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CONFLICT EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS: THE CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BENIN

Horace Gbehossou Lewis Agossou-Aguenou

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public and Development Management).

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Abstract

Conflict early warning systems are being implemented by regional economic communities in Africa amidst major challenges in regard to the methodology of and mechanisms for conflict prevention and management.

This study is an exploration of the potential and need for country-specific models and indicators within regional early warning systems such as ECOWARN. The study develops an understanding of conflict early warning systems through an investigation and description of indicators and models suitable to the socio-economic and political dispensation of the Republic of Benin.

The findings of the research point to the value of a country-specific and layered approach to conflict early warning, and make recommendations as to the use of such an approach in addressing the unique nature of tensions prevailing, or those that may arise in West Africa.

Declaration

I declare that this report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public and Development Management) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

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Horace G. L. Agossou-Aguenou

Dedication

This research report is dedicated to the fond memories of my late brother Charlemagne Atacolodjou.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all those near and far who have supported me throughout this journey.

I would like to extend special thanks to my co-supervisors, Brigadier General Paulino Macaringue, and Mr Tsepe Motumi for their guidance throughout this process, comments and advice.

A warm thank you to Dr. David Zounmenou and Professor Jenkins for their valuable input, information and the data they provided me.

To my extended family, parents and siblings, I am forever indebted. Thank you for your love and support.

Without all your assistance and support, this research would not have been possible.

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List of Abbreviations

AFSTRAG: African Strategic and Peace Research Group

APRM: African Peer Review Mechanism

AU: African Union

CBO: Community Based Organisation

CCC: Conflict Carrying Capacity

CCR: Centre for Conflict Resolution

CERTI: Complex Emergency Response and Transition Initiative

CEWARN: Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism

CEWS: Continental Early Warning System

CFR: Council on Foreign Relations

CIFP: Country Indicators for Foreign Policy

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

ECOMOG: ECOWAS Monitoring Group

ECOWARN: ECOWAS Early Warning Network

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

ECPS: Executive Committee on Peace and Security

FEWER: Forum on Early Warning and Early Response

FfP: Fund for Peace

HEWS: United Nations Humanitarian Early Warning System

IANSA: International Action Network on Small Arms

IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development

IOM: International Organisation for Migration

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

OAU: Organisation of African Unity

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

REC: Regional Economic Community

SIPRI: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

UNAMSIL: United Nations Mission in Sierra

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNDPKO: United Nations Department of Peace Keeping Operations

UNECA: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNITA: National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

UNOCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UNOWA: United Nations Office in West Africa

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

WANEP: West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

WHO: World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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1. Background

Over the last two decades the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been a conflict ridden region. All member states (Appendix A) have experienced some type of internal conflict ranging from military coups to civil unrest, and even Côte d'Ivoire, once among the most stable nations in the region, is only now recovering from turmoil.

As in all affected regions, West Africa is still struggling with the notion of security and sources of insecurity. In an attempt to deal with security issues and increase cooperation in the area of defence, various Accords and Protocols have been signed between ECOWAS member states, among which have been the 1978 Pact of Non-Aggression (PNA) and the 1989 Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance of Defence (PMAD). Articles 1, 2 and 4 of the PNA respectively state that:

> Member States shall, in their relations with one another, refrain from the threat or use of force or aggression or from employing any other means inconsistent with the Charters of the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity against the territorial integrity or political independence of other Member States.
>
> Each Member State shall refrain, from committing, encouraging or condoning acts of subversion, hostility or aggression against the territorial integrity or political independence of the other Member States.
>
> Member States pledge to respond to all peaceful means in the settlement of disputes arising among themselves.

The Protocol on Mutual Assistance reinforced the provisions made under the Protocol on Non-Aggression by stating in articles 2 and 3 the following:

> Member States declare and accept that any armed threat or aggression directed against any Member State shall constitute a threat or aggression against the entire Community.
>
> Member States resolve to give mutual aid and assistance for defence against any armed threat or aggression.

According to Abass (2000:214) and Khobe (2000:2), these accords secured many borders from external aggressions, but instilled in many instances a false sense of secured boundaries. Indeed, violent conflicts and tensions in Sierra Leone were exported to Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, while other countries in the region served as hiding and or training grounds, reinforcing the notion of conflict clusters as described by Buhaug and Gleditsch (2006:2-8). These movements of rebel groups, warlords and refugees have led to successive outbreaks of tensions within the region and caused great suffering. Moreover, frequent violence in Nigeria, chieftain disputes in Ghana and the Tuareg rebellion in Niger and Mali, among other incidents, prove that addressing the sources of conflicts is a challenge beyond the means of individual states (Khobe, 2000:1-2).

In the light of the inability to deal individually with intrastate conflicts and their threat to the stability of the region, collective actions led to the creation of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) as a peace-keeping and intervention force. While successful in many regards, these collective actions were not proactive enough. As a result, and following international trends and the African Union Peace and Security framework, ECOWAS shifted considerable resources and manpower from reaction to the prevention of violent conflicts, and embarked on innovative, groundbreaking actions (Abass, 2000:212; Adebajo, 2004:9). One such action was the adoption in December 1999 by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government in Lome (Togo), of the "Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping

and Security", which institutionalised structures and processes to manage regional security issues collectively (ECOWAS, 1999).

Chapter IV of the Protocol established the ECOWAS Early Warning System (ECOWARN) to anticipate and identify emerging conflict situations through a network comprising an observation and monitoring centre located within the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja, and four zonal offices which will collect data on indicators that impact on the peace and security of the sub-regions. Considered innovative, ECOWARN is based on a wide range of indicators that "appear to place regional interests above national interests" according to Lamin and Ndinga-Muvumba (2006:22).

In fact, ECOWARN does place regional interest above national interest, a position which is understandable taking into account the nature of integration which is the overarching goal of ECOWAS. And assuming integration succeeds, which would translate into the removal of borders between member states and free movement of people and goods, there would be no need for a country-specific indicator-based model and/or country-focused approach. However current realities in the region and the volatile socio-political environment in many countries require indicator-based models to assess the trends within individual countries based on their specificities and internal dynamics, which vary tremendously.

As one of the zonal reporting structures, the function of the Cotonou office of ECOWARN is to detect, analyse, monitor and signal threats and potential sources of conflicts in Benin, Nigeria and Togo. Though these three countries share cultural ties and economic links dominated by Nigeria and its huge market, they differ greatly. Therefore, assessing conflict trends in these nations using the same lenses (indicator-based model) would be a grave error.

This research clarifies the need for, and importance of, a country-specific indicator-based model within regional early warning structures. The objective here is not to advocate the need for each country within the region to establish a conflict early warning system (though, considering the size and complexities of some countries, that may be necessary), nor to duplicate efforts made at the regional level but to incorporate country-specific indicators and models within the regional early warning apparatus.

Taking this as a starting point, the research reviewed databases of conflict indicators and investigated how country-specific models can strengthen regional early warning systems by focusing on the case of Benin.

2. **Benin (historical context)**

A West African country, formerly known as the Kingdom of Dahomey, the Republic of Benin was a French colony and gained independence on August 1st 1960. It is nowadays considered an example of a pluralist democracy in Africa (Dossou-Yovo, 1999:59; Houreld, 2007:1) and a relatively peaceful country in a troubled region. However this has not always been the case. In this short profile, attention is drawn to key elements, periods and events that have marked the Republic's history.

2.1. **Post independence politics and conflict**

Independence ushered in a new era marked by extreme political instability, a result of the inability of leaders to gain support outside their areas. The political tension and conflict translated into a succession of military coups and a short lived three-man presidential council with a rotating chairman, known as the triumvirate (Cornevin, 1981).

Despite an ingenious attempt at reconciling the three traditional centres of authority, namely Bariba in the north, Abomey in the south-west, Porto Novo in the south-east, and build a constitutional government, the triumvirate failed to

maintain power and the military led by Major Mathieu Kerekou took over through a military coup (FCO, 2008:3; Laitin, 1986:165; Nikolov, 2000:168).
Despite the countless clashes, the unusual feature of conflicts in Benin has been their bloodless nature. In particular, none of the coups (1963, twice in 1965, 1967, 1969 and 1972) turned into violence or bloodshed regardless of the underlying arguments used as justification for the coup.

2.2. **From dictatorship to democracy**

Mathieu Kerekou introduced revolutionary changes which included the adoption of Marxism-Leninism as the ideology of the state and the country's name change to the "People's Republic of Benin" by presidential proclamation (Vittin, 1991: 93-115).

Kerekou's dictatorial regime lasted 17 years from 1972 to 1989 and survived many coups attempts related to internal tensions and regionalist interests. Although the dictatorial regime brought stability, from the continuous changes that marked the previous nine years, the military regime ultimately failed. As expressed by Gazido (2004:5) it is economic bankruptcy and social unrest that marked the end of the dictatorial regime and drove the country's move towards democratisation.

3. Democracy (1990-2007)

The late 1980's and 1990's ushered in a new era of democratic rule as Marxism-Leninism was no longer recognised as the ideology of the state (Reuters, 1989:1). In an effort to avoid violent conflict and bloodshed, President Mathieu Kerekou committed himself to the outcome of the National Conference. The nine-day conference opened on February 19, 1990 just three months after the fall of the Berlin Wall amidst uncertainty and the constant reminder of the military's presence and their tight grip on power. Despite the highly charged atmosphere, the conference, after postponing the issue several times, declared sovereignty in what Kerekou termed a "civilian coup" (PBS, 1990:3).

The February 1990 National Conference is recognised as the single most important event that helped diffuse tension and create the basis for democratic rule in Benin. Adopted as a result of this conference, the December 1990 Constitution reaffirmed "the people's opposition to dictatorship, injustice, regionalism, personal power and the like that bring about violent conflict" (Benin Constitution, 1990:1).

With the advent of democracy in the Republic, conflicts have been largely reduced to mild regional tensions, mainly the north-south divide along ethnic and religious lines. Nevertheless substantial efforts are being undertaken by state and civil society actors in building the capacity necessary to diffuse tensions before they turn into full blown conflicts. One such effort is the inclusion and key role played by community representatives, tribal chiefs and community-based forums in addressing the issues at hand (Benon, 1998:26-27). Another is the active role played by the country and its institutions to ensure that ECOWAS conflict prevention initiatives are implemented at the national level.

4. Support for ECOWARN

Benin plays an active role within the community and has contributed troops for ECOMOG various missions, the most recent being the ECOWAS Mission in Cote D'ivoire (ECOMICI) to which 300 Beninese soldiers were deployed.

In May 2001, Benin signed an agreement with ECOWAS to host one of the four ECOWARN zonal offices, and despite resource constraints, the country has remained committed to the goals of ECOWAS. Indeed, in the wake of President Eyadema's death in 2005 and the ensuing violent clashes, Benin played a crucial mediation role and received thousands of refugees fleeing violence in Togo. The Republic has also welcomed refugees from various other countries at war within the region and beyond.

