (and system operator) hence the systems credibility is primarily derived from its correspondence to the already existing rationale, beliefs, wishes and experiences of the decision maker.³⁵ Those already established perceptions of relationships, causality and rationale are derived from analogies. It is the past experiences operationalized into analytical models filtering and categorizing all information.

(P3) The early warning system can fail at a decision level. Decision failure is when the system’s indicators detect a threat but when the threat goes unacknowledged by the decision maker. *This is due to either lack of confidence in the system or the presence of strong analogies that overwrites the detection.* Decision level failure is due to the system operator’s analogies hampering him from reaction on the information presented.

³² Spinardi. 2007:91,104

³³ Agrell 1998: 186f

³⁴ Jervis. 1976: 56

³⁵ Jervis, 1976: 122

The Israeli early warning before the Yom Kippur War was a simple phone call from a HUMINT source, or simply a spy, in Egypt³⁶. The credential of that system was not some intricate measurement of indicators and their closeness to the operating threat. President Nasser had simply told the spy that Egypt would invade Israel within a couple of hours, the spy then called Mossad³⁷. One could assume that the notion of a war with Egypt was well within the reach of the operating Israeli analogies due to the models created with experiences of wars past. Because of this Israeli perception of Egypt early warning systems were aimed against Egypt. The HUMINT source was deemed reliable and accurate. The warning was therefore acknowledged before the point of no return and defense preparations were initiated. *The cognitive action of acknowledging and reacting to a warning is as vital as the warning itself in the early warning system.* In an example such as Yom Kippur the system succeeded at both the *sensor* as well as *decision* level.

(P4) The early warning system is based upon the model derived from the used analogy. The early warning system is therefore never aimed at the real world but at the model. This does not mean that the system could not have a satisfactory outcome. Satisfactory outcome does not mean that the system is describing the truth.

(P5) The early warning system can fail at a *sensor level*. Sensor failure is when the systems indicators are not assigned the correct values or when the indicators are not able to evaluate a threat due to its unforeseen features. Sensor level failure is due to the system constructor's coercive analogies.

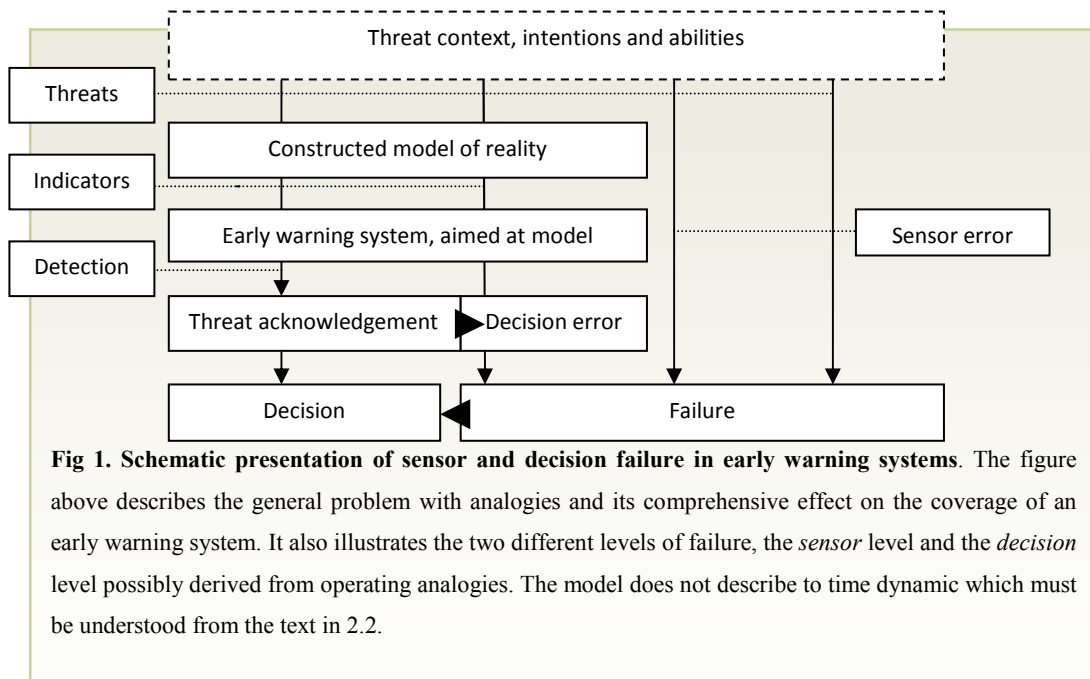
An early warning system based upon the translation of singular events into a generalized model or prediction is based mostly upon the inductive method³⁸. Without a generalizing aim the information presented to early warning systems is of little use. The inductive method is the subjective selection of cases and empiric data with the aim of creating an understanding of a specific case³⁹.

