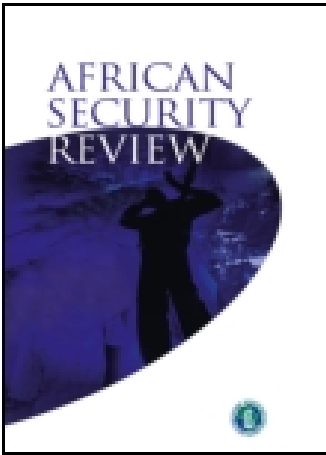


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# CEWARN's new strategy framework

## Implications for Sudan and South Sudan's existing and emerging conflicts

*Rania Hassan*

A decade after establishing the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the member states endorsed the new strategy framework that is to guide the work of CEWARN until 2019. Although the original legal foundation upon which CEWARN was founded did not specify the types of conflicts that it could be involved in, CEWARN chose to limit itself to cross-border pastoral conflicts. This was partially due to the low levels of confidence between the member states, which prevented CEWARN from engaging in other types of conflicts that are considered to be more 'political' and thus more 'sensitive'. The hope was that after asserting its own success in dealing with cross-border pastoral conflicts, CEWARN would be able to expand its geographical as well as thematic scope. Thus, the most pronounced aspect of the new strategy framework is the expansion of CEWARN operations beyond their current limited focus. Although it is too early to assess the new strategy framework, I attempt to provide a reading of the future of this strategy plan, with particular reference to Sudan and South Sudan. I argue that despite the rhetoric that accompanied the endorsement of the new strategy, the prospects of the new plan in Sudan and South Sudan depend on a number of factors: first, enhancing the mutual trust between Sudan and South Sudan with regard to exchange of information; second, changing Sudan's perceptions with regard to IGAD; and third, securing the much-needed funding for such an expansion of CEWARN's work.

**Keywords** early warning systems, CEWARN, IGAD, Sudan, South Sudan, Horn of Africa

## Introduction

In 2002, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) established its Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), which has been operational since

2003, making it the longest-functioning mechanism of early warning on the African continent compared to similar arrangements associated with other regional organisations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the African Union (AU) Continental Early Warning System (CEWS). The relatively advanced and sophisticated structure of CEWARN was finally completed with the launch of its latest Conflict Early Warning and Response Unit Committee (CEWERU) in Juba in May 2012, which was considered by IGAD as a ‘milestone in CEWARN’s support of the building of successful conflict prevention processes in South Sudan’.<sup>1</sup>

Although CEWARN has managed to achieve some success in reducing armed violence among pastoralist communities, as well as enhancing trust and collaboration among member states in addressing regional peace and security challenges, the Horn of Africa is still one of the most conflict-ridden regions in the world, from intrastate and interstate to cross-border community conflicts. Examples of the region’s conflicts include the Sudan–South Sudan border conflict, internal conflicts in both Sudan and South Sudan, Somalia’s collapsed state, Ethiopia and Eritrea’s state of no-peace-no-war, and Uganda’s northern conflict with the Lord’s Resistance Army, to mention but a few.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the region has the highest percentage of population affected by conflicts in the world, as well as the highest number of refugees compared to its countries’ national economies.

It is against this backdrop of mixed achievements that this article attempts to assess CEWARN and answer questions about its possible impact on the state of peace and security in the region, with particular focus on the new strategy framework adopted to inform and guide CEWARN’s work and activities in the coming years until 2019. This assessment will further focus on the possible impact of the new strategy in relation to Sudan and South Sudan’s conflicts.

It is worth noting here that any attempt to assess the impact of early warning systems on peace and security is very much a contested field of research, as argued by Oliver Ramsbotham and his colleagues.<sup>3</sup> This mission is even more daunting when the system under investigation is still to a great extent in its preliminary phases, as is the case with a new strategy framework. However, in order to overcome this difficulty, this article will draw on the existing knowledge available on the CEWARN itself, which is more than a decade old, as well as knowledge about the dynamics and conflicts of the IGAD sub-region, where CEWARN operations are taking place.