To conclude this profile, one must acknowledge that 17 years (1990-2007) of democratic rule later, The Republic of Benin has put behind its 17 years (1972-1989) long Marxist regime and its thirty years (1960-1990) long era of instability to become an "example of democracy in the West African region" (Ngwane, 2006:1).

Although the country has been on the early warning systems radars during the recent electoral periods (2006) with talks of amendments to the Constitution of December 1990, both presidential and local elections were conducted peacefully, reinforcing the status of the country as a model of democracy in ECOWAS and beyond.

5. Problem statement

The protocol relating to the mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace-keeping and security established ECOWARN and its structure. However the models and approach to be used were not clearly defined.

While an indicator-based model is currently in use at the regional level to generate reports for early warning purposes (Lamin & Ndinga-Muvumba, 2006:3) no model has been developed to access conflict trends in individual countries.

Prior research showed the importance of country-specific conflict early warning models (Lundin, 2004:21). However this research does not follow that path but rather proposes to incorporate country-specific models within the ECOWARN system so as to improve its early warning capabilities.

6. Purpose statement

The purpose of this research is to present an indicator-based model for early warning of conflict in Benin that can be utilised within the regional early warning system ECOWARN.

7. Research limitation

The research did not investigate or review all available indicators and models available in the literature. Several databases were reviewed, but the study focused on indicators in the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) database, and as such is limited to indicators generated and tested by prior studies.

8. Defining Key Concepts

Conflict

Conflict is often defined as a disagreement, which in many instances involves real or perceived threats to one's needs or interests. The Webster dictionary defines conflict as "opposing action of incompatible". Adding to this working definition, the term "conflict" in the context of this report includes both armed and unarmed conflicts, be they violent or bloodless.

Conflict prevention

Conflict prevention takes the form of diplomatic, military and development actions intended to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur (Boutros-Ghali, 1992).

It is one of the key objectives of conflict early warning systems; for a conflict early warning to be effective, early response is an absolute necessity. Such response can take diverse routes ranging from diplomatic interventions, multilateral talks on the political side to more militarised responses such as peace keeping through an interposition force.

Conflict prevention is nowadays an important element in international politics as well as a key issue in the human security discourse. Its implications for West Africa are diverse and must be well understood by the various actors both at national and regional levels as conflicts remains an impediment to development and regional integration (ECA, 2004:203-208).

Ultimately, conflicts are the result of unsatisfied human needs and conflict prevention must take into account or address those needs. According to Burton (1990:3) the term conflict prevention has a negative connotation and he thus suggests using "provention" instead of prevention.

He further defines conflict provention as follows:

> "Conflict Provention means deducing from an adequate explanation of the phenomenon of conflict, including its human dimensions, not merely the conditions that create an environment of conflict and the structural changes required to remove it, but more importantly the promotion of conditions that create cooperative relationships".

Early warning

Early warning refers to an "advance warning" or "advance notice" of a situation that may occur in the immediate or short term. It often involves dangerous or threatening situations. In meteorology, for example, early warnings regarding tornadoes, hurricanes or tropical depression ensure that any populations at risk receive advance notice and are prepared for what is to come.

As defined by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) early warning in this context is about the following elements:

- intra-state conflict (latent or over);
- ethno-political or religious conflict;
- political instability or the threat of;
- environmental/ resource-based conflicts;
- gross human rights violations;
- humanitarian crisis;
- insurgency, rebellions and illicit arms flow; and
- sharp economic downturns.

Conflict Early Warning

Conflict early warning proceeds from the position that adequate early warning enables interested actors and the international community at large to intervene at an early stage, before crisis situations turns into full blown violent conflict (Van Walraven, 1996).

Early Warning System

In this research early warning systems involve regular and organised collection and analysis of information on violent conflict situations. They deliver a set of early warning products (based on qualitative and/or quantitative conflict analysis methods) that are linked to response instruments/mechanisms (Nyheim, 2008:12)

The formal UN definition states that early warning systems involve "The provision of timely and effective information, through identifying institutions, that allow individuals exposed to a hazard to take action to avoid or reduce their risk and prepare for effective response" (ISDR, 2003).

In a broader sense, an early warning system is any system deployed by an individual or group to inform of a future danger.

Conflict Early Warning System

Conflict early warning systems are early warning systems intended to alert decision-makers of the potential outbreak, escalation, and resurgence of violent conflict, it purpose being to enable the deployer of such system to prepare for the danger and act accordingly to mitigate against or avoid it. (Adapted from Nyheim, 2008).

Indicators of conflict

Indicators are certain figures or groups of figures that, when monitored over time, reveal changes in political and economic conditions of a country or group. They are long-term in perspective and include issues such as crime rates, unemployment, corruption, protests and human rights violations (Conflict Management Toolkit, 2007). In conflict early warning, an indicator could, be for example, the number of small arms circulating in a given region.

Although there is no consensus over what type of indicators most accurately predict the emergence of conflict, research shows that military/political conditions serve as triggers for the outbreak of violent conflict, while economic

and social indicators are important for the structural background conditions within societies that provide a potential breeding ground for discontent and political mobilisation (Conflict Management Toolkit, 2007).

Models

Models are knows as patterns, a representation designed to show the structure or inner workings of a system. In the area of conflict early warning, three types of models have been defined and take into account human decisions, thoughts and behaviors (Brecke, 2000:7). Theses are correlation models which focus on structural indicators, causality and how these will help people understand why conflicts occur. Sequential models focus on the short term and the sequence of events that can trigger conflict, while the conflict response models seek to identify at which point in a conflict process intervention is needed for it to make a difference to the outcome.

According to the Conflict Management Toolkit (2007:5) summary, early warning models differ in their objective, structure, the manner in which data is collected and the mandate of monitoring agencies.

Human security

Human security is often defined in contrast with the more limited state security notion. According to Henk (2006:1) and Luckham (1992:12), scholars in recent years have not been content to view security solely as a state interest but rather as a "public good". Human security is concerned with human life and dignity (UNDP, 1994) and is described in relation to seven dimensions reflecting all of the key components of human development (Hussein, Gnisci & Wanjiru, 2004:13). These dimensions are economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security.

Human security as a concept recognises the right to a minimum quality of life defined as being the "Freedom from Fear, Freedom from Want and Freedom to take action on one's own behalf" (Actionaid International, 2005:3).

9. Report Outline

This report is organised into five chapters, and this introductory chapter focuses on setting the background and objectives. Chapter Two presents the methodology while Chapter Three focuses on the various debates in the literature on conflict early warning systems as well as sources of failures. Chapter Four presents the findings together with an analysis of the socio-political setting in Benin. Finally Chapter Five concludes on the need for country-specific indicator-based models and presents a few recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

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1. Research questions

In it effort to find a useful, applicable indicator-based model, the research will attempt to answer the following questions.

1. What are the theoretical assumptions and existing approach to conflict early warning systems?

In the relatively new field of conflict early warning, various approaches are being tested. To answer this question, the researcher will survey and provide snapshots of existing approaches to conflict early warning and the theoretical assumptions behind them. As this study will show, early warning is implemented in a wide range of fields with diverse assumptions and methodology.

2. How can country-specific models contribute to the efficacy and reliability of a regional early warning system?

This question relates to the evaluation of the role of country-specific models and their contribution to the efficacy of regional early warning systems. To this end, the researcher will look at the Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) reports and the State Failure Project findings and results in regard to “Failing States”, and “Failed States”.

3. What are the key elements, actors and data necessary for modelling a conflict early warning system; how relevant are they to Benin and its internal dynamics?

This question focuses on the key elements of early warning systems. The third international conference on early warning, and its key findings, provides essential answers to this question and the check list generated by experts will hopefully prove to be an invaluable element.

Adding to the three questions above that guided the research; a few additional questions (Appendix D) were developed and distributed to researchers within the conflict early warning field and analysts within ECOWARN and WANEP specifically to gain insight and their views on the applicability of a country-focused model.

2. Methodology

The context, design and methodology of any given research greatly influence its outcome, hence the necessity to use appropriate techniques to improve the validity of findings and enable greater deductions. This study is based on qualitative research methods and the theoretical framework of the report is informed by:

- the concept of early warning, ECOWARN and its objectives within the ECOWAS and African Union security framework;
- key components of early warning systems as defined by the third conference on early warning; and
- the debate around indicators, likely to generate early warning given socio –economic and political dynamics.

The research uses a qualitative approach as it is mainly concerned with presenting a conflict early warning indicator-based model. According to Merriam

(2002:11), qualitative research is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in the process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures.

3. Review of database

For this research, the review of database method is favoured, as a comprehensive collection of indicators and models is available and widely used by research institutes and international organisations worldwide. Moreover, many of these indicators have been tested, recorded and reported by prior researches.

Using the SIPRI database, indicators will be collected and reviewed according to their suitability and relevance to Benin. The SIPRI online database was chosen as it is the largest repository of early warning indicators and includes indicators developed by the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER), Fund for Peace, and International Alert.

Lastly, the categories defined by Gurr and Harff (1994: 20-24) and the nine issues areas identified by the CIFP will be used to classify the collected indicators.

4. Documentary analysis

The research includes documents analysis as a means to obtain more information on the peace and security policy framework at the regional level and the objective set out for the regional early warning system. Moreover, this method enables the researcher to answer the secondary research questions relating to existing early warning systems, structures and intended purpose. To this aim, relevant documents, such as policy statements, technical reports, policy seminar and expert group meeting reports will be obtained and analysed.

The analysis of documents will provide the researcher with more elements and perspectives on conflict early warning systems as well as familiarity with prior research and ongoing development at the ECOWAS level.

5. Data collection and analysis

Data collection will be done essentially through a review of previous researches involving the researcher's chosen indicators and model. Statistical data generated by Bond and Jenkins (2001) will be collected and analysed focusing on what they termed "conflict carrying capacity".

In addition, research institutes and organisations that developed and published indicators and models will be targeted, focusing on the data generated over the years and the success rate of their indicators in generating early warning.

Lastly, a visit to the Situation Room at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, and a briefing on the operationalisation of the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) will allow the research to gather information and data as well as inputs from early warning experts on the status of the regional buildings blocks.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

……

1. Introduction

> Internal conflict is the most lethal form of violence that has erupted in the wake of the Cold War. Indeed, more civilians have died from internal war than from terrorism and interstate war combined. The estimated ratio of civilian to military casualties in these conflicts is about 9:1, the majority being women, children, the poor and the weak. Internal conflict has caused the death of an estimated four million people in over thirty countries since 1989, and it threatens to claim the lives of many more. As some have noted, the future threat is potentially greater than most observers imagine (Fund for Peace, 2006:5).

