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## **The Global Balance Sheet: Emerging Security Threats and Multilateral Response Capabilities**

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# The global balance sheet: Emerging security threats and multilateral response capabilities<sup>1</sup>

By David Nyheim<sup>2</sup>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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The last decade has seen significant development in the conflict early warning<sup>3</sup> and response field – in terms of thinking, emergence of systems<sup>4</sup>, mainstreaming of key early warning tools in decision-making, and in the range of response mechanisms and instruments<sup>5</sup>. Much of the initial impetus for this development came from international failures to prevent civil war (Balkans, Zaire) and genocide (Rwanda) in 1990s. These origins have meant that in practice most operational early warning and response systems started with a focus on understanding/tackling internal conflict and promoting external preventive action.

The question posed and answered in this paper is whether current global early warning and response capabilities, as they have developed over the last decade are robust enough to meet the challenges presented in emerging security threats. It is argued that whereas much progress has been made in the conflict early warning and response field – capabilities remain scattered and weak, and the now institutionalised focus on (particularly grievance-based) internal conflict has led to complacency in relation to emerging security threats. This is particularly true when it comes to *multilateral* warning and response efforts – both at a global and regional level. The paper concludes that the global warning-response architecture is weak and at risk of becoming overwhelmed by new security challenges.

The paper starts by looking at the current state of play at a global level – with a review of existing multilateral and non-governmental early warning systems, their coverage, perceived value, impacts, and limitations. It then examines in some detail two regional initiatives (ECOWARN and CEWARN) to illustrate the value and challenges of inter-governmental warning and response systems in Africa. Emerging security threats – particularly as they relate to criminalised conflict (armed violence), extremism/terrorism, and climate change – are subsequently reviewed with emphasis placed on implications for current warning and response capabilities. The paper concludes by drawing implications for the global warning and response architecture of current challenges and emerging threats.

## 2. THE BIG PICTURE

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If slightly restrictive definitions of conflict early warning are used, over 15 governmental, inter-governmental, and non-governmental systems are currently operational (see Table 1 below).

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<sup>3</sup> The definition used here for *early warning* is that it is a process that (a) alerts decision-makers of the potential outbreak, escalation, and resurgence of violent conflict; and (b) promotes an understanding among decision-makers of the nature and impacts of violent conflict.

<sup>4</sup> *Early warning systems* involve regular and organized collection and analysis of information on violent conflict situations. They deliver a set of early warning products (based on qualitative and/or quantitative conflict analysis methods) that are linked (directly or indirectly) to response instruments/mechanisms.

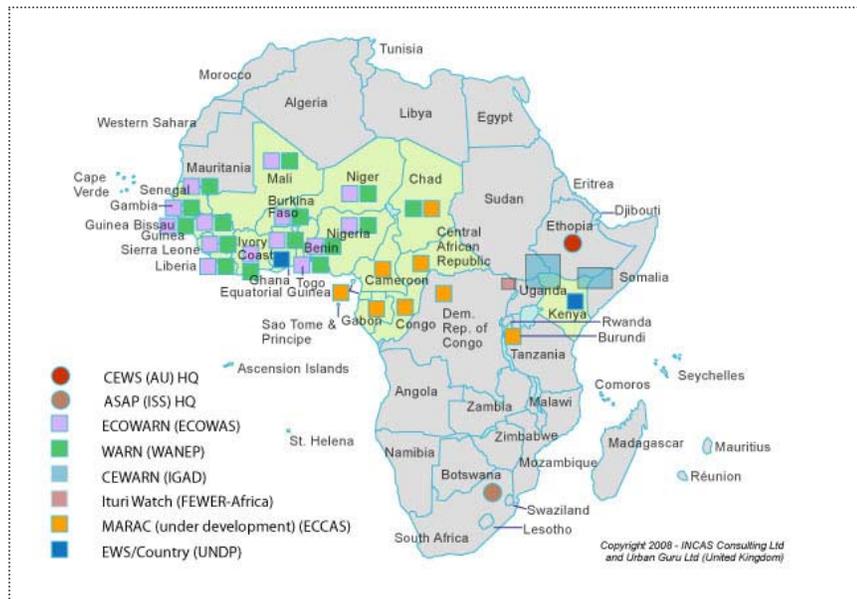
<sup>5</sup> These are preventive instruments and mechanisms (political, economic/financial, social, security) that are deployed to manage, resolve, or prevent the outbreak, escalation, and resurgence of violent conflict.

