

Research on conflict, resolution and prevention within the Sida supported research networks in Africa

African Peace and Conflict Research 1997–2004



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I Introduction

The purpose of this report is to shed light upon recent research on armed conflict, conflict resolution and conflict prevention produced within the context of the African social science networks supported by Sida/SAREC. The networks and institutions include the Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), African Association of Political Science (AAPS) and (up until 2001) Southern Africa Regional Institute for Policy Studies (SARIPS).

The need for an African perspective in peace and conflict research becomes evident when analysing the global pattern of armed conflict. For the period 1989–2003 the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme identified 38 armed conflicts in Africa, which implies that more than half of the countries on the continent have experienced armed conflict during this decade. (UCDP) The statistics convey a picture of a continent experiencing severe turmoil, crisis and instability. Acknowledging this, there is a strong impetus for improving the accessibility of the research from the South that addresses the issues of peace and conflict from within an African context.

Limiting oneself to the period 1997–2004, researchers and practitioners within the above-listed networks have produced a vast range of literature on peace and conflict issues, which will be the focus of this report. The collection includes edited books, research bulletins, conference proceedings, journal articles, research reports and working paper series. Some 100 individual research contributions have been assessed, thus constituting the basis of this report. A general overview of the literature and its themes is provided in section II. On the basis of the available publications the report aims to identify and label the areas of peace and conflict research that is being covered within the context of the social science research networks supported by Sida/SAREC. Section III offers a descriptive analysis of the literature on the basis of a categorization of the material according to which phase of the conflict it sets out to analyse or explain. Here it is fruitful, both from an empirical and theoretical perspective to separate between research dealing with the armed phase of conflict, addressing causes and dynamics, and the research dealing with the resolution and termination of armed conflict,

The report has strongly benefited from useful comments and valuable insights by Thomas Ohlson at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University.

as well as the post conflict phase. It is also useful to make a further distinction to the literature addressing the pre-conflict phase, proposing and analysing mechanisms for conflict prevention.

Section IV makes a qualitative assessment of parts of the literature, focusing on theory, method and data. It furthermore sets out to situate and assess the reviewed literature within the context of the international research agenda on peace and conflict issues. This includes comparing research questions as well as similarities and differences in results and emphasizes between the social science research networks supported by Sida/SAREC and what can be termed the “mainstream” peace and conflict research that has its primary centre of gravity in the North Atlantic sphere. While there is a convergence of issues, the perspective differs between the two research environments. Rather than seeing these differences as a weakness in the African peace and conflict research, these divergences can be interpreted as potentially fruitful lines of interaction between the two traditions, that might in fact function also as useful correctives to the mainstream peace and conflict research. The concluding section offers some analytical summaries and remarks pertaining to the reviewed literature.

II Overview of the Literature

The Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), the African Association of Political Science (AAPS) and the Southern Africa Regional Institute for Policy Studies (SARIPS) are regional research networks and -institutes organising individual scholars and institutions within the field of social sciences in Africa. The networks were established during the 1970s and 80s, with the aim of promoting and facilitating social science among African scholars, strengthening the institutional basis of knowledge production in Africa, advancing collaborative research efforts across the continent and combating the fragmentation of the African research community along scholarly, linguistic or geographical lines. Peace and conflict research is one part of the broad academic domain of the networks. Within this field the networks have, through conferences, workshops, seminars and annuals, functioned as venues for discussion, presentation and publication for African scholars.²

During the last seven-year period the social science research networks supported by Sida /SAREC in Africa have produced an impressive list of publications on issues of peace, stability, security, armed conflict, conflict resolution and conflict prevention. The contributions include edited books, research bulletins, conference proceedings, journal articles, research reports, occasional paper series and working papers. Hence, they vary in form and presentation. The overall majority of the contributions are, however, single case study approaches that provide a descriptive analysis of a specific context of armed conflict, in light of a more general argument. In accordance with the trend in the international research agenda, the empirical references are primarily to intra-state conflicts. This is also reflecting the actual conflict-pattern that has manifested itself on the African continent during the 90s, where only 2 of 38 armed conflicts are of an interstate nature. (UCDP) Most of the reviewed literature focuses on explaining the onset and prevalence of armed conflict, i.e. the causes and dynamics of conflict, rather than dealing with

² A noteworthy example of the efforts to promote a collaborative research environment is the publication of the Peace and Security Databank Project Report in 1999 where SARIPS attempts to identify and create a database of all individuals and institutions working on peace and security issues in Africa. Mandaza, I. (1999). Peace and Security Databank Project Report. Harare, SARIPS of the SAPES Trust Regional Office.

issues of resolution and management. Comparatively little is also done on issues of conflict prevention. Recommendations for the prevention and resolution of conflict are often merely provided in the concluding remarks, as natural extensions of a foregoing argument identifying the causes and dynamics of armed conflict.

Irrespective of which phase of the conflict dynamic that is addressed, there is a convergence in theme across the literature in terms of how it frames the study of conflict. A majority of the contributions are somehow linked to the problem of state making in Africa and the lack of adequate statehood in terms of regulative and coercive capabilities of the African state. The first, most outspoken perspective is the material crisis of the African state, as it is captured in notions of the weak state, state failure, state collapse and various consequences thereof. The crisis can be understood in terms of the erosion of state capacity, collapse of political authority and the rise of ethno-nationalism as alternative structures of protection and power. A second recurring perspective, connected to the above, is that the literature conveys a notion of peace that comprises more than merely the absence of armed conflict. The prospects for peace and stability is closely linked to the prospects for democracy, development and sustainability in the continent. Within this perspective armed conflict is regarded merely as a symptom of a larger, structural problem centring on issues of unequal and inequitable structures of authority, access and accumulation at the local, national and international level. A third, shared perspective in much of the research is a general shift in angle that complements the conventional state centric focus in mainstream literature on peace and conflict issues. Many of the contributions set out to explore alternative structures of authority and interaction, found partly at the local, partly at the regional level. It also considers local and global political, economic and social forces, not solely mediated by the state apparatus. This is quite noteworthy given the near obsession with the unitary nation state seen in mainstream research within international relations and comparative politics, and which also has characterized the attitudes of African state makers and politicians since independence.

An assessment of the research from the networks within a broader intellectual tradition in Africa reveals that the above perspectives are not specific to peace and conflict research. Many of the observations regarding the reviewed literature could hold equally well for larger parts of the African social sciences during the last decades. Studies in politics, economics and security from African research milieus often use one of two approaches when identifying and handling a research problem. One approach is to apply a strong focus on structural factors and broader issues of global injustice, especially related to Africa's colonial history and structures of hierarchy in the international economy. Another approach is a strong emphasize on micro-level structures of empowerment, access and development. Both of these approaches are clearly applied in the reviewed literature on peace and conflict issues.

As pointed out earlier the publications vary in form and presentation. Partly, this reflects a difference in rationale and objectives. A conference proceeding, a presentation of a future research program, an investigating field mission and a journal article has different theoretical, methodologi-

cal and empirical standards, and is written for partly different audiences. Partly, the variation can be traced to differences in the backgrounds of the contributors. Some of the scholars have an extensive academic record, with broad experience from African as well as high-ranking universities in the USA and Europe. Others are in the infancy of their academic career and have had little or no exposure to non-African research institutions. It is furthermore interesting to note the presence of both practitioners and academicians among the contributors. In some of the publications, diplomats, politicians and military leaders are included to complement the picture provided by the academicians. The distinction between the scholarly and the political actors may in fact be somewhat artificial in relation to much of the literature. As is stated in one of the contributions “These are the voices of African scholars, most of whom have been active participants in the struggle for African liberation in both the continent itself and the diaspora.” (Mandaza 1999) Within a constrained, domestic political space the nature of social sciences is, almost by necessity, politicised.

