

Information Support for Security Policy at the African Union

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By

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## **Information Support for Security Policy at the African Union**

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### Abstract

The Continental Early Warning System of the African Union is expected to provide decision makers with the information they need to prevent grave crimes against humanity. Little scholarship exists on the CEWS, as it is not yet fully operational. However by assessing the CEWS using the intelligence cycle as a framework for analysis, key weaknesses in the model of early warning adopted by the African Union become manifest. These weaknesses are likely to be serious enough to prevent the African Union from succeeding in its mission to prevent grave conflicts. The paper concludes by arguing that despite the historical factors that have shaped the African Union's model of early warning, it should develop the capacity to engage in carefully structured *ad hoc* intelligence liaison relationships with African and non-African intelligence services. This will enable it to supplement its collection capability, and encourage the active participation of high-level decision makers in the generation of early warning and operational contingency plans.

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*“If, begrudging the outlay of ranks, emoluments, and a hundred pieces of gold, a commander does not know the enemy’s situation, his is the height of inhumanity. Such a person is no man’s commander, no ruler’s counselor, and no master of Victory”- Sun Tzu*

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## **Introduction**

The African Union is seeking to become the security guarantor on the African continent, as well as to develop the capacity to prevent grave conflicts, such as the Rwanda Genocide. This paper will argue that it needs to supplement its planned information support capability with intelligence acquired through intelligence liaison, in order to perform its role effectively. The A.U. must be able to:

- Provide strategic warning to assist the Chairperson of the A.U. commission and the Peace and Security Council with crisis management.
- Assist the military committee in its provision of military advice to the Chairperson of the A.U. commission and the Peace and Security Council.
- Obtain information detailed enough to guide contingency and operational planning to include guidance on the composition and organization of forces, and appropriate diplomatic action.

This paper analyzes the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) of the African Union within the context of an ideal-type intelligence cycle. The intelligence cycle

(borrowing heavily from the U.S. experience) sets out a framework for the operation of an intelligence service. Services are tasked by policymakers, who then go onto collect, process, and analyze data, to be disseminated back to, and consumed by policymakers<sup>1</sup>. Policymakers are then meant to provide feedback. By using the intelligence cycle to analyze the A.U.'s information support unit, the CEWS, it becomes clear that the inability of the strategic leadership to task the CEWS on specific issues will be a serious shortcoming. In addition, its limited collection capabilities will render it unlikely to provide the kind of dynamic and actionable analysis that will enable the A.U. to effectively prevent grave conflict, as it seeks to.

In order to remedy these deficiencies this paper argues that the A.U. should develop the capacity to engage in effective intelligence liaison. However, as will be discussed below intelligence as a policy tool is gravely mistrusted by Africans<sup>2</sup>. This tension does not however undermine the fact that intelligence as a craft has been perfected over centuries, and remains the most effective policy and information support tool when responsibly used. This is especially true for decision-makers facing the formidable task of preventing grave conflicts in Africa. I would further argue that

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<sup>1</sup> Lowenthal, Mark M., *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy*, Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2006, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> This includes African intelligence and security services that have been used to suppress internal dissent and sometimes even assisted in mass murders. An obvious example of this is Idi Amin, in Uganda. Also. French, American, Belgian and other intelligence services have conducted well-documented covert operations that have been injurious to African interests. These issues will be discussed further in later pages.

the A.U. should invest its efforts in specialization, and develop information capabilities that **do not** presently exist within sub-regional security mechanisms such as the Economic Community of West of African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). This would include the development of capabilities to provide substantial real-time operational and tactical intelligence support to military, police and civilian elements of peace-support missions, and diplomats deployed to manage foreseeable and existing conflicts. In addition there is a need to develop a security culture and practices that would enable the organization to engage in foreign intelligence liaison (when deemed appropriate by the Peace and Security Council) with countries inside and outside of Africa, with more advanced information-gathering capabilities.



## Methodology



**Diagram 1.** A depiction of the intelligence cycle

Despite the fact that intelligence sometimes fails to deliver the warning, there are few countries of the world that do not have an intelligence service of some description. The intelligence cycle is sufficiently general to be deployed as a framework for assessing any intelligence or information support institution. It does not assume any mode of governance, or the existence of any particular bureaucratic structures; it only describes broad functions that should be conducted in sequence to generate robust information support. Furthermore, using the intelligence cycle to

assess the CEWS of the African Union can be justified on the grounds that the fundamental objective of the CEWS and an intelligence system is the same: it is to gain foreknowledge of an impending security breach (be it human or state), in order to formulate an appropriate response strategy.

## **The use of intelligence in Africa: A historical perspective**

This paper is not about the legacy of colonialism in Africa, nor is it about the damage that has been caused by African and foreign intelligence and security services in Africa. This paper is focused on seeking means and ways for the African Union's Continental Early Warning System to effectively support conflict prevention and mitigation efforts. Yet, before embarking upon a comparison and a critique of the CEWS (in relation to an ideal-type intelligence cycle) it is important to explain the historical context in which it was formed.

The colonial domination of Africa was primarily achieved by European militaries, but was also facilitated by the use of military intelligence. To some extent this has shaped the perception of intelligence (and security forces in general) as being predatory institutions in Africa<sup>3</sup>. However, the use of intelligence within and towards Africa in the post-Colonial era has shaped perceptions of intelligence and

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<sup>3</sup> Wade, Stephen, *Spies in the Empire: Victorian Military Intelligence*, Anthem Press, 2007, Chapter 6.

its use most in present times<sup>4</sup>. This paper views intelligence as a set of processes used to provide robust information support to policymakers specifically concerned with security, however this is not a view that many Africans would share.

Covert actions, which are secret policies supported and usually implemented with the help of intelligence services, are what most African people associate with intelligence. There are many examples of covert actions that have been executed in Africa, sponsored and managed by foreign intelligence services that have had tragic consequences for the African people. Only a few examples of these will be cited, to serve the purpose of explaining why there is so much distrust of intelligence (as a concept and mode of information support) within African countries, and to explain why the use of an intelligence model to generate information support for the African Union, was almost impossible to consider.

One of the most damaging cases is the involvement of China, Cuba, South Africa, the United States, and the USSR in Angola in 1975. The U.S. government supported the South African invasion of Angola, in an operation codenamed: IAFEATURE. This operation involved providing military support to South Africa to facilitate the invasion. It was in response to the U.S. backed South African invasion that Cuba with

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<sup>4</sup> In discussions with members of African civil society about the role that African intelligence services played in generating conflict early warning, there was often a considerable amount of annoyance that the question was even raised. It soon became very clear that civil society groups involved in generating early warning, prefer as much as possible to (knowingly) have nothing to do with African intelligence services.

the support of the Soviet Union dispatched 30,000 Cuban soldiers to Angola. China withdrew its support for its clients when she realized that they had allied themselves to Apartheid South Africa, to avoid losing its credibility on the African continent. To foreign intelligence agencies, sponsorship of various armed groups inside Angola (and indeed other places) during the Cold war was simply a policy in pursuit of their national security interests. However, to millions of Angolans, it was nothing short of a twenty-seven year nightmare, fuelling instability and conflict<sup>5</sup>. In addition to Cold war involvement in Africa, many of Africa's former colonial powers have sought to retain their influence on the continent, using covert and intelligence supported means. A good example of this was the successful murder of Patrice Lumumba in Zaire. His murder was attempted by a few Western intelligence services, the American, Belgian and French intelligence services all wanted him dead, as he appeared to be taking Zaire (viewed as a critical state in Africa) further into the Soviet camp. Lumumba's death brought into power a seemingly sincere and progressive leader by the name of Mobutu Sese Seko, who later became one of Africa's most notorious leaders.

