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The Role of Decentralisation on Peace Making and Conflict

A literature review

NIBR

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Preface

The literature review presented here constitutes the basis for a review paper titled 'Decentralisation, Peace Making and Conflict Management' commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in December 2005. This literature review shares the theoretical argument of that paper. However, more literature is examined and more details are presented in the present document. This document also tries to develop a clear, and hopefully new and fruitful, argument.

The project team has consisted of Einar Braathen (project leader), Berit Aasen and Siri Bjerkreim Hellevik. The project team wants to thank Jon Hansen-Bauer and Kristian Netland in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their support and productive comments to the project. We also express our appreciation to all the participants of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation organised by the MFA 21 September 2006 to discuss a draft version of the paper. The comments and feedback were very constructive and of great value to the project.

Oslo, December 2006

Arne Tesli

Research Director

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This working paper is a literature review of the literature on peace making and conflict management with regards to decentralisation as devolution. The literature reviewed does not discuss decentralisation in great detail, but only refers to this topic within the themes of autonomy, democracy and choice of electoral systems. Cases from armed conflicts in African countries are used to illustrate the role of decentralisation in peace making and conflict management processes.

Having reviewed the literature, we present another approach: the interdependent central-local relationship approach. This approach implies that in order for decentralisation to contribute to peace making and conflict management, the relationship between the central and local levels of government has to be characterized by interdependence in which the state devolves powers and resources and at the same time ensures fiscal equity between local government areas, and that local governments are accountable.

Moreover, we argue that there is a tendency in African countries which have been in processes of peace making and conflict management where decentralisation has been introduced that there is a move from regionalism to municipalism. This move is in some cases applied by central government authorities as a strategy of cooptation, because by moving power to the local level, regional authorities are enforced to split and move down to lower levels of government.

Abbreviations

DRC- The Democratic Republic of Congo

GTZ- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit

IDEA- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

LRA- Lord's Resistance Army (Uganda)

MPLA-Movimento Popular de Libertacão Angola

NIBR- Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research

SPLA- Sudan People's Liberation Army

SPLM/A- The armed wing of Sudan People's Liberation Movement

UN-United Nations

1   The territorial dimension of conflict and peace

1.1   Introduction

This NIBR working paper is a literature review on the role of decentralisation in peace making and conflict management[1] processes. Decentralisation, peace making and conflict management touch upon a broad range of issues, ranging from violent conflict to democratisation. The African Union Peace and Security Council define peace making as being carried out: "through the use of good offices, mediation, conciliation, and enquiry" (Nathan 2005a: 2). Conflict management may be defined as "the positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence" (Harris and Reilly 1998:18). The emphasis is on conflict management rather than conflict resolution, because decentralisation of authority are often seen as an instrument to manage conflict, not to resolve it, which is evidently a long-term process that may never be terminated.

In order to discuss the role of decentralisation in conflict management and peace making, it is however inevitable to focus on conflict formation and armed conflicts[2] as well. The literature we present and discuss is thus limited to the literature within conflict management and peace making that explicitly or more implicitly relates to decentralisation, such as through discussions on territorial autonomy and introduction of democratic institutions. One of the main issues in a peace settlement, whether dictated or negotiated, with long term implications for peace building and conflict management, is the post-war reorganisation of the disputed territories. The key issue is: How much autonomy should be granted to certain territories in particular and to various levels of territorial organisation in general in order for peace to be sustained and contribute to conflict management?

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[1] The report therefore leaves out discussions on conflict resolution and conflict transformation, as well as the discussion on the broader processes of peace building.

[2] With regards to conflicts, this paper only examines civil wars in African countries, and does therefore not focus on trans-national conflicts. The reason for concentrating upon civil wars is that most literature deals with civil wars, as this is and has been the most frequent form of conflict since 1945. The Uppsala Data Set only uses the term 'armed conflict' for civil wars, defined as: "a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths" (Strand et al.:2005:3).

This report will give a presentation of the various positions in the literature on this question, but it will also provide an overview of different solutions applied in post-conflict countries in Africa.