By utilizing scholars that possess first-hand knowledge of the conflict, the publications are able to provide inside accounts of particular conflict dynamics that could otherwise be elusive for the external observer. They may also be more sensitive to the political culture and the more informal structures of authority and knowledge in the society, leading them to phrase other kinds of research questions and suggest alternative mechanisms for solutions.³ It is, however, clear from a large portion of the reviewed literature that there are inherent perils when blurring the distinction between the research community and political actors. This invites criticism that the accounts are biased in favour of one of the parties. It also blurs the distinction between the political argument and the academic analysis, which in a longer perspective may serve to erode the credibility and legitimacy of independent research within these settings. Normative research may serve an important purpose vis-à-vis a domestic audience in environments where the political space is severely constrained. The value-infused rhetoric does, however, inhibit a larger distribution and discussion within the professional research community of otherwise interesting theoretical reflections and empirical observations. In parts of the literature the contribution is lost to a broader international audience because of a biased and normative positioning that may not even be central to the argument itself.

³ This could for example explain the broad attention given to pastoralist-based conflicts in northeastern Africa and to traditional patterns of hierarchy and alliances as conflict resolution mechanisms. See for example Babiker, M., Ed. (2002). *Resource Alienation, Militarisation and Development - Case Studies for East African Drylands*. The East African Drylands Programme. Addis Ababa, Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA).

III Central Issues and Findings

Looking at the period 1997–2004 there is a considerable width in the research issues and areas being covered in the reviewed research on peace and conflict in Africa. The themes span from case-specific studies of child-soldier reintegration programs, the impact of civil war on basic education in Tanzania, and the role of the family in Mozambique's peace construction, to broader issues of the privatisation of security, the link from resource scarcity to militarisation and the democracy/stability tradeoffs in conflict resolution. Below follows an attempt to identify and label the major themes and research issues addressed within the context of the social science research networks supported by Sida/SAREC. By necessity the categorization is not all- comprehensive, but seeks to identify those parts of the literature that somehow can be said to balance or complement the international research discourse. It hence covers the literature that is judged to be the most interesting contributions for the average practitioner or researcher in the field. The most case-specific studies, lacking theoretical relevance or general point of reference, are hence excluded. So are the most vaguely and generally voiced contributions, deficient in terms of contestable claims or empirical applications.

The categorization of the material is done according to which phase of the conflict it sets out to analyse or explain, separating between i) research dealing with the armed phase of conflict, addressing causes and dynamics, ii) research dealing with the resolution and termination of armed conflict, as well as the post conflict phase iii) literature addressing the pre-conflict phase, proposing and analysing mechanisms for conflict prevention. This threefold categorization scheme forms the basis of the descriptive analysis of the literature below.

Several of the publications address more than one research-issue and the issues identified in this report might by themselves be partly overlapping. One publication might both aspire to diagnose the problem and suggest its remedy, i.e. address both causes of conflicts and conflict resolution/prevention mechanisms. In some of these cases the publications are reviewed under more than one issue heading. In general the categorization should merely be read as an attempt to identify and conceptualise the core arguments of the publications.

3.1 The onset, prevalence and dynamics of armed conflict

3.1.1 The crisis of the state in Africa

The most pervasive argument of the reviewed literature is the crisis of the state in Africa and the consequent link to insecurity, instability and armed conflict on the continent. State weakness, understood in terms of an erosion of state capacity, collapse of political authority and fragmentation of societal cohesion, is identified as the single most important denominator for the onset and prevalence of armed conflict in Africa. The practices of the state itself have come to constitute a fundamental source of insecurity in the political, social, economic and ideological realms. As summarized by one of the authors "... the problem of peace and security in Africa is bound up with the nature and character of the modern state [in Africa] and its role in national and international society". (Jinadu 2000) The crisis of the African state is traced along many dimensions in the reviewed literature. For analytical purposes and for the sake of presentation the research on state weakness and conflict onset can be categorized according to issue, into: (i) the lack of vertical legitimacy, (ii) the lack of horizontal legitimacy and (iii) the erosion of state capacity.

The lack of vertical legitimacy concerns the lack of accountability, flexibility and representativity linking regime and constituency, resulting from exclusionary political arrangements and lack of popular democracy.⁴ Writers argue that most African states have yet to succeed in creating a relationship between rulers and ruled that subordinates politics to law, as well as provide legal safeguards for rights and liberties consistent with a sustainable democratic order. To the contrary, parts of the African leadership have become notorious for personalising state authority and paralysing constitutional procedures, making repression and discrimination legitimate means to stay in power. This is done through the implementation of patrimonial systems where state-offices and other privileges are distributed within limited networks in return for loyalty, support and service. The exercise of public authority is utilized to serve the elite and not the population. There is a strong connection between exclusionary political configurations and inequitable structures of access and accumulation. The literature argues that the lack of separation between private and official interests makes the state apparatus a viable source of private accumulation, and exemplifies with cases where the head of state has looted public resources while failing to provide the constituency with basic needs. In this context politics is a zero sum competition for resources and influence, and the literature argues that this explains the intensity in the struggle for political power in several African states, ultimately seen in militarism and the tendency for organized politics to take an armed form. (Nnoli 1998; Ikpe 2000; Mayowa 2001; Ukeje 2001; Bujra 2002; Nhema 2004)

The lack of horizontal legitimacy refers to the lack of societal cohesion, national unity and the lack of a collective consciousness of citizenship experienced by a majority of African states. The conventional argument explaining this dimension of state weakness is the artificiality

⁴ For a thorough discussion of the vertical and horizontal dimension of legitimacy see Holsti, 1996: *The State, War and the State of War*, Cambridge University Press, New York Formulärets nederkant

of African colonial borders. The literature criticizes this argument, stating that all boundaries by necessity are artificial and externally imposed. Instead it looks for the sources of societal polarization in the political configurations and the historical experiences of the African state. The first observation is that the process of restructuring and decay of central authority has implied a strengthening of the structures of native authority in rural areas. These structures determining access and exclusion, existing parallel to the nation-state project, have remained ethnicised throughout the post-colonial period, implying that collective economic and social rights have been distributed according to ethnic, i.e. native, citizenship. Following decades of migration and fusion of groups, this “bifurcated citizenship” now feeds tension and discrimination between indigenous and non-indigenous groups in multi-ethnic African states. (Mustapha 1998; Idowu 1999; Mamdani 1999; Nzongola-Ntalaja 1999; Mamdani 2001; Kefale 2004)

The literature’s other observation aiming to explain the lack of horizontal cohesion does also pertain to political arrangements, though in this case on the macro level of state structures. The argument holds that the sectional dominance of government and the exclusionary configurations of access and influence secure very limited support among the constituency for the idea of national unity. Instead it breeds the alienation of marginalized groups and reinforces the salience of other socio-political variables, such as ethnicity, religion and regionalism. Groups seeking to break structures prolonging the inequality are susceptible for the mobilization and manipulation on the basis of alternative loyalties by entrepreneur elites, pursuing their own political and economic agenda. This stress on the societal fabric and threat to state cohesion is proposed as generators of violent mobilization. (Ogachi 1999; Ikpe 2000; Oyugi 2000)

The third issue characterizing the crisis of the state in Africa, according to the reviewed research, is the erosion of state capacity. It is observed in a process of diminishing administrative capacities and coercive powers, in the erosion of capability for social development and the provision of social goods and the problem defending the territorial sovereignty of the state in porous border areas. This erosion of state capacity serves to de-legitimise the post-colonial state, failing to maintain the security needs of the people and making it incapable of solving the national and social questions confronting it. Hence it is also incapable of dealing with the issues of democracy and development. This political crisis of the state is perceived a reflection of the socio-economic crisis that, according to several observers, in the end must be traced to the external dependence of the state and its incapability of exercising effective control over its domestic resources in the wake of increased global demand, economic liberalisation and structural adjustment programs. (Jinadu 2000; Olufemi 2000; Baregu 2002; Nhema 2004)

These three issues of state weakness collide to create a constrained, but volatile and vulnerable political space where more immediate political forces coincide to precipitate the eruption armed conflict. Examples of more immediate forces mentioned in the literature is youth bulges, unemployment, poverty, elite manipulation of grievances, unequal rates of development, land conflicts etc. The literature conveys an impression

of the post-colonial state as a contested terrain of hegemonic groups, serving predatory group interests and itself being a major part of the problem. The state apparatus is perceived as the core avenue of contention, a major impediment to structural reform and therefore the major obstacle to peace and security in Africa. Within this broad perspective conflict is regarded merely as a symptom of a larger problem: the problematic structure of production and hence power relations in the modern state. On the basis of this it is argued that the possibilities and prospects of peace and security in Africa are inseparable from the possibilities and prospects of democracy and development on the continent. (Jinadu 2000; Bujra 2002).