Within Africa, intelligence services have been used far and wide to murder, disrupt and destroy those that oppose incumbents. An example of this is General Sani Abacha of Nigeria, he used the State Security Service (Nigeria's domestic intelligence

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<sup>5</sup> The National Security Archive,  
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB67/>, accessed on 11/08/2009

service) to systematically disrupt and destroy all elements of opposition to his rule. In Apartheid South Africa, the intelligence services were used to both sow discord and destroy opposition to the Apartheid system. In general, Africa's people have suffered at the hands of their own governments with the support of foreign governments, this support has largely been provided via intelligence and security services. The use of intelligence in Africa explains the objections by African people generally and members of civil society particularly to the African Union adopting an intelligence-based model of early warning. One member of African civil society went as far as saying that 'the role of early warning in Africa is to prevent violence, whereas the role of Intelligence may be fomenting it.'<sup>6</sup> The objection of African governments will be addressed below.

## **Early warning from the Organization of African Unity to the African Union**

The Organization of African Unity was an organization established with the main goal of protecting the sovereignty of nascent African nations in the post-colonial era. The objective was to ensure that there would be no external intervention in the internal affairs of member states, a situation that was at variance from the long history of foreign intervention in Africa's affairs<sup>7</sup>. Despite the important

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<sup>6</sup> Based on an interview conducted in July 2009

<sup>7</sup> Makinda, Samuel M., and F. Wafula Okumu, *The African Union: Challenges of Globalization, Security and Governance*, Routledge, 2008, p13. The authors describe colonialism in Africa as a 'humiliation' for Africa's people.

contributions that the Organization of African Unity made in ending minority rule in Southern Africa, and seeking to forge common positions on the continent relating to development, it has been widely condemned for remaining silent in the face of the most egregious crimes against humanity conducted by some of its member states. A particularly horrendous example of this was at the regional summit held in Tunis, just after the genocide in Rwanda had come to an end. The President that had effectively presided over the genocide was welcomed and treated like a *bona fide* head of state<sup>8</sup>. Even though one of the founding missions of the O.A.U. was to guarantee the Sovereignty of member states and refrain from intervening in their internal affairs, little can justify what happened. The Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution adopted in Cairo in 1993, marked a shift in the organization's philosophy. It now became apparent that indifference to what was happening in a neighboring country, in order to uphold the principle of non-interference was unjustifiable. This was not just a moral argument but also one based on the fact that conflicts in one country tended to spill over into another and resulted in refugee flows that could at times destabilize a whole sub-region, as was seen in Southern, Central and Western Africa<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> The O.A.U. International panel of Eminent Personalities, *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide*, The Organization of African Unity, December 1999, 15:86

<sup>9</sup> There are many examples of this, including the conflict in Sierra Leone, which was an offshoot of the conflict in Liberia. Likewise the conflict in Eastern DRC is an offshoot of the Rwanda genocide.

The founding of the African Union in 2002 signaled the beginning of an organization that sought to take an active, rather than passive role in managing the continent's affairs, including conflict. Given the lack of international political will to intervene in a timely fashion where serious crimes against humanity are anticipated, or in the process of commission, the Union has sought to prepare itself to act as a security guarantor (when a government is no longer able to manage security within its borders, or when a government itself is the cause of serious instability), for a period of up to six months where it is expected that the U.N. will take over the mission. The reason for this is the fact that the international community (i.e. the United Nations system) cannot be relied upon to make timely interventions to halt grave crimes against humanity in Africa, Rwanda being the best example. There are in fact several cases of intervention by the international community in Africa but they are rarely designed to prevent foreseeable conflicts from manifesting. The proximity of the African Union to events and potential conflict situations has put force behind the assumption that there is better understanding of African conflicts within Africa and a greater will to prevent them. This has further reinforced a shift to regional, rather than international solutions to peace and security challenges on the African continent.

## Early Warning vs. Intelligence

The use of early warning systems is well established in functional areas such as famine and natural disasters, the best example of this is the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS), which has been in use by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) since 1975<sup>10</sup>. However their track record in assisting in conflict management is mixed at best<sup>11</sup>. Early warning systems much like traditional intelligence systems seek to collect, analyze and disseminate relevant, timely and accurate information to decision-makers. However they differ in their objectives, and in their mode of collecting information.

In an intelligence system the objective is to maintain or protect national security (or perceptions thereof), whereas conflict early warning systems look beyond the security of states. There is a distinction largely used in discussions about Africa, concerning state and human security<sup>12</sup>. In most countries of the world the *raison d'être* of the state and its apparatus is to create a secure and stable living environment for the people living within that country. However, in Africa, large-scale civilian casualties and fatalities have characterized conflicts, which has broadened the perception that there is a real distinction between the two types of

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<sup>10</sup> Boothby, Derek and George D'Angelo, *Building Capacity within the United Nations*, in, Carment, David and Albrecht Schnabel, *Conflict Prevention From Rhetoric to Reality: Opportunities and Innovations*. Lexington Books, 2004, p. 253

<sup>11</sup> Boothby, Derek, and George D'Angelo, *Op. Cit.*, p.253

<sup>12</sup> The view that African governments and their security services are the cause of insecurity has been discussed above.



security. Early warning systems are intended to flag concerns about human security and consider interests that have a broad humanitarian appeal<sup>13</sup>. By far the most important distinction between an intelligence service and an early warning system is that the latter prescribes policy. For this reason, the CEWS must be even more driven, determined and better resourced than an ideal-type intelligence service in order to perform its function, which in this case is to support the prevention of serious crimes against humanity.

The second difference between intelligence and early warning is the manner in which information is collected. Information is drawn from open sources (including government sources), and analyzed in a transparent environment. Whereas, collection in an intelligence system is covert and/or clandestine.

## **The Intelligence Cycle**

Within an ideal-type intelligence model, services are tasked by policy-makers or military commanders to acquire information on a set of issues that may be relevant to policy and any actions being pursued. Meaning that policy makers (or their future needs) largely set the agenda, and it is up to the service to devise a strategy for satisfying the requirements. In order to put the collection strategy of the CEWS into

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<sup>13</sup> In some of Africa's most protracted conflicts i.e. Somalia and Sierra Leone, the collapse of the government preceded the devastation experienced by the population, this raises the question about the extent to which it is useful to make the distinction between state and human security.

the broader context of possible information collection strategies, this paper will fully explain all the possible sources of information available when seeking to influence security-related decision-making.

The collection capabilities of an intelligence service will ultimately depend upon the resources at its disposal. There are five main collection disciplines in the field of intelligence: Signals intelligence (SIGINT), Human intelligence (HUMINT), Imagery Intelligence (IMINT), Measurement and Signature intelligence (MASINT) and Open source intelligence (OSINT)<sup>14</sup>.

SIGINT consists of three main disciplines: communications intelligence (COMINT) relates to the interception of voice and other forms of communications. Telemetry intelligence (TELINT) generally relates to missiles. Electronic intelligence (ELINT) gathers electronic emissions that do not result from communications. An example of this is direction-finding which is used to locate electronic signals emanating from enemy weapons and other systems.

Espionage is the acquisition of HUMINT and is considered to be the second oldest profession in the world. Most intelligence services of the world possess this capability. The basic principle behind espionage is that agents with access to

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<sup>14</sup> Lowenthal, Mark M., *Op. Cit.*, Chapter five of this book forms the basis of the outline of intelligence collection disciplines.

information that a foreign or domestic intelligence service have been tasked to collect are 'run' by a representative of the intelligence service, in order to continue to obtain officially denied but required information.

Imagery intelligence is always derived from cameras, however they may be mounted on a number of different platforms, ranging from satellites, to unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), to buildings. MASINT is a catch-all term for a range of intelligence that is derived from sensors that SIGINT and IMINT cannot obtain. Examples are radar detectors used to obtain intelligence on nuclear matters<sup>15</sup>.

Open source intelligence is obtained from a broad range of undenied sources, which may include reports, journals, trade shows, interviews and other open means. The evolution of Google earth and commercial firms providing satellite imagery also means that to some degree IMINT may also be considered an open source.