The article will begin with a brief introduction to the CEWARN mechanism. The second section will discuss the new strategy framework in comparison with its predecessor, which covered the years 2007 to 2011. The third section will focus on the work of CEWARN in both Sudan and South Sudan. Based on the findings of these three sections, the article will draw conclusions with regard to the possible impact of the new strategy on the conflicts in the two countries.

## **CEWARN: a background**

In 1996, as a result of IGAD’s realisation that the presence of a peaceful and stable environment is a crucial prerequisite to economic development and social progress, the organisation expanded its mandate to include peace and security. According to Article 18 of the Agreement establishing IGAD, member states shall: (a) ‘take effective collective measures to eliminate

threats to regional cooperation, peace and security; (b) establish an effective mechanism of consultation and cooperation for the pacific settlement of differences and disputes; and (c) accept to deal with disputes between member states within this sub-regional mechanism before they are referred to other regional or international organisations.<sup>4</sup> However, it took IGAD another four years before it took the decision to establish CEWARN during the meeting of the council of ministers held in Khartoum in 2000. The Khartoum Declaration states: 'We endorse the establishment of a mechanism in the IGAD sub-region for the prevention, management and resolution of inter-state and intra-state conflicts'.<sup>5</sup> In the same meeting, directions were given to the executive secretary to prepare a draft protocol on the establishment of CEWARN for consideration by the assembly at its next meeting.<sup>6</sup> The Protocol Agreement was then endorsed in 2002, providing CEWARN with a legal entity and operational framework. In July 2003, the Protocol entered into force.

Like any other early warning system, the rationale behind CEWARN is to systematically anticipate violent conflicts and respond to them in a timely and effective manner in order to prevent them from erupting or at least stop them from escalating or expanding on a wider regional scale. According to CEWARN's mission statement, it is more effective as well as much cheaper both in terms of human and material resources to deal with conflicts before they erupt than to deal with 'full-blown crises'.<sup>7</sup>

In order to carry out its mandate, exchange of information regarding potentially violent conflicts in the region is central to the work of CEWARN. This information is gathered, verified, processed, analysed and subsequently communicated to the decision-makers of IGAD policy organs as well as the national governments of member states to help develop case scenarios and formulate appropriate responses.<sup>8</sup>

The CEWARN model, unlike some other early warning systems, does not depend on the state's coercive structures, nor is it based on military intervention. Rather, it depends primarily on the contribution of civil society and other non-coercive structures in support of its activities.<sup>9</sup> The key elements in the structure of CEWARN are the national Conflict Early Warning Response Units (CEWERUs). These units exist in each of the member states and are the coordinating structures at the national level for both the collection of information and the initiation of response measures. They are supported by National Research Institutes (NRIs), which are expected to work and collaborate with the CEWERU in tracking and monitoring conflicts.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, each member state has its own country coordinator, and field monitors who are stationed in Areas of Reporting (AoRs). The rationale behind this structure, as argued by its architects, is to make the early warning process more relevant and closer to the grassroots level.

As for financial resources, CEWARN is funded by regular member states' contributions, in addition to financial support provided by international donors such as the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).<sup>11</sup> However, one of the important aspects of development in the mechanism has been the establishment of a multi-donor basket known as the Rapid Response Fund (RRF), which aims to enable CEWARN to support locally driven and timely response projects to contain the spread and escalation of violent conflict along the borders of Ethiopia and Djibouti; Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda; and Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, through supporting short-term efforts including dialogue promotion and modest developmental projects that provide a peace dividend to communities.<sup>12</sup>

It is obvious from the above presentation that CEWARN has quite an elaborate structure. The issues are, however, whether or not this has helped improve the state of peace and security

in the region, and if the work of CEWARN does actually result in any preventive action, which is not the case for most early warning systems, as argued by Herbert Wulf and Tobias Debiel.<sup>13</sup> To investigate these matters, we need to highlight the activities that CEWARN has been undertaking at ground level since it started its work, and the achievements that have resulted from these activities.

Since CEWARN's inception it was agreed that the mechanism would commence its activities by monitoring cross-border pastoral conflicts, which led to CEWARN mainly working in two areas: the Karamoja Cluster, which covers parts of south-western Ethiopia, north-western Kenya, south-eastern Sudan and north-eastern Uganda; and the Somali Cluster, which covers south-eastern parts of Ethiopia and adjoining north-eastern parts of Kenya. Even within this geographically and thematically limited focus, for the first few years of its work CEWARN was fully functional in only three member states – Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya.