3.1.2 Ethno nationalism as alternative structure of power and profit

Closely related to the crisis of the state is the manipulation and mobilization of ethnicity as a source of instability and conflict. The link between state weakness and ethnic conflict is widely explored in the reviewed peace and conflict literature, often in terms of how the African state has come to structure inter-ethnic relations in the post-colonial phase through manipulation and a focus on elite accumulation. With the erosion of state capacity and the presence of exclusionary socio-economic and political configurations, several of the publications note the rise of ethno-nationalism, providing alternative structures of power, protection and profit in African countries.

Within the African research agenda, as well as internationally, ethnic nationalism – encouraged by traditional, but somewhat perverted patrimonial structures – has become the dominant frame for interpreting intrastate conflict, hence recognizing ethnic affinity as a powerful force in the motivation and coordination of many rebellions. The research reviewed largely ascribes to what has become the emerging consensus in the mainstream literature regarding the link between ethnicity and armed conflict – the constructivist approach. It recognizes that ethnic identity constitutes a significant and persistent force in inter-group relations, but at the same time rejects the notion that ethnicity is inherently conflictual and that ethnic conflict are “natural”, defying rational explanation. Even in cases where ethnic affinity clearly has come to constitute a powerful force in the motivation and coordination of rebellions, the literature rejects “tribalism”, ethnic antagonism and cultural differences as a cause of conflict. Rather, these armed conflicts are essentially posed as political problems of how elites come to power, maintain access to power and accumulate wealth and status in weak states. (Egwu 1998; Nnoli 1998; Rutake and Gahama 1998; Lumumba-Kasongo 2000; Oyugi 2000)

According to the reviewed literature the critical variable in the link between ethnicity and armed conflict is the character and material conditions of the state. It is pointed out that most countries in the contemporary world that espouses liberal, democratic systems in fact have ethnically based problems over economic and political domination. These do, however, not materialize into violent challenges to statehood, in the way that they do in Africa, because national identity and state centric consciousness in these nation states takes precedence over ethnic affiliation. (Lumumba-Kasongo 2000) As stated in an earlier section in

several African states the idea of the national state does not command loyalty from a majority of the population, as exclusionary political and economic arrangements, often structured along ethnic lines, feed alienation among segments of the population.

The African Political Class has tended to manipulate ethnicity for partisan purposes, with destabilising effects for the society as a whole. Ethno-nationalism has been a discourse of mobilisation and consolidation, used to preserve access to power by those benefiting from present structures of access and utilizing the state apparatus as a mean of acquisition. (Oyugi 2000) Marginalized groups in turn become susceptible to manipulation by elite entrepreneurs, who, themselves excluded, invoke ethnicity as the base of mobilization when trying to find broad-based support for what is really limited, personal interest. The partisan nature of the state, combined with the zero sum nature of politics, hence feeds into factional struggles between the domestic elites, where the manipulation of ethnicity is used for the purpose of exclusion, competition and authoritarianism. (Nnoli 1998; Ikpe 2000; Lumumba-Kasongo 2000; Oyugi 2000)

It is argued that political liberalization and economic reform in the early 1990s has formed the backdrop for the resurgence of ethno-nationalism and the escalation of ethnically based tension on the African continent. Economic reforms programs, benefiting a small elite group, have been implemented in situations where a democratic political system, that can secure participation and accommodation, is not yet put into place. The ethnic hegemony over economic interests within such a situation of political reform raises popular demand for the redefinition of economic rights – often made by appeals to ethnic economic sentiments. This politicisation of ethnicity takes place in the middle of a reform process that also exacerbates inequalities, contributing to the mobilization of the marginalized along ethnic and gender lines. The result is ethnically based, polarized societal groups. The trigger to violence in these situations is proposed either as privileged elites acting defensively to stall reforms, hence provoking mass political violence. Alternatively, newly erupted elite coalitions use the socially excluded as a reserve army to be mobilised in the pursuit of personal interests. The rural and urban poor are manipulated to agitate on an agenda that primarily serve elite interests. In this context emergent ethnic symbolism of the 1990s is regarded primarily as rhetorical rationalization and forms of mobilization for predatory economic or political behaviour. (Ogachi 1999; Lumumba-Kasongo 2000)

The reviewed research primarily frames the phenomenon of ethnic politicisation as a problem of the weak state. Ethnic conflict is explained as a political phenomenon caused by a convergence of the forces of economic austerity, parochial regimes and the salience of ethnicity. In an overall picture Africa's susceptibility to armed conflict and the importance of ethnic markers in demarcating access and privilege in African politics is traced, however, to the historical legacy of the continent. Colonial rule manufactured and manipulated ethnic identity for the purpose of discrimination, exclusion and competition. The politics of "divide and rule" on the basis of ethnic identity functioned as an important part in the process of subjugation of the African constituency and

was institutionalised in the administrative system by the colonial rulers. The colonial state, at the time of independence, hence left a legacy that adversely affected inter-ethnic relations in Africa. It was, however, perpetuated by a post colonial leadership, pursuing sectarian interests and making discrimination and repression legitimate means to maintain access to state power. The subsequent rise in sub-ethnic consciousness infected the socio-economic and political sphere with tension (Nnoli 1998; Oyugi 2000)

3.1.3 Militarisation on the sub-national level

A third distinct observation in the reviewed research is the way the state monopolization of violence is increasingly being challenged by a militarisation of sub-national groups and the proliferation of small arms within African societies. Several of the publications note the rise of new complex forms and variations of force both within and beyond the state during the 1990s, linking the erosion and collapse of the African security infrastructure to problems of governance and development, as well as the international arms economy. Partly this militarisation is proposed as a reflection of state weakness and marginalization of political authority, discussed above, but is also proposed as a cause of intra-state violence that has fed into a detrimental violent dynamic on its own

Paradoxically perhaps, the explanation for the militarisation of sub-national groups and non-state actors is often framed as a problem of the weak state. The militarisation of communal groups is said to be a symptom of an intra-state crisis, which has resulted in a security vacuum that a various number of actors and alliances now seek to fill by the use of violence. The research points to the drying up of external sources of patronage and the questioning of structures of clientelism, nationally and internationally in the post cold war era as an important explanation for emergence of new sources and entrepreneurs of force during the 1990s. The process of political liberalisation, in connection with state weakness is claimed to have encouraged a growing market in security, where private and official actors tend to capitalize on situations of relative anarchy. (Hutchful 1998; Baregu 2002)

The problem of the weak state is that the security needs of the state and the security needs of the population are not necessarily overlapping. This is so partly because governance to a large extent is monopolised by ethnic or ideological oligarchies at the expense of the majority of ordinary citizens, partly because the security of the citizens in fact derives less from military protection than from the satisfaction of basic needs. The issues at stake comprise accountability, flexibility, legitimacy and stability. Within this political context militarisation of sub-national groups is said to reflect a sense of lack of security and a collectively felt fear of the future among the population, following the failure of the state to arbitrate between groups and to commit to upholding their basic security needs. (Hutchful 1998; Nathan 1998; Sundberg 1999; Ukeje 2001; Bujra 2002; Wasara 2002; Wairagu 2004)