1.2　The approach of the paper

The paper is a literature review of relevant contributions within the peace making and conflict management literature that deals with decentralisation. The literature reviewed primarily discusses the role of decentralisation with reference to the wider debate on introduction of democracy and arrangements of power sharing and autonomy. Having been motivated by the gaps in the literature reviewed and our own readings of African conflicts, we argue that the territorial dimension is central to conflict and peace on the continent. In a number of African armed conflicts the territorial dimension has been present through claims for territorial autonomy. According to Forrest (2004), demands for territorial autonomy have increased in African countries. However, even though several groups fight for territorial autonomy, they have "specific regional goals" and may thus not seek *full* secession from a nation state (ibid.:5).

Forrest (2004:236) argues that there are four explanatory factors to the increasing presence of a territorial dimension in African conflicts:

1. "history of state intervention and constructivist manipulation of regional affairs"
2. "long-term economic inequities" (persisting from the colonial period)
3. "individuals' conscious or ascriptive adherence to ethnic or regional identity patterns"
4. "the instrumentalist leadership of movement elites"

We argue that the territorial dimension particularly refers to the centre – periphery relations within a given territory (e.g. a nation-state with internationally recognised borders. ***Decentralisation*** is a state strategy to restructure the centre-periphery, or central-local, relations. It can be defined as the transfer of tasks and public authority from the national level to any public agency at the sub-national level (Eriksen et al 1999:14). Thus, decentralisation is inherently territorial. The public administration literature commonly classifies decentralisation in four different types, depending on the scope of authority transferred and the character of the sub-national institutions on the receiving end (see for instance Rondinelli 1983; Olowu and Wunsch 2004). When using the term, we refer to integrated and political decentralisation: a wide range of tasks and authority spanning multiple sectors are transferred, and the local institutions are based on political representation and have a territorially restricted mandate[3] (ibid.:36-38). A key question when examining a particular state of decentralisation is to assess the extent of central control and local autonomy. How much autonomy should be granted to certain territories in particular and to various levels of territorial organisation in general?

Regionalism and municipalism are two different, yet complementing ways of granting autonomy to sub-national levels of a state. We argue that there is a move in African countries in post-conflict contexts from regionalism to municipalism.

We approach the study of the territorial dimension of conflict and peace by employing three perspectives:

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[3] This definition therefore leaves out sector-wise decentralisation. Cultural decentralisation is only treated briefly throughout the report.

1. *A political geography perspective*, which emphasises the structural-spatial dimensions of conflict and peace.

2. *A political economy perspective*. It focuses on the struggle for power and resources, and may explain the escalation and militarisation of conflict (as well as demilitarisation and peaceful handling of conflict).

3. *A politics of identity perspective*, which considers how particularly 'territorial' identities (e.g. nationalism, regionalism, tribalism) are used in the politics of conflict and peace.

The challenge is to grasp the multiple dimensions of the processes, in particular the dynamics in the way the dimensions are socially constructed and interconnected. They have to be assessed in various sequences of conflict and peace within their proper contexts. Reducing civil war to one type of causes, or even to one type of universal behaviour like in the 'greed'-model, does not make sense. A case-oriented strategy is needed in order to learn which strategies produce which outcomes under which circumstances. However, this does not exclude perspectives that focus on one particular dimension, like the 'territorial', as long as the contextual and multi-dimensional dynamics are recognised.

1.3   The context of the study

The context of this study and its delimitation is the interface between two traits present in several African countries for the last 15-20 years:

1. The increasing 'frailty' of African states

This frailty implies that state has lost monopoly over violence and thus power has disparaged; from the central state to a number of local power brokers. This situation of frailty is in the literature often referred to as 'state failure'. We prefer the notion of 'frailty', because it signifies that states may differ to the degree that they have failed.

Bøås and Jennings (2005:386) criticise the state failure literature for building upon a "flawed understanding of state recession", because it presupposes that all states "are essentially alike". Rather, they believe it is vital to decompose the society of the failed state, analysing the actors and strategies within this society in order to capture how this situation inflicts upon people's lives, power relations, and politics in general.