**Table 1: Governmental, Inter-Governmental, and Non-Governmental Early Warning Systems<sup>6</sup>**

Governmental Early Warning Systems	Inter-Governmental Early Warning Systems	Non-Governmental Early Warning Systems
Secrétariat Général de la Défense Nationale (France): Système d'Alerte Précoce (SAP)	United Nations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OCHA – Early Warning Unit; Humanitarian Situation Room (Colombia)</li> <li>UNDP – Country-level early warning systems in Ghana, Kenya, Ukraine (Crimea), Bolivia (PAPEP), Balkans, Kyrgyzstan</li> </ul>	FEWER-Eurasia (Russia): FEWER-Eurasia Network
		ISS (South Africa): African Security Analysis Programme (ASAP)
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ): Crisis Early Warning System	EU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU Watch List</li> </ul>	FEWER-Africa (Kenya): Ituri Watch (Democratic Republic of Congo)
United States Government: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization and National Intelligence Council: Instability Watch List</li> </ul>	AU: Continental Early Warning System (CEWS)	Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow): Network for Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning (EAWRN)
	CEEAC: Mécanisme d'Alerte Rapide pour l'Afrique Centrale (MARAC)	Foundation for Tolerance International (Kyrgyzstan): Early Warning for Violence Prevention Project
	ECOWAS: ECOWAS Early Warning and Early Response Network (ECOWARN)	Crisis Group (Belgium): Crisis Watch
	IGAD: Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN)	Foundation for Coexistence (Sri Lanka): Program on Human Security and Co-Existence
	OSCE: Centre for Conflict Prevention	West Africa Network for Peace-building (Ghana): Early Warning and Response Network (WARN)

Among inter-governmental agencies, the most developed systems are found in Africa – particularly in the West African sub-region (ECOWARN run by ECOWAS) and in the Horn of Africa (CEWARN run by IGAD) (see map<sup>7</sup>).

Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America have very poor early warning coverage – while Europe is home to the headquarters of several early warning systems.



<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Nyheim, D. (2009) Preventing Violence, War, and State Collapse. The Future of Conflict Early Warning and Response. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/DAC. Paris.

<sup>7</sup> Maps replicated with the permission of INCAS Consulting Ltd. And Urban Guru Ltd. (United Kingdom).

It is possible to distinguish between different *generations* of early warning systems. *First generation systems* (often established in the mid-to-late 1990s) are focused on analysis and often have a mandate that is about promoting evidence-based responses to conflict in the institutions they serve. *Second generation systems* (early 2000s) combine analysis and advocacy in an attempt to catalyze responses of external institutions. While *third generation systems* (post 2003) explicitly focus on responding to threats of (or on-going) violent conflict, while promoting evidence-based responses among other actors. Most first generation systems will often be headquarter-based, while second and third generation systems place stronger emphasis on institutional proximity to the conflict areas they cover.

All systems deliver a set of early warning products (based on qualitative and/or quantitative conflict analysis methods) that are linked to different approaches to catalyzing response. Most multilateral and non-governmental systems are focused on different types of internal conflict, use grievance-premised analytical models or focus on detecting levels of state fragility.

In practice and in perhaps simplistic terms, what this means is that research, information, and analysis looks mostly at what can be called grievance focused indicators (e.g. poverty, inequality, environmental degradation at the roots, as well as arms flows, power changes at the proximate level) and the management of political agendas. It also means that emphasis is placed on catalyzing external responses (partly emerging from an interventionist paradigm) into local level conflicts.

On the plus side, these systems and their focus play important roles within the institutions that house them and for their target audiences. A recent OECD/DAC review<sup>8</sup> of current early warning and response systems lists these as follows:

- Crisis prediction enables proactive decision-making, and a stronger basis for evidence-based decision-making on countries affected by crisis;
- Systematic country reviews and expert analysis sets the stage for improved programming of responses; and
- A shared problem definition on crisis-affected countries or regions sets the stage for more coherent inter-departmental/agency responses.