The research furthermore points out that there is a detrimental spiral of increased violence built into this process of state decay and proliferation of armed groups. At the point of time when violence has become a pervasive trait of society and the constituency experiences a general

breakdown of law and order, the state in fact loses control of its security functions vis-à-vis its citizens. The citizens then decide to arm themselves to protect their lives and property. The result is a culture of self-arm and self-protection, with increasing levels of insecurity and violence. In such a situation the border between politically induced and communal conflict is thin, and so is the border between armed conflict and the prevalence of banditry. The armed conflicts transform the communal conflicts into militarised campaigns within and beyond state borders. As the hegemony of the state vanishes the security vacuum is left open to manipulation by ethno-nationalists, warlords and political entrepreneurs, privatising and commercialising on the security needs of the population. (Hutchful 1998; Baregu 2002; Wasara 2002; Wairagu 2004)

It is argued that this development has strong implications for the nature of modern wars. The militarisation of societal groups is linked to what is termed “the demilitarisation of wars”. Wars are increasingly waged by a large number of armed forces not trained nor managed by military institutions. Armed civilians do much of the fighting and wars have become “the terror of civilian chaos”. It is motivated by economic opportunities in the absence of a government that can provide its citizenry with security. The result in the low end of the spiral is that civilians, under the leadership of a range of different violent entrepreneurs, take up arms to pursue goals that in reality are more criminal than political, preying upon the weak state environment. Thriving under such conditions of relative anarchy, investing in the perpetuation of conflict are mercenaries, arms-dealers, drug-barons, warlords, money launders and criminal plundering networks. (Baregu 2002; Wairagu 2004)

Returning more specifically to the phenomenon of militarisation of communal groups, little attention has been given especially to the phenomenon of non-state violence. Much of the research specifically addressing the militarisation of communal groups hence is descriptive, aiming to conceptualise the phenomenon in more specific terms. This research makes a distinction between urban violence, which includes ethnic, religious and class-based action and rural conflicts. While the first tends to be intermittent violence, often including attacks on private or public property, the latter tends to be over grazing or cultivating land, cattle or water-points between or within rural groups. (Bujra 2002) The research points to a number of changes in the economic and social structure of society that, in the shadow of state weakness, have fuelled the proliferation of armed groups. Examples are the high rate of urbanisation; high unemployment; high share of youth in population; deterioration of funds for public spending; increased differences between rural rich and poor; increased competition for scarce resources and privatisation of land ownership. Building on these explanations, the issue of militarisation of communal groups is empirically explored on the societal level, especially within the context of pastoralist conflicts in northeast Africa and the Great Lakes region. Pastoralist conflicts over cattle, water points or grazing land, previously resolved through a continuous process of migration and the fission and fusion of groups, now takes the form of small-scale arms races between communal groups. The military leaders can disarm their people by force, but cannot guarantee the security of the people and their livestock, and the people hence chose to instigate

violence, in search for self-preservation. The proliferation of small arms as well as the vicinity to other armed conflicts has implied that inter-group conflicts have taken a more violent and escalatory form. (Ahmed 2001; Storås 2002)

Within this research literature, the militarisation of sub-national groups is strongly linked to the proliferation of small arms and the growth of the international arms economy. This is facilitating rapid escalation and militarisation of conflicts over land and scarce resources that were previously resolved with non-violent means. The proliferation of arms are fuelling the militarisation by creating a destabilizing dynamic of its own. The ready access to weapon has increased the lethality and duration of armed conflict in Africa. (Hutchful 1998; Storås 2002; Wairagu 2004) To break this cycle of militarisation it is necessary to address the structural causes of this crisis. This in turn raises the imperative for the establishment of good governance. Disarmament and security is said to follow good governance, rather than the opposite. (Nathan 1998)

3.1.4 Resource insecurity and armed conflict

Environmental degradation and resource scarcity is explored both as a cause and a consequence of armed conflict within the relevant research networks. Several of the contributions set out to explain the complex link between population, resource insecurity and armed conflict in Africa.

Also the linkage between resource scarcity and the onset of armed conflict is framed within the perspective of the weak state. The classical argument, originally proposed by Homer Dixon, is that a fast growing population worsens resource scarcities, which in turn sharpens intra-state tension and provokes conflict. Obi questions the thesis that rapid population growth, in spite of the stress on natural resources, in itself can be the cause of armed conflict, and argues that the struggle for shrinking resources is more than the function of the population trap. (Obi 1999), (Obi 2000) The alternative explanation proposed is the role of the authoritarian state in Africa in the population-resources-conflict nexus. This holds that resource scarcity rather is defined by the state's monopoly on resources, and the extent to which the state in Africa expropriates resources, control access and distribution, on the expense of a majority of the population. According to this argument the intensity of the resource-induced conflicts is determined, primarily, by the character of the state and its repressive capacity, where the crucial factor is the distribution of resources, power, and the access to the modes of production. (Obi 1999; Obi 2000; Ukeje 2001)

Another aspect of state weakness that is presented as a cause of resource conflicts is the loss of control over the domestic resource-base in the face of the so-called "hegemonic agenda of the global capital" (Obi 1999) The literature explores the environmental costs of the liberalisation of African economies and its linkage with environmental crisis and armed conflict. The argument is that the patterns of extradition, production, allocation and accumulation promoted by the structural adjustment package from the international financial institutions feed into authoritarianism, environmental degradation and resource scarcity. It is also connected to the alliance between the state and foreign companies, on extraction of a resource base solely motivated by elite accumulation. This

in turn sharpens the contradiction arising from the interaction between market economy and the ecology, as the African state experiences diminishing capacity to protect their environment in the wake of increased global demand and control over their resources. Conflicts become inevitable when the threshold of extraction, degradation and repression directly threaten the basis for the population's survival. (Obi 2000; Ukeje 2001; Bujra 2002)

It is also noted in the contributions how resource insecurity and armed conflict feed upon each other in a circular way. (Obi 2000; Doornbos 2001; Salih, Dietz et al. 2001) In this broader perspective, armed conflict is seen as major constraint on the implementation of sustainable development. Participation in war is often a survivalist strategy, following competition over land and resource scarcity. The result is, however, often the reverse, as conflict only feeds further erosion and intensified competition over resources due to displacement, restricted access to resources, loss of life and livestock etc. The research hence underlines the importance of securing a stable resource base in the post conflict context as a precondition for sustainable peace. (Doornbos 2001; Rugumamu 2004)

Much of the research addresses the issue of resource insecurity and conflict on the micro-level of analysis, exploring the causal linkage from resource competition to the eruption of armed conflicts within pastoralist societies. (Ahmed 2001; Gebre 2001; Kassa 2001; Salih, Dietz et al. 2001; Babiker 2002; Otim 2002; Storås 2002). In these studies, dealing primarily with eastern and southern Africa, land is identified as a significant factor in the eruption of armed conflicts between and within societal groups. On this level it is the land policies and development programmes of the governments, biased towards large scale, mechanised farming and against the pastoralist groups, that is claimed to be the major cause of reduction in the resource base. Another important empirical application is the resource-induced conflicts relating to oil-extraction in the Niger Delta. The causes of a resurgence of violence are also here identified as land scarcity and environmental degradation, in combination with discontent over the disparate distribution of revenues from the oil industry. Decades of oil production in the Niger Delta have only accentuated the impoverishment of the inhabitants. (Obi 1999; Ukeje 2001) A critical observation in all of these cases is how the resource base under the state monopolization of authority and control, has become extremely vulnerable to appropriation from outside, and encroachment by foreign actors has functioned to accelerate the loss of control over land by local groups. This has brought about undesirable transformation of land use with increased competition for scarce resources, encouraging the involvement of the societal group in armed conflict around the use and management of resources, as they are struggling to protect their means of subsistence. (Obi 1999; Gebre 2001; Kassa 2001; Ukeje 2001)