Once information has been collected from across the disciplines it usually requires some sort of processing before it can be passed on to analysts. Examples of the way an intelligence service may process information include: rendering digital imagery, processing HUMINT reports to ensure that the identity of sources do not become

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<sup>15</sup> Macartney, John D., *John, How do we Explain MASINT?* in, George, Roger Z., and Robert D. Kline, *Intelligence and the National Security Strategist: Enduring Issues and Challenges*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006, p. 169

widely known throughout the intelligence service running the agent. It may also include the transcription of intercepted communications for use by analysts. After the processing and collection of information it is now left to analysts to consolidate the information into a product for use by decision-makers.

The role of an analyst in an intelligence service is to fuse information that has been collected and processed from whichever of the five intelligence collection disciplines they have available to them (HUMINT, SIGINT, IMINT, MASINT and OSINT) and use information from all sources to generate the most accurate reflection of an event or issue that a policymaker has tasked it to report on. In an ideal system, this built-in redundancy seeks to enable the proper vetting of sources. As an example, SIGINT may be used to verify the report of a human source. HUMINT reporting may be used to help explain IMINT. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the deputy head of GRU (Soviet Military Intelligence) provided critical information that was used to identify the deployment pattern of Soviet missiles from images taken by American U-2. Establishing a full and accurate picture of an event or issue (especially one as complex as an unfolding genocide) requires both multiple sources of information from within a collection discipline. It also requires that information can be verified across collection disciplines, to give policy makers the confidence necessary to act on the information at hand, should they wish to do so.

An excellent and rare example of using multiple collection disciplines to respond to crimes against humanity is U.S. action at the UN Security Council after the Srebrenica massacres had occurred in Bosnia. The US called in the help of the Central Intelligence Agency, who examined satellite imagery taken over the span of two weeks. The earlier imagery showed detainees standing in a field. The later imagery showed disturbed earth consistent with mass graves and tire marks in the same area. This imagery intelligence was used to corroborate reports from refugees that had survived mass killings. Ultimately the intelligence was used to counter Serb denials of the Srebrenica massacres and develop a consensus that concerted action was required in Bosnia<sup>16</sup>.

Analytical products in intelligence services are divided between current and strategic intelligence. Current intelligence is there to guide decisions that are currently being made by policymakers. This could include a diplomat negotiating a settlement or treaty on a particular issue, or a military commander seeking current intelligence on operational centers of gravity. Strategic intelligence is more long range in its objectives and seeks to provide information intended to guide strategic and contingency planning.

In the ideal-type intelligence service decision-makers receive the information that they have requested, disseminated either through an oral briefing or through the

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<sup>16</sup> Albright, Madeleine, *Madame Secretary*, (Miramax Books, 2003), p. 187-9

dissemination of a written report. Analysis is intended to be relevant and help to shape policy and decisions. Because of this there is some debate about the extent to which intelligence analysts may tend to skew analysis to suit the preference or policy directions of their policymakers, especially in more authoritarian systems. However, this problem is not unknown in established democracies. Politicization is widely believed to have been a factor in the 2002 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate on Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction, as policymakers are reported to have placed an unusual amount of pressure on analysts to make their analysis conform to policy predilections.

## **The CEWS model of the African Union**

In the case of the African Union, the *raison d'être* of the CEWS is fixed. The Continental Early Warning System of the African Union was established to provide analysis to the Chairperson of the Commission on the continental security situation. The Chairperson in turn advises the Peace and Security Council (PSC) on potential threats to the peace in Africa, in addition to recommending a response strategy<sup>17</sup>. The three main responsibilities of the PSC and Chairperson of the commission are to:

- Anticipate and prevent disputes and conflicts and policies that may lead to genocide and crimes against humanity.

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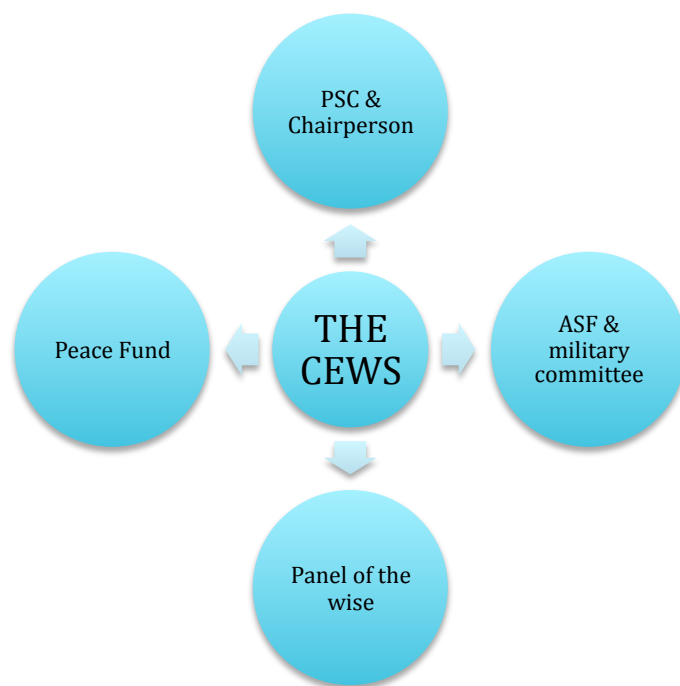
<sup>17</sup> Conflict Management Division of the Peace and Security Department, African Union Commission. *Meeting the Challenges of Conflict Prevention in Africa: Towards the Operationalization of the CEWS*. 17-19<sup>th</sup> of December 2006. p. 1 para. 3

- To undertake peace-making and peace-building functions.
- To authorize the mounting and deployment of peace support missions<sup>18</sup>.

The CEWS, like all intelligence services, is designed to keep key decision-makers informed as well as provide information support to the other policy tools at the disposal of the Chairperson A.U. commission and the Peace and Security Council. This paper argues that the CEWS as it currently conceptualized will not likely succeed in this objective. The CEWS is only one of four pillars of the African Union's peace and security architecture. As it is the sole focus of this paper the remaining three policy tools will only be briefly described because the CEWS is also intended to support their efforts. The Panel of the wise is a five-member panel of eminent Africans that will serve as the diplomatic arm of the African Union. The African Standby Force (ASF) (supported by the military committee) is composed of five brigades, and contains a 5,000 member military, police and civilian force that is expected to be ready for deployment within 30 days. The Peace Fund is a funding arm of the peace and security apparatus.

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<sup>18</sup> El Ghassim, Wane, *From Concept to Implementation: The Establishment of the Continental Early Warning System of the African Union*. Conflict Management Division of the Peace and Security Department, African Union. p. 7



**Diagram 2.** A depiction of the relationship between the CEWS and the rest of the African Union’s Peace and Security Apparatus.

The key structural difference between the CEWS and an ideal-type intelligence system is that with the CEWS the decision-makers have no established authority to task it to seek out particular information; in a sense the CEWS is on autopilot. This will have very important implications for generating oversight and accountability over the CEWS, as well as ensuring that it provides information relevant to those responsible for authorizing interventions to prevent grave conflicts.

The overview of methods of collecting security-related information above is intended to highlight just how much information is potentially available. Realizing the full potential of information availability requires, funding, technology and political will. As discussed above, member states of the African Union have a strict



aversion to giving the A.U. an information capacity that would violate its sovereignty. This is an argument that must be reconsidered in cases where the acts of the government in the territory concerned are egregiously at odds with the actions of a responsible sovereign, or where the government in question is incapable of fulfilling its core obligation as a sovereign, which is to protect its people. Nonetheless there remains little political will to enable the A.U. to realize the information acquisition capabilities that exist<sup>19</sup>. The issues of funding and technology are equally formidable barriers to realizing some of the potential that exists to collect information on security-related issues by the Africa Union.

Unlike an-ideal type intelligence system the CEWS is intended to be an open source system that relies on data and information from governments, inter-governmental organizations, the media, non-governmental organizations, think tanks and academics. The plan is for information to be processed through an automated system. In addition to developing an internal capability to track trends in the news, and a system for grading sources and reports. There is an added dimension to the collection capacity of the A.U. Seven sub-regional bodies (regional economic communities (RECS)) have developed or are in the process of developing early warning systems that are expected to feed data into the CEWS. The Early Warning Systems (EWS) of ECOWAS and IGAD are at an even more advanced stage of development than that of the African Union. In Central Africa, the Economic

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<sup>19</sup> There has been a parallel debate at the U.N.