Africa is one of the most severely affected regions, and the true cost of conflict and internal wars is far beyond estimations. Conflicts hinder any form of sustainable development and create division and distrust along ethnic, cultural and regional lines. Of the thirty countries referred to by the Fund for Peace (FfP) roughly two-third are in Africa.

A quick scan of the decade 1997-2007 reveals conflict all across the continent (Appendix B). Indeed, Southern Africa witnessed the UNITA rebellion in Angola, and internal violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). East Africa is marked by ongoing tension between Eritrea and Ethiopia and humanitarian crises in Sudan and Somalia. In North Africa, the Western Sahara issue remains unresolved (Souaré, 2007:1-11), while West Africa, the main focus in this study, has also been the scene of violence, going from the longest running internal dispute between Senegal and its separatist region of Casamance, to what Adebajo (2004:4) termed “the tragic triplets” (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau) and the ongoing dispute and rebellion in the Niger Delta in Nigeria.

Contrary to Lund's (1996:3) assertion that politicians and middle level elites have little understanding of post-Cold War conflicts and the mechanism required to reduce them, the diligence of West African leaders in establishing ECOWARN and putting in place the necessary structures for the development of conflict prevention capabilities shows an increased concern for the overall stability of the region.

In the following section, the research explores the origins and basis of early warning systems focusing specifically on conflict early warning systems. Indicators and models indispensable to an effective and accurate early warning system are described and compared in terms of their ability to generate early response. Lastly, known sources of early warning failures are explored to ensure that preventable failures are taken into consideration and adequately addressed within conflict early warning systems.

2. Early warning systems: origins, purpose and value

2.1. Origins

The origins of early warning systems can be traced back to the 1950s in the field of military intelligence and disaster preparedness (Matveeva, 2006:9) and have been adapted to various other areas including disease control and humanitarian disasters. Critics however regard early warning systems as intelligence gathering schemes toward unclear ends, thus justifying cautious approaches on the part of some governments. Many of these governments however, lack the capacity and resources to conduct such activities and must rely on other sources, some with diverse interests or objectives. The evolution of early warning systems nonetheless translated in the 1970's into the United Nations Humanitarian Early Warning System (HEWS), the first such system to implement a theoretical model. Focusing on drought and famine problems, the HEWS used over 100 indicators (Lundin, 2004:8; Austin, 2003:4) to monitor trends and to alert countries and humanitarian agencies on potential shortages and related issues.

According to Rupesinghe (2005) early warning systems can be grouped in three generations. The first is based outside the target area, the second is marked by field monitors and the last is conceived and entirely located in the targeted region and integrated with early response strategies. Third generation early warning systems often incorporate networks of monitors operating in conflict areas. They analyse data using qualitative and quantitative methods, prepare a range of different reporting products, and often either provide recommendations or bring decision-makers together (Nyheim, 2008:19) to plan responses. In that sense, ECOWARN is among third generation early warning systems although the system goes one step further by emphasising human security as opposed to regime security. This approach which is considered innovative may be the basis for a new generation of early warning systems.

Though early warning systems are hailed as a relative success in disaster management fields, and most recently in meteorology in the case of typhoons, hurricanes and tsunamis, conflict early warning systems have been less prominent. This lack of prominence is in part due to the debate generated by scholars around conflict theory and the difficulty presented by conflict prevention. Indeed, can conflict be prevented when conflict is inherently part of human nature and as such unpredictable?

To answer this question one must look at past events and historical elements for assessments. As been demonstrated in Rwanda in the run of to the genocide, and the outbreak of armed conflict in the DRC and Sierra Leone, conflict seldom erupts without signs. Indeed, in Rwanda, Lieutenant-General Dallaire the UN Force Commander, explored those early signs and requested additional troops, only to face rejection from the UN Security Council (Dallaire, 2003).
In Sierra Leone, early signs according to Hirsch (2001:16) involved the cross-border movements of rebels from Liberia and the flow of light weapons as well as the illicit diamond trade.
In all these cases, early signs were apparent, some more visible than others. It is thus through monitoring and assessing theses early signs that conflict prevention

is made possible (Hagmeyer-Gaverus, 2003:4). Though conflict prevention is a necessary undertaking, the gap between early warning and early response remains a problem as demonstrated by the cases above. Indeed, the presence of early signs and the availability of early warning reinforce early response as issue to address.

Why is early response so slow in coming, if it ever does? This is a crucial issue that third generation early warning systems such as ECOWARN address by ensuring that scenarios are elaborated and response options evaluated and presented in early warning reports and briefings to decision-makers.

2.2. Purpose

As summarised by Clements (2003:4) in the table below (Table 1), early warning systems can be adapted to a wide range of fields, from monitoring of refugee flow, ethno-political conflicts, militarised disputes and minorities issues to famine. Many of these elements are taken into account by ECOWARN and other regional early warning systems such as CEWARN which for example look among others at pastoral issues in the Karamoja cluster. Although the focus of this research is on the conflict warning side, ECOWARN covers a broad range of issues reflective of it chosen human security approach. As such, human rights, democracy, food shortages, environmental issues and social concerns are all taken into consideration.

Table 1: Early Warning Types

Early Warning About What?	
Refugee / Interdependencies / Development / Human Rights Violations	Future of Global Interdependence (FUGI)
	Amnesty International
	Human Rights Watch
	Interdisciplinary Research Programme on Root Causes of Human Right Violations (PIOOM)
Ethno-political conflict	Early Recognition of Tensions and Fact-Finding (FAST)
	Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER)
	International Crisis Group (ICG)
Genocides and Politicides	Accelerators of Genocide
	Genocides and politicides Project
	Life Integrity Violations Approach (LIVA)
Armed conflict / Military expenditure / Arms production	Global Event Data System (GEDS)
	State Failure Project
Famine and food supplies	Famine Early Warning System (FEWS)
	Global Information Early Warning system (GIEWS)
Preventing inter-group conflict	Conflict Early Warning System (CEWS)
Militarised disputes	Correlates of War
Crisis development and effectiveness of attempts at management	International Crisis Behaviour (ICB)
Telecommunications and its relations to conflict	Leland Initiative: African Telemetric Project
Minorities	Minority at Risk (MAR)
Direct political action	Protocol for the Analysis of Nonviolent Direct Action (PANDA)
CHEs	Reliefweb (UNDHA)

Source: Clements, 2003:4

According to Abass (2000:227), the implications of the ECOWAS early warning system are far more comprehensive, as the mechanism on which it is based provides for the establishment of a "framework for the rational and equitable management of natural resources shared by neighbouring member states which may be causes of frequent inter-states conflicts".

While ECOWARN is hailed as being a comprehensive system, its structures have yet to include country-specific indicators and models. By looking at trends for Benin and specific indicators capable of generating early warning, the research reinforces the argument advanced by scholars that such an approach improves the overall quality, reliability and extent of warning, as the root causes of conflict vary from country to country, region to region.

Lundin (2004:21) highlights the issue of country-specific indicators and models. He states that:

> "Every country is unique, with its own history, conditions, political tensions and ethnical groups. It therefore makes sense to use different models, indicators and accelerators for different countries".

2.3. Value

Regardless of one's standing on the role of conflict within any given society, the importance of conflict early warning systems is undeniable, as their basis ultimately holds: prevention is better than cure.

Brecke (2000:1) concurs, arguing that Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia and attached humanitarian disasters could have been prevented or mitigated by early interventions. An example of such early intervention is the mediation role played by the ECOWAS Secretariat and ECOWAS heads of states in the aftermath of the sudden death of President Gnassigbe Eyadema of Togo. The then longest running African president's death exacerbated a fragile political and

socio-economic environment marked by deep distrust among political actors and state institutions. This insecure political climate, on the brink of explosion was further fuelled by the military and its support and effective endorsement of Faure Eyadema, son of Gnassingbe Eyadema as new president, instead of Fambaré Ouattara Natchaba the then National Assembly President, who was first in line of succession as prescribed by the Constitution.

The quick actions of the ECOWAS Secretariat in sounding the alarm coupled with the swift actions of ECOWAS leaders in condemning such action as a military coup, and thus questioning the legitimacy of the new regime, demonstrated the value of conflict early warning systems and early response in defusing potentially deadly conflict situations.

Although according to the UN human rights body, 400-500 died during the violence and riots in Togo, the potentially disastrous consequences of this crisis for the country and it neighbours were largely mitigated and the resolve of ECOWAS heads of states was lauded by UN secretary general Koffi Annan (Annan, 2005:1). In a region already largely marked by turmoil, the management of the Togolese crisis came as an indication of the impact which conflict early warning systems combined with early response can have on maintaining peace.

3. Existing conflict early warning systems

Conflict early warning systems currently exist at various levels with different components and objectives. To gain a broad sense, the researcher reviewed early warning systems starting from the United Nations, responsible for peace and security throughout the world, through the African Union's approach and initiatives down to the ECOWAS region under which Benin falls.

3.1. The UN System

> We the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person…have resolved to combine our efforts…to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace. (UN Charter, 1945:1)

As the institution globally responsible for peace, conflict prevention is central to the endeavours of the United Nations but constitutes one of its greatest challenges (Sriram & Wermester, 2003:375). Irrefutably, preventing and managing conflicts throughout the world is an enormous undertaking marked primarily and most visibly by past failures and their accompanying humanitarian disasters.

The UN conflict early warning system is a web of interrelated systems and networks that cut across a wide range of institutions, statutory bodies and agencies, the most cited being the Security Council, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) and the Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO). All three, however, have proven to be more effective for emergency response than for early response particularly on the preventive side. This is primarily due to political considerations and in some instance a pure lack of interest, as events happening half way around the world are not always perceived as a threat to the permanent members of the Security Council (Matveeva, 2006:40-42). In an expert group submission to the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), Patrick Meier concurs, adding that no UN decision-making body focuses on rapid preventive actions or has the incentive to act on urgent early warning as proven by events in the Great Lakes regions, West Africa, Asia and elsewhere.

In addition, statistics show reluctance on the part of the international community and particularly the great powers to finance early warning activities (Lamin & Ndinga-Muvumba, 2006:21), while billions are made available to peace

enforcement and peace keeping operations. Within ECOWAS for example, the Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO) undertook six missions, both political and peace keeping, at a cost exceeding four billions U.S dollars, with $2.8 billions spent on UNAMSIL alone (UNDPKO, 2007). Such trend must be reversed and emphasis put on all types of preventive measures including conflict early warning systems for the United Nations to have any realistic chance to fulfil its mandate, be it in Africa or elsewhere.

The early warning system currently in operation within UN structures is a wide and complex network but considered to be by and large inaccessible to the public and slow as it must first go through the organisation's bureaucracy and be endorsed through among other procedures, a resolution. In a context where timely reaction is crucial, the response timeframe undermines the usefulness and value of the system as a whole (Matveeva, 2006:41).

