

## Early Warning System Means and Tools in the African Union and the Organization of American States: An Analytical Study

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### Abstract

*Disasters, crises and wars are a serious and unforeseen threat. The capacity of the early warning system to monitor such crises is therefore crucial. The ability to make quick decisions in a short time is necessary to prevent crises from occurring. Here, the role and effectiveness of the early warning system emerges through its ability to monitor, record and analyze signals. It can also be evidenced by its ability to immediately convey these indicators to the concerned authorities to take measures that ensure these conflicts and disasters do not worsen. The system's ability to detect disasters and crises, identify the crisis and its type, and use the scientific method and common sense to deal with it is something that contributes to finding the best way to manage the crisis. Thus, the adverse effects of crises can be avoided, including: physical and moral effects, effects with a clear direct impact of the crisis, or indirect effects, long-term, medium-term and short-term effects. Therefore, in this study, we will try to demonstrate the means and tools of early warning systems in the African Union in a way that allows us to identify the most prominent benefits and disadvantages of these systems, and then analyze them in detail.*

**Keywords:** *Means and Tools; Warning; Early; AU; Analytical study.*

### Introduction

The spread of disasters, crises and internal and external wars in the countries of the world negatively affects the political and economic stability of those countries. Thus, this is reflected in regional security and its impact extends to global security, through the catastrophic consequences and effects of these wars, crises and conflicts on society.

The world is currently witnessing a wide spread of conflicts and conflicts, where we can say that Africa is one of the regions that witness the most bloody conflicts and wars, whether internal "such as civil wars, ethnic conflicts and the demand for secession", or external conflicts between countries. We also find that some regions of the world are witnessing crises and conflicts, including the countries of the American Union.

As a result of the increasing prevalence of wars in the world, there was a need to find mechanisms that would prevent wars from breaking out before they began, and to work to extinguish the flames of raging wars. This is done through diplomatic action, whether carried out by States alone or through international and regional organizations, with a view to establishing peace, prevention and limiting the outbreak of war, which in turn reflects positively on the political and economic stability of the countries and peoples of those States.

In this paper, we will attempt to demonstrate and explore the means and tools of early warning systems in the African Union, and analyze the effectiveness and objectivity of the model in predicting and dealing with conflicts and conflicts. We will pose a fundamental problem: have the means and tools of the African Union's early warning systems been effective in predicting conflicts and disputes there?

We then put forward the hypothesis that institutional barriers within ECOWAS in the implementation of the early warning mechanism are related to the extent of continuity and the gap between monitoring, preparedness and response situations, which calls for serious reforms of the warning system and mechanism (Hussein, 2024, p.21).

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## First: Means of early warning systems in the African Union

After the end of World War II, the African continent witnessed a number of tensions and conflicts. These developments greatly affected the stability of the countries of the continent and the security of the population, as this led to the deterioration of the living situation (Muntasser, 2022, p. 110), the deterioration of services and the poor health conditions of the population of the African continent (Murad & Naima, 2020, p. 85).

We note that the spread of conflicts and wars in the continent began in 1970, where conflicts increased and expanded to include more than (14) African countries. This resulted in a large number of deaths and injuries, and led to a large wave of displacement estimated at more than eight million displaced people. (Al-Nashif, 1999)

We note that the spread of conflicts and wars in the continent began in 1970, when conflicts increased and expanded to include more than 14 African countries. This caused a large number of deaths and injuries, and led to a large wave of displacement estimated at more than eight million displaced people.

These include the civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and tensions and crises in Senegal, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan (Khamis Daham Hamid & Hamsa Qahtan, 2015, p. 101-102), Libya and other countries. We will identify these conflicts and wars in detail in the following paragraphs (Ahmed Abdul Amir, 2020, p. 203).

The crises and conflicts experienced by the African continent have caused the deterioration of the economic conditions in the continent and the countries of the continent have become one of the poorest countries in the world. Wars and conflicts have also contributed to the prevalence of the concept of violence (Muntasser, 2022, p. 1-24), and the rise of rule by corrupt rulers who rule their countries with authoritarianism and dictatorship (Hassan, 2016).

Conflicts and wars in the continent of Africa vary between internal wars, ethnic and tribal wars, separatist wars, in addition to wars that erupt between countries due to border problems and political differences (Rassouli, 2018, p. 119).

In addition to the conflicts and wars taking place on the continent, we find risks that are no less terrible than conflicts, causing conflicts and the death of many people. The continent is witnessing the growing phenomenon of international terrorism and organized crime.

We see the presence of al-Qaeda in the Arab Morocco, the Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa, and Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. We cannot overlook the presence of Al-Shabaab and the Mujahideen in Somalia and the destruction it has caused to Somalia (Murad & Naima, 2020, p. 86).