Also on the positive, these systems have some indirect and possibly direct impacts. However, aside from process-type and indirect impacts (e.g. improving the evidence-base of decision-making, shared problem definitions, etc.), it is difficult to go beyond anecdotal evidence of direct impacts as not much research has been conducted to robustly qualify these. Most of direct impacts, are attributable to *third generation systems* – and in some cases, second generation ones. The above mentioned OECD/DAC review flags several examples:

- OSCE's early warning to the crisis in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – and prompt, as well as successful preventive measures taken.
- ECOWARN efforts to avert crisis in Guinea and Togo through regular warning reports and strong links with ECOWAS response mechanisms.
- Ituri Watch prevention of clashes between communities in the DR Congo by catalyzing local responses.
- FEWER-Eurasia contributions to reduced number of disappearances in Chechnya through monitoring and humanitarian dialogue.

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<sup>8</sup> Nyheim, D. (2009) Preventing Violence, War, and State Collapse. The Future of Conflict Early Warning and Response. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/DAC. Paris.

- CEWARN prevention of pastoralist clashes through early detection and rapid transmission of information to key responders.
- FCE de-escalation of tensions at the micro-level in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka through monitoring and rapid response.

Challenges remain numerous, though – and for most early warning systems, catalysing response remains the most important hurdle. Among multilateral organisations, particularly those that run first and second generation systems, this hurdle involves three inter-connected challenges: (a) weak early warnings; (b) immature response mechanisms and instruments; and (c) personal, institutional and political shortfalls. Concretely, these challenges mean the following:

- Warning reports are of variable quality – drawing on poor information sources, with often unsubstantiated analyses, and weak (sometimes irrelevant to responding institutions) recommendations on what should be done.
- The “delivery systems” of responses as embodied in the mechanisms and instruments (e.g. the EU’s Instrument for Stability, or ECOWAS’s Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security) available to many governmental and inter-governmental institutions are still immature; they are slow, reactive, overly bureaucratic, and disjointed from warnings and rarely can help launch timely and effective responses.
- The personal, institutional and political factors that affect responses are the same today as they were decades back (see Table 2 from the OECD/DAC report of 2009<sup>9</sup>).

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

In sum, the big picture is mixed. Despite the number of early warning systems and response mechanisms/instruments developed over the last decade, international capabilities remain scattered and weak – particularly outside of Africa. They do, however, provide important value added for target audiences and there is evidence of both indirect and direct impacts. Nonetheless, the warning-response link remains feeble – largely due to weak warnings, immature response delivery mechanisms, and a range of personal, institutional, and political shortfalls.

### **3. EMERGING REGIONAL CAPABILITIES**

A closer look at regional capabilities – particularly more developed systems in Africa – serves to illustrate and nuance current strengths and weaknesses of early warning and response

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

capabilities. In the region, there are two systems of special interest – the ECOWARN system run by ECOWAS in West Africa and the CEWARN system run by IGAD in the Horn of Africa.

### 3.1. ECOWARN

ECOWARN was born out of the ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security in 1999. Its objective is to engage in data collection, analysis and the drafting of up-to-date reports on possible emerging crises, on-going crises and post-crisis transitions. The focus of the system is broad, covering violent conflicts, political instability, state fragility, human rights violations, and human security in the ECOWAS region.

As more of a *second generation system*, ECOWARN activities involve monitoring and data collection, incident and situation reporting using quantitative (events-based) methods to produce situation updates. Qualitative (WARN/FEWER) conflict analysis methods are used to prepare more in-depth reports. The ECOWARN system benefits from access to multiple sources, including governmental and civil society field monitors (attached to Zonal Bureaus) and open source data.

The value added of ECOWARN for its target audience is the on-going feed of information and analysis into ECOWAS decision-making processes. This feed has recently been bolstered with the putting into place of a team of analysts that responds to queries and produces a range of reports – including more in-depth conflict analysis reports using the WARN/FEWER methodology.