Moreover, the various components of the system (UNOCHA, UNDP, DPKO, etc.) all have different mandates in term of conflict prevention and framework teams adding to other coordinating mechanisms were introduced to harmonise activities though heavily criticised by UN reform proponents as covering the bureaucratic divisions within the institution.

Despite systemic constraints, the UN early warning activities are currently conducted through the Inter-Departmental Framework for Coordination on Early Warning and Preventive Action, the Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS) and the Secretary General's Policy Committee (Matveeva, 2006:40). At the agency level, country-specific analysis is increasingly undertaken. Together with the minimum preparedness action plan at OCHA and UN country teams these strengthen the organisation's capacity to generate early warning and early response. Indicators used are based on hundreds of data collection from varied sources and agencies (World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Fund for Population (UNFPA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), DPKO) as well as regional entities (the UN Economic Commission

for Africa (UNECA), the UN Office in West Africa (UNOWA)) and external actors like NGOs and CSOs. The variety of sources allows cross-checking for accuracy and has the potential to generate actionable and reliable early warning as well as possible scenarios for the way forward.

3.2. The African Union

Conflict early warning initiatives in Africa were formally introduced under the auspices of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1992 and put into effect through the Cairo Declaration in June 1993 (AU, 2007).Under these structures the system was to anticipate and prevent situations of armed conflict and undertake peacekeeping and peace building efforts. It was however deeply influenced by postcolonial tensions and the doctrine of non-interference in domestic affairs as sovereignty and territorial integrity were considered sacrosanct. According to Cilliers (2005:3), the focus on national sovereignty and "the practice of solidarity politics resulted in the OAU's inability to give effect to its preventive intentions". The result of this was the failure to address the crisis in Somalia (1993-1995) and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Under the African Union Constitutive Act, emphasis was put on early warning systems as an essential feature and the responsibility of the Peace and Security Council (PSC); specifically, article 2(2) of the PSC calls for the creation of a Continental Early Warning System (CEWS). The CEWS will mainly rely on a network of regional early warning systems, which will feed information back to the Situation Room at the AU Headquarters in Addis, where interpretation will be done. According to current structures, indicators used for analysis within the CEWS are based on open source information systems, with inputs from the UN, academic institutions and research centres like the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping and Training Centre (Malan, 2005:4-13).

However, Cilliers (2005:6) argue that for such a structure to function "the CEWS will need to be politically astute and its analysis informed by sound political

judgment". Current developments within the design of CEWS nonetheless show increased concern for accuracy and a broader base through collaboration with non-governmental agencies, community-based organisations and others as crucial sources of information. Leading the pack in this regard, according to Adebajo (2004:12), ECOWAS has signed agreements with various NGOs and CSOs among which are the African Strategic and Peace Research Group (AFSTRAG) and the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). Matveeva (2006:16-19) contends however that caution must be exerted as to which sources of information are considered and their objectivity thoroughly analysed so as to maintain the integrity of the system and its database.

According to Cilliers (2005:5-9), the real capabilities of the CEWS to store and disseminate information in real time will be put to the test when the situation room is enhanced and regional building blocks are fully integrated. A meeting of governmental experts on early warning portrayed the CEWS as promising and a key pillar of the continental peace and security architecture and coupling its ability with the African Standby Force would hopefully be the beginning of a new era, marked by Africa's ability to monitor and address its own issues (Othieno, 2007: 25-39).

Another key development in the continent's increasing willingness and endeavours to address its own issues is the inclusion of conflict prevention elements in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Among others the questions below are to be addressed by countries under review.

- What mechanisms exist for preventing, reducing and managing conflicts in your country or region and how effective are these mechanisms?

- To what extent have regional and sub-regional organisations been involved in intra-state and inter-state conflict resolution affecting your country?

(APRM country self-assessment questionnaire, 2002:28)

These questions and the follow-up evaluation done through the NEPAD Secretariat will raise more awareness on the need and importance of preventive mechanisms and related institutions. It is an important achievement at the continental level where more initiatives are needed to address issues related to sources of conflict.

The inclusion of questions relating to conflict prevention mechanisms in the APRM will ultimately reveal areas of weakness, while contributing to strengthening countries' capacities and that of regional economic communities. It is also believed that these questions will serve as a diagnostic instrument. However, Gruzd (2007:64) points out failures relating to the lack of questions involving electoral disputes and unfair political systems as sources of conflict. The current case of the mismanagement of the electoral process in Kenya strengthens this position particularly when one considers the fact that the APR Panel (2006:63) described Kenya as "an island of peace within a troubled region". This particular case demonstrates how weak and fragile some African states remain and the importance of early warning mechanisms in attempting to prevent a crisis from turning into full blown conflict.

Though at the continental level conflict early warning structures are being elaborated and innovative options considered, Northern Africa and the slower pace of integration remain a point of concern (Cilliers, 2005:10).

3.3. ECOWARN

As a result of neglect by the United Nations Security Council and slow decision-making at OAU level, West Africa has gone further than any other African sub-region in efforts to establish a security mechanism to manage their own conflicts (Adebajo, 2004:1; Ero, 2000:1).

Indeed, experiences in Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Cote D'Ivoire have broaden the involvement of ECOWAS and its mandate while providing the needed ground for innovative security mechanisms to deal with new challenges.

Based on Chapter IV of the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace Keeping and Security, ECOWARN is being structured and equipped to address potential crises in the sub-region before they escalate into full blown conflict. Following the innovative path of ECOMOG, ECOWARN takes human security as it basis and sets preventive mechanisms with the aim of maintaining peace and security within ECOWAS. The system consists of a monitoring and observation centre and four monitoring zones (Gambia, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Benin) covering three or four member states.

- Zone 1 in Banjul covers Gambia, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal.
- Zone 2 in Ouagadougou covers Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Mali and Niger.
- Zone 3 in Monrovia covers Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Ghana and Guinea.
- Zone 4 in Cotonou covers Benin, Togo and Nigeria.

(ECOWAS, 2006)

These zonal bureaus monitor trends and report on established indicators which vary from political, economic and social to environmental issues.

At the core of ECOWARN is the Department of Operations, Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Affairs (DOPHA) which formulates and implements all military operations, and the Department of Political Affairs and Security (DPAS) which organises manages and provides political support for activities related to conflict prevention (Lamin & Ndinga-Muvumba, 2006:7). This design ensures that early warning is combined with early response structures. Moreover, the ECOWAS security system links ECOWARN to key instruments such as the Council of Elders, a 15 member committee of eminent personalities within the region which undertakes pacific resolution initiatives to eventual disputes. The West African

Standby Brigade and its rapid deployment unit, in the event of early warning of conflict in a specific zone, can be effectively deployed as an interposition or intervention force, while options are evaluated for long-term peacekeeping and peace building.

Considered to be one of the most advanced regional early warning system within CEWS (Cilliers, 2005:10), ECOWARN is often compared to the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) initiated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the horn of Africa. Built in collaboration with Virtual Research Associates Inc, both systems use quantitative and qualitative indicators and models generated by the company. However, both regions differ in size and scope, approach and focus. Moreover, the current situation in the IGAD region marked by conflict in Sudan, Somalia and the incessant clash between Ethiopia and Eritrea remains a challenge.

Although ECOWARN represents a comprehensive system, it also faces challenges among which are: capacity, funds and sustainability as the current system depends heavily on foreign support (Cilliers, 2005:11; Lamin & Ndinga-Muvumba, 2006:19). Its comprehensive approach to early warning is nonetheless laudable. In addition to the preventative diplomatic role which the council of elders is asked to play in mitigating conflict through the use of traditional authority, the involvement of community based organisations and non-governmental organisations has proven to be of great value. Indeed, the involvement of WANEP in ECOWARN increases its potential sources of information and provides variety and a given measure of evaluation through cross referencing.

4. Conflict early warning indicators and models

According to research done by Hagmeyer-Gaverus and Weissmann (2003:4) at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, there is no such thing as a "sudden crisis", only lack of information and analysis. In other words crises or

conflicts do no erupt overnight without signals which if tracked could result in effective preventive actions. This demonstrates the crucial role of early warning systems and at their heart models and indicators of conflict.

While a wide range of early warning systems are at play in any given region, the conflict early warning system in West Africa is a novelty, and deciding on models and indicators to use is a tremendous challenge. Many international organisations and research institutes have designed country-specific models to monitor conflict trends. However, most of these models or assessments involve countries in conflict (Sudan), countries recovering from conflict (Sierra Leone, Liberia), or countries with geo-strategic and /or economic importance (Nigeria, Angola). As of September 2007, for example, the Council on Foreign Relation's Centre for Preventive Action analysis covering Africa is limited to the Great Lakes region and Nigeria. Limited research and resulting models are thus available for relatively peaceful countries, such as The Republic of Benin, green flagged according to Marshall's (2005:24) studies on conflict trends in Africa.

4.1. Indictors of conflict

Conflict prevention need not be undertaken only when tensions arise but also during peace time to reinforce institutions and promote the peaceful resolution of disputes so as to consolidate the various achievements. Looking particularly at indicators, these vary depending on the socio-political and economic dynamics of a country. The late 1960's in Benin is quite different from its current dispensation. Indicators must thus be developed taking into consideration those changes.

From 1963 to 1972, six military coups occurred in Benin and although they did not lead to major outbreaks of violence, these events were nonetheless possible triggers to conflict and as such could be used as indicators. In fact International Alert and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) conflict impact assessment documents, list "uncontrolled military forces" as an indicator (Leonhardt, 2000).

In contrast indicators of conflict in present-day Benin must be toward the left side of the conflict spectrum (peacetime) as the country moves toward establishing an enduring and stable democracy with due regard to electoral processes and change in state structures while reinforcing institutional capacities to deal with potential crises.

The Country Indicators for Foreign Policy project's assessment of conflict in West Africa offers a valuable model, although some indicators may need to be tailored or adapted as different data is available and necessary in accessing conflict trends in different environments. In the case of Liberia, for example, the CIFP report lacks economic data from 1995 to 1999 as well as military expenditure data, thus making it hard to reach an accurate and reliable composite risk rating (Ampleford, 2002:7).

Based on risk assessment and research done in Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Senegal, the CIFP analysis used nine interrelated issues areas identified as potential sources of conflict:

- history of armed conflict;
- governance and political instability;
- militarization;
- population heterogeneity;
- demographic stress;
- economic performance;
- human development;
- environmental stress; and
- international linkages.