3.1.5 Globalisation critique

There is a strong critical voice running through parts of the literature that is directed against forces operating in the global political economy. The globalisation and liberalisation of the world economy is, by some of

the writers, referred to as a continuation of the forces of imperialism and hegemony that colonised and subjugated the African continent at the turn of the last century. (Yengo 2002; Nabudere 2004) Globalisation is argued to be the new form of imperial domination, operated through financial and monetary hegemony, through scientific and technological domination, monopoly of natural resources and energy and through the display of military supremacy by the West. New structures of suppression are created by debt mechanisms, structural adjustment plans and pacts of military allegiance. This argument encompasses a historical reference, where the present crisis of Africa is argued to be the culmination of the process of decay, decomposition and crisis of the European economic and political order that was imposed by Europe on Africa. It is explained as a continuation of the process of dispossession and disempowerment and a crisis of the post-colonial state, which is creating new conditions for a re-colonisation of the African continent by western banking and industrial corporations. (Tandon 1999; Yengo 2002; Nabudere 2004)

In its more moderate phrasing this argument holds that the state in Africa is experiencing diminishing capacity to protect its domestic environment in the wake of increased global demand and control of their resources, following the liberalisation of the world economy and externally imposed structural adjustment packages. Unequal or asymmetrical exchange relations between the rich industrialised countries of the West and the African countries perpetuate and exacerbate global economic inequality. Globalisation is said to prolong structurally induced and institutionalised inequalities and the existence of historically marginalized groups within the African state. Economic decline, externally induced market reforms and foreign appropriation of resources, have even contributed to making the inter-group tensions more pronounced, as it accentuate the impoverishment of already marginalized groups. According to some of the writers the crisis of the state in Africa; its internal failings, repressive character and lack of capacity derives to a large extent from its dependence on external factors and forces. (Egwu 1998; Obi 1999; Abul-Enein 2000; Jinadu 2000; Obi 2000; Olufemi 2000; Nhema 2004)

The concrete link to violence within this process is left somehow unaccounted for, or at least described in very general terms in a large portion of this research. Insecurity and violence appear as the outcome of the process of social differentiation, marginalization and order of inequality generated by economic globalisation, which are in turn nurtured through market generalisations, budget restrictions, free enterprise or control of dominated economies. This has led to unprecedented forms of warfare in the modern form of barbarity: mercenaries, mafia networks and inter-state crime, involving African dictatorial regimes and western elites.(Yengo 2002)

The argument is empirically applied to the conflict complex in the Great Lakes Region – most specifically to the war in Congo. It is argued that much of what is happening there is a continuation of the process of colonization and dispossession of the resources of Congo by foreign interests in collusion with domestic forces, where the real motivations are the resources, especially minerals. In contrast to previous periods these actors have been African in collaboration with foreign beneficiaries,

working with the forces of the global economy. The war is seen as a part of the economic globalisation process, where international financial and industrial conglomerates and financial institutions play an important role in the war. (Tandon 1999; Baregu 2002; Yengo 2002; Nabudere 2004)

3.2 Conflict management and conflict resolution

3.2.1 The broad approach to conflict management

When addressing conflict resolution the reviewed literature focus less on issues immediate to the process of peace making and peace building, such as the termination of violence, regulations of the incompatibility, intra/ inter party dynamics or the negotiation process – all of which are important issues in the mainstream literature. Rather the emphasis is on addressing the underlying, structural causes of conflict and creating sustainable peace. The notion of peace and stability conveyed in this literature hence comprises more than merely the absence of armed conflict. It also includes human security implying the satisfaction of basic needs, equity and just allocation of resources, as well as equal access to structures of power and production. As stated by Jinadu “the possibilities and prospects of peace and security in Africa are inseparable from the possibilities and prospects of democracy and development in Africa”.(Jinadu 2000) According to this vision the realisation of peace hinges upon the structural transformation of the African state, including cultural reorientation and the implementation of participatory, power-sharing democracy, but also on the restructuring of the international society, on the basis of social justice and equity, income redistribution and, equality, reciprocity and recognition. (Jinadu 2000)

When applying this broad perspective to security and stability it is impossible to avoid addressing the problem of state weakness as an impediment for creating sustainable peace. Several publications go to great efforts diagnosing the problem of state crisis and go on to provide recommendations for its rectification. The strongest imperative in the conflict resolution literature is hence the need for a reorganisation and reconstitution of the state in Africa. First and foremost this builds on the recognition that social instability and armed conflicts in Africa are mainly due to exclusionary political arrangements that do not guarantee basic freedoms, accountability of leaders, nor encourage participatory democracy. The conventional argument has been that peacemaking precede democratic reforms, as stability and peacemaking is held to be the *sin qua non* of democracy. Several of the writers, however, reverse this argument to assert that democracy and development is a precondition for durable peace. Most seem to agree that the relationship between democracy and peace are mutually reciprocal, and hence cannot be traded against each other. It is not possible to build sustainable peace by undermining principles of participation, openness and accountability. (Jinadu 2000; Makoa 2004; Nhema 2004)

Among those addressing the issue it seems to be consensual that the theory and practice of democracy, incorporating the provision of basic needs, popular participation, proper representation, accountability of the leadership and respect for human rights, is the path when seeking solution to the conflicts in Africa. Also the researchers addressing more specifically problems of ethnic conflict agree on this view. Looking at the

central role of the state in the dynamics of ethnicity, they argue that the manipulation of ethnicity for partisan purposes only can be solved by transforming the exclusionary political configurations of the African state. The prescription for conflict resolution and prevention is hence to democratise ethnicity, through the implementation of power sharing built on the proportionality between groups. In spite of espousing a democratic ideal, several do reject the application of a global rigid democratic framework and point to the need for sensitivity to the distinctive societal, cultural and political characteristics of the society in the transition to democracy. They also criticise the individualistic assumption of liberal democracy, and emphasize the importance of building democracy from below. (Obi 1999; Abul-Enein 2000; Jinadu 2000; Lumumba-Kasongo 2000; Apollos 2001; Doornbos 2001; Bujra 2002; Nhema 2004)

There is also a strong material dimension to the argument for a restructuring of the African state, building on the “symbiotic relationship between peace and development”. (Nhema 2004) On the domestic level the imperative is raised for a reorganisation of the patterns of ownership, redistribution of income and open the structures of access and accumulation to secure basic human needs and a just distribution of the country’s resources. (Jinadu 2000; Olufemi 2000; Nhema 2004) The literature also rises a parallel imperative pertaining to the structures of the global economy. The argument is that the socio-economic crisis of the state in Africa to a large extent is a function of its political and economical marginalization in the international community. The literature hence advocates equitable terms of trade, the channelling of resource surplus back into the domestic economy and a global redistribution of income as a precondition for attaining sustainable peace. (Jinadu 2000; Lumumba-Kasongo 2000; Obi 2000; Yengo 2002; Nabudere 2004)

Paradoxically, the solution to state weakness is, in several of the publications, framed in terms of a departure from the power locus of the central state to other levels of authority and interaction. The change of perspective can be observed “downwards” in the focus on the structures of native authority existing parallel to the central state apparatus, and “upwards” in the reference to the regional level of state interaction. The recommendation points in direction to a reorganisation of political space and a diffusion of power, through the consolidation of authority on the communal level and the strengthening of regional networks of cooperation at the inter-state level. African elites are encouraged to transcend the nation state project and revive the regional approach to economic cooperation, security and trade to strengthen the state in Africa. (Hutchful 1998; Olufemi 2000; Apollos 2001; Nabudere 2004)

3.2.2 Micro and macro mechanisms of conflict resolution

There is a clear parallel argument in the literature, complementing the above focus on deep structures, that more specifically, both in terms of theory and empirical application, addresses the experiences of conflict resolution at the continent. This research to a large extent substantiates the prevailing view that the attempts to deal with conflict in Africa are not yielding significant results. It corroborates the overall impression that the state in Africa has a weak record in terms of conflict resolution efforts. According to one of the authors most African countries today

lack any mechanisms for resolving politically instigated conflict except through the use of military force. (Bujra 2002) At the same time, and on a more optimistic note, several of the publications observe a revival of the African initiative in peace making after the end of the cold war. They note the formation of a new, African centred geo—political alliance, and the growth of a new regionalism seen among other things in a more serious interest in regional security mechanisms. They also note a growing acceptance for diplomatic and military intervention ahead and during conflict to contain its spread. (Hutchful 1998; Bujra 2002; Okoth 2004) It is this gap between the mixed record of African attempts at conflict management and the historically new prospects for a concerted African effort in dealing with issues of stability that the literature on conflict resolution attempts to address.