³⁶ Uri Bar. 2008: 231f

³⁷ Uri Bar. 2008: 232

³⁸ Agrell.1998:180

³⁹ Teorell.2007: 11



To summarize:

An early warning system is constructed to detect threats. It is constructed to operate within the model that is the constructors' perception of the world. The system is monitoring indicators. *Indicators are perceived observable values which has been designated and assigned to describe changes in the tendencies of an event perceived threatening.* The values are being assigned by the systems constructor. An early warning system can fail on a *sensor* or *decision* level. On a sensor level the indicators do not detect the threat or are unable to do so before the point of no return. On a decision level failure the systems indicators detect a threat yet the warning does not result in action due to a lack of acknowledgment by decision makers.

3 Method

- What also floats?
- A duck!
- Exactly! So logically...
- If she weighs the same as a duck...She is made of wood?
- And therefore?
- A WITCH!
- BURN HER!

(Sir Benevere and the villagers on the indicators of witch craft, the Quest for the Holy Grail)

3.1 Critiquing positivism

Early warning systems, and the instilled confidence in them, are the makings of a positivistic approach to prediction and science. The systems are based on an institutionalization of perceived rules, treated as facts. In this section I will initially state the positivistic approach to science and prediction and thereafter the social constructivist critique of that approach also further enclosing my own ontological and epistemological position.

3.1.1 Positivistic approach

In positivistic science a great challenge comes with the seeking of *validity in results*. Through the definition of Esaiasson the validity of results comes through the compliance of the theoretic definition and the “actual operating indicator” indicative of the absence of systematic errors and the presence and preciseness of method and variables (high validity). High reliability is the absence of unsystematic errors.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Esaiasson 2004:67

For example; rain always comes from clouds, it comes from gray clouds and never from white clouds. Clouds are there for deductively well equipped to provide warning of rain since they are; (1) free from systematic errors (the compliance between the operating threat and the indicator= high validity). (2) Every times it rains, it rains from gray clouds (absence of unsystematic errors=high reliability). Clouds have good validity in results. However, although all rain comes from gray clouds not all gray clouds rain. The clouds are at best indicators of rain. Weather warning systems are good examples of systems operating with a deductive method.

In the positivistic approach of early warning systems the question of result validity is, not surprisingly, crucial. If a positivistic system's design is false, or methodologically not valid in result, the decision or lack of decision based on that system design will be wrong in an absolute sense. This can be translated into validity in results for early warning systems; when the indicator is closely connected to the operating threat and when the threat always indicates the same way, the system has a good validity in results. This is only achievable in a positivistic approach to early warning systems.

Early warning systems are not only directed against strategic actors and competitive enemy institutions but also against the forces of nature and universe like earthquakes, floods, melting glaciers, solar-storms, and meteors for example, where quantitative methods are much useful. Some systems must use quantitative methods and some systems must use qualitative methods, or a combination of both, to fulfill their purpose. However, without an aim to generalize, neither approach serves an interest for a predictive system. Early warning equals, according to the writer of this thesis, a belief in an instrumental generalization and case-to-case translation.

The establishing of casual relationships and the quantifying of finds with the aim of establishing "facts" is mostly a deductive phase⁴¹. It is conducted prior to the inductive case to case translation operation due to the need to understand the frequency of a feature hence aiding the constructor to assign values and features which to monitor. The inductive phase may there after help the constructor to more precisely describe the feature's mechanisms in order to construct a more solid

⁴¹ Teorell. 2007: 10

model of the object and construct indicators in line with the deductively acquired important values. The quantitative knowledge helps the analyst to understand how representative, and there for, reliable a feature is. *An understanding of the door's fundamental features (validity) times the knowledge on how viable this information is concerning this specific door (reliability) equals a validity of results in a systems design.*

3.1.2 Social constructivist approach

The outcome of an evaluation is dependent upon which analogy the system uses to categorize the information, like the above mentioned experiment with war analogies suggests. *If a coercive analogy exists it will formulate the threat and indicators thereof rather untouched by the information presented but in alignment with those cognitive links prescribed by the coercive analogy.* Our cognitive expectations and prior experience will formulate information and construct models of the threat in order to connect our acquired islands of knowledge⁴².

Since we cannot study the real world we must study models. A model will never provide validity of results to the metaphysical extent suggested by Esaiasson, it can only do so within the model itself. But one can describe the previous experiences of the actors thus rendering a narrative understanding of the specific actor rational or “psycho logic” (which could be as strong and visible that it may be mistaken for an observable rational) and the reality perceived by the studied actor.