This limited focus in terms of both geographical and thematic scope has its own rationale. On the one hand, cross-border pastoralist conflicts are one of the common problems faced by almost all the countries in the region; thus, focusing on this area is believed to be of mutual interest to all member states and should subsequently lead to encouraging more cooperation among the countries.<sup>14</sup> On the other, it has been argued that by focusing on less political and sensitive conflicts, CEWARN will avoid becoming 'caught up' in the major conflicts of the region.<sup>15</sup> Although this is not entirely true, pastoral conflicts were perceived by the political leadership of the member states as less 'political' and less 'sensitive', and thus much more convenient for the leaders to allow CEWARN to work on.<sup>16</sup> In the same vein, the dynamics of power relations in the region suggested that it would be very difficult for almost all the countries to freely exchange information regarding certain types of conflict, for fear that this information would be used to undermine their stability. Taking into consideration that some member states joined CEWARN in order to be able to gather intelligence on other countries, there is a predominant sense of caution among the member states.<sup>17</sup> Finally, it was also argued that any success CEWARN could achieve would help to build the trust of the member states in it, and could pave the way towards more involvement in other types of conflict.<sup>18</sup> These arguments found reflections in declarations and speeches made by officials from the member states. For example, the head of the Ethiopian delegation to the Committee of Permanent Secretaries (CPS) attributed the 'humble start' of CEWARN to the low level of confidence and trust in the region, which is exacerbated by the volatile situation.<sup>19</sup>

## **CEWARN'S new strategy framework**

By definition, a strategic plan of an organisation is a statement of goals to be achieved within a fixed period of time in order to move closer to its overall vision. This strategic plan has to be translated into both operational and tactical plans. While the operational plan consists of the short-term objectives of the strategic plan, the technical plan anticipates the obstacles and the necessary means to deal with them in order to successfully execute the strategic plan.

It was thus believed that if CEWARN was to move forward and become fully operational, it had to adopt a focused plan of implementing activities on a long-term basis.<sup>20</sup> It is against this backdrop that CEWARN started its first deliberations on the different approaches of developing a five-year strategic plan to inform and guide the future activities of CEWARN for the period 2007–2011.<sup>21</sup> After such deliberations, CEWARN opted for a programmatic option, the main feature of which was the decision to continue the mechanism's focus on cross-border

pastoral conflicts while laying the foundation to expand to other types of conflicts, as outlined in the protocol. This particular aspect of the strategy was endorsed by a number of member states. Eritrea, for example, argued that the continuous focus on pastoral conflicts would enable member states that had not yet started work to operationalise and implement early warning and response activities in their respective countries to do so. This view was shared by Sudan.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to expanding the monitoring and reporting of pastoral and related conflicts in all IGAD member states, and informed by the weaknesses of CEWARN that were reflected in its operations, the strategic plan aimed to achieve the following:<sup>23</sup>

- To strengthen the early response side of CEWARN by fully operationalising CEWERUs in all IGAD member states.
- To widen sources of information, enhance the information collection system, and strengthen the data analysis capacity of CEWARN.
- To develop a public relations and communication strategy and promote awareness of CEWARN's work.
- To strengthen the institutional and functional capacity of CEWARN using all enabling means, including research and training as well as administrative and financial support.
- To implement a sustainable long-term funding strategy that will ensure access to adequate resources for CEWARN to fulfil its mandate.