The literature clearly links the African predicament in conflict management to the character of the African state, indicating that this explains while similar strategies as those applied internationally fail to show the same encouraging record in the African context. One example that is reviewed in the literature is the case of federalist rule in Ethiopia. Federalism attempts to fulfil demand for ethnic autonomy and self-determination in the ethno-linguistic diverse state and reduce ethnic conflicts. In the case of Ethiopia federalism has turned out anti-liberal and anti-majority as only a few of the states actually have a majority of the ethnic group in which federal self rule is designated. Furthermore as a conflict management mechanism it is not adapted to the actual conflicts that take place, such as the conflict between regional majorities and settler minorities. According to the writer the politico-administrative efforts at conflict management remain characterized by the hegemonic and centralizing tendencies of the political centre in Ethiopia. In the face of emerging conflicts in the 90s the political organs have been slow in their response, and the instruments for conflict management have remained ad-hoc, disparate and reactive. (Kefale 2004)

Also conflict resolution efforts at the regional level have come to mirror fundamental problems characterizing the states that initiated them. One of the publications review the conflict resolution mechanism from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) established in 1992, to deal with the twin issues of peace and development. The SADC organ is strongly criticized for its exclusive use of track-one diplomacy that is solely government sponsored. It is not amendable to the control of national parliaments, neither open for the participation of civil society or oppositional parties. The anti-democratic nature of the SADC member states also makes it difficult to argue that the heads of state are exercising sovereignty and democracy on behalf of their people. The writer argues that the structural position of the organ and the way it operates in fact is the antidote to democratic development in Africa and opposite to the *raison d'être* of its mandate of promoting peace and stability. It works from the assumption that the security needs of the state and of the citizens are congruent, acting as if the state cannot fan political conflict. This is claimed to be a major flaw within a political context where the state in fact in many cases poses the largest threat to the human security of its citizenry. According to the writer the SADC organ functions merely to suppress not manage armed conflicts. (Makoa 2004)

There is a clear pattern in the reviewed conflict resolution literature to redirect the focus away from the central state authority to other levels of political society when proposing effective mechanisms for conflict management. Partly the focus is redirected downwards to micro level structures of communal based authority, partly it is redirected upwards to regional security arrangements and the need for concerted efforts in conflict management. Several publications argue in favour of the utility, strengthening and consolidation of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve local tension and promote stability at the micro level. These publications emphasise the micro level foundation for sustainable peace as promoting stability and harmony at the local level. They propagate to revert to a system where these parallel structures of native authority and more informal arrangements of societal order regain some of their importance in the judicial and political process of the state. One of the publications is written within the empirical context of Ghana and explores mediation by local indigenous parties linked to the traditional system of chieftdom, discussing how the institution of chieftaincy can be remodelled to satisfy new needs in conflict management. (Oquaye 2000) Another publication explores various forms of societal organization within pastoralist communities in northeast Africa. These are institutions and alliances developed in order to maintain security and harmony in competition for scarce resources, and have been used both for aggression and for defence among the pastoralists. They are such viable and important societal institutions, hence, efforts to build peace and security in the region needs to acknowledge them. (Otim 2002)⁵

The recommendation that traditional authorities must regain some of their importance in the judicial and political process of the state is first of all proposed as a necessity, as the writers argue that it would have grave consequences to undermine these parallel structures of authority. Secondly, it is argued that the antidote to militarism should be found and encouraged within the context where militarism first manifested itself. On a more practical level it is argued that local, indigenous parties have the advantage that management does not seem intrusive. They enhance consensus building, have more legitimacy within the local community, and are also more sensitive to local needs. It is argued that when peace initiatives come from the local civil society it contributes to a civic culture of consultation and persuasion rather than imposition. (Oquaye 2000; Mamdami 2001; Otim 2002)

On the other hand there is a strong focus in the literature on the need for regional initiatives for containing and managing armed conflict, transcending the political reach of the individual state. To a large extent the calls for regional cooperation is phrased as a response to the acknowledgement that as the actors and issues feeding armed conflict cross international borders – so should also the efforts to control them. Several of the publications trace the causes of war within regional settings,

⁵ Further examples of publications that explore conflict management efforts at the micro level are Fombad, C. M. (2004). *Prospects for Peace Building through Truth Commissions in Africa. The Quest for Peace in Africa: Transformations, Democracy and Public Policy*. A. G. Nhema. Addis Ababa, International Books with OSSREA.

Another publication exploring micro level efforts at building sustainable peace is the attempt to identify "best practises" in child soldier rehabilitation and reintegration by Lakeberg Dridi, B. A. (2004). *Child-Soldier Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs: Effective Antidotes to War. The Quest for Peace in Africa: Transformations, Democracy and Public Policy*. A. G. Nhema. Addis Ababa, International Books with OSSREA.

observing regional patterns of instability, cross-border incompatibilities and external linkages. (Baregu 1998; Baregu 2002) Some of the publications examine the policy of exporting armed rebellion outside its own borders in regional settings where societies are ethnically fragmented and political and economic communities are weak. (Bangura 1999; Mamdani 2001) Another specific issue where the literature advocates international and regional concerted efforts is when it comes to the proliferation of small arms. (Storås 2002) The impact of this acknowledgement for conflict resolution is an increased focus on the external linkages of armed conflict and hence refusal of the static approach to intra state conflict where conflict parties are defined by the reach of the territorial borders of the state.

The call for a strengthening in regional mechanisms of security is accompanied by a revival of the African initiative in peace making, with African leaders working through the UN and other organizations as well as launching independent initiatives. The literature notes the formation of new Africa centred, geo-political alliances and a new regionalism demonstrated in the revival of a regional approach to trade and issues of economic cooperation as well as a much more serious interest in mechanisms of regional security. (Hutchful 1998; Okoth 2004) It is argued that this also is the only way forward, addressing the increased pressure on the state in Africa both from domestic and global forces. Several writers propagate the consolidation of the African Union project to develop and implement a regional strategy of conflict resolution. (Bujra 2002; Nabudere 2004)

One might say that the recommendations for reorganising the political space in the region hence comprises two processes, complementing each other. One political process should be geared towards opening up the territorial space from below and strengthen civil society, communal based structures of authority and grassroots movements. The other process goes towards the strengthening and consolidation of regional mechanisms for coordinating security, political and economic development in the region

3.2.3 The material aspects of conflict resolution

A prominent perspective in the front of the mainstream peace and conflict research during the last years has been the economic account that places economic incentives at the core of the explanation for the prevalence of armed conflict. Within the context of conflict resolution the reviewed literature does also address the issue of economic incentives in war and frames them as a main impediment for reaching negotiated peace, as it implies that there are economic stakeholders in the continuation of conflict.