Community of Central African States (ECCAS) is developing an EWS, as is the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), however the SADC model is based on a classified intelligence community model. The Community of Sahelo-Saharan states (CEN-SAD) has not started to establish its early warning capability at the time of writing.

The greatest problem with the collection strategy of the CEWS is that it only has the capacity to collect what it has received, and what it needs to fulfill its duties may not be what it receives. Amy Sands explains that when using open sources “...an analyst has to rely on what exists, understand why it was produced, and be sensitive to the potential for errors, bias and misinformation.<sup>20</sup>” Unlike an intelligence service the CEWS is not empowered with the capacity or the authority to collect the information it requires to inform policy, and may be more vulnerable to making analytical errors due to a collection method that is inherently biased. This is a key shortcoming that entering into a carefully monitored and structured intelligence liaison relationship may solve.

Further, the CEWS may be able to provide strategic warning on crimes against humanity from multiple open sources of reporting and information produced by

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<sup>20</sup> Sands, Amy, *Integrating Open Sources*, in, Sims, Jennifer E. and Burton Gerber, *Transforming U.S. Intelligence*, Washington D.C.: Georgetown University, 2005, p.67.

RECs, but it may not be able to translate the warning it receives into operational plans, because it does not possess the tasking authority to actively seek the information that may be required to craft clear and implementable contingency plans.

The case of Rwanda presents some very useful lessons on the creation of an appropriate collection strategy. It shows the difference in the operational utility of information derived from open sources (NGO reporting), vs. HUMINT reporting. Mr. Waly Bacre N'diaye was the Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions at the United Nations Human Rights Commission. He reinforced warnings that had been made by NGOs since 1993, explaining that there was systematic targeting of members of the Tutsi minority, in the wake of the 1990 invasion of the Tutsi-dominated Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) from Uganda. He reported that: '...the victims of the attacks, Tutsis in the overwhelming majority of cases, have been targeted solely because of their membership of a certain ethnic group and for no other objective reason.' In contrast to the information that the UN Special Rapporteur and NGOs were providing, the UN mission had a source that was able to provide far more operationally relevant information. Three months before the Genocide began the UNAMIR Commander and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Mr. Maurice Booh-Booh received information from a highly placed individual that lists were being generated of all the Tutsi in Kigali, that death squads were being trained to kill one thousand Tutsi every twenty minutes,

and that weapons were being stockpiled. The most significant piece of information provided by the informant was that Belgian peacekeepers were to be targeted and killed to force the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping force<sup>21</sup>. The U.N. did not have the capacity to 'run' this source in the same way that a liaison intelligence service would have. If the U.N. Security Council had been serious about preventing the Genocide in Rwanda, this would have been an invaluable source for supporting both strategic-level policy and operational planning.

The CEWS still remains solely wedded to reliance on the reporting of NGOs, IGOs, the media, think tanks and academics, (and government reports which may be biased) when there are (1) other sources of information available such as imagery intelligence, which can be acquired from low cost platforms, and (2) the most critical (and relevant if there was going to be an operation to prevent conflict) information that emerged during the Rwanda genocide came from a human source. Yet, there is no established procedure (that has been made public) for handling the extremely sensitive task of 'running' a high-level source capable of providing detailed insights into the intentions and capabilities of those that may seek to commit genocide and other grave crimes against humanity. Imler defines espionage as "...a tool that is more an art than a science, used for thousands of years by statesmen and commanders to obtain information from as close to the centers of

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<sup>21</sup> Carlsson, Ingvar, *Report of the Independent Inquiry into United Nations Actions During the Rwanda Genocide*, New York: The United Nations, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1999.

gravity of an adversary, or potential adversary, as possible<sup>22</sup>.” The ability to effectively manage human sources and integrate their reporting into analytical products is critical for the CEWS, whose responsibility it is to engage in warning as well as contingency and operational planning. In order to do this it will need to know and understand the intentions and capabilities of the groups and / or individuals it is seeking to prevent from acting. In this vein Amy Sands argues that ‘...open sources should never be seen as replacing classified information. Nor is it likely that they will provide a “smoking gun” about some issue or threat since, like other types of intelligence sources, open-source materials will probably be fragmentary, providing only pieces of a larger puzzle.’<sup>23</sup>

The A.U. will also be dependent on information gathered by sub-regional security mechanisms (when they all become operational). The two most advanced of which are those belonging to ECOWAS and IGAD. Their early warning systems are called ECOWARN and CEWARN respectively, and they both operate in a similar fashion. ECOWAS, located in West Africa, has a field-based reporting system, where each member state appoints a government official to submit early warning reports. Government reports are submitted alongside members of civil society, and are fed

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<sup>22</sup> Imler, Norman. *Espionage in an Age of Change: Optimizing Strategic Intelligence Services for the Future*, in, George, Roger Z., and Robert D. Kline, *Intelligence and the National Security Strategist*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, INC. 2006, p. 220

<sup>23</sup> Sands, Amy, *Op. Cit.* p. 67

back to the analytical unit at ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja. Analysts also assess reports from the Internet, media, television and newsprint.

The field reporting is very important but the difference between field reporting and HUMINT is analogous to the difference between diplomatic reporting and HUMINT derived from a source close to key centers of gravity. Government reporters attached to either mechanism will naturally use the reporting mechanism as a public relations vehicle, especially if it is their government that appears to be doing something wrong. Furthermore, government reporters are unlikely to be at a sufficiently high level to be able to report high-level decisions that will likely affect security, even if they chose to be impartial. The problem with civil society actors is that they are unlikely to have the necessary access to provide insight into the intentions and capabilities of genocidal or other actors. They are only able to observe the consequences of policy and not necessarily understand (in the detail necessary for operational planning) what is driving the phenomena they are observing. In 2007, John Mark Opoku argued that even with the concerted support of civil society, ECOWARN produces 'few actionable recommendations.'<sup>24</sup> Limited collection capabilities and the fact that analysts receive no feedback (discussed below) are largely responsible for this.

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<sup>24</sup> Opoku, John Mark, *West African Conflict Early Warning and Early Response System: The Role of Civil Society Organizations*, Accra: KAIPTC Paper, No. 19, September 2007, p.16.

To return to the Rwanda Genocide, the UN special Rapporteur and other NGOs were able to observe that Tutsis were being targeted for genocide, but unlike the source that had reported to General Dallaire and the SRSG, they were not able to provide the details of the operations behind the killings and the future intentions of the relevant actors. This again reinforces the need to obtain HUMINT when and if the need arises to prevent genocide. In the case of the African Union, this can best be done with the support of a liaison intelligence service.