The study of science holds many an amusing example of scientific blunders and, in hindsight, absurd assumptions in the quest for knowledge and generalization. Especially so in the pre modern days. Scientists in the pre modern days were not specialized in the manner of today's scientists but instead fielded knowledge and writing on both the science of nature as well as the social sciences⁴³. This meant that it was academic fair game to use analogies from the natural science to describe human society and vice versa⁴⁴. Ant and bee societies could be studied in order to gain knowledge on human societies. Interestingly the tendency to draw knowledge

⁴² Bucchi. 2002: 44f

⁴³ Bucchi. 2002: 43f

⁴⁴ Bucchi. 2002: 44,f

and explanatory models from bio-social analogies was a predominant feature of German social scientist in early 20th century, to a known outcome. This method was greatly criticized by the later prevailing British and American scientists who argued that a human society must possess a moral and societal complexity above that of bugs.⁴⁵ One must assume that the future will reveal some of our own scientific methods and assumptions as problematic. Perhaps even preposterous and describing our formative experiences, societal structure and political discourse before describing the real world and its features.

Although beehives would not count as a sound social science case selection today, there is a long tradition of merging the method and epistemology of natural and social science. There is a social scientific longing for the simplicity in an equation, its reliability and promises of generalization and prediction⁴⁶. The same longing inhabits the early warning communities. Agrell points out that the combination of inductive models and strong institutional forms of surveillance are a common source of failure in early warning systems⁴⁷. In a formalized intelligence system the critical approach to epistemological and ontological assumptions tends to lose sway against the temptations of a more positivistic approach where risks are measured, or rather presented, in graphs and numbers⁴⁸. The core problem with positivism is its misguiding of the receiver, implying that the facts are acquired with the same clinical and indisputable objectivity as are they presented with.

The earlier mentioned inductive method is a feature of qualitative research⁴⁹. I would argue that the use of strategic early warning analogies is inductive in the sense that a scenario is translated through a cognitive case to case operation, just like when approaching a new door. Specific case particulars are transformed into corresponding specifics of the current situation; hinges and doorknobs (as described in section 2.1.1). In the creation of analogies, whereas a case through inductive method and “lines of similarity” are set to represent a current case, it is to a great extent natural yet hazardous for the operators to *create* hard numbers to compare. These conversions in positivistic warning systems do not acknowledge

⁴⁵ Bucchi. 2002: 45

⁴⁶ Gill. 2009: 51

⁴⁷ Agrell. 1998: 181

⁴⁸ Agrell. 1998: 179f

⁴⁹ Teorell. 2007: 10,f

vulnerability to an analogy. Positivists seek the right historic case to explain the present, assuming such a case exists.

Social constructivism ‘holds a middle ground’ in epistemological and ontological discourse⁵⁰. Resembling the postmodernist argument for a world in all constructed features and valid only by their beholder, social constructivists on the whole also argue for a non-existing world. Social constructivists, as the postmodernists, cannot observe and categorize truth, due to our eternal bias. Yet some social constructivists, including this writer argues that: *this does not mean that in social science there could not exist soft causal relationships and/or an independent ability or intention apart from our perception of it*⁵¹. Nuclear missiles launched by an enemy will most probably strike us independent of our perception of them coming or not.

Social constructivists distance themselves from positivists in the sense that positivist claim to objectively describe and explain not only *an existing* but what they see as an *observable* “real world”. I do not believe that to be generally possible outside the metaphysics. We describe and observe perceptions.

3.2 Case selection and data.

As stated above the aim of this thesis is to formulate a theoretical and methodical argument for a more careful use of analogies. I will exemplify my arguments with an illustrative case study of the Korean War in 1950. Both the North Korean invasion as well as the Chinese intervention in favor of North Korea were unpredicted, yet not unwarned of, and came to symbolize a failure of contemporary US strategic early warning systems. I will illustrate how the undetected North Korean invasion could be described as a *sensor failure* and the unacknowledged detection of the Chinese intervention as a *decision failure*. There are many other cases in which intended early warning systems did not detect a threat, many of them more recent than the Korean War. But the Korean case has many virtues.

⁵⁰ Björkdahl. 2002: 25

⁵¹ Björkdahl. 2002: 26

The selection of this case in particular has three main reasons: **(1) “Easily” identified analogies:** The US and Soviet leadership had just finished fighting the Second World War and were in the fierce race for claiming the still undetermined and unaligned white spots of the world. There are few other cases where the decision makers had had such an extensive exposure to an analogy or set of analogies. **(2) Documented evaluation of early warning signals:** The warnings from the Chinese regime, Indian ambassador as well as the immense concentrations of Chinese troops would expectedly have given rise to greater concern, were they not drowned, not in “noise” but in analogies. It can therefore be argued that the impact of analogies can be isolated (illustrated) to a greater extent in the case of the Korean War than in many other cases. **(3) Identifiable policymakers.** The role of President Truman in the Korean War is great. The circle of determining decision makers around him is less hard to identify than the greater organizations of contemporary US.