By the end of the implementation phase of the first strategic plan, CEWARN proved to have committed itself to a great extent to achieving the goals of the plan. The most pronounced feature of CEWARN's activities has been the continued focus on cross-border pastoralist conflicts. After nearly a decade since its establishment, CEWARN has failed to extend its work and activities to cover other types of conflicts. Nevertheless, it has achieved the goal of expanding its geographical scope by adding new AoRs, and managed to put in place 'selection criteria' that would allow the addition of new areas to the already functioning two clusters mentioned above. According to these criteria, for an area to be added it has to be: (a) a pastoral community area, (b) prone to conflict either internally or across borders as a result of the pastoral nature of its communities, and (c) the conflict should be of such a nature that it may turn violent, leading to loss of property and lives. However, for new areas to be approved, the national CEWERU along with the NRI has to submit to the CEWARN Unit a list of the areas where there is a need for monitoring. The CEWARN Unit shall then present the proposals for the new AoR to the Technical Committee on Early Warning (TCEW) and to the CPS for approval. In the case of cross-border conflicts, all member states involved in such a conflict have to reach consensus for CEWARN to operate. However, if this consensus cannot be reached, the member state or states willing to have its or their area(s) monitored will benefit from the functioning of CEWARN as consultations continue with the reluctant parties. It is worth noting that in addition to the two clusters that CEWARN has been working in since its inception, new areas for reporting have been identified in Djibouti, such as the Dikhil area, which is a cross-border area with Ethiopia. Similarly, Eritrea proposed a new area of reporting, which is a cross-border area with Ethiopia and Sudan. Other countries like Ethiopia and Kenya have also expressed an interest in expanding their areas of reporting.

Other aspects of the first strategic plan, as mentioned above, have been achieved with various degrees of success. As for the response side of CEWARN, for example, the RRF has been established. Furthermore, new sources of information have been identified. However,

funding issues still represent a challenge. According to the report of the 5th Meeting of the CPS, only 10 per cent of CEWARN's budget comes from the member states, while the GTZ and USAID contribute 30 per cent and 60 per cent respectively. In order to ensure sustainability and ownership of the mechanism, the strategy plan proposes that member states commit to making gradual increments to the core funding of CEWARN's activities so that by the end of the five-year plan they are contributing 30 per cent.<sup>24</sup> CEWARN is, however, nowhere near this target, and funding is still one of the major challenges it faces.<sup>25</sup>

The new strategy for CEWARN was revealed in a meeting that was convened in Uganda in September 2012. That was, however, preceded by prolonged consultations that lasted for seven months and involved state officials and an estimated 5 000 citizens, peace and development experts, and local and national authorities. In an interview with a CEWARN Unit staff member, I was told that the most challenging phase in the consultations was the one that involved government officials who were still reluctant to accept a wider mandate for CEWARN. These national officials were asked to engage with the outcome of the consultations carried out earlier at the grassroots level and to set the national priorities for their respective countries. The outcome of these consultations revealed that there has been a strong demand, from all quarters, for CEWARN to significantly expand its thematic and geographical focus in order to address a broader spectrum of drivers of conflict.<sup>26</sup> National priorities that stemmed from the consultations included a wide range of conflict typologies, including border territorial conflict, terrorism/extremism, inter-ethnic conflict, small arms, human trafficking, piracy, migration, resource-based conflict, food insecurity, and political instability, to mention but a few. It was agreed though that drivers and triggers of conflicts are complex and interwoven, which necessitates a more comprehensive approach in dealing with conflicts and their underlying causes. Along with the expansion of CEWARN's scope both geographically and thematically, the strategic framework proposed other areas of work, such as enhancing the organisational and networking capabilities of the mechanism on the regional, national and local levels; network engagement and communication; supporting and scaling response initiatives; improving financial and administrative resources and systems; and improving the quality of data collected on conflicts.<sup>27</sup>

Since the announcement of the new strategy, a number of statements seem to back this new expansion of CEWARN, highlighting the reasons why this step was so important. According to Janet Museveni, Minister of Karamoja Affairs, '... since the nature of conflicts that the IGAD region is grappling with are fast evolving, it is imperative that member states strengthen existing multi-lateral arrangements such as CEWARN to deal with a wide scope of national and trans-boundary security challenges'.<sup>28</sup> By the same token, the Executive Secretary of IGAD, Eng. Mahboub Maalim, stated that

despite the great potential and promise the region has for development and economic integration, the Horn of Africa region continues to deal with increasingly complex security challenges. It is thus imperative that member states strengthen the capacity through facilities like CEWARN to address national and trans-boundary security challenges.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the rhetoric since the inception of the new strategy framework is that the CEWARN is positioned to significantly contribute to the fulfilment of IGAD's peace and security mandate.<sup>30</sup> Although it is still too early to assess the new strategy plan, I argue that it is possible to offer a tentative review concerning the prospects of the strategy with special reference to the conflicts of Sudan and South Sudan. This will be based on the involvement of Sudan in

the activities of CEWARN since the latter's inception, as well as the nature of the conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan.