As it is presently conceptualized, one of the main activities of the CEWS is information processing. As discussed above the CEWS does not have an independent information collection capability, but relies on secondary sources for information. As the information may be relevant but not necessarily configured to the needs of the decision-makers at the African Union (i.e. the Chairperson of the Commission, the PSC, and the operational-level policy arms) it requires processing. This is likely to result in what Mark Lowenthal describes as the “Wheat vs. Chaff” problem, where the increased collection of information and data, also significantly increases the task of finding truly relevant information.<sup>25</sup>

After consultations with various groups and experts, the framers of the CEWS decided that it was important to have a uniform and consistent means of assessing

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<sup>25</sup> Lowenthal, Mark M., *Intelligence From Secrets to Policy*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2006. P. 71

conflict situations and opted to create a system that was based on a comprehensive set of political, economic, social, military and humanitarian indicators<sup>26</sup>. The plan is for information to be processed through an automated system, and to develop an internal capability to track trends in the news, in addition to a system for grading sources and reports. This is similar in approach to the Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS) operated by the Organization for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) at the U.N., A. Walter Dorn explained that the HEWS monitored the possibility of deterioration in the security situation over one hundred countries, using professional staff and computerized capacity that could evaluate and monitor a large number of indicators. From the time it began operation in June 1995, the HEWS was unable to generate a single case of 'early warning' of armed conflict. Dorn explains that the failure was due to the fact that "too much reliance was placed on statistics, computer databases, neural networks, and automated computations for pattern recognition, without linking this to more practical human analysis."<sup>27</sup>

Conflicts tend to follow their own internal logic, and seeking a generic approach to the analysis of conflict maybe scientific but not necessarily practical. Carment and Schnabel argued this point well when stating that '....publicly available academic approaches constitute a formidable and potentially useful "tool kit" for risk

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<sup>26</sup> Institute for Security Studies, *Non-Paper on the Operationalization of the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS)*, 2004, p. 9

<sup>27</sup> Dorn, A. Walter, *Early and Late Warning by the U.N. Secretary General of Threats to the Peace: Article 99 revisited*, in, Carment, David and Albrecht Schnabel (eds), *Conflict Prevention from Rhetoric to Reality: Vol. 1*, Lexington Books, 2004, pp. 328.



assessment and early warning, but they do not always pass the basic litmus test required for policy relevance.<sup>28</sup>

The analytical products that the CEWS intends to produce are organized into three main categories: strategic conflict and cooperation analysis, which is intended to identify key sources of tension; actor analysis, which would focus on the key protagonists; and dynamic analysis that is intended to establish factors that inhibit and trigger conflicts. As described above, the limited scope of collection activities by the CEWS will have significant implications for the quality and operational relevance of analysis. As Carment and Schnabel observed above, this has been a critical weakness in conflict early warning systems.

The type of analysis generated will ultimately flow from the indicator-based model of generating early warning, which artificially compartmentalizes extremely complex issues. Barnett R. Rubin explains that ‘...violent conflict does not result from the linear summation of a neatly defined set of causes, but from interactions among multiple phenomena in a complex system with several levels of organization. Some factors may predispose certain societies to violence, but only the decisions of

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<sup>28</sup> Carment, David and Albrecht Schnabel, *Into the Mainstream: Applied Conflict Prevention*, in, Carment, David and Albrecht Schnabel (eds), *Conflict Prevention from Rhetoric to Reality: Vol. 2*, Lexington Books, 2004, p. 6.

actors in dynamically changing situations realize these potentials...<sup>29</sup>” Even for a well-resourced intelligence service, obtaining an accurate reflection of an issue or situation for the purpose of supporting the decision-making process can be hard enough. Dorn explains that the reliance on automated ‘linear’ systems of analysis, that are at odds with the complex, multilayered and dynamic nature of conflict, prevented the HEWS at the UN from generating a single warning of armed conflict, before being eventually dismantled.

As described above in relation to Srebrenica, warning is more than just telling the Chairperson of the African Union and the PSC that there is likely to be a genocide in a particular country or region, it is showing them that this will be the case in a manner that is readily comprehensible and leaves little doubt about what is to unfold, or what is already unfolding. This will rely on sources of information that the policymakers involved will likely be responsive to, such as imagery intelligence or HUMINT from a well-regarded source. Changes in key indicators and NGO reports are not likely to impress decision-makers into expending the immense resources that preventing a genocide will require, unless supplemented by some further compelling evidence. This evidence, may be acquired through the use of liaison intelligence services, to supplement the information collected by the CEWS with timely, and relevant reporting.

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<sup>29</sup> Rubin, Barnett R., *Sources of Violent Conflict*, in, Carment, David and Albrecht Schnabel, *Conflict Prevention from Rhetoric to Reality: Opportunities and Innovations*, Lexington Books, 2006. P. 22

Secondly, analysis is meant to facilitate contingency and operational planning. Analysis that is based on modular indicators is likely to encourage static policy prescriptions to dynamic problems. Furthermore, prescriptions are likely to be relevant for broad strategy and unlikely to deliver detailed operational guidance, because of the relatively stale nature of the information on which analysis will be based.

Furthermore, in contrast to the discussion above on politicization in intelligence systems, in the case of the African Union, the CEWS is likely to be on the opposite end of the spectrum. Analysis is likely to be so un-politicized due to the modular based methodology, that it will likely be irrelevant. This is very much at odds with the extremely political nature of any effort to try and prevent genocide or any crime against humanity. Richard Betts explains that “For issues of high import and controversy, any relevant analysis will perforce be politically charged because it will point at least implicitly to conclusions about policy- whether it will work, whether it addresses the right issue, whether it will have negative side effects, and so on<sup>30</sup>.”

This has proven true within the context of the ECOWAS, Opoku explains that “lack of political will resulting from the divergent calculations of the ECOWAS member states tends to impact negatively on intervention even when there is a clear need for

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<sup>30</sup> Betts, Richard, *Op. Cit.*, P.75

one.<sup>31</sup> Failure for analysts to understand the political nature of their prevention efforts will likely have disastrous consequences. As a policy-making body the CEWS will require information about the interests and capabilities of key-decision-makers, in order to make a persuasive case for whatever course of action they deem necessary. Charles Dufresne and Albrecht Schnabel in a similar vein have argued that “...sound early warning analysis must not only recommend preventive action, but must also consider which organizational, political, and resource constraints exist, which impact they have on effective preventive action, and how they can be circumvented and, sometimes overcome.<sup>32</sup>” The responsibility of an analyst at the CEWS is far greater than its collection system prepares it for. It simply will not provide them with the information needed to warn and prepare sufficiently detailed contingency plans for the PSC and the Chairperson of the commission.

Further compounding this problem, is the fact that in the information age, where real-time information can be transmitted to key decision-makers that have access to the Internet and CNN, the role of the analyst is even more difficult. In order for analysts and their analysis to be relevant to decisions made either within the context of an intelligence system or the African Union’s CEWS, they will be required to provide analysis that gives better insight than other information sources that are readily available to decision-makers.

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<sup>31</sup> Opoku, John Mark, *Op. Cit.*, p.16.

<sup>32</sup> Dufresne, Charles and Albrecht Schnabel. *Building UN Capacity in Early Warning and Prevention*, in *Conflict Prevention from Rhetoric to Reality*: Vol. 1. P. 378

As the PSC is made of African heads of state<sup>33</sup>, it may likely have access to more relevant and timely information than the CEWS is able to obtain. This has been a significant problem at the United Nations Security Council, where permanent members of the Security Council have far better information support than the UN itself. A. Walter Dorn argues that “The only times when the Secretary-General can claim special privilege is when he possesses unique information, not available to the major powers, which can galvanize the council to action. But it is rare that the Secretary-General will know more about a new dispute than the major powers.<sup>34</sup>” The reality is that knowledge about an unfolding situation has never really been a problem. The leaders of African states usually know about and, sometimes actively participate in conflicts in other countries. The best example of this is in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the governments of Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Angola, Uganda and Zambia, all became involved and sponsored factions on one side or the other. A more recent example is Chad and Sudan, where both governments actively support armed groups on the opposite side of the border.

The decision-makers whom early warning seeks to influence, may have deeply-ingrained vested interests in a particular conflict situation, or unfolding crime

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<sup>33</sup> Heads of State may also be represented by Foreign Ministers and Ambassadors to the A.U.

<sup>34</sup> Dorn, A. Walter. *Op Cit.*, p. 332

against humanity as France did in Rwanda<sup>35</sup>. Mobilizing action under those circumstances is difficult.

Another issue to do with audience is the fact that the CEWS is not flexible enough to be operationally useful to other key decision-makers, such as force commanders or members of the Panel of the wise. This is partly a function of the fact that the response is pre-programmed. The force structure and size is not determined by the situation at hand. The African Standby Force (ASF) is expected to have only five brigades that it can call upon to deploy 5,000 personnel each. Likewise diplomatic tools are also limited, without the assistance of the broader international community to assist with the enforcing sanctions, or any other diplomatic tools that may be considered useful. Ideally, the deployment of military and police forces and diplomatic needs should be based on assessed needs, however, as discussed above the CEWS is unlikely to be able to give much insight into what those needs may be, as it lacks the tasking authority to obtain the necessary information.