Hence, strengths-wise, the system has a growing analytical capability. It also has a fairly robust framework for processing data – data from open (web) sources and the Zonal Bureaus. On the response side, ECOWARN benefits from an institutional link to the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security (“the Mechanism”). The Mechanism enables a broad set of ECOWAS responses to crisis and has been deployed with varying degrees of success in Liberia, Guinea Bissau, Togo and Guinea.

There are several challenges currently facing ECOWARN – and the ones most pertinent to this paper are given below:

- Although regional coverage is broad – it remains quite shallow and sporadic – both in terms of information collection and analysis. Each country has two monitors (one governmental and one civil society) to cover vast and often inaccessible areas, as well as complex issues. The analysts in Abuja do their best with limited information, but find themselves often at great distance from the events they write about.
- The WARN/FEWER analytical method conceptually provides space to capture the dynamics of internal (social, political, and economic – and often grievance-driven) conflict at country-level, but has two important restrictions: (a) greed-driven conflicts (such as in the Niger Delta of Nigeria – see Box 1) where crime and a complex political economy of violence is key are not captured well; and (b) regional-level and cross-country dynamics (e.g. weapons flows, trafficking of drugs, stolen oil, minerals, etc.) are too complex to be effectively addressed by the analytical frameworks available.

#### **Box 1: Greed-driven violence in the Niger Delta**

Over the last five years, the Niger Delta has seen a shift from and a mix of grievance-driven (involving communities) and greed-driven violence (involving armed groups). Whereas there is no doubt that grievances are both present and real at a community-level, they now often serve as a fig-leaf for criminal intent by armed groups.

The growth of armed groups in the region has been driven by a lucrative political economy of violence. This political economy involves illegal crude and condensate bunkering, armed robbery and kidnapping, mercenary activities, narcotics, and numerous extortion-related activities. It is compounded by a large number of weapons, high youth unemployment that provides a steady supply of foot-soldiers, an environment of lawlessness and insecurity, and the complicity of parts of the security forces.

- In terms of response, the ECOWAS Mechanism and institutional culture are largely pre-disposed to macro-level and reactive responses – as opposed to proactive preventive intervention. ECOWARN reported micro-level dynamics, such as district and provincial level violence in member states, even when it has the potential of escalating are rarely addressed by the ECOWAS Mechanism. This can be explained partly in terms of political sensitivities, limited resources (time, funding, etc.) and competing priorities. But what it means is that real prevention remains elusive.

### 3.2. CEWARN

IGAD's Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) was created on the basis of the CEWARN Protocol in January 2002. Its mandate is to receive and share information concerning potentially violent conflicts as well as their outbreak and escalation in the IGAD region with a particular focus on pastoralist and related conflicts. The geographical scope involves three clusters: (a) the Karamoja Cluster (cross-border areas of Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda); (b) the Somali Cluster (cross-border areas of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia); and (c) the Afar/Issa Cluster (cross border region of Djibouti and Eritrea).

As one of the first *third generation systems*, most of CEWARN's monitoring and responses are driven at the local level – in the clusters themselves. Data is collected by field monitors and fed into a data-based monitoring system using CEWARN Reporter-software – a system based on 52 indicators, which include structural data, climatic/environmental data. Alerts are issued as they occur, while a set of regional cluster reports (quarterly), monthly updates, and situational reports are produced at national level – then disseminated to the governments involved. Responses to alerts are either from local authorities directly – or managed by Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Units (CEWERUs) at local and national level in member states.

The critical value added of CEWARN is the preventive action taken at the micro-level when alerts are issued. However, it also provides an important platform for coordinated interventions nationally – and in some case cross-nationally. Similar to ECOWARN, CEWARN provides a rich feed of information and analysis to IGAD member states – and to other actors (NGOs, donors, etc.) active in the region.

CEWARN's key strengths are in its network of monitors and responders in the clusters – as well as the platform for response provided in the CEWERUs. The CEWARN head office in Addis Ababa, along with national counter-parts involved in the preparation of analytical reports serves to maintain and manage an efficient system.