## **CEWARN and the two Sudans: between cautious involvement and open approach**

There is little doubt about the importance of the early warning system for both Sudan and South Sudan. Both of these countries are going through what is known as a 'post-conflict' phase. In such a context, early warning and early response have become equivalent to conflict prevention and conflict transformation processes. An early warning system in this context plays a significant role in preventing the reoccurrence of and relapse into conflict, provided that it is fully and correctly implemented.<sup>31</sup>

The importance of CEWARN's work for Sudan was emphasised by the Sudan country co-ordinator himself, who pointed out that Sudan was a unique case with multifaceted conflicts that required critical assessment and addressing in order to inform the effective functioning of the CEWERU in Sudan. In this regard, the continued existence of various violent conflicts at the cross-border, national and local community levels complicated efforts directed towards peace building, something that the CEWERU will have to appreciate and find innovative ways of dealing with.<sup>32</sup>

Although the secession of South Sudan brought hopes of peace to the Horn of Africa region, these prospects did not hold for long before it was evident that the formation of the new state had not marked the end of the war between the two parties. In addition to the interstate conflict, the two countries face internal conflict in their respective territories. This situation raises questions about the current role (not) played by CEWARN in the Sudanese conflicts, and what the prospects are for this role in light of the new strategy framework. It is outside the scope of this article to provide a comprehensive account of the conflicts of the two Sudans. However, I will highlight general remarks about the existing conflicts as well as potential conflicts.

The relations between Sudan and South Sudan during the period since the latter's independence has been characterised by tensions, the most serious of which was the armed conflict that erupted between the two countries over the oil-rich regions between South Sudan's Unity state and Sudan's South Kordofan state. The conflict led the Vice President of Sudan, Al-Haj Adam Youssef, to declare that a 'state of war' existed between the two countries.<sup>33</sup> Later, he also declared that all negotiations between the two states were on hold. Subsequently, Sudan's parliament met and voted unanimously to declare South Sudan an enemy of all Sudanese state agencies. In September 2012, South Sudan accused Sudan of airdropping weapons to rebels. While Sudan dismissed the charges and any links to rebels in the south, it accuses Juba of supporting rebels in its borderlands.<sup>34</sup>

These mutual accusations of supporting the rebels in the two countries are closely related to the unsolved conflicts in what has become known in the literature as the issue of 'the three areas', which refers to Abyei, the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile. Thus the way in which the conflicts in these areas are handled will determine which path the relationship between the two Sudans will go – either towards sustainable peace for the two countries or towards more conflicts that could shake the already fragile peace.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to the above-mentioned tensions between Sudan and the new state of South Sudan, there are also multiple internal conflicts in both countries. For example, South Sudan



witnessed the eruption of a conflict between the Lou Nuer and their neighbours during the course of their dry season migrations. Furthermore, since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), there have been endemic clan-based fighting among the Dinka of the Lakes District, Murle cattle-rustling, and a number of other conflicts. There is also the increasing violence associated with the dry season movement of cattle by the armed youth of Ayod (Gawaar Nuer), Duk (Dinka), and Uror and Nyirol (Lou Nuer), and in particular those groups that composed the Lou. This situation is further aggravated by the number of small arms possessed by the southern tribes and population.<sup>36</sup> In Sudan, the ongoing conflict in Darfur, as well as conflicts in eastern Sudan, are just some examples.

It is in the context of this volatile situation that the need for the positive engagement of CEWARN in both countries is of paramount importance. However, to what extent are the two countries willing to positively engage CEWARN in their respective conflicts? I argue in this regard that since the establishment of CEWARN, Sudan has adopted a rather cautious approach in dealing with it, while South Sudan has adopted a more open approach.