2. The focus on introducing democratic institutions in peace making and conflict management processes.

Democracy has been introduced in a number of countries as part of peace making and conflict management processes. Even though the literature on democracy and conflict management and peace is extensive, few scholars have devoted attention to the issue of decentralisation in peace making and conflict management. Theories of democracy, such as transition theory (see O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986; Linz & Stepan 1996; Rueschemeyer et al 1992) largely focus on national level institutions (Hartmann 2006:2).

3. The introduction of decentralisation reforms in several African countries.

In recent years, a number of African countries, no matter having been in war or not, have embarked on integrated and political decentralisation reforms.

1.4   Peace making

The UN defines peace making as "the use of diplomatic means to persuade parties in a conflict to cease hostilities and to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the dispute" (Annan cited in Aning et al 2004:12). The African Union Peace and Security Council define peace making in similar terms as being: "through the use of good offices, mediation, conciliation, and enquiry" (Nathan 2005a: 2).Collier et al. (2006) argue that peace making as a concept and process is not easily defined, nor is it limited in time. Thus one has to look at the wider peace building/post-conflict phase. Collier et al (2006: 3-4) separate between the following stages of post-conflict

1. negotiated settlement (while conflict is still going on)
2. Light presence of peacekeeping troops
3. constitution with varying degree of decentralisation of power
4. international intervention
5. post-conflict elections
6. withdrawal of international peacekeeping troops

Peace making is thus the immediate process from parties considering to lay down weapons (initial stages before negotiations) to the resulting peace agreement. There are many obstacles to be overcome to reach the negotiation table and eventually, a settled agreement in a peace making process. First, one has to make the parties agree to a cease fire and start negotiating. Reaching this mediation process in itself may be difficult, which the case of Rwanda shows (Jones 2003). Moreover, the entire peace making process is vulnerable to set-backs, including a return to conflict.

1.5   Conflict management

There are various ways of defining conflict management.

According to Schelnberger (2005), conflict management theorists see conflict as part of life and "their solution is considered unrealistic: they can only be managed constructively" (ibid.:8). There are two approaches to conflict management according to Schelnberger (2005:8):

1. "appropriate intervention to achieve political settlement", cooperating with the power brokers in the country.
2. "designing appropriate institutions that structure and guide the existing conflicts in such a way that all conflict parties can be accommodated" (ibid.:8).

The International IDEA handbook on democracy and conflict management defines conflict management as "the positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence" (Harris and Reilly 1998:18).

1.6   The literature reviewed

We have reviewed general literature on conflict management, peace making and decentralisation. We agree with Schelnberger (2005:11) that few articles deal with the

relation between decentralisation and conflict management and "there have not been any attempts at systematic theory-building" on the relation between decentralisation and conflict management". The same can be said about the relation between decentralisation and peace making. Most scholars discussing the relation and role of decentralisation in such processes only address the issue vaguely within the frame of debating the introduction of democracy and reconstruction of the state in peace making and conflict management processes. Moreover, as Hartmann states (2006:3): "the theoretical literature is mostly interested in the conflict-mitigating effects of *federalism*" (our emphasis) and not decentralisation reforms as such. In this paper, we do not discuss the relation between federalism, one hand, and peace making and conflict management on the other, mainly because it is outside our scope and the issue has been treated in an earlier NIBR report (see Haug and Schou 2005).

In addition to the review of the general literature, we have also briefly mapped several African internal conflicts to see whether the issue of decentralisation was introduced in the peace making process or came later in the conflict management situation. This part of the review is not to give full account of all civil wars/internal conflicts in Africa, but to document the centrality of our main argument: that the territorial dimension plays an important part in conflict and peace settings in Africa. Further, the cases demonstrate the move from regionalism to municipalism that we argued has taken place in several African countries having initiated decentralisation reforms as an instrument of peace making and conflict management.