CEWARN too faces several important challenges:

- Although the coverage of pastoralist conflicts is robust in the clusters covered, CEWARN is restricted to member-state agreed geographical clusters – and must tread carefully in looking thematically beyond pastoralist conflicts. In other words, geographically and thematically, CEWARN has important constraints.
- Methodologically, emphasis is placed on 52 structural and climate/environmental indicators. Data provided on these indicators is analysed quantitatively and to a certain extent qualitatively. However, there are two important issues that limit the relevance of this methodological approach: (a) indicators used cannot effectively capture the current commercialisation (and criminalisation) of pastoralist conflicts – particularly large-scale commercial (and highly violent) cattle rustling; and (b) the methodology, along with political sensitivities limits an understanding of extremist groups in Somalia and impacts of terror-based violence (particularly in cross-border areas of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia) on regional stability.

- CEWARN has documented a range of CEWERU responses to alerts and can show to several success-stories in terms of violence prevention. Although these responses are laudable, CEWARN remains largely reactive and engaged in immediate preventive interventions. Work on structural prevention, to address the root causes of pastoralist conflicts is yet to start. This, however, will require deeper analysis than is currently the case – and will have to address greed-driven violence, as well as extremism and terrorism to be effective. Furthermore, due to political sensitivities, coordinated cross-border responses where two or more countries work together has been limited.

### 3.3. IMPLICATIONS

ECOWARN and CEWARN are currently the most developed early warning and response systems in Africa – and from a global early warning/response system perspective, Africa is currently the best covered continent. Both systems provide important value to their host institutions – in terms of a more robust evidence-base for decision-making (ECOWARN and CEWARN) as well as immediate local level prevention of pastoralist violence (CEWARN).

However, both systems face a range of challenges that reflect those seen in globally. The first challenge is one of breadth and depth of coverage; ECOWARN has broad coverage, but limited depth, whereas CEWARN has deep coverage, but limited breadth. The second is that current analytical methodologies used cannot adequately provide an understanding of greed-driven or criminalised (armed) violence, extremism and terrorism, or regional-level dynamics. And the third challenge is that both systems remain reactive in their responses and do not tackle the micro-level origins of conflict (ECOWARN) or their structural causes (ECOWARN and CEWARN).

The picture emerging is one of uneven and quite weak regional early warning capabilities. Beyond geography, the technical base (information and analysis) in place does not adequately enable the promotion of effective responses on emerging forms of violence and the cross-border dimensions of conflict. And although response mechanisms (e.g. ECOWAS Mechanism and CEWERUs) are in place, their effectiveness is constrained by political sensitivities, their design and the institutions that house them.

## 4. EMERGING THREATS

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At a global level, there are three emerging threats to peace and security that have important implications for early warning and response systems. Two of them, namely criminalised conflicts (or armed violence situations) and extremism/terrorism have been touched upon above. The third, which is getting increasingly more attention, is climate change.

### 4.1. CRIMINALISED CONFLICTS (ARMED VIOLENCE)

A key milestone in research into greed-driven or criminalised conflicts was the publication by the World Bank of *Greed and Grievance in Civil War* in 2000<sup>10</sup>. In the report, Collier and Hoeffler argued that the “traditional” view that “grievance begets conflict, which begets grievance, which begets further conflict” (a view out of which many early warning systems have been conceived) and that interventions need to reduce the level of grievance has important limitations. They proposed that opportunities for predation are the key causes conflict and “the grievances this generates induce Diasporas to finance further conflict”<sup>11</sup>. Later work (e.g. by Murshed and Tadjoeeddin in 2007<sup>12</sup>) has nuanced this picture and argues that greed and grievance drivers of

<sup>10</sup> Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A. (2000) *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*. World Bank, Washington DC.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Murshed, S. M. and Tadjoeeddin, M. Z. (2007) *Reappraising the Greed and Grievance Explanations for Violent Internal Conflict*. MICROCON Research Working Paper No. 2. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1116248>

violence often co-exist, reinforce each other, but where the political economy of violence perpetuates and entrenches conflict.