The existence of these armed terrorist groups poses great challenges to the peoples of the region, which worries the countries of the continent. We find that the wide borders, the weak capabilities of border control, in addition to the overlapping borders between them (Mustafa, 2022, p. 180-184), and the support of some countries for these groups in order to spread chaos in the countries with which they war, have significantly increased the expansion and spread of these groups. The proliferation of arms, separatism and ethnic conflicts have also contributed to the exacerbation of this problem (Rassouli, 2018, p. 121).

The African continent is also witnessing military coups, due to authoritarianism by some rulers, and dictatorial rule exercised by governments. This led to the intervention of the army and the coup against the country's leaders, and this is what some African countries have witnessed.

We note that racial and ethnic differences in one country have led to the support of a group of groups for a person belonging to them. In order to try to bring him to power, the government is rebelled against and coups are carried out, and this causes an increase in conflicts and famines in those countries. In addition, diseases are spreading that these poor countries cannot control (Murad & Naima, 2020, p. 85).

As for the origins of the early warning system, we note that there are two schools of thought. The first school of thought believed that the early warning system was of military origin, since early warning was developed during the world war by military intelligence in some countries, in order to enhance their capabilities to predict ballistic missile attacks.

Adherents of the second school believe that early warning is of a humanitarian source, and therefore has evolved as a system for predicting natural disasters and environmental hazards “such as earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes and other natural disasters.” The proponents of this trend believe that the early warning system was used at the beginning of the nineties of the last century to predict the state of the financial markets. Therefore, according to the school, early warning focuses on humanitarian issues such as illegal migration, famine affecting humanity and relief work (Belaour, 2017, p. 37).

Early warning, as a system for preventing conflicts and wars, was established in 1992 to prevent conflicts and crises, following the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros-Ghali. While we find that its emergence in Africa was carried out by the Organization of African Unity, during the meeting of ministers of the Organization of African Unity in 1996.

The meeting approved the proposal submitted to them by the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity at the time, Salim Ahmed Salim, which included his proposal on the need to establish an early warning system at the level of the African continent. The early system on the continent was officially launched in 2004 and is considered a body of the African Peace and Security Council (Tirunch, 2010, p. 5).

According to Article 12 of the Protocol of the African Peace and Security Council, the continental early warning system “should consist of a monitoring and monitoring center known as the Operations Room, located in the Conflict Directorate of the African Union, responsible for collecting and analyzing data on the basis of early warning in a timely manner.

The Chairman of the Committee uses the information gathered through the Early Warning System to advise the Peace and Security Council on potential conflicts and threats in Africa, and to make suggestions and recommendations for the best modus operandi (Fisher, 2010, p. 45).

Therefore, we find that the means of work of the early warning system in the African continent is through the following:

- Monitoring units monitor signals of potential conflicts and wars, and monitor regional mechanisms through communications with the situation room.
- Collecting and processing data at the level of monitoring units.
- 3- The data shall be referred after processing to the operating room, which operates for 24 hours a day without interruption.

It is worth mentioning that the operations room includes a responsible coordinator, in addition to eight assistants and an assistant communications clerk whose task is to send official messages of information to the regional agencies (Tirunch, 2010, p. 12).

## **Second: The African Peace and Security Council**

The African Peace and Security Council is one of the organs of the African Union, and it was established by African countries in 2002 in the city of “Durban” in South Africa, and the Peace and Security Council consists of fifteen members, elected for a period of three years by the Executive Council of the African Union. (Jaaboub, 2017, p. 68)

Members are selected and elected on the basis of their potential and abilities to contribute to the achievement of the Council's objectives and regional peace and security. Members must adhere to the principles of the African Union, and equitable geographical distribution is taken into account in the selection process through optimal representation of the various regions of the African continent (the northern and southern regions, the central region, and the eastern and western regions).

States represented on the Council have the right to discuss the issues on its agenda and to vote on the resolutions adopted thereon. Each member State of the Council has one vote, and the decision-making process within the Council is carried out by a two-thirds majority. No Member State has veto power over Council decisions (Hamed, 2007, pp. 21-24).

Among the objectives entrusted to the Council in accordance with Article III of the Protocol of Establishment of the Council are the following:

- Supporting peace and security in the continent, and therefore we find that the Council follows preventive diplomacy, through which crises are avoided and peaceful initiatives are supported, thus preventing conflicts between countries or within the same state.
- Circumventing disputes and conflicts by preventing their occurrence, and initiating peaceful measures such as negotiation, mediation between disputants, and other peaceful measures.
- Striving to achieve sustainable development in African countries, through the Council's support for democratic practices and human rights.
- Ensuring the sovereignty of states in the African Union, and non-interference in the internal affairs of states, except in narrow cases that require intervention, such as war, genocide, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity.
- Adopting an early warning system for crises in the region, and analyzing potential signs of conflict on the continent.
- Conducting reconstruction in countries exposed to conflicts and wars, through coordination and cooperation with African and international financial institutions.
- Combating international terrorism, extremism and organized crime (Manea, 2008, p. 317).