2 Conflict

In the literature on conflict, conflict management and peace making, conflicts are in most instances classified according to their causes. Schelnberger (2005:6), Mehler (2001) and other scholars commonly list political causes, economic causes, and ethnicity to civil wars. Schelnberger (2005) adds unequal access to resources. Before discussing the aspects of peace making and conflict management, it is pivotal to give a brief introduction to the territorial dimension in the processes of conflict formation and conflict, because these processes influence the post-war context in a country and the possibility of succeeding with peace treaties and conflict management in the long run. The discussion will be limited to civil wars/internal conflicts in African countries.

2.1 Conflict formation

In every modern nation-state, politics has a territorial conflict dimension (Rokkan and Eisenstadt, 1973). Nation-state politics is about different factions of citizens competing for state power, i.e. the sovereign control of a territory within certain internationally recognised borders. The state controls and redistributes important resources. The nation-state usually creates a geographical centre for the concentration of state power and state resources – a capital. Once there is a centre there are peripheries. The centre-periphery relations become vital aspects of the political, administrative, social (class) and economic structures of a country. Modern politics deals not only with power and resources, but also with people's identities. Political actors fighting for state power may use any peripheral part of the territory as base for their popular mobilisation. There are three aspects of conflict formation that are particularly relevant considering the territorial dimension:

1. The situation of frailty in the state
2. Economic aspects
3. Retraditionalization- mobilising territorial identies

2.1.1 The situation of frailty in the state

The approaches arguing for the political causes of civil wars have revolved around discussions of state failure and colonialism as main variables explaining civil wars. The political causes are in some instances intertwined with the economic causes, such as those put forward by Keen (2000) who considers them both to be important. Considering the argument of colonialism playing a role for today's civil wars, Ellis (2004:1) states that "Africa's wars are not new wars, have their roots in colonial times (among other causes). However, what is clear is that "the style of government introduced in colonial times is disappearing in much of Africa and that new patterns are emerging, fully integrated into

the 21ˢᵗ century globe, but often showing interesting continuities with older African history also" (ibid.:3)

The possibility of using parts of the territory for mobilisation for conflict signifies in many cases that the state is frail or has failed to retain monopoly of violence within a country, as is commonly stated in the literature. The literature on 'state failure' discusses the loss of central state functions: the loss of monopoly of violence and a dysfunctional central administration. This failure or as we would propose to characterise it; the situation of *frailty,* is a condition, which several African countries are or have recently experienced.

The concept of state *failure* has been defined in various ways, depending on the context it is applied in and the intention behind the description. One definition of state failure is that it appears in situations in which "the disappearance of both public authority and its supporting social norms", resulting in "domestic anarchy" (Shafir 2004:54). In cases where international interventions are considered, state failure "refers to critical indicators measuring whether the state is performing adequately or not" (ibid.:57).

In broader terms, state failure may refer to a "continuum" in which the central authority is weak and ethnic or other groups may rule over parts of the territory (ibid.:57). Further, the situation in which the state looses its authority is often described by a "tipping model" in which there is a "qualitative change in state institutions" which leads to the collapse of their authority (ibid.).

Rayemakers (2005:3) further groups the state failure literature in two approaches:

1. Institutional breakdown, e.g. "collapse of government" (Zartman 1995; Dorff 1996; Gros 1996).
2. weak state and society

According to Shafir (2004:55), the literature predominantly views state failure as resulting in two situations: "security dilemmas" and "predation" (Shafir 2004:55). The security dilemma literature appeared to describe interstate wars (see for example Posen 1993 (referert til i Shafir 2004:73), but has since the end of the Cold War been applied on internal wars in African countries.

The predation argument, on the other hand, is a competing argument "based entirely on greed" (Shafir 2004:56). This argument has been commonplace in literature on civil war, yet the literature on security dilemmas such as the contribution by Posen (1993) does not mention greed (Shafir 2004:56). In practice, it is hard to separate between predation/greed and security dilemmas in explaining civil wars, because it may be difficult "to tell who is seeking security and who is greedy" (Shafir 2004:56). Shafir thus argues for applying both in analysing civil wars.