(Ampleford, 2002: 38-40)

These indicators for the most part are consistent with those in use by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and the Forum

on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER). However, their individual approach and methodology varies greatly, whether the focus is on human rights violations, armed conflicts, ethnic violence or the like. Thus, Samarasinghe (1999:10-17) offers warnings and calls to differentiate between private and public sector initiatives and models as their intents and objectives differ. The challenge in deciding which indicators to incorporate is addressed by Fein (1994:31-35), who recommend that indicators be divided in three categories namely: conditions from the past; recent background; and precipitating events.

Critics affirm that this methodology and value of the resulting models must be proven and indicators tested (Brecke, 1998:19-23). Their assertion is in opposition to the summary issued by the Complex Emergency Response and Transition Initiative (CERTI). Indeed, CERTI results showed that conflicts could be anticipated up to six months prior to eruption with 80% accuracy using data gathered and the findings of the State Failure Project (Lundin, 2004:13).

Sometimes Characterized as too broad (Brecke 2000:5), the state failure project nonetheless offer a glimpse as to the effectiveness and potential behind early warning models in preventing conflicts. It presents an opportunity for reviewing and adapting proven and tested indicators from various sources.

4.2. Models

Traditionally three types of models are used in early warning systems corresponding with different methodologies to forecast negative developments in countries and crisis regions (Brecke, 2000:8). In recent years new models have surfaced among which the SIPRI forecasting model, a sort of hybrid combining database and expert models. This approach is said to increase the accuracy of forecasts by including long- and short-term data (Hagmeyer-Gaverus & Weissmann, 2003:5).

5. Early Warning / Early Response failures

The gap between early warning and early response is often considered to be the main cause of the failure of early warning mechanisms (Anderlini, 2003:5; Matveeva, 2006:27). According to respondents, early warning failures occur for a variety of reasons ranging from lack of political will and resources to more structural elements.

Gerner and Schrodt (1998:6-13) present six possible modes of early warning failure (strategic deception, conventional concealment, institutional ignorance, reflexive response, exogenous shifts and systemic complexity) summarised below.

Strategic deception as a mode of early warning failure occurs in complex humanitarian crises with a significant political component, where an explicit attempt is made to provide misleading information. As strategic deception mainly involves false data, misleading or erroneous information, it is crucial that sources be evaluated and their objectivity assessed frequently.

Conventional concealment is said to be simpler than strategic deception and involves the absence of sufficient information for forecasting purposes. In this case the actors do not actively create misleading information, but the accuracy of analysis and the interpretation of data remain an issue.

Institutional ignorance, unlike conventional concealment, occurs when institutions or their actors ignore the evidence and wide range of reliable data and information from a variety of sources. This kind of failure is often the result of heavy bureaucratic systems, utter lack of political will and alternative priorities.

Reflexive reaction is said to arise when, as a result of early warning and early response, by some elements of the international community a predicted conflict situation is prevented. Guilmette (1995:18) summarises it best:

> "Anticipating conflicts and nipping them in the bud is a process which to the extent that it is successful, will tend to obscure its own successes".

Exogenous shifts as a mode of conflict early warning failure occur as a result of interactions between the system and elements that were not monitored. Lastly, systemic complexity as a cause of early warning failure happens when the simultaneous reactions and synergetic effects of various indicators monitored are incorrectly forecasted. An example of such failure in West Africa is the case of Cote D'Ivoire, where the synergetic effects between the issues of "*Ivoirité*", culture identity and xenophobia turned into a full blown conflict. This conflict was further fuelled by the easy availability and transfer of small arms and ammunitions between rebel groups, some hoping to control areas rich in natural resources (Misol, 2004: 1-3).

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

……

1. Introduction

According to Abass (2000:227), the implications of the ECOWAS early warning system are far more comprehensive, as the mechanism on which it is based provides for the establishment of a "framework for the rational and equitable management of natural resources shared by neighbouring member states which may be causes of frequent inter-state conflicts".

While ECOWARN is hailed by respondents, scholars and the international relief organisations as being a comprehensive system (OSAA, 2007; GPPAC, 2005), its structures have yet to include country-specific indicators and models. By looking at trends for Benin and specific indicators capable of generating early warning, the research reinforces the argument advanced by scholars (Goldstone, 2000; Lundin, 2004) that such an approach improves the overall quality, reliability and depth of warning, as root causes of conflict vary from country to country, region to region.

The issue of country-specific indicators and models is highlighted by Goldstone (2000:11). Indeed, in his research on state failure, different structural models were developed for different regions, the sub-Saharan model being one of them.

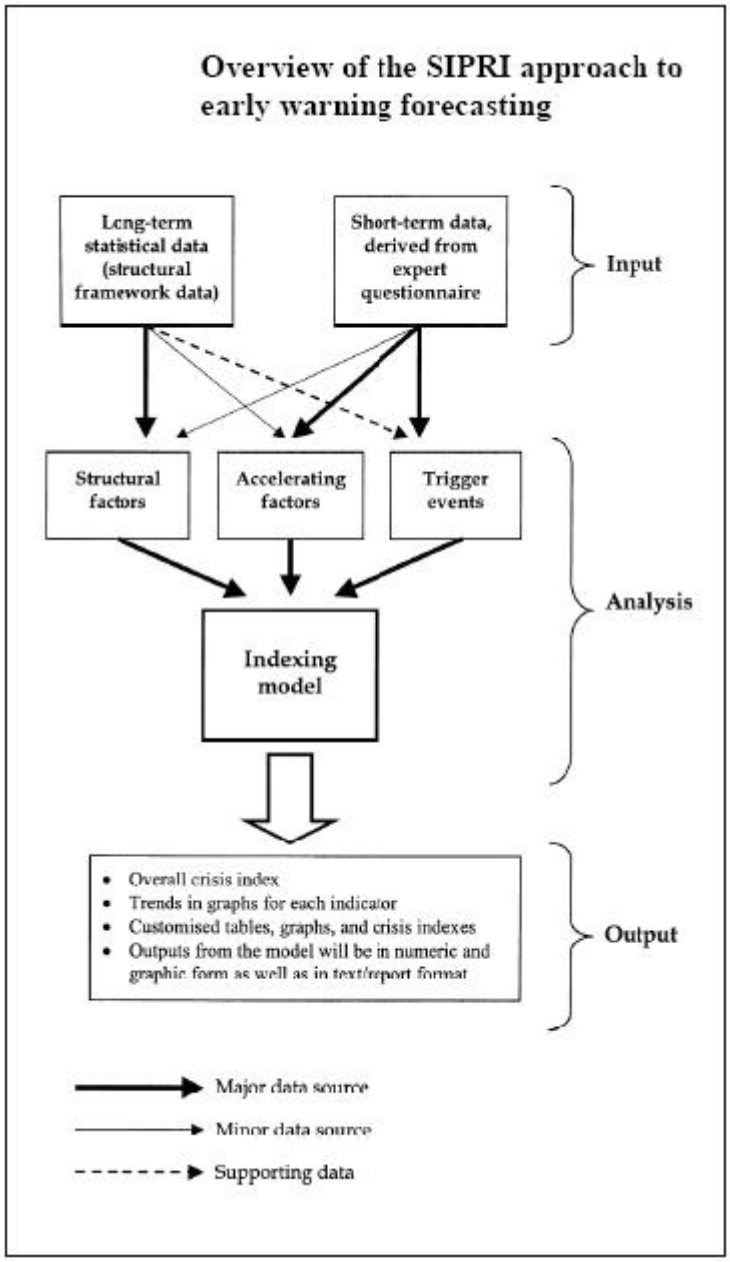
This chapter presents the research findings, discusses and interprets the SIPRI model found to be suitable for the Republic of Benin.

2. The SIPRI model

Various models are in use by institutes and research centres around the globe. These models represent possible theories in the conflict prevention arena. According to Brecke (2000:7), there is not a one-to-one relationship between theory and models. Models may be the representation of one or several theories, while a theory may be translated into various models.

The SIPRI forecasting model depicted in Figure 1 fulfils the requirements set out in the search for an indicator-based conflict early warning model suitable to Benin. First, it is an indicator-based model that combines the database and expert model approach (Hagmeyer-Gaverus & Weissman, 2003:5). Secondly, the SIPRI model can be incorporated into the ECOWARN system at the zonal level to provide a country-specific assessment. Thirdly, it uses short-term and long-term data and this increases the accuracy of the model.

Figure 1: SIPRI model



Source: SIPRI, 2003

The SIPRI model has three distinct sequential phases: Input, Analysis and Output.

2.1. Input

During the input phase, long-term statistical data and short-term data derived from expert questionnaire must be sourced. These data (long and short-term) are based on a wide range of indicators.

This report first examines a few indicators available in the SIPRI database, than focus on the associated long- and short-term data generated for Benin, and this includes the country's conflict carrying capacity score.

2.1.1. *Conflict indicators*

The online database developed by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute served as the main collection point of the indicators presented here. The "Internet-Based Early Warning Indicators System for Preventive Policy" as it is known is a project aimed at providing an in-depth, significant and comprehensive list of early warning indicators developed worldwide by scholars, research institutes, and international organisations alike including, but not limited to, the Fund for Peace, International Alert, CIFP, UNOCHA, UNHCR and FEWER.

Forty conflict indicators (Appendix C) from the SIPRI database were found to be of relevance to Benin among which are those shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Examples of conflict indicators

- State repression
- Mechanisms, tools for peaceful conciliation of different interests
- Political instability in neighbouring countries
- Violent contentious actions
- Economic performance
- Unfair election procedures
- Influence of security forces on political decision-making

These indicators and associated data are later grouped according to their relevance to structural factors, accelerating factors and/or trigger events during the analysis phase. In this phase indicators are used to generate both long and short-term data.

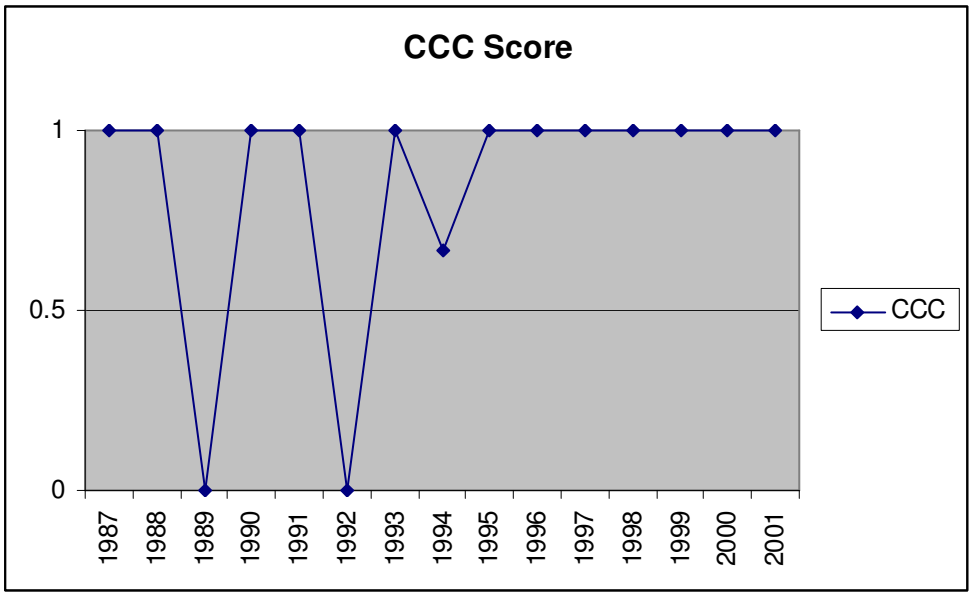
2.1.2. *Long-term data*

The conflict carrying capacity presented by Bond and Jenkins (2001) presents a readily available analysis of the frequency of conflict related events recorded for Benin as well as the country' CCC score. The conflict carrying capacity (CCC) is an early warning tool that portrays the ability of a political system to regulate internal conflicts, in other words, the ability of government and its structures to manage any internal issues, crisis or events that may escalate into conflict.