As the early warning system is one of its effective bodies, the system detects signals about the likelihood of

The occurrence of a conflict we find that the Council intervenes in order to prevent the occurrence of conflict, and in the event that the system fails to anticipate the conflict

In the event of the conflict, the Council plays its role through the settlement of the conflict and try to stop the conflict as soon as possible, and in that we find that the intervention of the Council quickly in crises leads to reduce the effects of conflicts and their seriousness on the peoples and the region Therefore, we find that the Council is activating the role of the African population to maintain peace and security in the continent (Al-Majdoub, 2006, p. 471).

It is noteworthy that the Peace and Security Council consists of four basic structures:

- The African Standby Force, which was formed according to the text of Article XIII of the Constitutive Protocol of the Council, and consists of military units from the five regions of the continent, and its number has been determined at about fifteen thousand soldiers (Jaaboub, 2017, p. 70).

- The Peace Fund, which was established under Article Twenty-One of the Constitutive Protocol of the Council, and the source of funding of the Fund is from the contributions of African member states of the African Union and member states of the Peace and Security Council, and donations are obtained by other bodies such as civil society, international bodies and international organizations (ibid).
- Early warning system that monitors signals about conflicts and thus delivers information to the Council to take appropriate action, and we have talked in detail about the early warning system.
- Panel of Elders, which includes five personalities selected by the President of the African Commission,
- The appointment is for a period of three years by the Conference, and the role of the Panel of Elders is to advise the Council, and the said body convenes whenever the need arises (Abo Al-Ainain, 2007, pp. 50-66).

### Third: Preventive Diplomacy for Crises and Conflicts

- The Peace and Security Council, through the information it receives from the early warning system, follows preventive diplomacy in order to prevent crises and conflicts. To identify ways to prevent crises in the African continent, we will identify the stages that crises go through, and then we will address the preventive diplomacy followed in order to defuse conflicts and wars, according to the following:
- The stage of crisis emergence. At this stage, we find that there are warnings about the occurrence of a crisis, where the early warning system monitors crises. We also find that the appearance of crises for the first time is in the form of a vague sense of them, and thus the crisis appears as if it warns of danger, but the danger is not clearly defined due to the lack of information about its causes. Also at this stage, dealing with the crisis is through insight, good perception, and identifying the causes of its emergence and then trying to eliminate the crisis before it surfaces and becomes a realistic crisis (Merbah, 2012, p. 53).
- The stage of crisis growth. The decision-maker's lack of good perception of the crisis leads to the growth of the crisis. At this stage, the sense of crisis is generated clearly, and its existence cannot be denied because of the severe pressures it causes (Qahwaji, 2015, p. 204).
- The stage of crisis maturity. This stage is characterized by the fact that the crisis has developed and has become a serious danger. This is due to poor planning and the inability to curb the crisis, which led to the exacerbation of the crisis to advanced stages (Basa & Rashid, 2022, p. 305).
- The recession and disappearance of the crisis. After the crisis has reached its peak, it gradually begins to disappear and fade (Qahwaji, 2015, p. 305).

Therefore, we find that the early warning system aims to prevent crises and conflicts, and the more accurate and analytical the system is of signals, and rapid action and good coordination with the competent authorities in order to combat crises before they arise. This will achieve better results in eliminating crises and conflicts. Therefore, the prevention of crises and wars by adopting preventive diplomacy leads to satisfactory results and many crises and conflicts have been eliminated before they escalate and become catastrophic (Mustafa, 2023, p. 85).

### Preventive Diplomacy

The aim of preventive diplomacy is to calm tensions before they turn into armed conflict, and in the event of armed conflict. It also aims to contain the conflict, which leads to stopping the escalation, and this is the role of prevention (Abdelghaffar, 2003, p. 303).

Preventive diplomacy was defined as: “The activity carried out by the United Nations to prevent the outbreak of conflicts and seek to contain and settle them if they develop into armed conflict or push them away from the circle of tension and danger by keeping them within their specific framework and preventing them from occurring”(Al-Jibori & Al-Hashimi, 2015, p. 150).

Therefore, preventive diplomacy aims to prevent conflicts between states or within one state. It also aims to prevent conflict from turning into conflict and work is done to stop conflicts when they occur (Boulnaouar & Zubair, 2015, p. 34).