Rayemakers (2005) criticises the state failure literature for "obscure definitions, and a blurring of causes and consequences". He further states that the difference made between "normal" states and "pathological states" makes it impossible to analyse the political order that is present in these states (Rayemakers 2005:3). Rayemakers (2005:7) argues that these perspectives go astray, because he believes that state collapse is not necessarily society collapse. In fact, in several cases, Rayemakes argue (ibid.), state collapse has led to "the emergence of new institutional arrangements between grassroots populations, armed actors and various "elites" at a local and national (or regional) level that are fostering new strategies of social, economic, and political integration". Moreover, people do not necessarily "participate in state structures", but rather use other informal

institutions (for example Ghana, Guinea, DRC (Rayemakers 2005)). ¨Thus, state collapse does not necessarily imply that social norms and systems are destroyed.

2.1.2   The economic aspect of conflict

The territorial dimension for conflict formation is also inherently linked to the economic aspect of conflict. In order to limit the discussion of the economic aspect, which is often pointed to as one of the main causes to conflict, we concentrate on the most discussed theoretical and empirical debate of greed and grievance in recent years. While grievance may be operationalised in terms of economic inequality, political repression, and lack of democracy (Collier and Hoeffler 2004), greed refers to the drive for economic benefits, such as from extracting natural resources. The various approaches within this debate over the economic causes to conflict unite in opposing the traditional assumption about civil war is that one has two groups that seek to gain control over the state. It might rather be "continuation of economics by other means", because the state is weak and enjoys no monopoly over control of violence (Keen 2000:27).

According to Shafir (2004:53) most scholars see civil conflicts as a consequence of "social grievances". Collier and Hoeffler (2003:53), opposes this emphasis on grievance by arguing that greed represents the major cause of conflict, based on large-scale econometric analyses[4] that actors are primarily driven by greed, that is the economic benefits gained in war. They further argue that causes of conflict has been interpreted in the light of political positions, in which the centre has seen the main cause of conflict to be "lack of democracy", while the political left wing has emphasised grievance as a cause to conflict.

Keen (2002:31) slightly opposes the argument of greed being the main driving force behind civil wars, because he believes that grievance is more important than greed. Rather, he argues that grievance plays the major role because it triggers and explains the rationality of violence. Moreover, in Keen's eyes (2002:4), grievance motivates violence, because of "the immediate sensation of power and reversal of perceived injustice that violence seemed to offer". Keen thus combines political and economic causes for explaining civil war. He believes that exploited groups outside the state are used by the groups that have access to the state. Grievance and rebellion is created within these exploited groups, leading to "legitimizing further greed" (Keen 2002:32). Moreover,

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[4] Collier's and Hoeffler's studies from 2003 and 2004 and others have been subject to fierce critique for their methodological approach and operationalisation and assessment of concepts. They have acknowledged the critique and revised their methods. Nathan (2005b), and also Keen (2002) argue that the use of proxies for grievance might as well have been used as proxies for greed. Thus, the main argument made by Collier and Hoeffler of greed being the cause of civil war is dubious. ". For instance, "some of the proxies intended to test for opportunity could just as well be indicators of grievance" (Nathan 2005b:7). Political exclusion, for example, is operationalised as appearing if a group has 45% of the population. Moreover, an opportunity variable is "atypically weak government military capability" which is assessed by the proxies "mountainous terrain and geographic dispersion of the population, both which C&H consider as favourable to rebels" (Nathan 2005b:9). They do not however, study other factors that impedes upon government capability. In all, their "proxies are arbitrary and spurious" (Nathan 2005b:11).They are arbitrary, because one proxy maybe used to measure opportunity in one paper, while in another it assesses variables of grievance (the example of income inequality) (ibid.). Moreover, as Keen states (2002:1), arguing for greed as a main cause also serves "a political conservative but also a variation of the colonial tradition of dismissing every rebellion as the work of criminals
On the basis of this operationalisation of greed, Nathan (2005b:6) states that "their research is filled with empirical, methodological and theoretical problems that lead to unreliable results and unjustified conclusions". They have, for instance, concluded without having studied the phenomena; civil war and rebellion empirically, only used general data available. They have thus missed out on the *context* of the wars.

political regimes may call groups rebels in order to mask and come to grips with political opposition, which justifies abuses and a state of emergency.