The lack of feedback is a real problem in even the most advanced intelligence systems<sup>36</sup>. In order to better serve the needs of policymakers, analysts need to know whether their analysis was useful, actionable, and timely enough. This is a problem

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<sup>35</sup> The O.A.U. International Panel of Eminent Personalities. *Op. Cit.*, 15:80. The report cites allegations made by U.N. officials that France flew some of the genocidaires out of Goma, including the Genocide Leader Col. Bagasora.

<sup>36</sup> Lowenthal, Mark, *Op. Cit.*, p.65.

that obviously becomes more acute, where the policymakers have no tasking authority at all.

## **Compromised intelligence?**

From assessing the key differences between the ideal-type intelligence system and the manner in which the A.U.'s CEWS has been organized and set-up, some key issues emerge.

**Tasking.** The absence of a tasking Authority is relevant in two arenas. (1) The PSC and the Chairperson of the Commission, have no established means of tasking the CEWS for particular information. (2) The collectors themselves have no tasking authority, and therefore no authority to craft a collection strategy for the information they require to influence policy and contingency planning. The first instance, is likely meant to ensure that decision-makers on the PSC and the chairperson of the commission get information on potential and actual crimes against humanity whether or not they wish to receive it, and ensure that the analytical process is not politicized. However, this is likely to reduce the relevance of the CEWS<sup>37</sup>. As discussed above, the fact that mass crimes against humanity are taking place is usually an open secret and therefore alerting the PSC and the

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<sup>37</sup> This has been a serious problem in sub-regional warning systems, where analysts have no means of understanding how policymakers receive their policy recommendations.

Chairperson of the A.U. commission is a secondary function. The main responsibility of the CEWS is to ensure the existence of operational plans that do not appear to impose outrageous costs on the relevant decision-makers. This is directly related to the second issue of the lack of tasking authority by analysts, who only have access to the information they receive, which may not be the information they need.

The main problem with the lack of tasking authority when related to policy-makers is that there is no established chain of accountability to follow. If the CEWS fails to deliver appropriate warning and contingency planning, the policymakers, (i.e. the Chairperson of the A.U. commission and the PSC council) cannot be held responsible, because they are entirely isolated from the process of warning and contingency planning.

**Collection.** Due to the fact that the CEWS lacks tasking authority, it uses the information it receives, and consequently has a reactive collection strategy. As assessed above reports from IGOs, NGOs, other sub-regional collective security mechanisms, have a role to play. However, the role that information provided by these organization should in fact play, is guiding collection, not constituting the full range of collection efforts. The information acquisition strategy of the A.U. is best suited to establishing context and guiding long-range strategy, but not well suited to guiding operational contingency planning necessary for preventing conflict and ensuring that analysis is relevant to policy deliberations in a crisis situation.



The fact that the collection strategy of the A.U. is based primarily on **some** of the available open sources is a critical weakness. Sources of information that are far more useful for operational and even warning purposes are neglected.

**Processing.** The indicator-based conflict early warning system of the A.U. is problematic, and has been unsuccessful when tried in other bodies. This mode of information processing is helpful when the issue at stake is non-contentious such as Tsunami, drought or famine warning. However, where the intervention required becomes far more complex and even political and may tread on sensitive vested interests, the warning system employed must be far more complex, agile and integrated.

**Analysis.** The collection strategy and the mode of processing have a knock-on effect on the analysis that the CEWS will likely provide. CEWARN operates an indicator-based early warning system. It produces analysis that is scientific and balanced with factors clearly assessed. However, this is unlikely to make for operationally useful reading to policy-makers, as it reads more like a social-science paper (with graphs and charts, rather than communications transcripts, or imagery showing damning evidence) than an operational plan. This is further evidenced by the recommendations for policy. One of the policy recommendations was that 'Kenya should take advantage of the existing Joint Border Commissions (with Ethiopia and

Uganda) to monitor and strengthen security along common border.<sup>38</sup> This is a strategic objective that must be further translated into an operational plan, which would include key points along the border, personnel levels and constitution, funding and equipment requirements, and much more. Without the who, what, why, where, when, and how being attached to policy recommendations, there is little understanding of whether or how the achievement of the stated policy objective is possible. Or even worse, it could encourage the A.U. to make a decision to intervene in a situation that it is greatly unprepared for. This was a problem in Darfur, where manpower levels were grossly inadequate, compounded by the lack of air assets to ensure the mobility of the troops that were available. In Somalia, the A.U. deserves credit for taking the initiative to send in a peacekeeping mission. However, manpower levels and resources are inadequate, as a function of inadequate planning, inadequate support from A.U. member states (that have not fulfilled their troop pledges), and poor international cooperation. A critic of the A.U.'s mission in Somalia has described AMISOM as an 'ill-conceived mission', further explaining that 'the A.U.'s peacekeepers struggled to protect themselves, let alone Mogadishu's beleaguered residents.<sup>39</sup> As it is currently conceptualized the CEWS is unlikely to generate the analysis and guidance to policy makers needed to ensure that they effectively prevent mass and violent crimes against humanity.

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<sup>38</sup> IGAD-CEWARN, *CEWARN Country Updates: May-August 2004: For the Kenyan Side of the Karamoja Cluster*, Addis Ababa: CEWARN, July 12<sup>th</sup> 2005, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Williams, Paul D., *Into the Mogadishu Maelstrom: The African Union Mission in Somalia*. International Peacekeeping, Vol. 16, no. 4, August 2009, pp 514-515.

**Dissemination.** There are five categories of decision-makers that must be taken into account, the Chairperson of the A.U. commission, the Peace and Security Council, the Military (and police force) Commanders, the members of the Panel of the Wise, and the Peace fund (including donors). There is a need to comprehensively cater for all their information requirements.

The CEWS is geared to warning the Chairperson and the PSC, but does not adequately address the concerns and operational needs that the other policy arms of the peace and security architecture will have, and this is because its information tasking and collection strategy renders the CEWS highly inflexible.

**Consumption.** Analysts at the CEWS may incorrectly assume that their job is to report trends based on changes in indicators, by virtue of their collection and processing concepts. They will ultimately be required to understand the calculations and interests of key actors, if their analytical products and policy response strategies are to be taken seriously.

**Feedback.** The fact that policymakers do not directly generate, set or shape collection priorities almost guarantees that analysts will receive no feedback. The lack of feedback from policymakers at the EWS of ECOWAS has been a real issue. The early warning department sends out early warning based on reports received from the field and from open sources, it then compiles a concise report, that gives

some background analysis, worst-case and best-case scenarios and policy-prescriptions. They do not receive feedback on their analysis, and do not obtain a good understanding of the dynamics behind decision-making. This reduces their ability to improve their analytical capability and increase their relevance to policy<sup>40</sup>.

## **Improving information support to the African Union**

This paper is not written to disparage the immense efforts that have been made to improve the capacity of the African Union to act as a continental security guarantor, it is intended to build on those efforts, by proffering a potential solution to the problems that the A.U. will likely face with its current information support system. The foundation truly exists for a collective security capacity that will be capable of overcoming political obstacles, in the form of vested interests, resource handicaps and meager international political will to operationally prevent conflict on the African continent. The first step in achieving this is the creation of an information policy that not only establishes the capacity to warn effectively, but also enables contingency planning and provides key information support to interveners. The objective of intelligence is that it helps to 'economize forces' by assisting policymakers and helping them to be in the right place at the right time. Intelligence should deliver an understanding of the intentions and capabilities of an adversary, in this case a government or non-state actor seeking to, or in the process of

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<sup>40</sup> This was a recurring theme in discussions held with members of the Early Warning department in July 2009.

committing crimes against humanity. With good information it is easier to apply pressure on key centers of gravity, to prevent or mitigate conflict at a reduced cost<sup>41</sup>.