The argument starts with the observation that the process of state collapse in Africa has created a security vacuum that a number of private and official “entrepreneurs of violence” have sought to manipulate and capitalize on for personal gain. The zero sum character of African politics and the accumulation of revenue within fragile patrimonial systems of governance feed the intensity of this struggle for dominance as the security infrastructure of the state collapses. The privatisation and commercialisations of security has also been fuelled by the proliferation

of small arms. The result is a geopolitical space structured by a plethora of new agents of violence: warlords, who link violence, territorial acquisition and business, private security entrepreneurs, autocratic statesmen brought into power by warfare, wandering armies comprised by armed forces no longer under state control, and ethnic entrepreneurs. In association with global conglomerates, criminal networks and domestic and international financial elites, the above actors form new alliances and struggles that, according to the writers, to a large extent is motivated by a purely economic agenda. (Hutchful 1998; Bujra 2002) The writers argue that several of the pernicious conflicts on the continent are increasingly linked with the struggle over valuable mineral resources, rather than with a political agenda. The literature explores the economic interests fuelling armed conflict, demonstrating how conflict parties in fact become stakeholders in the continuation of war as natural resources and capital is colonised and accumulated through the use of force. (Hutchful 1998; Yengo 2002; Nabudere 2004)

The imperative for conflict resolution is to acknowledge that contemporary war to some extent is a criminal enterprise, where economic and political agendas blend. Agents of conflict transformation hence have to distinguish the “stakeholders” in the conflict. Instead of assuming that all parties to various degrees are committed to peacemaking, they have to recognize that there are parties that actually benefit from the alternative structures of power, profit and security manifested during war, and that the commitment to peace is a function of the political and economic interests at stake. (Baregu 2002) Another important lesson, drawn from the above observations, is that the conflict parties are not found within the country of conflict origin. Predatory actors are not limited solely to the territorial borders of the state. On the contrary there are a number of external linkages from a war economy to forces in the international arms economy, drug cartels, global conglomerates in trade and finance as well as entrepreneurs in violence from neighbouring territories. These linkages serve to prolong the conflict, by creating domestic stakeholders in the continuation of armed conflict and complex alliances obscuring the negotiation process. (Baregu 2002)

There is however an additional, radically different, material dimension that is emphasized in the conflict resolution literature from the research networks. As pointed out above, the commitment to peace is largely a function of the interests at stake – also in the positive sense. (Baregu 2002) Several of the publications underline the importance of giving the society as well as the parties to the conflict incentives to prefer peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. There is hence a need to transform the socio-economic setting to facilitate the proliferation of peace. This includes issues of equity and access to jobs, income, asset and social service; it includes redistributive efforts and affirmative action for economically marginalized groups. The literature furthermore points to the importance of maintaining the productivity of the natural resource base in the post conflict phase; to include the provision of financial redress in the workings of truth commissions; and instigate land reforms. (Lumumba-Kasongo 2000; Apollos 2001; Doornbos 2001; Rugumamu 2004)

3.3 Conflict Prevention

3.3.1 Broad approach to conflict prevention

The issues of how to prevent armed conflict receive relatively little attention in the literature, and few of the publications deals with mechanisms of direct prevention that prevent a conflict in its early phase from further escalation. One explanation for this fact could be that in much of the African peace and conflict literature conflict is regarded as the current state of affairs. As previously discussed conflict is to a large extent perceived as merely a symptom of a larger structural problem of national and global patterns of injustice and exclusion. This perspective implies that the emergence of organized violence is treated as less of a critical watershed than it is in the mainstream peace and conflict research literature. The consequence for the literature on conflict prevention is that most of it addresses issues of structural prevention, such as poverty, development and democratisation. It hence comes close to the literature addressing the causes of war, where recommendations for conflict prevention are somehow deduced from the concluding remarks.

It is symptomatic that one of the more comprehensive treatments of the issues of conflict prevention emphasise the need of long term policies, seeking to prevent the emergence of conditions that give rise to conflict. The suggestions for strategies of conflict prevention includes first the revival of the project of nation building as a long term plan for developing consciousness of national unity, primarily through the educational system. The second recommendation is the development of the political system along lines of participatory democracy, power sharing, civilian control of the military, support to civil society and the kind of multi level structures of authority and legitimacy discussed earlier. Thirdly, conflict prevention should include strategies of economic development, incorporating a free market economy combined with affirmative action programs. (Bujra 2002)

The broad approach to conflict prevention is also illustrated by other publications, advocating early accommodation and the management of ethnic mobilisation. It is necessary to accommodate the challenging opposition by opening up channels of communication and initiate dialogue to prevent the escalation of armed conflict. It is also recommended that more groups are granted autonomy and that the democratic experiences of African states should be based on consociational or power sharing democracy and ethnic federalism. (Abul-Enein 2000)

3.3.2 African initiatives in conflict prevention reviewed

One interesting African initiative in conflict prevention that is given a comprehensive review in the literature is the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), which was endorsed by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in 2002. (Apuuli 2004) The aim of the mechanism is to detect conflicts in an early phase, as well as create strategies for containing and settling low intensity conflicts that have already broken out. Based on what is judged to be the strengths of the mechanism it is possible to say something in general about what is perceived in this literature to be good efforts in conflict prevention. First of all the writer underlines the important role given to non-state actors,

such as NGOs, civil society and humanitarian organisations in the early warning response. It is argued that the non-state actors, operating at the societal level, increases access to the parties in conflict and the flow of information about them, hence improving the comprehensiveness of the response. He also notes the role of academicians, perceived as a neutral front, as source, analyser and end user of information. Another positive dimension noted in the mechanism is the utilization and reliance also on already established mechanisms on the micro level. (Apuuli 2004)

While the theoretical framework of the mechanism is good, the literature also identifies a number of frauds and ambiguities at the level of practical application. The most important weakness is that the broad mandate of the protocol is too broad, involving multiple actors in multiple sectors, does not correspond to the limited amount of resources actually available to be channelled into conflict prevention efforts. As a political initiative it is argued to be somewhat futile, as the problem up until today not has been the lack of conflict prevention efforts, but rather the lack of political will to act on early warning signals detected by such mechanisms. The IGAD protocol does not have any enforcement mechanisms and the member states are not obliged to act on early warning signals. The lack of political will at the level of heads of member state implies that early warning signals are not followed by effective preventive measures. (Apuuli 2004)

IV General Assessment

4.1 The research triangle: the relationship between theory, method and data

In the preceding section the reviewed research has been categorized according to research issues and findings. Priority has been given to this dimension, as it constitutes the most evident strength of the reviewed literature in relation to mainstream peace and conflict research. A comprehensive review of the literature does, however, warrant some comments on the relationship between the claims, the empirical evidence to support them and the methodology employed. This section will hence provide some general comments on the publications, structured along the research triangle, in terms of theory, method and data.

In general the African peace and conflict research, as represented in this report, is strong in terms of its substantive theses and contestable claims. It challenges and complements conventional knowledge in the field. This aspect could, however, be made even more outspoken with a clearer and more explicit formulation of the publications' individual contribution in relation to previous theory. To some extent the reviewed African peace and conflict research shows a clearer legacy from critical, Marxist theory than what is the case in mainstream peace and conflict research. First and foremost this is seen in the analysis of the forces of the global political economy and the external relations of the African state. In these cases the research conveys an impression of a certain bias in terms of influences from critical theory and normative language. The consequence is that the line between political contentions and the more detached, and unbiased academic argument becomes blurred. This might inhibit a broader distribution of these publications within the academic community, and the contribution is lost to a broader international audience because of a biased and normative positioning that may not even be central to the argument itself.

One might expect that apart from novel theoretical perspectives, the potential strength of African peace and conflict research would lie in a comprehensive and insightful empirical application. To some extent this expectation is not completely fulfilled. When assessed jointly, the publications are relatively weak in terms of systematically providing empirical evidence to substantiate its claims. Several of the publications are characterized by sporadic empirical applications, where references, if given, are

provided merely as illustrations, not serving to substantiate specific claims. The literature is, however, diverse and do on the other hand contain comprehensive single case studies, going deep into the substance matter and providing invaluable inside account from African conflicts not easily accessible to the external observer. This is especially the case in literature addressing communal conflict within pastoralist communities and scarcity-infused conflicts at the micro level. Example of such valuable reading include the journal articles “Resources, Population and Conflicts – Two Case studies” by Cyril Obi and “Youths, Violence and the Collapse of Public Order in the Niger Delta” by Charles Ukeje. (Obi 1999; Ukeje 2001)

Regarding empirical applications it is furthermore interesting to note the exclusionary focus on Africa, and within the continent the strong gravity within certain countries. Apart from DR Congo, the empirical application centres to a large extent on domestic political life in Kenya and Nigeria. The two latter are also known to be the “academic great powers” of the continent, but are however, not the cases of intensive violent conflict most utilized and explored in the mainstream peace and conflict literature.