2.1.3 Mobilisation by retraditionalization

The territorial dimension in conflict may often be related to pre-colonial structures of local government and autonomy such as for instance is the case in the Katanga province in East Congo (DRC) (Forrest 2004:108). The Katanga province was ruled by the Lunda in pre-colonial times, and regained powers from 1960-63 (Forrest 2004:107). Pre-colonial Africa had traditions of decentralised rule in several areas of the continent (Mamdani 1996). The colonial system of local government in British and French parts of Africa built on these pre-colonial structures in various ways (Mamdani 1996). Many post-colonial African countries continued on with the decentralised system after independence. However, this system was one of deconcentration, implying that the decentralised governments did not exercise any authority, but were strictly administrative units governed by the state in most countries. Some of the current decentralisation reforms claim to build on this heritage of pre-colonial units of local government.

Forrest (2004) further states that both uni-ethnic and multi-ethnic movements found their demands on a territory. He argues that conflicts with territorial dimensions over time are characterised by movement leaders who are able to transform local legitimacy into "regional patterns of interpersonal and inter-group interaction" (Forrest 2004:3). Moreover, Forrest (2004:237) argues that reasons for the augmentation of regional movements in Africa are among others the "retraditionalization of political power" which has "contributed to a "synchronization between movements and their social context".

The Katanga region in DRC is used to illustrate his argument. This region has formed and promoted its regional identity through building a political alliance between various ethnic groups, while at the same time legitimising their claims on the basis of the pre-colonial Lunda polity (Forrest 2004:106). Forrest argues that there is a tendency within several African countries that re-traditionalization, through revived local political structures (chiefs, councils), is coupled to sub-national movements. This revitalisation of the old power structures is likely to persist and provide the sub-national movements with legitimacy in the years to come (2004:216). In Uganda, for instance, Museweni reinstalled the local chief system in order to "ensure national political stability" (Forrest 2004:220). Before his period, there had been several groups fighting for territorial autonomy within the country, such as the Konko and Amba in 1963-64 (Forrest 2004:222). This movement was reinvigorated in 1979 and a peace settlement was struck with it in 1982.

2.2 Armed conflict (civil war)

As Clausewitz noted, war is the continuation of politics by other means. This is particularly true for modern civil wars. Sometimes the political struggle – efforts to take over or keep state power - transcends peaceful and constitutional forms. A militarisation of national politics takes place. Grievance motivates violence, because of "the immediate sensation of power and reversal of perceived injustice that violence seemed to offer" (Keen 2002:4). When, and under which conditions, should be a key research concern.

Structurally, a combination of corruption of state power - characterised by increased personalisation of power and 'businessfication' of politics – is suggested to interact with financial crisis and external donor calls for a 'leaner government', causing the shrinkage

of the state. The result is "the retreat of the state" – the state literally withdraws from many sectors and regions of the territory, and this creates a turning point – a point of no return to peaceful politics (Braathen, Bøås and Sæther, 2000). The situation in which the state loses its authority is often described by a "tipping model" in which there is a "qualitative change in state institutions" which leads to the collapse of their authority (Shafir 2004:57). After studying the cases of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zaire and Nigeria, William Reno (1998:1) finds that "….less government has contributed, not to better government, but rather to warlord politics".

Every civil war has a territorial dimension. The logic of war makes the parties operate with a hierarchy of territories, with assumptions of different degrees of own control. War is about weakening (undermining, destroying) the territorial control of the enemy. One war faction may start with control of a small piece of a nation-state territory and end up with the control of the whole country, and vice versa, or be completely defeated.

There are two particularly complex issues debated to explain the outbreak and perpetuation of civil wars: the roles of warlordism and ethnicity, respectively.