My illustrative case study will rest only upon secondary sources. I will not myself undertake any attempts to unveil new findings from the archives of Moscow or Beijing. My empiric material is there for not new and especially breathtaking in itself. Its purpose is to be seen in the light of my theoretical approach and suggested propositions. Much of my empiric material is also quite accessible without much analysis.

3.2.1 Describing analogies

In order to illustrate my theoretic framework and answer my research questions I will have to present empiric data illustrating the propositions presented in chapter two.

(Q1) What risks are involved in the use of analogies in early warning systems?

(Q2) How did analogies in US early warning systems hamper or effect US decision making, leading up to the Korean War and its escalation against China?

The aim and theoretical framework would to a large extent benefit from a simplified case study design derived from the policy tracking method. Bennet describes the methods features as follows:

‘To identify the process, one must perform the difficult feat of figuring out which aspect of the initial conditions observed, in conjunction with which simple principles of the many that may be at work, would have combined to generate the observed sequence of events.’⁵²

The method is used in inductive studies and aims to work closely upon the studied actors, describing their alternatives and decisions, illustrating their specific context in relation to the outcome. Such a method works well with the social constructivist approach of relational rationale and subjectivity of both the studied objects and their decisions. It can be used for both theory testing and theory development and can be well articulated in the contextual rationale within a case⁵³.

Given my research aim and theoretical propositions I find that a very simplified policy tracking method would aid my analysis and structure my presentation of the illustrative case study’s result. Taking into account the positions stated in 3.1 and 3.1.1 I must settle for a hermeneutic understanding before evidence in that presentation of results. The illustrative case study conducted will not isolate analogies as the sole ruling variable of the outcome, this is not only due to the lack of space in this thesis but also due to the difficulties in proving the variables isolation and casual effect on the outcome.

In order to illustrate the propositions P1-P5 I will use a simplified presentation of the *narrative* of the early warning systems constructors and operator. This answers to the search for the coercive analogies operating as the fundament of policy. Essentially the idea of narrative policy tracking analysis is that the historical narrative can be transformed into a theoretical description suitable for illustrating the impact of analogies⁵⁴. Instead of seeking a theoretical explanation I will search for an illustration and theoretical framework possibly describing the outcome. Taken into account the above mentioned statements the case study can be perceived as either a “heuristic case study” (according to Eckstein’s terminology) or “hypothesis generating case study” (according to Lijphart’s terminology)⁵⁵. The

⁵² Bennet. 2005:206

⁵³ Bennet. 2005:206

⁵⁴ Bennet. 2005:211

⁵⁵ Bennet. 2005: 213

method of illustrating propositions would, at least semantically, align the study primarily as a “hypothesis generating case study”.

I will only illustrate the coercive analogies of the US leadership. The Soviet and Chinese analogies will be discussed, however they are much less accessible than those of the US. This is due to lack of available documents, memoirs or reliable accounts of the thoughts of the comrades Stalin and Mao Zedong who as individuals were determining or even sole policy makers of their nations.

4 Going to war; Truman's memories, fears and analogies.

In this chapter I will illustrate my arguments and propositions with two cases which demonstrate failure to act upon indicators of strategic aggression and escalation. The two cases are both set in the Korean War and illustrate how exposure to coercive analogies can have fundamental consequences for the ability to detect changes in enemy intentions and ability, the core elements of threat.

4.1 Case one. -Faced with war-

On the 25th of June 1950 the peoples' army of North Korea, in a surprise assault sanctioned by Stalin, crossed the border to South Korea and pushed south with great determination and speed, shattering the surprised South Korean forces⁵⁶. At the time of the invasion no prior warning of an eminent attack or increased threat of invasion had reached the US leadership. This failure to warn of the North Korean and Soviet aggression was a great disaster for the newly established Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The critique against the CIA was fierce and merciless. The whole purpose of Truman establishing the CIA in 1947 was to avoid the next Pearl Harbor.⁵⁷

Despite the obvious geopolitical delicacy of a conflict on the Korean peninsula, bordering China and Soviet, the United States decided to take military action when faced with such aggression on the part of North Korea. Due to the Soviet boycott of the Security Council the United States managed to obtain an UN-mandate and employ an UN-force tasked with repelling the North Korean attack⁵⁸. The bulk of the UN-force consisted of American forces, predominantly at air and at sea, the US

⁵⁶ Stoessinger. 2001:54

⁵⁷ Agrell. 2008.179

General Macarthur was appointed supreme commander of the UN-contingent⁵⁹. The lack of sensors in South Korea was absolute. General Macarthur himself had to make a personal and highly covert recognizance in person before presenting the available military alternatives to President Truman⁶⁰.