Preventive diplomacy may be carried out by the Secretary-General of the United Nations personally, or by the Security Council or the General Assembly, or specialized international organizations or regional organizations. Preventive diplomacy is considered to be: “Constructive actions that are resorted to in order to avoid a potential threat or avoid the use of armed force by the conflicting parties”(Al-Jibori & Al-Hashimi, 2015, p. 154). Here, we find that the role of the African Union is very important in preventive diplomacy, as it aims through the Peace and Security Council to prevent the outbreak of conflicts in the African continent. After the early warning system monitors signals about the possibility of crises or conflicts, the council takes measures to prevent the outbreak of conflicts. In the event of conflict, the Council endeavours to mitigate its intensity and try to stop the conflict by all available diplomatic means.

There are two ways of preventive diplomacy, either direct preventive diplomacy or indirect preventive diplomacy, and we will discuss this according to the following:

### **Direct Preventive Diplomacy**

Preventive diplomacy is resorted to in order to prevent conflicts in the short term. Preventive diplomatic work is carried out at the stage of crisis occurrence, where there is a possibility of crisis development and reaching military escalation, or increasing the severity of the crisis and its spread. Therefore, it is directly and quickly working to prevent escalation, increase the intensity of the conflict and its development, and direct preventive diplomacy procedures are carried out by a third party to be a mediator between the conflicting parties (Al-Khaznadar, 2011, p. 23).

It is noted that the African Union, through its direct diplomatic practice, has mediated as a third party mediator in many conflicts that have occurred in the African continent.

### **Indirect Preventive Diplomacy**

Indirect preventive diplomacy is active in the case of latent conflicts, which are likely to lead in the medium or long term to the outbreak of armed conflict. In this case, the task of the African Union organization is to provide national, regional and international environmental conditions that would lead to reducing the possibility of conflict, which is known as deep “structural” preventive prevention (Boulnaouar & Zubair, 2015, p. 38). This is done by working to alleviate poverty, tackle social injustice and authoritarian regimes (Furqan & Hussein, 2024, p.3-19), and combat organized crime and drug trafficking.

It is worth mentioning that the aim of preventive diplomacy is peacemaking, which has been defined by the Secretary-General of the United Nations as: “The work aimed at reconciling conflicting parties through peaceful means, such as those stipulated in Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter” (Ghali, 1992).

### **Conclusion**

The task of early warning falls under the Department of Peace and Security Operations. It is one of the general strategies of rapid intervention forces in order to develop an integrated and operational early warning system for the forces. It can detect potential threats and conflicts and also enable response

mechanisms. Events on the ground indicate the failure of early warning in both continental and regional aspects to anticipate unconstitutional changes in African countries in general, and in West Africa in particular. This weakened the ability of the African Union and ECOWAS to respond to or influence military coups, despite the waves of violence preceding them or popular protests. While most regional economic groupings in Africa rely heavily on development partners to fund conflict prevention programs, this particularly undermines the ability of these groupings to implement long-term structural preventive interventions. Issues related to weak or lack of coordination between external donors have also been identified as a challenge, including: “Lack of political will, weak funding, inadequate staff, weak civil society and private sector, and inadequate and weak infrastructure”. If we look at the protocols of the “African Union” signed and approved by member states, we may find that the majority of members of the economic group did not adhere to what was agreed upon. This is particularly true of matters such as democracy, good governance and rejection of military coups that have escalated in recent years. This comes after the region was on its way to promoting the peaceful transfer of power and turning the pages of military control over governance, which is an endemic feature within the African continent in general and the most severe in the world.

The return of military coups in West Africa has created security, economic and social problems that are the result of political and security instability. These issues in turn negatively affected efforts to strengthen national economies, growth, poverty resistance and others, which ECOWAS sought to achieve as one of its foundational goals. This raised the question over the extent of ECOWAS’s ability as a regional body to support democratic principles and maintain peace and security in the region.

The study concluded by proving the hypothesis that the institutional obstacles within ECOWAS in implementing the early warning mechanism are related to the extent of continuity and the gap between monitoring, preparedness and response cases. This calls for the need for serious reforms to the early warning system and mechanism. These reforms should be implemented in parallel with making improvements in some aspects of deficiencies related to the consolidation of the provisions of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. Moreover, there is a need for activating the group's decision to quickly establish a military force. Finally, new financing alternatives that do not depend on outside sources should be found.

It is important to look at the intelligence services and the security sector in general, in their bias in many African countries within the early warning devices. This bias in turn affects the inputs and outputs of this vital device authorized to alert about potential and existing crises.

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