As we see it, there are two ways in which the territorial dimension plays a part in conflict:

1. Conflicting parties have a territorial base, but do not aim for secession or autonomy arrangements
2. Parties claim territorial autonomy or secession

2.3 Conflicting parties have a territorial base, but do not aim for secession or autonomy arrangements

Controlling a territory is important, because the resources found in the territory may secure the funding of the war. Moreover, the territorial dimension is important, because in many instances it manifests the stronghold of one ethnic or religious group in an area.

Moreover, as Forrest and several other scholars have pointed out (Reno 1998; Giuostozzi 2005, etc) the territorial dimension is important, because it presents warring factions with a resource base. Faction leaders who engage in economic activities such as the diamond trade during the civil war in Sierra Leone are commonly referred to as warlords. Giustozzi (2005) and other scholars argue that for these warlords and their adherents, controlling and benefiting from extracting resources is in some cases more important than the war. Guistozzi illustrates his arguments with the examples of MPLA in Angola and Taylor's group in Liberia.

The territorial dimension is closely related to the issue of local power brokers, usually informal ones such as warlords and local political chiefs. Warlords are commonly referred to in the literature, and these often have a unique local constituency and control a well-defined territorial base. Many scholars argue that these local power brokers do not aim towards seizing control over the country, but are only concerned with the economic benefits they may make out of engaging in conflict. Giustozzi (2005) supports this argument in believing that conquering of territory is not their primary goal, but he states that they would not mind if it happened, referring to the examples of MPLA in Angola and Charles Taylor and his group in Liberia. These leaders may however not be tied to a territory, according to Giustozzi; military-political leaders in general (not necessarily warlords, see section 4.2) do operate without a territorial base.

The local traditional chiefs' role in war is not much emphasised in the literature. They may in some instances belong to the warlord category, while in other cases they are more likely, we believe, to pull the threads behind the conflict, thus be a support base for the warlords, ensuring legitimacy in the population for the warlords' action. This theme is however under-researched.

In the case of Uganda, the conflict between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has a territorial dimension, because the LRA have their power base in the Northern part of the country. There has been a North-South divide since colonial times in terms of economic disparities between the cash-crop growing Southern regions and the Northern part which functioned as a "labour reserve" for the Southern plantations and industry (Atingi-Ego and Sebudde 2005:171-172). Also, the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire has a territorial dimension in the rebel groups being based in the Northern part of the country, and the economic division between the Northern and the Southern part is a cause of conflict.

2) Parties claim territorial autonomy or secession

According to Forrest (2004), the claim for territorial autonomy has increased in African countries. However, even though several groups fight for territorial autonomy, they have "specific regional goals" and may thus not seek full secession from a nation state (ibid.:5). Controlling a territory is also important, because the resources found in the territory may secure the funding of the war.

Moreover, the territorial dimension is important, because in many instances it manifests the stronghold of one ethnic or religious group in an area. The territorial dimension is closely related to the issue of local power brokers, such as warlords, which they are called in many works on conflict and civil war. Such warlords often have a unique local constituency and control a well-defined territorial base. Many scholars argue that these local power brokers do not aim at seizing control over the country, but are only concerned with the economic benefits they may make out of engaging in conflict. Giustozzi (2005) supports this argument in believing that conquering a territory is not their primary goal, but he states that they would not mind if it happened, referring to the examples of MPLA in Angola and Charles Taylor and his group in Liberia. These leaders may however not be tied to a territory, according to Giustozzi; military-political leaders in general (not necessarily warlords, see section 4.2) do operate without a territorial base. Moreover, Forrest (2004:236) argues that there are four explanatory factors to the increasing presence of territorial dimension in African conflicts:

1. "history of state intervention and constructivist manipulation of regional affairs"
2. "long-term economic inequities" (persisting from the colonial period)
3. "individuals' conscious or ascriptive adherence to ethnic or regional identity patterns"
4. "the instrumentalist leadership of movement elites"

The movements that persist over time are characterised by leaders being able to transform local legitimacy into "regional patterns of interpersonal and intergroup interaction" (Forrest 2004:3). He states that both uni-ethnic and multi-ethnic movements found their demands on a territory.