Beyond criminalized conflict are situations of significant criminalized violence – termed by the OECD/DAC among others as “armed violence” situations, where armed violence is defined as “the use or threatened use of weapons to inflict injury, death, or psychosocial harm which undermines development”<sup>13</sup> and characterized by the widespread availability of small arms. Taking this definition a step further, and for the purposes of this paper, the following definition on armed violence *situations* is offered and used here: “armed violence situations are either conflict situations characterized by a dominant political economy of violence and significant lawlessness, or areas controlled by non-state actors where small arms are used widely to inflict harm, injury and death”. Using this definition, the terms “greed-driven” or “criminalized conflicts” will be replaced with “armed violence situations”.

A broad look at armed violence situations globally shows the extent of the threat.

<b>Africa</b>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>Eurasia</b>	<b>Latin America</b>
Sudan, Somalia, DR Congo, Mali, Nigeria (Niger Delta), Uganda, CAR, Chad	Afghanistan, India (Naxalite), Yemen, Uzbekistan, Thailand (South), Pakistan, Iraq	Russia (North Caucasus), Serbia, Georgia (Abkhazia) Palestine, Lebanon	Colombia, Ecuador (NBZ), Brazil, El Salvador, Haiti, Jamaica

Although recognized as an emerging threat, most research on armed violence remains descriptive and analytical at a big picture level – and does not currently provide pointers on how to deal with these situations. The analytical and response tools that do exist and are used in early warning and response systems were born out of the traditional view that grievance begets conflict, and are therefore designed to address mostly structural and grievance-based issues, as well as political dynamics. There is therefore an important knowledge gap that needs to be filled.

An illustration of the above shortfalls can be seen in the Niger Delta conflict. If ECOWARN’s research process and analytical method is used for the conflict in the Niger Delta, it will adequately explain micro-level community conflicts, as well as part of the MEND<sup>14</sup>-Nigerian government conflict. However, it will not provide a clear picture of greed dynamics, i.e. on the political economy of violence (oil theft, extortion rackets, piracy, etc.) – nor be able to inform adequately how these need to be tackled.

Most of the tools for dealing with armed violence are within government – and particularly governments in countries affected by such situations. In the Nigerian case, the Federal government has deployed significant resources to address armed violence in the Niger Delta – with some success, although the jury is still out. However, not many governments are as resource-strong as the Nigerian government is – so the need for multilateral tools to deal with armed violence situations is urgent.

#### **4.2. EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM**

Much of the debate on extremism and terrorism is linked to what is currently seen in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine – as well as the “war on terror” and invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. If we use Large’s (2005) understanding of terrorism; a political, ideological or religious act that is meant to inflict dramatic and deadly injury on civilians and to create an atmosphere of acute fear and despair<sup>15</sup>; and look a situations where terrorist acts (e.g. mass

<sup>13</sup> OECD/DAC (2009) *Armed Violence Reduction – Enabling Development*. OECD/DAC, Paris. Available at <http://browse.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/pdfs/browseit/4309151E.PDF>

<sup>14</sup> Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)

<sup>15</sup> Large, J. (2005) “Democracy and Terrorism: The Impact of the Anti”. Paper presented at the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security”. Club de Madrid, Madrid 8-11 March 2005. Available at <http://summit.clubmadrid.org/contribute/democracy-and-terrorism-the-impact-of-the-anti.html>.

atrocities, symbolic atrocious killings, such as public beheadings, etc.) are a key part of waging war, the list of countries where extremist groups use terrorism as a means of waging war expands significantly (see table below).

**Table 4: Selected Countries Affected by Violent Conflict where Terrorism is Used by Extremist Groups**

Africa	Asia	Eurasia	Latin America
Sudan, Somalia, DR Congo, Uganda (LRA), Mali	Afghanistan, India (Naxalite and Kashmir), Yemen, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh, Thailand (South), Pakistan, Iraq, Indonesia	Russia (North Caucasus), Palestine, Lebanon	Colombia

Operationally and politically, engagement with extremist and terrorist groups is sensitive. The tools deployed to tackle the threats they pose to stability are mostly in the realm of counter-terrorism. Nonetheless, the number of conflict situations where terrorism is used as a weapon of war is growing – partly due to asymmetries in power, as well as to deliberate strategies by extremist groups.