This paper is certainly not recommending that the A.U. establish its own intelligence capability, but it is rather arguing that the A.U. should utilize resources that already exist to strengthen its capacity to warn and force necessary action. It also recommends that it strengthen its capacity to engage in long-term strategic planning for the continent (a task that the CEWS actually prepares it for). There is also a need to provide military commanders with the intelligence resources they are seriously lacking, to assist them in preventing and managing conflict. In light of the demanding intelligence requirements in peacekeeping operations, in 2006, the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO) issued a policy directive on Joint Operations Centres (JOC) and Joint Mission Analysis (JMAC) Centres. The core objectives of the JOC and the JMAC centers is to 'ensure that all peacekeeping missions have in place integrated operations monitoring, reporting and information analysis hubs at mission headquarters to support the more effective integration of mission-wide situational awareness, security information and analysis for management decision making.'<sup>42</sup> The A.U. only plans to deploy the

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<sup>41</sup> Brody, Richard, *The Limits of Warning*, The Washington Quarterly, (Summer 1983), vol. 6, no. 3 (p. 40-48)

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/info/sitcentre.shtml>, accessed on 10/22/2009.

African Standby Force for up to six months, before the mission is re-hatted to the U.N. However, this will never justify sending troops into a dangerous situation, like Somalia, with inadequate means of developing meaningful situational awareness<sup>43</sup>.

The problems with the CEWS at present is that the absence of tasking authority by the policymakers will automatically disengage them from the process of warning and contingency planning. This will make it difficult to hold them accountable for failures to make appropriate interventions to prevent conflict. The inflexible information collection capability will likely generate information that is most suitable to long-range analysis and not current unfolding events, and is unlikely to provide information that will help to establish of clear centers of gravity. The indicator-based warning system will not provide the dynamic analysis needed to warn and generate a well-resourced and organized response to an unfolding genocide. Finally, dissemination is targeted to the policy level actors and is unlikely to cater for the needs (beyond providing background) of diplomats and military commanders that will be deployed to manage conflict.

In addition to these challenges there is the very real possibility of a bureaucratic conflict with sub-regional organizations, especially those that have a peace and security infrastructure more advanced than that of the A.U. (i.e. ECOWAS, SADC, and

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<sup>43</sup> A.U. peacekeeping troops in Somalia have been subject to several deadly suicide attacks, including an attack on their headquarters.

IGAD). With these organizations, in order to avoid cooperation being based on the fact that donor funds are distributed to sub-regional organizations via the A.U., there is a need to make the A.U. useful to them.

## **Fixing the CEWS before it breaks**

The African Union is at risk of simply duplicating the efforts being made by sub-regional bodies, despite their efforts to avoid doing so. This paper advocates for the A.U. specializing its information support capabilities and providing levels and modes of support that are both sorely needed but generally unavailable, to all but the wealthiest African nations. The African Union should also specialize in strategic planning for the continent, and security issues that cut across sub-regional blocs in order to avoid encroaching on existing bureaucratic functions being performed by existing sub-regional organizations (and encourage the development of emerging sub-regional early warning systems). The A.U. should also pool together resources to ensure the development of capabilities that will enable the A.U. to create a far more flexible information collection strategy. This would include training analysts to use imagery intelligence (that can be derived from increasingly less expensive platforms) and other technical data, as well as inculcating security culture and practices within the CEWS; that would greatly assist in the provision of operational information support to military commanders and diplomatic interveners.

The sub-regional bodies should be left to develop capabilities to flag potential incidents of genocide and other grave crimes against humanity. Information obtained from open sources will serve this purpose. When the alert is high enough, the A.U. should monitor the situation more carefully with the benefit of expanded means of obtaining relevant information.

Adapting to the particular circumstances of the African Union, the intelligence liaison model (described below) is prescribed to fix some of the key shortcomings of the CEWS model, and provide it with a more flexible and ultimately useful information collection capability. As discussed above both African and foreign intelligence services have a history of exacerbating the security situation in African countries, this makes it necessary to organize intelligence liaison between the African Union and intelligence services in a such a way as to prevent abuse. In general, intelligence liaison can also be a vehicle for manipulation by a member state or foreign government, and therefore the model must also be adapted to reduce the likelihood of manipulation, especially given the humanitarian nature of the issues the CEWS is tasked to deal with. The final objective is to increase the interaction between the CEWS and the strategic leadership of the A.U., so that both share or are recognized for successes or failures. This will be accomplished by giving the PSC the power to authorize intelligence liaison and thereby tasking collection on issues of concern.



## Intelligence liaison

Intelligence liaison is a widely practiced mode of collecting information by barter.<sup>44</sup> Jennifer Sims explains that the relationship may be simple or complex. Simple liaison relationships involve the exchange of intelligence for intelligence. This may involve the U.S., U.K., or China (all of which boast a technically advanced intelligence collection capability), exchanging intelligence with a service that does not have those capabilities, but does have access to sources and agents of mutual interest. A complex intelligence liaison relationship involves bartering a mixture of 'political, intelligence, economic, military or operational goods through intelligence channels.' This may include allowing a foreign intelligence service to place a listening post in a territory in exchange for economic, political, military and even intelligence goods. Symmetric liaison can be simple or complex; it is characterized by balance overtime. Asymmetric liaison is characterized by imbalance. This is where one party in the relationship receives more than they are given<sup>45</sup>.

Intelligence liaison occurs between diverse countries, with ostensibly different geo-strategic interests. A good example of this is the widespread and controversial reports of intelligence liaison between the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Sudanese intelligence. On the surface, it would not seem that Sudanese intelligence

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<sup>44</sup> Sims, Jennifer E., *Foreign Intelligence Liaison: Devils, Deals and Details*, International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence, vol. 19, no. 2, pp-196-199.

<sup>45</sup> Sims, Jennifer E., *Op. Cit.*, p. 196.

would have much to offer the well-resourced and technologically superior U.S., especially as the relationship presented a political risk, given Khartoum's alleged genocidal conduct in Darfur. Nonetheless, there must have been some basis for the relationship.

## **The use of intelligence liaison in multi-national organizations**

**NATO.** NATO and the African Union are at very different stages in their development, and generally find themselves confronting very different security challenges. This is starting to change with NATO engagements in Afghanistan relying more on counter-insurgency operations, than air power. This paper builds on and adapts the NATO model of using intelligence liaison for intelligence collection purposes, arguing that it can be adapted to the particular circumstances of the African Union, and help to overcome some of the problems inherent in the mode of information support that the A.U. is developing.

NATO has no independent intelligence collection capacity, but retains the capacity to process, analyze and disseminate intelligence it receives from member states within its Headquarters. The intelligence committee provides day-to-day intelligence to the Secretary-General, the North Atlantic Council, the Defence planning committee, the military committee, and other NATO bodies. In addition to

providing strategic intelligence it also provides intelligence support to guide the composition and organization of NATO forces.

Key NATO member states have an extremely robust intelligence capability. Very little literature exists on the capabilities of African intelligence services, but using Sudan as an example, some are capable of generating information that the U.S. (with a very advanced intelligence capability) finds useful. The ability of member states to contribute useful information within the context of an intelligence liaison relationship is not so much the issue as the likelihood that they will seek to manipulate the process, where and if vested interests are at stake.

**The United Nations.** The United States and other members of the international community have offered to provide intelligence support to the U.N., particularly when their interests overlapped with those of the U.N. This was prevalent during U.N. weapons inspections in Iraq. Loch K. Johnson explains “Germany provided helicopters to UNSCOM, for instance, with special radar to penetrate Iraqi sand dunes in search of buried weapons; Britain contributed sensitive scanners to intercept Iraqi military communications; and the United States loaned U-2 spy planes and even Navy divers to probe Iraqi lakes and rivers for submerged

weapons.<sup>46</sup> U.N. member states have deployed state-of-the-art intelligence gathering capabilities, in support of U.N. efforts. According to Johnson, there is also a specially designated category of intelligence that may be disseminated to the U.N. by America's Central Intelligence Agency.