Based on the CEWARN member states' activity reports, it is obvious that Sudan has not been actively involved in CEWARN activities. Although Khartoum was among the first few countries to ratify the CEWARN Protocol, it took the country quite a long time to fully operationalise CEWARN on the national level. Sudan, for example, did not establish its own CEWERU until 2004. Furthermore, it took another two years for its country coordinator and field monitors to be appointed and its NRI identified. During the 5th Meeting of the CPS, the delegate of Sudan stated that his country was ready to begin work on operationalising the Sudanese side of the Karamoja Cluster.<sup>37</sup> In 2008, the country coordinator of Sudan announced the opening up of four new areas of reporting on the Sudan side of Karamoja: Naita, Narus, Ikotos and Lotukei. Additionally, a middle CEWERU was established in Juba to serve as a link between the national CEWERU and these AoRs.<sup>38</sup> In 2009, the country participated in the preparatory cross-border meeting of the Karamoja Cluster, in preparation for a comprehensive cross-border meeting in the respective communities.<sup>39</sup> It could thus be argued that apart from laying the infrastructure of CEWARN in the form of establishing CEWERUs and appointing the country coordinator and field monitors, the activities of CEWARN in relation to Sudan is extremely disproportionate. However, it should be noted here that after the secession of South Sudan in 2011, the reporting areas mentioned above are geographically located in South Sudan. Consequently, Sudan is no longer involved in the Karamoja Cluster.

It is also worth noting that the negotiations over the CPA between Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) was used as an excuse for the slow response and lack of participation on the part of Sudan, as stated by the country coordinator during the 5th Meeting of the CPS.<sup>40</sup> The same argument was reiterated by the Head of the CEWERU in Sudan during the 4th Meeting of the TCEW.<sup>41</sup>

As for South Sudan, the approach is quite different. The need for South Sudan to become involved directly and actively in CEWARN operations has been emphasised on numerous occasions. Furthermore, South Sudan was the only country that linked early warning to governance. This particular approach was described by a CEWARN Unit staff member as reflecting the most accurate understanding of the work of CEWARN among the member states.<sup>42</sup> In terms of the structural foundations, becoming an independent country only in 2011, South Sudan was the most recent country to join CEWARN and the latest to establish a CEWERU, on 5 May 2012 in Juba. This step was considered by CEWARN's director as an opportunity for the mechanism to play a substantive role in building peace in South Sudan.<sup>43</sup> This unit is expected to serve as 'the highest response structure of the national system as well

as a national node that links South Sudan to CEWARN's regional response structures for cooperation on cross-border conflict issues'.<sup>44</sup> Technically, the five counties that are located in Eastern Equatorial State, where CEWARN has been operating since 2009, are now within the ambit of the South Sudan CEWERU.<sup>45</sup>

## **Possible implications of the new strategy framework on Sudan and South Sudan**

Based on the above analysis of CEWARN and the engagement of Sudan and South Sudan in its activities, it is possible to draw the following conclusions regarding the new strategy framework.

First, the active roles that both Sudan and South Sudan – among other IGAD countries – have played in developing the new strategy demonstrate the existence of political will and national ownership of this strategy. During the consultation process, CEWARN convened national consultations in Khartoum in February 2012. These consultations assembled governmental and non-governmental institutions, including a number of peace non-governmental organisations, parliamentarians, humanitarian aid and disaster-management specialists, environmentalists, conflict analysts, peace workers, and university researchers, among others. Similar processes took place in South Sudan. It is worth noting that during the national consultation processes, the two countries identified a number of themes as matters of priority in preventing conflicts that CEWARN could contribute to addressing during its post-2012 period. Among the themes that both countries agreed on are the issues of borders and boundaries, which could open the door for more involvement from CEWARN, especially in Abyei.<sup>46</sup> Apart from this, Sudan mentioned as priorities: natural resources use and management; conflicts due to pressure from climate change; proliferation of small arms and light weapons; land use and laws governing land; and violence between pastoralist communities. South Sudan mentioned themes such as land ownership disputes; crime; and violence between pastoralist communities.