This poses an important challenge to early warning and response systems – and to the conflict prevention community more broadly, specifically whether or not to address this threat. Some will argue that engagement with extremist/terrorist groups is futile, politically unacceptable and not feasible, or that the security risks are too great. Others may focus on terrorist acts as tools of war, perhaps not too dissimilar to the historic use of landmines, and argue that engagement is a necessary precondition to stop the use of such tactics.

If one is to be pragmatic and consider the current political climate, engagement on the topic of terrorism is unlikely and not desirable for most existing early warning and response systems – or for many conflict prevention organizations. However, despite political constraints there is a need to gain a better understanding of extremist groups and terrorism, where relevant, in order to inform (and make more sensitive) the use of available mechanisms and instruments for response.

If we are to take a concrete example, using the cases given above, how could CEWARN better inform CEWERU responses and decision-making among IGAD member states on how to shield pastoralist populations from atrocities committed during cross-border raids by Somali extremists? The evidence-base required for such decision-making will not come from an analysis of structural indicators – or from current monitoring approaches. It will require different information sources (e.g. monitors in Somalia), modified analytical methods (e.g. detailed stakeholder analyses) and an adjusted monitoring system (e.g. tracking cross-border movements).

The points made here are simple. First, extremism and the use of terror tactics are prevalent and increasing in many countries affected by conflict. Second, technical engagement on these issues will be required by early warning and response systems to help protect populations. And third, such technical engagement means new information sources and adjusted methods and systems.

### 4.3. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

There is now broad agreement that climate changes are happening and that these will be felt through 2100 and beyond<sup>16</sup>. However, although the broad impacts can be forecasted, there are a range of limitations to understanding likely sub-regional impacts – particularly in developing countries where data reliability is poor and collection on climate change is not systematic. Nonetheless, many developing countries will experience drops in food production, increased temperatures, erosion and desertification, sea-level rises affecting crops and fishing, as well as extreme weather conditions<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> [http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/Report/AR4WG1\\_Print\\_SPM.pdf](http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/Report/AR4WG1_Print_SPM.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

A March 2008 High Representative and European Commission report to the European Council<sup>18</sup> on climate change impacts on conflict identified seven areas of concern:

1. Conflict over resources such as water, food and fish stocks;
2. Economic damage and risk to coastal cities and critical infrastructure, including decreases of up to 20% of global GDP per year, damage to coastal areas that are home of about one fifth of the world's population, and damage to infrastructure supporting mega-cities, such as port facilities and oil refineries;
3. Loss of territory and border disputes following receding coastlines and submergence of large areas;
4. Environmentally-induced migration, particularly of populations that already suffer from poor health conditions, unemployment or social exclusion;
5. Situations of fragility and radicalization in weak or failing states by over-stretching already limited capacities of governments to respond effectively to the challenges they face;
6. Tension over energy supply from intensified competition over access to, and control over, energy resources; and
7. Pressure on international governance from impacts of climate mitigation policies (or policy failures) that may drive political tension nationally and internationally.

As mentioned above, and in practice, however, we are not in a position to forecast these impacts at a sub-regional or sub-national level. From the vantage point of early warning and response systems, what this requires is the combination of databases and scenario-building techniques at national and sub-national levels. However, very little of this thinking is mainstream at the moment in agencies involved in early warning and response – and there is a need to intensify work on projecting climate change impacts on conflict.

#### **4.4. IMPLICATIONS**

There are two broad implications that follow from the above discussion on emerging threats:

- The first is that the emerging threats are real and widespread. Box 2 below provides a rough “practitioner’s sketch” categorization of some of the violent conflict, armed violence, and extremism/terrorism situations present globally – provided with the caveat that it does not take into account intensity considerations, the historical evolution of conflicts, political sensitivities, or strict academic definitions.

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<sup>18</sup> European Commission (2008) *Climate Change and International Security*. Paper from the High Representative and the European Commission to the European Council. S113/08. Brussels, March 2008.