4.1.1 Operating US analogies

In the aftermath of the Second World War and the struggle for containing communist influence it was widely perceived by US policy makers that deterrence and solid response was the only way to hold the communist expansion at bay. Yet there was no experience of actual war fighting with the communist states.⁶¹ The production of defiance from the West was managed through force demonstrations, economic aid and proclamation of interest spheres. The confrontations had so far more in common with chess than war. In the years after the Second World War leading up to the Korean War a number of experiences had shaped US perceptions of the communist threat and how to repel it. Soviet involvement in Greece, Turkey, Iran and Czechoslovakia are some of the most renowned, and coercive, cases.

The British influenced Iran had a lingering Soviet military presence since the Second World War. Soviet troops sought to aid a northern province, rich in oil, in seceding in order to align it with the Soviet Union. After direct threats of British and US military intervention the Soviet troops left the country and the northern province remained Iranian. In Turkey, the Soviet Union demanded territory lost in 1918 and requested a naval base in the Dardanelles, hence acquiring control of the entry to the Black Sea. Such an outcome was avoided through a massive naval muscle flexing by the US navy outside the Turkish coast and after generous economic and military aid to Turkey. In Czechoslovakia the communist party coup d'état left the President Benês with the rather uncomfortable alternatives of surrender or Russian invasion and civil war. With no solid western support he caved in to the communist demands and soon the nation was incorporated into the

⁵⁸ Stoessinger. 2001:65

⁵⁹ Stoessinger. 2001:65

⁶⁰ Stoessinger. 2001:63

⁶¹ Stoessinger. 2001:58

Soviet sphere.⁶² In post war *Greece* a civil war erupted between communist partisans, supported by Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, and the conservative government aligned with Britain. The US initiated its own economic support for the conservative government and weighted, together with Britain, the scale to a communist defeat in 1949⁶³.

The strong presence with the experiences from Greece is widely associated with President Truman in the US approach to the Korean War. The decisive circle of US decision makers shared that analogy. The US secretary of Defense later stated that no one ever questioned that comparison.⁶⁴ On the 25th of June, the day of the North Korean invasion, President Truman explained to a gathering of journalist that: ‘This [the communist aggression in Korea] is the Greece of the Far East. If we are tough enough now, there won’t be any next step⁶⁵’.

President Truman had over his previous five years in presidency taken many hard decisions, including that of the utter destruction of two Japanese cities in 1945. In his memoirs President Truman recollect the similarities between the North Korean aggression and, besides the communists in Greece, the German, Japanese and Italian predecessors’ aggressions, preluding the Second World War⁶⁶. He had also seen the consequences of appeasement against such actors. Yet the analogies providing models of interpretation did not hint of a war in Korea.

The US did not initially imagine the Korean peninsula as a possible isolated theater of war. Within the US military doctrines and the decision makers’ experiences from Europe and Iran it was perceived that the communist regimes would seek to aggressively influence yet not risk an armed clash with core values and territories of the US and its allies⁶⁷. The previous acts of communist influencing were seen by the US as mere probing with no real intent of armed attack if met with confident US defiance⁶⁸. No US troops were therefore stationed in Korea due to the US perception of all future wars being total thus rendering it

⁶² Thruén. 1971:9

⁶³ Thruén. 1971:10

⁶⁴ Stoessinger. 2001: 61

⁶⁵ Stoessinger. 2001: 60

⁶⁶ Stoessinger. 2001:58

⁶⁷ Jervis. 1967: 50

⁶⁸ Stoessinger. 2001:61

irrational to expect an isolated aggression on the Korean peninsula.⁶⁹ Consequently no systems monitored possible indicators of such an isolated attack as it was deemed irrational. Hence, when faced with war, the supreme commander of the Pacific and his jeep had to go to Korea themselves in order to get an idea of what happened.. This strategic misperception of Soviet's and China's intentions can be summarized in the later insights of the Foreign minister of President Truman, Dean Acheson, when facing the war:

“The very fact of this aggression...constitutes undeniable proof that the forces of international communism possess not only the willingness, but also the intention, of attacking and invading any free nation within their reach at any time that they think they can get away with it. The real significance of the Korean aggression lies in this evidence that, even of the resultant risk of starting a third world war, communism is willing to resort to armed aggression, whenever it believes it can win.⁷⁰”

(P4) The early warning system is based upon the model derived from the used analogy. The early warning system is therefor never aimed at the real world but at the model. This does not mean that the system not will ha satisfactory outcome. Satisfactory outcome does not mean that the system is describing the truth.