In terms of method the publications are dominated by single case study approaches. In some of them the form of presentation comes close to that of the anthropological narrative, lacking any disciplining disposition. In other publications the case studies are well structured and systematic, fulfilling high standards of academic professionalism. A majority of the contributions in the edited volume “The Quest for Peace in Africa” falls within this latter category. (Nhema 2004) The methodological approaches are restricted. The literature does not consist of any systematic qualitative cross case study, nor any statistical study trying to substantiate claims of general patterns across the African continent. In the spirit of advocating methodological pluralism and the benefit of combining several different methods of inquiry one might argue that the research would benefit, especially in terms of empirical applications, to more strongly demonstrate its methodological consciousness.

With this being said certain weaknesses in terms of methodology and data should not inhibit that the research reach out to a broader professional audience. Standards of methodology and empirical evidence are matters of contention also at the front of the international research agenda. As long as the publications do not claim applicability and generalizability beyond the scope of their methodological and empirical point of reference, the problems with method and data should be seen as minor in relation to the contributions and complements they constitute for the mainstream peace and conflict research.

4.2 The findings in relation to the mainstream discourse

Comparing the African research on conflict onset, resolution and prevention, as it is represented in this report, with the mainstream peace and conflict research, it is especially interesting to note the convergence in issues. Thematically there is a clear correspondence in the explored causes of war, the proposed dilemmas of conflict management and the imperative raised for conflict prevention between the two discourses.

What sets them apart is first and foremost the applied perspective when addressing these issues. The mainstream research is mainly concerned with analysing the immediate dynamics of armed mobilization, violent dynamics and periods of de-escalation. It furthermore seeks to explain these processes in terms of conjunctures of a more transitory and instant kind.⁶ The African peace and conflict research, reviewed in this report has a clearer focus on structural, embedded conditions, trying to explain not so much the close dynamics of war, but rather its prevalence, resolution and prevention. The literature focus on enduring conditions enabling armed conflicts to engulf and become “normal politics” in these states. Key issues are poverty, lack of democracy, under-development and dependence – on the local, national and international level. Typically for this perspective, war is treated merely as a symptom of a larger problem. It is explained, not so much as a convergence of short term political factors, rather as a structural, historically rooted crisis – embedded in the patterns of unequal access and unequal distribution. This perspective implies that the emergence of organized violence is treated as less of a critical watershed for African society than it is in the mainstream peace and conflict research literature. The view that militarisation has become ordinary politics is conveyed by a number of contributions. For an especially valuable introduction to the security predicament of the African state see Eboe Hutchful’s introduction to a special edited number of the *African Journal of Political Science* addressing these issues. (Hutchful 1998)

North Atlantic peace and conflict research tends, at least operationally, to equate the absence of armed conflict with peace. In the African research reviewed here the structural framing of issues of war and insecurity is mirrored in a correspondent perception of issues of peace and stability as comprising more than just the absence of armed conflict. The prospects for peace on the African continent are inseparably linked to the prospects and possibilities for democracy and development. According to one of the writers peace is a “process which institutionalises social (broadly understood to include the economic and political) and cultural (including psychological) harmony, with justice defined as the underlying principle of societal organisation and or resource allocation and distribution in society”. Peace is “built in parts” through removing obstacles to collective self-development and self-actualisation. (Jinadu 2000)

The broad, inclusive approach to issues of war and peace might have the implication that the literature, especially in terms of policy recommendations, appears to be less substantial and lacking in politico-political significance compared to research from the North. When compared to the mainstream research, the African publications are apparently partly trapped in very general and idealistic prescriptions for reforming state structures and patterns of global dominance. On the other hand one might argue that the African peace and conflict literature to a larger degree manages to capture the core issues explaining turmoil

⁶ In terms of causes of war proximate causes mentioned in the mainstream literature are for example processes of political transition, availability of lootable resources and cross border exportation of rebellion. In relation to conflict management examples of proximate factors are intra- or inter-party dynamics, exclusion from peace negotiations, economic incentives for signatories to a treaty and military hurting stalemates.

and violence at the continent. Perhaps mainstream peace and conflict research warrants more criticism for wearing blinkers, when failing to address difficult issues of poverty and global injustice.

4.3 Imperatives for mutually beneficial paths of interaction

One should be careful to not immediately denounce the divergence in perspective from the mainstream peace and conflict research as weaknesses in the African research discourse. Rather the differences can be interpreted as potentially prosperous lines of interaction between the two communities, where the novel perspectives of African research might come to function as useful correctives to the mainstream peace and conflict research. In this section the strengths of the African perspective identified in this report is rephrased as three imperatives that can serve as possible correctives to the mainstream peace and conflict research.

The first imperative is inclusiveness when addressing issues of peace and security. By equating peace merely with the absence of armed conflict one might not only come to overlook important societal aspects of both state making and peace building within an African context. One might also come to trade crucial issues of accountability, justice and equality against a short-term goal of suppressing political violence. If peace is comprehended as a process that institutionalises social, economic and political and cultural harmony, then it is not clear that peacemaking precedes democracy or development. The perspective on armed conflict as merely a symptom of larger structural problems of inequality and exclusion should hence form the basis for a more sensitive approach when addressing issues of conflict management in the African context.

The second imperative is to approach the issues of conflict onset, conflict resolution and conflict management with a focus on deep structures of authority, access and accumulation as forming the preconditions for sustainable peace. While a pragmatic and short sighted stand to issues of conflict resolution and conflict prevention might produce immediate and substantial policy recommendations, this perspective needs to be complemented by a broader perspective seeking to accomplish structural changes and transformation at the national and international level as necessary conditions for democracy, development and hence enduring peace in Africa.

The third imperative, inferred from the reviewed literature is to complement the state centric focus in present peace and conflict research by exploring causes and solutions at other levels of analysis. First of all one might argue that non-African research put too much emphasis on the central authority of the state compared to its actual role in political life in African societies. As illustrated by the reviewed literature, several conflicts take place outside the state apparatus, and these might more properly be explained in terms of structures of native authority or patterns of exclusion and integration in political communities below the state level. The near “obsession” with the integrative needs of the nation state in much mainstream peace and conflict research can be seen as a failure to analyse political violence in Africa within the actual context of its origin. Rather it considers the problem of the African state, not in terms of its own history and context, but by presuming that African

states are imitating the European state and its experiences with consolidating efficient statehood. (Mamdani 2001) Secondly one might argue that a shift in level of analysis when studying conflict resolution and prevention, not only better captures the dynamics surrounding armed conflict. Furthermore, the redirection of attention to alternative levels of political organisation serves as a fruitful survivalist strategy acknowledging the crisis of the African state in peace and conflict research. More attention to structures of political authority, nurturing new forms of interaction between local, provincial, state and regional levels, comes across as a distinct corrective in the reviewed research.

V Concluding Remarks

There are many parallels between the mainstream peace and conflict research and research produced in the South, as it is presented in the reviewed literature. This is especially striking in the identification of the partisan, undemocratic state as a primary source of contention and instability in third world society. However, whereas Northern research seeks to channel peacemaking efforts into the strengthening and restructuring of the existing structures of authority, African research proposes two important correctives to this approach. First, the reviewed research emphasizes the need of first addressing the structural causes feeding and prolonging state weakness, such as poverty, unequal access and external dependence. Secondly, African research points to the necessity of exploring alternative levels of political authority and legitimacy at the local, as well as the regional level. This twofold strategy is argued to be the superior way of enhancing both human and national security in a longer perspective.

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