An example of long-term structural data, the CCC data is based on various indicators among which are those listed above (Table 2). Using data generated by Virtual Research Associates, published in the World Handbook of Political Indicators IV, a graph (Figure 2) was generated to illustrate trends in Benin, particularly in the years following the regime change in the early 1990's from Marxism-Leninism to democratic rule.

Available data from 1991 to 2002 are presented below and allow visualising trends during the first decade under democratic rule while the CCC scores are analysed in the light of political and socio-economic events in the country.

Figure 2: CCC Score



Source: Jenkins, 2002

Looking at Figure 2, one can notice a straight line from 1995 through to 2001, which correspond to a CCC score of 1 for every single year (Table 3). This means that throughout those years, the country was able to manage and regulate its political processes adequately and without any violent contentious actions. Such was also the case for 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991 and 1993.

Table 3: Yearly Data

Year	All Events	All Actions	All Violent Actions	Conflict Carrying Capacity	CS
1987	2	1	1	1	1
1988	3	1	0	1	1
1989	**27**	**19**	**3**	**0**	**0.729673266**
1990	9	6	0	1	1
1991	28	17	2	1	1
1992	**12**	**9**	**2**	**0**	**0.087663**
1993	23	10	0	1	1
1994	**26**	**14**	**1**	**0.666666687**	**0.772747**
1995	34	22	3	1	0.665322185
1996	69	46	5	1	1
1997	25	11	0	1	1
1998	21	7	0	1	1
1999	36	7	1	1	1
2000	12	9	1	1	1
2001	31	13	0	1	1

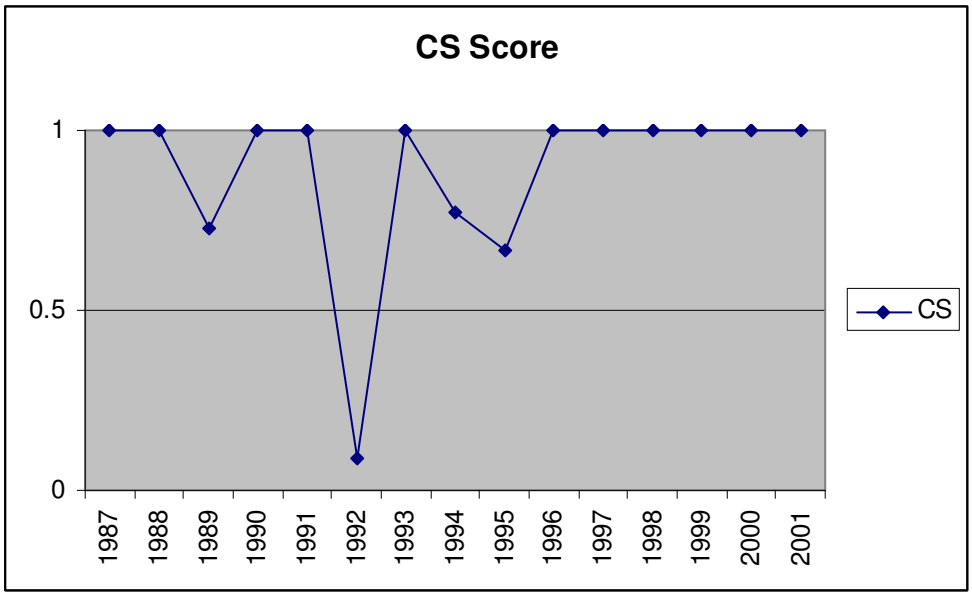
Source: Jenkins, 2002

The previous years portray a different trend. Indeed, the years 1989, 1992, 1994 display respectively 0, 0 and 0.66 as CCC scores. The year 1992 must however be isolated, as further review shows an insufficient amount of recorded events for that year. The recorded CCC score of 0 would other wise mean that civil and political relations were dominated by violent turmoil, civil contentious actions and state repressive actions during that year. This, however, was not the case in Benin in 1992 as it is only during that year that the country started recovering from the 17 years long dictatorial regime marked by the mismanagement of state structures.

The year 1989 also indicates a CCC Score of 0 in the data set (Table 3). Despite the fact that the period 1988-1989 in Benin was marked by contentious actions, a

CCC score of zero is not really interpretable, according to Jenkins (2002:5). He suggests looking at the Country Stability Score (CS) represented in Figure 3. CS is defined in the codebook as a "Curvilinear version of CCC score adjusted to capture the 'slippery slope' of conflict and the reciprocal interaction of civil and governmental contentious actions" (Jenkins, 2002:5). In other terms, the country stability index is another version of the CCC Score, with minor changes in order to improve the responsiveness of the index to events that influence the stability of the country.

Figure 3: CS Score



Source: Jenkins, 2002

0n the CS index, 1989, 1992, and 1994 correspond respectively to 0.72, 0.08 and 0.77. The overall trend, however, remains the same on both indexes. According to the CCC score (Figure 2) and the CS Score (Figure 3), Benin is a fairly stable country. In the 15 years from 1987 to 2002, only three years are of concern (1989, 1994 and 1995).

1989 was marked by contentious actions related to the then dictatorial regime, the gradual collapse of public services, arbitrary arrests and protests. It was the

conflict situation and clashes during that year that led to the convening of the National Conference.

The contentious actions in the years 1994 and 1995 a few years after the adoption of a new constitution relates to economic woes. Indeed, the devaluation of the CFA franc had a negative repercussion on millions of households that could no longer afford basic commodities as a result of price increases almost overnight. This was further prolonged by structural adjustment programmes and the economic policies under President Nicephore Soglo (Lortan, 2001:2).

In the 15 years presented in the data set, the country had managed to live through a few years marked by contentious actions that could have turn into violent conflict. The data presented here and analyses thereof for those years illustrate the value of long-term data gathering in assessing variations over a given period.

2.1.3. *Short term data*

Short-term data gathering in the SIPRI model relies on experts and their detailed and solid knowledge of a given country, its internal dynamics and the socio-economic and political dispensation.

Whereas long-term data can use general indicators, short-term data in this case must prioritise the local context and its specificities. For Benin, this means that regional tensions within the country must be taken into account in the questionnaire along with the following:

- ethnic rivalries;
- the challenges of decentralised government;
- conflicts between local authorities and traditional leaders; and
- religious tensions.

Once long- and short-term data are gathered, they are analysed in the second phase.

2.2. Analysis

During this phase data gathered (long- and short-term data) are analysed, classified and documented using three categories:

- structural factors;
- accelerating factors; and
- trigger events.

2.2.1. *Structural factors*

Structural factors are elements that increase a society's vulnerability to conflict. These include political, economic and social patterns such as state repression, the lack of political participation, poor governance performance, the distribution of wealth, the ethnic make-up of a society and the history of inter-group relations (Leonhardt, 200:25).

2.2.2. *Accelerating factors*

Accelerating factors often consist of political developments or events which bring underlying tensions to the forefront and cause the situation to escalate. They include new radical ideologies, sharp economic shocks, changes in, or collapse of, central authority, new discriminatory policies, external intervention and the proliferation of weapons (Leonhardt, 200:25).

2.2.3. *Trigger events*

Trigger events are immediate events that have the potential to move a high risk situation into active conflict or crisis (Hagmeyer-Gaverus & Weissman, 2003:7). Trigger events are, according to Hagan and Heitmeyer (2005:362), events which are seen as a threat to the majority. Considered outrageous events, they often trigger feeling of fury or vengeance and the establishment of a critical mass of people prepared to participate in collective action.

Having looked at the three categories to be used in the analysis phase of the SIPRI model, the researcher than classified the indicators used above (Table 2) for further analysis (Table 4).

Table 4: Indicators and conflict factors

	Indicators
Structural factors	State repression
	Mechanisms, tools for peaceful conciliation of different interest
Accelerating factors	Economic performance
	Political instability in neighbouring countries
Trigger events	Unfair election procedures
	Influence of security forces over political decision making

Source: Leonharddt, 2002:25

2.2.4. *structural factors of conflict for Benin*

As defined above, structural factors are deep rooted elements that increase a country's vulnerability to conflict. The structural factors of conflict in Benin are numerous, ranging from the three ancient and traditional centres of authority on which are largely based current regionalist tensions, to present day attempts to build and maintain a pluralist democratic system with strong and independent institutions.

Two indicators are used here to illustrate how data is gathered and analysed on structural factors of conflicts within the SIPRI model. They are:

- state repression; and
- mechanisms, tools for peaceful conciliation of different interests.

"State repression" and, " Mechanisms, tools for peaceful conciliation of different interests" are used as indicators because a strong correlation exists between governance structures, the nature of any given regime and its ability to regulate adequately internal conflict as presented earlier through the CCC score (Bond & Jenkins, 2001:6).

It is best summarised as follows:

> Regime characteristics are associated with conflict potential in myriad ways. Democratic institutions, for example, encourage a relationship between state and society that fosters pluralism, inclusion and ultimately peaceful conflict resolution. Alternatively, the lack of accountable and transparent institutions through which to channel grievances can aggravate the risk of outburst of violent conflict. So too can the denial; of civil and political liberties, such as the rights of expression, assembly and association…increase the likelihood [that] dissenting views will be expressed through violence (CIFP, 2002:15).

State repression has been for many years a common phenomenon in the Republic of Benin along with the use of state controlled media and censorship. Using it as an indicator and gathering data will help monitor the country's evolution in regard to the respect for civil liberties, press freedom and the like that often constitute breeding grounds for violent contentious actions and conflict.

The next indicator used in Table 4 on structural factors of conflict in Benin is: "Mechanisms, tools for peaceful conciliation of different interests".