Previously Soviet and its satellites had shown restraint when realizing that a continuation of a certain policy would lead to an armed confrontation with the West, at least so in Greece, Turkey and Iran.

(P2) Perception is based on experience and case to case translation and generalization of previous cases. The rationale connected to the perception is based upon *which* previous experience being most coercive with the decision maker and the constructor of the warning system. This experience is turned in to an analogy when used to construct and interpret a model of the world

4.1.2 Early warning failure.

There was no early warning systems of rank in South Korea, there were no systems aimed at North Korea or against Chinese or Soviet aggression on the Korean

⁶⁹ Jervis. 1974: 57

⁷⁰ Stoessinger. 2001:50

peninsula. The systems therefore, through its nonexistence, failed at a sensor level. When faced with war decision makers did a remarkably fast and solid recapturing of the initiative. Therefore it could be argued that the success of detection also would have had led to an acknowledgment if made prior to the point of no return.

(P5) The early warning system can fail at a *sensor level*. Sensor failure is when the systems indicators are not assigned the correct values or when the indicators are not able to evaluate a threat due to its unforeseen features. Sensor level failure is due to the system constructor's coercive analogies.

4.2 Case two. -US decision makers and the missed Chinese belligerence-

“The Chinese intervention in the Korean War provides a good illustration of the practical, operational consequences of divergent perceptions in world affairs. These perceptions are in effect definitions of the situation at hand.”⁷¹

After a successful amphibious landing at Inchon and a following counteroffensive the UN forces began advancing. The UN forces and their American leadership were soon forced to make a decision on whether to continue onwards into North Korea at the risk of Chinese and Soviet intervention or stop the offensive at the 38th parallel⁷². On the first of October the first South Korean forces crossed the parallel. On the second of October the Indian ambassador in Beijing sent a warning to Truman with the content that China would not stand for an US offensive closer to the Chinese border⁷³. On the 10th of October, just after the crossing of the 38th parallel by the American first cavalry division, the Chinese foreign minister left his first of many warnings declaring that ‘[...]the Chinese people [would] not stand idly by in this war of invasion’⁷⁴.

These warnings did however not concern the US leadership⁷⁵. It was perceived that the continued and escalated warnings were mere diplomatic maneuvers and

⁷¹ Stoessinger. 2001:74

⁷² Stoessinger. 2001:66

⁷³ Stoessinger. 2001:68

⁷⁴ Stoessinger. 2001:68

⁷⁵ Smith. 2007: 202

that China neither possessed the means or intentions of a direct intervention. This position was established and all agreed upon in a common meeting with President Truman, Foreign minister Acheson, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the National Security Council, the director of the CIA and heavy weight senators, in all the very bulk and critical mass of US decision making actors. However, lower ranking officers and analysts within the CIA and the Pacific command warned greatly of the increased threat and alerting indicators of a Chinese intervention in Korea but they were silenced by the ruling and judgment of the critical mass of the senior officials⁷⁶. The general opinion among the policy makers and senior officers was still that it would be irrational of China to intervene due to the risk of another world war, especially since the Chinese regime lacked nuclear weapons. The aerial reconnaissance photos of massive Chinese troop concentrations at the North Korean border did not change that belief.⁷⁷

The reason for such an interpretation of the Chinese intentions and abilities was, besides the earlier mentioned asymmetry of nuclear weapons, the Chinese lack of conventional heavy weaponry to the quantity that US analysts believed needed to wage war against the US⁷⁸. Less than a week from the reassuring meeting, the fourth Chinese field army, consisting of 200.000 soldiers crossed the Chinese border into North Korea. To avoid a great escalation to war, the Chinese troops were referred to by their government as “volunteers” joining hands with their Korean comrades. The first soldiers crossed the border of the very day of the meeting.⁷⁹ Eventually the number of Chinese “volunteers” would rise to 360.000 men⁸⁰. The point of no return was definitely reached. The Chinese troops pressed the UN-contingent all the way back to Seoul, which was lost again in January 1951⁸¹. The UN forces advantage in materiel and firepower eventually took its turn on the lighter equipped Chinese forces and after yet another American offensive, the lost ground was regained and the tide turned again in favor of the UN forces. In

⁷⁶ Ovodenko.2007: 255

⁷⁷ Agrell. 2008: 180

⁷⁸ Agrell. 2008:180

⁷⁹ Stoessinger. 2001:71

⁸⁰ Jackson. 2010: 264

⁸¹ Jackson.2010: 261

1953 a ceasefire was signed between the two exhausted forces locked in a costly and bloody stalemate at the 38th parallel.