Another factor that supports the argument of an active role by CEWARN is the political atmosphere created by the secession of South Sudan. Unlike the situation when CEWARN was first established in 2003 – that is, it was faced with a case of contested state power between Khartoum and the SPLM/A in the south<sup>47</sup> – since 2011, the picture is different with the state of South Sudan joining IGAD and CEWARN a few months after gaining its independence. Now it has become possible for CEWARN to work along the Sudan–South Sudan border in the same manner that it is currently working on the other two clusters, without the fear of being accused of interfering in the internal affairs of a member country, that is, Sudan.

However, for the new strategy plan to achieve its potential and work to its full capacity, some important issues have to be dealt with and addressed by the concerned parties.

First and foremost, there should be a serious commitment towards the exchange of information between the concerned parties. It is well known that the extended mandate requires information-sharing on more sensitive issues compared to the old, more limited mandate. Taking into account that control of information is deeply politicised, this could hinder any prospects for the new CEWARN strategic plan.<sup>48</sup> It is worth saying that while the protocol encouraged member states to adjust their relevant national laws regarding information control and exchange in order to accommodate their obligations under the CEWARN protocol, none of the member states is known to have revised its laws regarding the dissemination

of information. This challenge regarding the sharing of information is more serious in the case of conflicts between different parties, such as between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and more relevant to our discussion here, Sudan and South Sudan. In cases of conflict, parties tend not to see the common benefit of sharing information, as issues of sovereignty, political interests and national security tend to precede any other issues.<sup>49</sup>

Second, it is crucial for CEWARN to link good analysis with timely action, a challenge that is faced not only by CEWARN but by almost all early warning systems. Although CEWARN, according to its original mandate, should focus on both early warning and the early response, it has been proved that the implementation has been mainly concerned with the early warning aspect. In other words, the relationship between the system and its response mechanism is complicated and rather distant, which is something CEWARN needs to improve.<sup>50</sup>

Third, the perceptions that both Sudan and South Sudan hold about IGAD as the mother organisation of CEWARN will largely determine its success or failure in dealing with the countries' conflicts. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that Sudan and South Sudan hold distinct views regarding IGAD. South Sudan has always been supportive of an active role played by IGAD in the peace process, even after the signing of the CPA in 2005. Furthermore, in 2009 the SPLM/A began lobbying IGAD to convene a special session to review the status of CPA implementation, with the aim of re-engaging the body that had negotiated the peace agreement and keeping its member states' eyes on the CPA process, including the referendum.<sup>51</sup> Conversely, Sudan and its ruling National Congress Party have long expressed reservations about IGAD's role in Sudan. The perception that has been prominent in Sudanese official circles is that IGAD's powerful members are supportive of the South, and thus Sudan does not necessarily see IGAD as a forum that will secure its interests.<sup>52</sup> Although CEWARN has its own protocol and structure, there is still some proximity between the two bodies and thus any perceptions about IGAD are likely to influence the work of CEWARN. This could explain the different approaches of Sudan and South Sudan in dealing with CEWARN and the levels of their engagement in its activities.

Finally, the issue of insufficient funds could present another hindrance regarding any extended role for CEWARN. Although, as mentioned above, CEWARN secures funds from member states as well as from international donors, its funding capabilities are still limited. Since any successful early warning activities depend on financial and human resources, this lack of funds will necessarily pose constraints on any future expansion in CEWARN's work.

## Conclusion

The legal foundations upon which CEWARN was established have not limited its scope. However, the limited focus on cross-border pastoral conflicts was a tactical choice dictated by numerous factors. Among these was a lack of confidence and trust among the member states, which made them more willing to allow CEWARN to work on this geographically and thematically limited scope that was perceived by the political leadership in these countries as less 'political' and thus less 'sensitive'.

After several years of laying the structural foundation of the mechanism, CEWARN has launched a new strategy framework that is to inform and guide its activities until 2019. Based on the knowledge available about CEWARN and the involvement of Sudan and South Sudan in its activities over the past decade or so, this article provides a reading into the possible implications of the new strategy framework on the conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan.

I have argued that although the strategy plan offers opportunities for more active engagement in the region in general, and Sudan in particular, this optimism should be treated with caution. Furthermore, I have highlighted a number of issues that should be addressed if the new framework is to be fully implemented.

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## Notes

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