The U.S. has also provided tactical intelligence support to U.N. peacekeepers when it has assessed that they may be in danger. Loch K. Johnson explains that "when the intelligence community determines that the Blue Helmets are in jeopardy, a member of the US Mission to the United Nations will (with clearance from the Department of State) present valuable battlefield information orally to the appropriate UN officials, possibly saving lives but without leaving any intelligence documents behind<sup>47</sup>." The provision of intelligence support by member states implicitly acknowledges the information deficit that exists at the U.N., which is far better resourced than the African Union.

If the African Union is to succeed at warning and operational contingency planning, in a way that compels state parties and the international community to act, it will need the capacity to collect information, that it is not currently set-up to acquire.

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<sup>46</sup> Johnson, Loch K., *Peacekeeping Intelligence: Emerging Concepts for the Future*, in Johnson, Loch K., *Strategic Intelligence: Windows into a Secret World*, Roxbury Publishing company, 2004. Chapter 20.

<sup>47</sup> Johnson, Loch K., *Op. Cit.*

Intelligence liaison is the simplest route to augmenting the A.U.'s collection capabilities, as well as engaging key decision-makers.

## **The dangers of liaison**

The most likely intelligence liaison relationship that will emerge between the African Union and intelligence liaison partners is asymmetric. Between two intelligence services this kind of liaison relationship is dangerous. Sims explains that the liaison partner with the least to offer will become dependent, and may be taken hostage by a less dependent service<sup>48</sup>. This is certainly true of the U.N. experience with intelligence liaison, where ties between UNSCOM and intelligence services of member states (all three of them being close allies) led to the wide spread belief that the U.N. had allied itself to intelligence services of member states in an attempt to depose the leader of another member state. There was the widespread belief that the U.N. was being manipulated to serve the political ends of its liaison partners.

## **The possibility of Intelligence liaison with the African Union**

The most likely basis for intelligence liaison with the A.U. is that it could present a way for any willing and capable U.N. member state to fulfill its international legal obligations to take collective action to maintain international peace and security.

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<sup>48</sup> Sims, Jennifer E., *Op. Cit.*, p. 198

This basis for cooperation is too idealistic to be reliable. Africa is the source of many valuable and important raw materials exported to many of the world's most advanced economies. The maintenance of regional stability should therefore be an important objective in most of the world's major capitals, however this has not stopped foreign powers from supporting or ignoring destabilizing policies in the past.

However, this is not always the case, the New York Times reported that Operation Lightning Thunder, conducted by Ugandan troops fighting the Lord's Resistance Army, was provided with intelligence and logistical support from the U.S.<sup>49</sup>.

According to the New York Times, the U.S. responded to a request for help from the Ugandan government. This will not necessarily happen again.

This paper argues for liaison Intelligence services to essentially volunteer to assist by providing the tools for a more flexible collection strategy<sup>50</sup>. For example they will assist in managing HUMINT sources (which tends to be the most widely used source

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/07/world/africa/07congo.html?pagewanted=1&r=2&sq=uganda,%20LRA&st=cse&scp=7>, Accessed on 10/18/2009

<sup>50</sup> There are several medium powers, with comparatively sophisticated intelligence services that may be willing to form liaison relationship of this kind, even where the issue does not affect their vital interests in any meaningful way. Candidate countries may be Scandinavian countries and some European countries too.

of intelligence in Africa<sup>51</sup>), and help with the acquisition of other sources of intelligence. That is where their responsibility would end. A.U. analysts must be trained to interpret and manage sensitive sources and intelligence derived from technical means and disseminate the information (directly and indirectly) to all five categories of relevant decision-makers: the Chairperson of the A.U., the PSC, the Africa Standby Force, the Panel of the Wise and the managers and donors of the peace fund.

## **Benefits of intelligence liaison for the African Union**

Authorization to enter into liaison relationships, with three separate intelligence services, should be granted by the PSC. The three categories of intelligence service will be: (1) A service that is relatively close to the site of the unfolding or ongoing incident, (2) a second, that is in the African region, but not from the same sub-region (or in close geographic proximity to the country or countries in question), and (3) another intelligence service from outside the region.

The redundancy built into this proposal serves two main purposes. Firstly, it seeks to protect the liaison relationship from manipulation by partner services. Three different services, with different geo-political interests will be brought together to work on the same issue, making it far less likely that the system will be abused.

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<sup>51</sup> This assessment is derived from interviews with experienced African intelligence officers.

Secondly, despite the fact that a service with superior technical capabilities may try to dominate the process, they may lack the in-depth knowledge and insight that partner services can bring to bear in the relationship, meaning that as with simple liaison, capability differentials should be assessed as differences rather than superiority.

The second objective in establishing the capacity for intelligence liaison is, that it engages the strategic level decision-makers with the warning and contingency planning process. As noted above, the current CEWS is almost entirely insulated from key decision-makers, because of their lack of tasking authority. Before an intelligence liaison relationship can be established, member states on the Peace and Security Council would have to vote, and task the intelligence services to obtain or manage particular information. This engages them with the operational planning process, and ensures that they will share accountability for failures and be recognized for successes. This would also empower the PSC to establish and terminate an intelligence liaison relationship, when they consider it necessary. The PSC would be similarly accountable for such decisions.

Finally, a more flexible collection strategy, is intended to result in a more sophisticated and true-to-life analytical capacity, capable of going beyond prescribing broad strategy to providing detailed operational plans, that will not only



be useful to key decision-makers on the strategic level, but also decision-makers on the operational level too.

## **Challenges to Intelligence liaison with the African Union**

Addressing the political and sovereignty concerns of member states may be challenging. This is not to mention the extremely bad reputation that intelligence services generally have in the minds of African people. However the A.U. must develop the know-how to better exploit operationally relevant sources of information, without seeking to develop an intelligence service, for the sake of preventing grave and destabilizing conflicts in Africa. The arrangement would be *ad hoc*, and under the control of the PSC and the chairperson of the commission.

On the operational level, greatly improved security practices at the African Union will be required for the liaison model to be successful, in addition to providing substantial training to analysts that would enable them to use information from sources that they may be unfamiliar with.

## **Conclusion**

Improved access to intelligence and better information support will not remove all the challenges confronting the African Union's peace and security architecture. However, it will certainly help to ensure that it makes better-informed policy-

decisions, as well as set up the African Union to make powerful warnings about potential and ongoing crimes against humanity that may occur in member states. The sub-regional organizations should be allowed to develop and grow their capacity to provide alerts on potential crises in their areas. The A.U. on the other hand should specialize by developing the capabilities to conduct detailed investigations into such reports, using intelligence methods, that will likely elicit information detailed enough for realistic operational planning, specific to the particular crisis. This specialization will also decrease the likelihood that the A.U. will be encroaching on the bureaucratic turf of organizations that are currently more capable and experienced.

There are significant barriers (mainly sovereignty concerns, negative perceptions of intelligence in Africa and resources) to improving the A.U.'s information support capabilities, but they must be considered in light of what is at stake, if the A.U. fails to empower itself to make better decisions and deploy its very scarce resources in an informed manner. This paper sought to address the sovereignty concerns of African nations, by arguing for *ad hoc* intelligence liaison capability that would only be used under the gravest circumstances. This paper also sought to address the issue of the widespread mistrust of intelligence services by Africans by arguing for multi-layered intelligence liaison process, in the hope that three separate services with differing (and maybe even competing geo-strategic interests) would be less

likely to manipulate the process and therefore less likely to assist further abuses against the African people.

In the final analysis the African Union and its supporters will have to balance the competing histories that have driven the formation of the CEWS. On the one hand the memory of covert actions and intelligence-related activities has caused a severe mistrust of intelligence as a policy support tool. On the other hand the genocide in Rwanda, left 800,000 people dead and those that remain in Rwandese society will be scarred for generations to come. The method of generating early warning described above, seeks to balance the two histories, and will be more likely to provide the kind of actionable information required to prevent another Rwanda. This should be the overriding concern of the African Union and its supporters.

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