4.2.1 Operating US analogies

The United States had had a number of face offs with the Soviet Union since the latter's creation. China was in fact an old ally, though under new management. The historic role of China, as a weak yet abiding ally, hampered the US perceptions of the Chinese threat⁸². When faced with the North Korean aggression the US therefore directed attention against the Soviet and not the Chinese threat. Partly because of the Soviets greater ability but also because Soviet was the usual and institutionalized suspect in most war games⁸³.

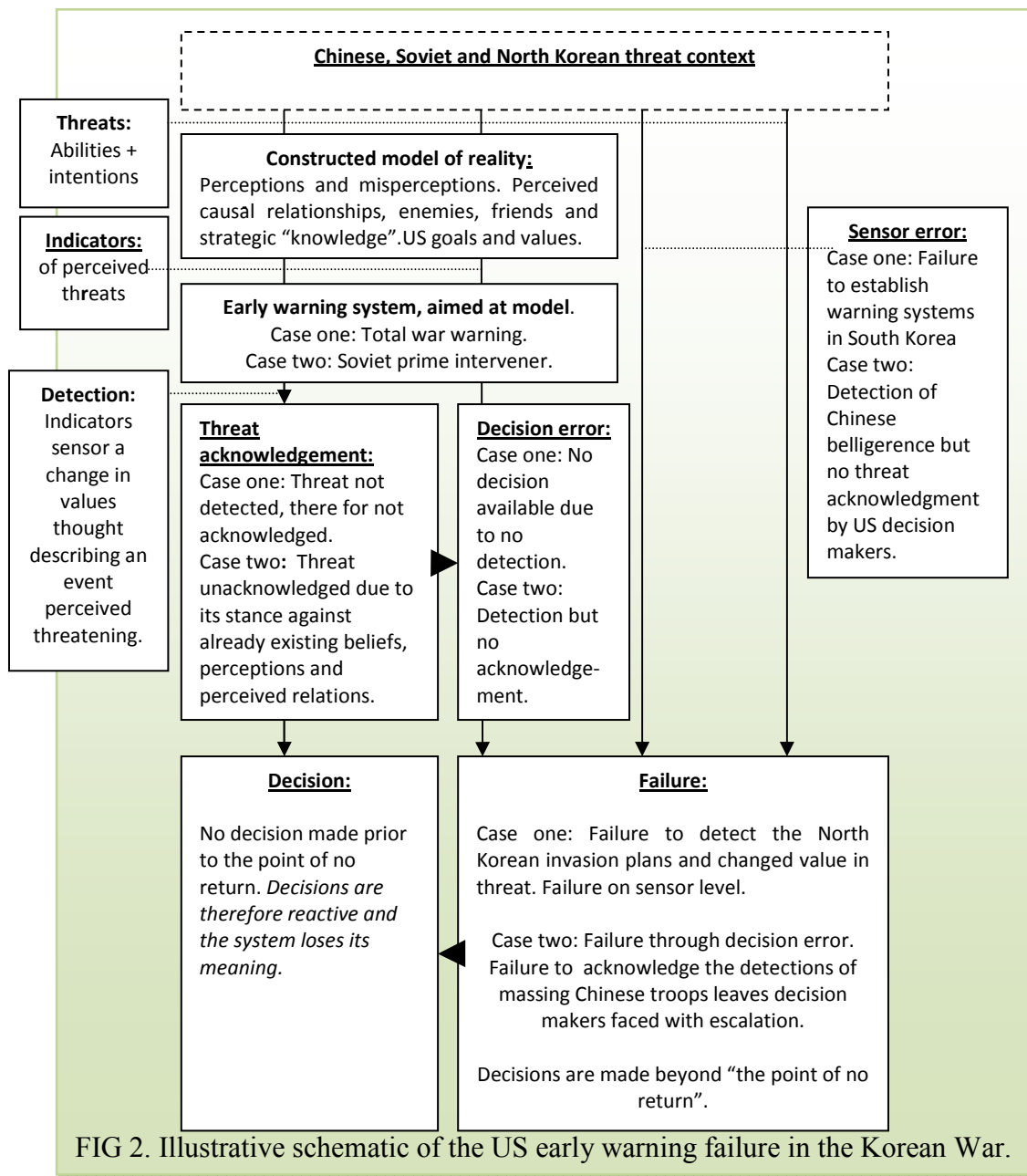
None of the Chinese or Soviet generals had studied at West Point or Sandhurst. The American perception of military logic and logistical necessity was neither that of the Chinese or Soviet logic nor sense of necessity. The US military made a fatal error in their evaluation of the Chinese ability and intentions. The US military, known for its richness in supplies and weaponry, could not understand how a nation would risk facing them with so much less logistical ability and inferior access to heavy weaponry and weapons of mass destruction⁸⁴. This experience was gathered in the campaigns of the Second World War and merged with the perceived rules of strategic asymmetry to a US advantage based on nuclear capacity. Further experience was gathered through the cases of previous Soviet stand offs in Eastern Europe and the weak Chinese efforts in the Second World War. These experiences were transformed into analogies and a model of analysis. From this model the US evaluators perceived a rationale of Soviet and Chinese abilities and intentions. It is possible that the US decision makers therefore could not recognize and *acknowledge the detections* of Chinese troop concentrations and indicators of enemy plans of deployment within the theatre.⁸⁵