**Box 2: A Rough Sketch of Countries Affected by Armed Violence and Extremism/Terrorism**

	<b>Violent Conflict</b>	<b>Armed Violence/ Violent Conflict</b>	<b>Armed Violence</b>	<b>Extremism/Terrorism</b>
<b>Africa</b>	<i>Guinea Conakry</i>	<i>Sudan</i>		<i>Somalia</i>
	<i>Cote d'Ivoire</i>	<i>Nigeria (Niger Delta)</i>	<i>DR Congo</i>	
	<i>Senegal (Casamance)</i>	<i>CAR</i>	<i>Uganda (LRA)</i>	
		<i>Chad</i>	<i>Mali</i>	
<b>Asia</b>	<i>Indonesia (Papua)</i>	<i>Myanmar</i>	<i>Afghanistan</i>	
		<i>India (Naxalite)</i>	<i>India (Kashmir)</i>	
			<i>Yemen</i>	
			<i>Uzbekistan</i>	
			<i>Bangladesh</i>	
			<i>Thailand (South)</i>	
			<i>Pakistan</i>	
			<i>Iraq</i>	
			<i>Philippines</i>	
	<b>Eurasia</b>	<i>Turkey</i>	<i>Serbia (Sandzak and Presovo)</i>	<i>Russia (North Caucasus)</i>
		<i>Georgia (Abkhazia)</i>	<i>Palestine</i>	
			<i>Lebanon</i>	
<b>Central/Latin America and Caribbean</b>	<i>Guyana</i>	<i>Colombia</i>	<i>Ecuador (NBZ)</i>	
			<i>Brazil</i>	
			<i>Haiti</i>	
			<i>Jamaica</i>	
			<i>El Salvador</i>	

- The second is that generally we are unprepared and ill-equipped technically to deal with these and climate-change threats. We currently do not have the information sources, data collection systems, analytical methods, or response mechanisms to deal with the nature and scale of the problems that are and will be at hand.

The conclusions we can draw from the above discussion on the big picture, regional capabilities, and emerging threats follow.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

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The purpose of this paper was to take stock of what exists in terms of global early warning and response capabilities and examine whether these are robust enough to tackle emerging security threats. It has done so by looking at global existing multilateral and non-governmental early warning systems (coverage, perceived value, impacts, and limitations), followed by a more detailed review of ECOWARN and CEWARN to illustrate the value and challenges of multilateral warning and response systems in Africa. It then discussed three emerging security threats – armed violence, extremism/terrorism, and climate change and discussed the implications of these threats for current warning and response capabilities.

So what does it all mean for the global warning and response architecture? The above discussion has drawn the following conclusions:

- The range of early warning systems and response mechanisms/instruments developed over the last decade has not yet yielded robust international capabilities – but remain scattered and weak especially outside of Africa. However, there is important value add that these systems provide and there is evidence of both indirect and direct positive impacts. Still, the warning-response link remains feeble – largely due to weak warnings, immature response delivery mechanisms, and a range of personal, institutional, and political shortfalls.
- In terms of regional capabilities, using ECOWARN and CEWARN as examples, the emerging picture is one of uneven and generally weak regional early warning capabilities. Beyond geography, the technical base (information and analysis) in place does not adequately enable the promotion of effective responses on emerging forms of violence and the cross-border dimensions of conflict. And although response mechanisms (e.g. ECOWAS Mechanism and CEWERUs) are in place, their effectiveness is constrained by political sensitivities, their design and the institutions that house them.
- At a global level, there are three emerging threats to peace and security that have important implications for early warning and response systems, namely criminalised conflicts (or armed violence situations), extremism/terrorism and climate change. These threats are real and widespread. Existing early warning and response systems are unprepared and ill-equipped technically to deal with them. The information sources, data collection systems, analytical methods, and response mechanisms at hand are insufficient to deal with the nature and scale of these threats.

In conclusion, the balance sheet of capabilities versus threats shows a severe deficit. The international system has made progress on early warning and response, but emerging threats have evolved faster than the capabilities to manage them. For multilateral agencies as key cornerstones of the global warning and response architecture, and for governments that believe in their value, this deficit should be a grave concern that needs urgent attention.

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