Prior research has demonstrated the importance of vehicles through which grievances can be channelled, and solutions or compromises achieved. In Benin, the absence at the national level of such mechanism at the heights of crisis in 1989 made famous the efforts to convene "*la Conference Nationale des Forces*

Vive de la Nation", the National Conference as the mechanism through which to reach compromise (Banegas, 2003; Heilbrunn, 1993 & Laloupo, 1993). This National Conference, among the only to succeed in francophone Africa (Lund & Santiso, 1998:252), demonstrated the importance of institutions and or mechanisms geared toward reconciling warring factions.

By using "Mechanisms, tools for peaceful conciliation of different interests" as an indicator, data can be gathered and an analysis can be done on the gains or losses of the country in developing institutions, mechanisms or tools for conflict management, be it at the local, national or ECOWAS level as is the case with the country's participation in ECOWARN.

2.2.5. **Accelerating factors of conflict in Benin**

In the 2002 CIFP report, Benin had a relatively high risk at 6.8 using economic indicators (with the high risk at 8.10 when one considers human development indicators). This illustrates the important role economic performance and social development plays in maintaining a stable political environment. It further reinforces the findings described under the CCC score for 1994 and 1995 in relation to economic factors and their impact on social development. Indeed, in the Republic of Benin, high youth unemployment, illicit trade, reliance on primary goods and lack of economic potential make many young people vulnerable and willing to engage in destructive behaviours that ultimately lead to crisis or violent tensions.

According to the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) 2007 report, the youth bulge lacking financial means is not only the perfect source of manpower for rebel groups but they also feed the black market. Extreme poverty, coupled with rampant corruption and racketeering, has been a source of conflict in the region. Examples are blood diamonds in Sierra Leone, and fuel bunkering in Nigeria of which a substantial amount is illegally traded in Benin. As has been

demonstrated in recent violent actions and mass protests by workers in the streets of Cotonou, the country's economic performance and the inability of the state to pay its workers on the current salary scale must be monitored as a possible accelerating factor of conflict.

"Political instability in neighbouring countries" is the second indicator presented in Table 4 as an accelerating factor. According to Buhaug and Gleditsch (2006:6), conflicts may become more likely when nearby countries experience civil wars or social upheaval which often results in trans-national refugees who put severe strain on the receiving country. Their research also showed that countries in poor regions are considerably more likely to experience conflict than countries in wealthy regions. Considering the level of poverty in West Africa and the incessant conflicts that have generated thousand of refugees within the region, this is a quite a concern. In the case of Benin, the effects of tensions in the Niger delta and the intake and resettlement of refugees from wars within the region must thus be monitored.

2.2.6. **Trigger events of conflict in Benin**

In March 2008, Benin celebrated 18 years of democratic rule, an important milestone when one consider the 17 years dictatorial regime of Kerekou and the post-independence years marked by instability.

In the Republic, just like in democracies in Africa and West Africa in particular, the poor management of electoral processes has resulted in crises and conflict situation. Presented in Table 4 as an indicator, electoral procedures and the management thereof are even more important for young democracies like Benin.

Tensions during electoral periods, fuelled by regionalism and the north/south rivalries, must be carefully monitored as a trigger to conflict in Benin.

The second indicator used to gather data on trigger events of conflict in Benin relates to the influence of the military and security forces over political decision-making. According to the CIFP (2000:19), the capacity of any given country's military force affects its ability to defend itself, and to manage potentially violent crisis and military intelligence and forces, can be a deterrent to the circulation of rebel groups. However the use of military force and any such structure for that matter is one to consider with reservation as the role of the military in state structures can impede on its ability to address social needs.

Having experienced military rule, the Beninese people have resolved not to go back to that era. The influence of security forces over political decision-making is thus a sensitive issue, likely to trigger conflict in Benin.

The December 1990 constitution addressed this issue and made civil disobedience and uprising a duty in case an illegitimate group, be it security forces or others, exercise unduly influence on the political process.

> In case of a coup d'état, or a putsch, or aggression by mercenaries or of any action by force whatsoever, any member of a constitutional agency shall have the right and the duty to make an appeal by any means in order to re-establish the constitutional legitimacy, including recourse to existing agreements of military or defence co-operation. In these circumstances for any Beninese to disobey and organise himself to put a check to the illegitimate authority shall constitute the most sacred of rights and the most imperative of duties (Benin 1990 Constitution, Article 66).

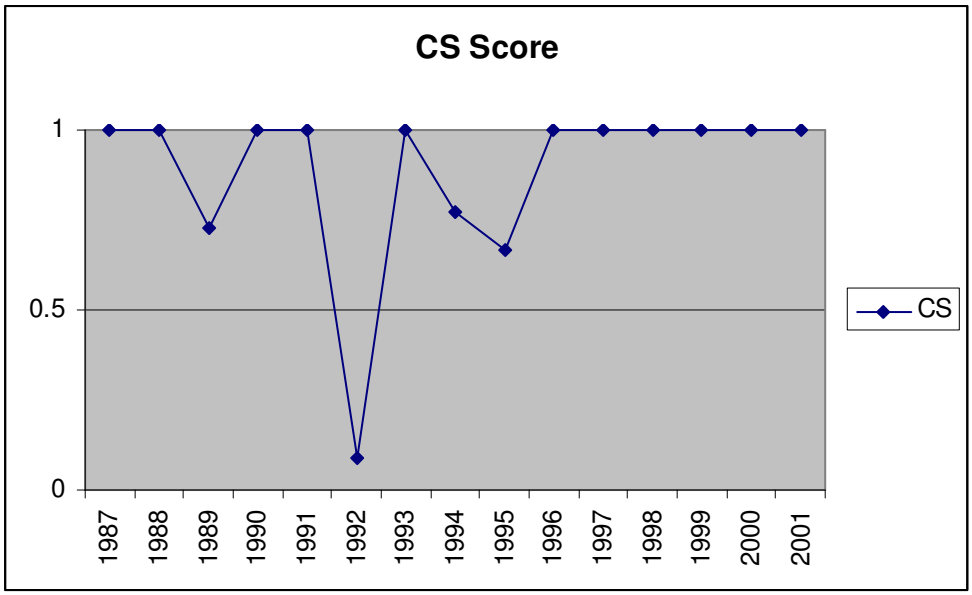
Having looked at the "Input" then the "Analysis" phases, this work now focuses on the "Output" phase of the SIPRI model.

2.3. **Outputs**

Outputs from the SIPRI model will be in numerical, graphic and report format the latter focusing on answers gathered from the expert questionnaire and automatically transferred into reports in accordance with a set of templates (Hagmeyer-Gaverus & Weissman, 2003:9).

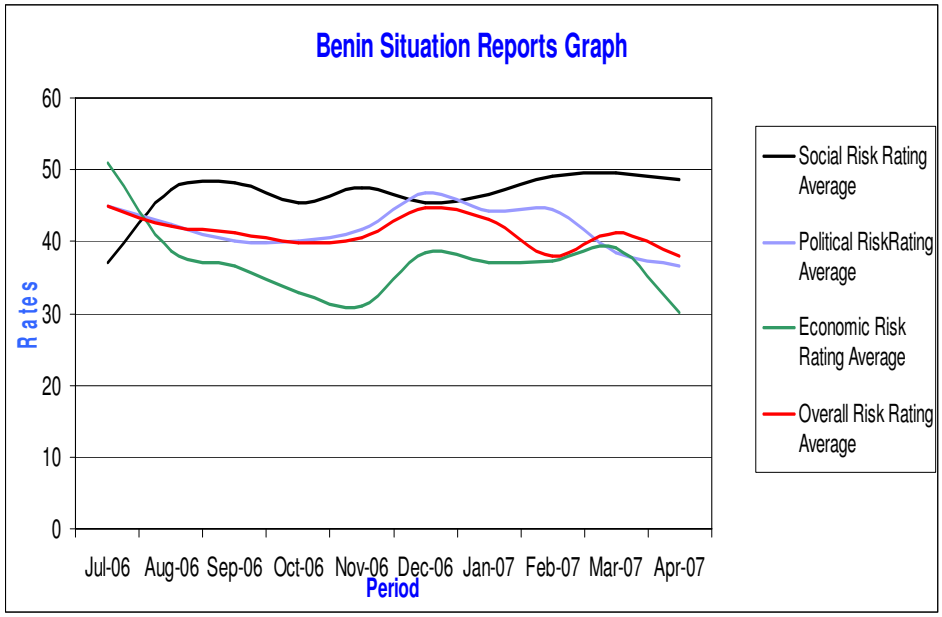
As an example of such output: Figure 3 shows the evolution of violent contentious actions in Benin over the 1987–2001 period, while Figure 4 presents a situation report graph over the 2006-2007 period.

Figure 3: CS Score



Source: Jenkins, 2002

Figure 4: Situation Graph



Source: ECOWAS, 2008

Trends for each indicator and indicator category will thus be shown in graphs, and it will be simple to compare different indicators.

3. Summary

ECOWAS has a huge task to fulfil in regard to conflict prevention in West Africa. As an early warning system ECOWARN represents an innovative approach, however, it is important that country-specific indicator-based models be incorporated as the region is quite diverse.

Indeed, the various states are in different phases when one considers the conflict life cycle and different indicator-based models are needed to make accurate sense of the nature, causes and implications of conflict and provide early warning where need be.

This chapter used Benin's political, socio-economic and cultural dispensation to illustrate the applicability and country-focused analysis that is made possible by indicator-based models within regional early warning systems.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

……

1. Introduction

This concluding chapter presents the findings of this research and makes recommendations on available options for regional early warning systems.

2. Highlights of the study and conclusion

"Armed conflicts in Africa have been the single most devastating challenge for the continent" (Aning, 2007:1). In recent years efforts have been made to shift focus toward conflict prevention in light of the many failed attempts at peace-keeping, peace building and conflict management in the war torn regions of Africa and elsewhere around the world. The cases of Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Kosovo and Haiti are examples of such failures, that in some instances continue to this day and whose impact will remain for decades.

In West Africa in particular, experiences in Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Cote D'Ivoire have revealed the economic and human cost of war and have reinforced support for conflict prevention initiatives and mechanisms at the regional level. The Economic Community of West African State Early Warning System, better known as ECOWARN, is thus being operationalised and, according to respondents, it provides decision-makers with actionable early warning, and also evaluates scenarios in dealing with possible sources of conflict.

Adebajo (2007:18) argues that states have lost their monopoly on violence, and that the ongoing efforts mark a substantial evolution in the ability of the Regional Economic Communities and the African Union to address security related issues. The structures and mechanisms designed must however reflect the realities on the ground and, more importantly, have the capacity to detect potential areas of tensions, given the complexity of conflict in Africa.

In ECOWAS, research by WANEP and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC, 2005:4) have showed the interconnectedness of conflicts due in part to the porous nature of borders and circulation of small arms. Adding to this complex environment, extreme poverty and ethnic-based disparities have only exacerbated the current issues.