⁸² Stoessinger. 2001:71-73, Jervis. 1976: 46, 70

⁸³ Ovodenko.2007: 261,267

⁸⁴ Ovodenko.2007: 262

⁸⁵ Agrell. 2008:180



4.2.2 Early warning failure

The establishing and socialization within the US leadership of a perception of Chinese forces as unable to fight and win against US troops led the US decision makers to believe that China was just rattling its guns to intimidate. The three years of grim war did however show that China was more than able to give US troops a run for their money and that the Chinese decision makers were unaware of the irrationality of their behavior. In the case of missed Chinese belligerence the error is not in the early warning systems sensors. The sensors detected the change in

values describing a Chinese threat, but the systems decision capability faltered. The system consequently failed at a decision level.

(P3) The early warning system can fail at a decision level. Decision failure is when the system's indicators detect a threat but when the threat goes unacknowledged by the decision maker. *This is due to either lack of confidence in the system or the presence of strong analogies that overwrites the detection.* Decision level failure is due to the system operator's analogies hampering him from reaction on the information presented.

(P1) The real world and its causality do not exist. The knowledge on outcomes are therefore only available in hindsight. A prediction is consequently a hypothesis. All predictive systems are based on a specific perception of the world. Change the perception and the model and hypothesis describing the world changes with it.

5 The ghost of wars past; discussion

The ghost of the Korean War came to be the dominant reference of a limited war until the end of the Cold War⁸⁶. Its coercive effect must not be underestimated as President Truman and his successors then took on the campaigns in Indochina. It cannot be underestimated how the lessons of limited war on the Korean peninsula utterly destroyed the belief of an US deterrence policy resting primarily on nuclear weapons and the rationality derived from it.

In the Korean case (Q2) I have illustrated how the perceptions of a rationale hampered the use of US early warning systems in the Korean War. The earlier experiences of confrontation with Soviet may have led the US system constructors to believe that Soviet would not peruse military action when faced with determined defiance. The Chinese intervention was however not unwarned of, yet the detection was not acknowledged due to the coercive analogies and perceptions with US decision makers. The perception of China's lack of ability and intentions stopped the detections to transform into decisions hence leading the war into a grim escalation beyond all actors' first intentions.

The answer to my primary question (Q1) is hopefully available throughout this thesis and with the illustrations of my propositions in chapter four. Based on an approach to early warning derived from these propositions I have made an argument for the need to treat early warning systems with great skepticism and carefulness. A fabricated precise prediction may be as fearsome as a missed one. All systems are based on an oversimplified positivistic approach fit for decision makers yet ill adapt for the complexity of the world and the maneuvers of great powers and their rulers. The experiences with system constructors and operators are the cognitively acquired perceptions ruling the systems outcome.

I have sought to from a social constructivist perspective advocate a more critical approach towards early warning systems. Yet, if standing on a distant Japanese

⁸⁶ Jackson. 2010:255

shore when sounding of the Tsunami alarm, would only positivists run for the hills? This author would definitely excuse himself from any further beach activities on that note. Early warning systems will, and must, always be a part of our decision making. This is a paradox for social constructivists. The critical approach is although necessary. The ever present early warning systems do not fulfill their purposes if given the false trait of preciseness. The intelligence and decision making actors must recognize its subjectivity thus creating cultures whereas critique and exposure on cognitively acquired fact and relationships are acknowledged and taken into account. In fact, perhaps such an acknowledgment would prepare decision makers to handle critical questions after the point of no return, like Truman had to do when faced with the North Korean aggression. By accepting the limitations and challenges of early warning systems the systems are not deemed useless yet downsized to its proper instrumental value thus actually being more useful than before.

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