As effective conflict prevention is a prerequisite for achieving peace and sustainable development, ECOWARN must address all those areas as potential sources of conflict, and this research has demonstrated the need and importance of a country-specific indicator-based model in enhancing its capabilities.

The political, social and economic dispensation of each country varies tremendously, as well as the influence of culture and history. Some countries are recovering from conflict and undergoing peace building, while others experience continuous crisis situation. Some amidst all this have remained conflict free and relatively peaceful. This disparity by itself justifies the need for a country-focused approach to conflict prevention, as indicators of conflict for Liberia or Sierra Leone are likely to fail in Benin or Burkina Faso. Country-specific indicator-based models such as the SIPRI model allow focusing on the various dimensions and the internal dynamics of a given country. It also provides means to scrutinise elements particular to a country in the case where synergetic effects may result in conflict.

In the case considered in this research, the historical and political dispensation in the Republic of Benin provided elements with which to assess the selected model. As revealed by its conflict carrying capacity, Benin is nowadays a relatively peaceful country where potential sources of conflict could be military coups, considering the country's past history or the results of economic hardship and illegal trade among which is that of oil generated in Nigeria. Indeed, statistics reveal that, the proximity to that country has turned Benin into a major smuggling and transit point.

As acknowledged in this research, sources of conflict are varied and in the case of Benin, monitoring elements in areas such as governance and political stability, the socio-economic dispensation, and the link between military leadership and the executive power, is a comprehensive way to access conflict trends in the country.

Nevertheless for conflict prevention to be effective, be it in Benin or in the region, inclusive institutions must be built and past grievances corrected (Adebajo, 2007:19), while mass poverty is addressed. As good governance, improved standard of living and elevated standard of education are in many instances a deterrent to conflicts, Souaré (2007:107) argues that preventive measures to conflict, such as early warning mechanisms, must use those elements as indicators. However, recent events in Cote D'Ivoire, which had achieved relative prosperity under Houphouet-Boigny, demonstrate the need for a more comprehensive mechanism that includes cultural identity issues and the interactions between the various indicators presented. Of paramount importance in these preventive approaches is the youth bulge with its utterly high unemployment rate and how this is dealt with. As Wannenburg (2005:9) best summarises it: "despairing young males living in terrible conditions are the shock troops of crime and political instability".

3. Recommendations

The prevention of conflict through early warning is inextricably linked to sustainable development, since development cannot take place in an environment of violence (Vadlamudi, 2003:3). Moreover, research has shown that conflict seldom erupts without warning signs. In Africa, and particularly in West Africa arguments suggest that there is a close correlation between the exploitation of natural resources and the various armed conflicts and their length (Aning, 2007:2).

Considering those facts, the efforts of RECs are quite laudable. However, they must focus on the specific nature of tensions prevailing in particular countries and attempt to recognise risk levels and turning points. To this end this study recommends a multilayered approach as it provides the means of detecting and alerting on specific elements in a given area which might other wise be overlooked yet have devastating implications.

The multilayered approach would present a general view of the whole region, allow for the comparison of trends between zonal offices, and most importantly provide a country-specific outlook when necessary for actionable early response decision-making by regional actors.

This approach is recommended as it could also be incorporated into the current design of ECOWARN. Indeed this approach would use indicator-based models at the zonal level to access trends for individual countries, while a broader list of indicators would be used to monitor the sub-region and region.

As ECOWARN is operationalised it will be crucial that indicators selected to detect trends at the regional or zonal levels be further refined and adapted to the case of individual countries. Although this approach is claimed to be costly, preventive measures require a long-term approach, capacity building, advocacy and increasing the awareness of the populations under scrutiny. Adding to these,

the institutions and mechanisms necessary to address areas of concerns and disputes, must be put in place.

Lastly, as experience has demonstrated with the electoral process in Togo and Kenya, there must be an increased focus on the institutions that reinforce democratic rule and enable regional early warning systems to function.

4. Further Research Needs

This research has looked at a multi-layered approach to regional conflict early warning systems and specifically the incorporation of country-specific indicator-based model into their mechanisms. As proven by prior researches, accuracy improves by using region or country-specific models. However, within the African and West African contexts little research exists to confirm those findings.

Although it is difficult to ascertain the future value of this approach, it is one to consider, given current trends. As prevention is better than cure, there is much space for research into the various approaches to consider in strengthening early warning systems. Areas worthy of research by scholars interested in this field include:

- assessing the value of country specific-models in other countries within the ECOWAS region;
- assessing the linkage between ECOWARN early warning and early response structures;
- analysing the type of early warning generated in countries at peace and those undergoing post-conflict reconstruction;
- developing and testing country-specific early warning models; and
- comparing regional early warning systems, methodology, indicators and models.

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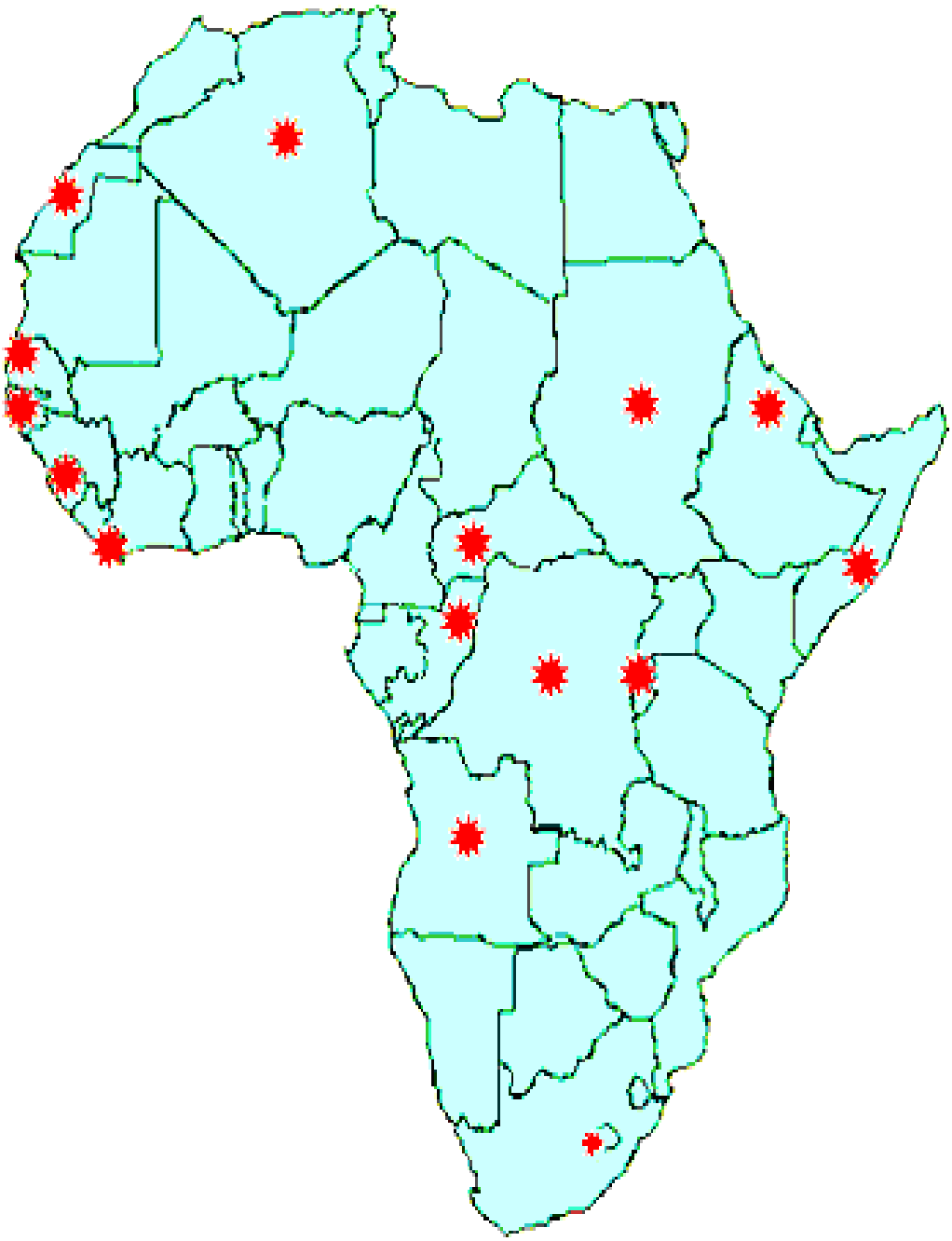
Appendix A: ECOWAS Members States Map



Source: ECOWAS, 2007

Appendix B: Conflict Map (1997-2007)
(Adapted from New Internationalist, 2008)



Appendix C: Conflict Indicators (SIPRI)

List of Conflict Indicators
1. Rise of factional elite
2. Human rights violation
3. Absence of mechanism for peaceful conciliation of different interest
4. Constitutional abuse
5. Number of political prisoners
6. Undermined legitimacy of traditional and religious authorities
7. Restriction of movement into and out of the state
8. Censorship by government
9. Freedom from arbitrary arrest
10. Use of state-controlled media
11. Attack and arrest of press reporters
12. Lack of an active and organised civil society
13. Newness of democracy
14. Regional inequalities
15. Political instability in neighbouring countries
16. Corruption
17. Ethnic and religious representativeness of the government
18. Strength of the judicial system
19. Regime stability
20. Protection of civil liberties (freedom of speech and assembly)
21. Unfair election procedures
22. Central government unable to protect it citizens
23. Massive movement of internally displaced people
24. Humanitarian emergencies
25. Negative impact of rural-urban migration
26. Rise of military opposition
27. History of state repression
28. Strong or rising presence of security forces in the streets
29. Formal and informal channels of conflict management
30. Influence of security forces over political decision-making
31. Influx and easy availability of small arms
32. Gender relations
33. Coups ousting governments
34. Sharp and severe economic decline
35. Lack of economic potential
36. Regional economies and illicit trade
37. Agricultural failures
38. Youth unemployment
39. Reliance on primary commodities
40. Control of local markets by racket

Source: Internet-Based Early Warning Indicators System for Preventive Policy

Appendix D: Additional Questions

1. Country-specific models are said to increase the reliability of early warning systems. Do you agree? Please explain.

2. Inadequate early response, or lack of it, is often considered to be the main source of early warning systems failure. Do you agree with that statement?

3. How can ECOWARN fill up the gap between early warning and early response?

4. What is to your knowledge the biggest impediment to the effectiveness of early warning systems?

5. What are the benefits of a multi-layered approach to regional early warning systems?

6. Does a country-focused approach increase the reliability of conflict early warning systems?

7. What do you foresee as a challenge in integrating ECOWARN with the continental early warning system?