In the case of Uganda, the conflict between the government and the LRA has a territorial dimension, because the LRA have their power base in the Northern part of the country. There has been a North-South divide since colonial times in terms of economic disparities between the cash-crop growing Southern regions and the Northern part which functioned

as a "labour reserve" for the Southern plantations and industry (Atingi-Ego and Sebudde 2005:171-172). Also, the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire has a territorial dimension in the rebel groups being based in the Northern part of the country, and the economic division between the Northern and the Southern part is a cause of conflict.

In many cases the local institutions continue under conflict (Luckham 2004:489). The involved parties in conflict also establish new political, social and economic institutions following a state collapse that "allow them to accumulate power and sustain conflict" (Lyons 2004:269). These institutions "are based on violence, fear, and predation" (ibid.).

Several scholars have described the leaders of rebel groups or non-state parties in a civil war for warlords (see Reno 1998; Giustozzi 2005). Warlords have commonly been defined as "actors who have full and autonomous control over a military force, operating at a sub-state level, aims at benefiting as much as possible from state disorder, collapse or weakening, neo-patrimonialist, uses violence and coercion, relies on a hard core of supporters, lacks interest in changing the nature of the state, if he is in all interested in seizing the state" (Guistozzi 2005:5).

According to Giuostozzi (ibid.), warlords have existed and been described in various history books for decades. For instance, the Chinese local power brokers from 1910-39 were called warlords. In delineating the historicity of the usage of warlords, Giustozzi (2005:2-3) thus opposes the scholars describing warlords as a phenomenon resulting from the globalisation in the 90'ies. Moreover, Giustozzi (ibid.:5) criticises the warlord literature for having the tendency "of stretching the term too far", which "is likely to invalidate its heuristic potential". Rather, he argues that one needs to rethink the term warlords, by deconstructing the concept into *several types of non-state military-political leaders*, because "the concept of warlord is unsuited to cover all of these actors" (ibid.:9).

The main delineation criterion is legitimacy, separating non-legitimate military leaders from legitimate ones. Legitimate military leaders are characterised as having "support of at least one established social group" (ibid.). Warlords are thus defined as "legitimate and maybe charismatic military leader who needs to wage periodically successful military campaigns, has full and autonomous control over a military force, exercises political control over part of the territory of a state, uses violence to maintain his power, has little or no political legitimacy, a neo-patrimonial attitude, is concerned with his own benefit, lacks interest in changing the nature of the state he is trying to overthrow" (ibid.).

This definition of warlords leaves aside many other types of political-military actors, which Giustozzi (2005:10) calls military-political entrepreneurs, i.e. "individuals who are willing to take a gamble and invest resources in exploiting and creating an opportunity to gain influence and/or power through the use, among other things, of military force".

Giustozzi (2005) does not make the connection between decentralisation and warlordism and conflict. He only argues that countries which are "strongly regionalised" and where the state institutions are weak may cause warlordism (ibid.15). By regionalised, he does however not refer to decentralised institutions, but "size," difficult geography" and "complex ethnic/religious make-up" (ibid.).

In the contexts where the state has not collapsed, the warlords are termed "would-be warlords" and the conflicts in Darfur and the South of Sudan are examples of such warlordism. Warlordism may also appear as an "indirect outcome, weakening of state control over military commanders in the field", such as for instance in Eritrea, where such warlords are appearing as we speak (ibid.:15). In Liberia, Giuostozzi argues that one had a mixture of orphan warlords and the ones stemming from a weakening of state control

over the armed forces. Yet, some of the so-called warlords may also have been mere political-military entrepreneurs rather than warlords, according to Giustozzi.

Reno (1998) argues that warlords are often part of the old political elite that seek to reinforce their power. The control these warlords have may be used to build proto-states, small state structures, they may build upon a military monopoly and are thus much more likely to establish state organisation than entrepreneurs are. In having political control over a part of a state, decentralisation of power has actually taken place within the context of conflict. However, this decentralisation is not characterised by democratic decentralisation, but by consolidation of power in one hand over a territory. Moreover, as Clapham (2004:91) states, the type of "political authority that it creates is very far from the models of statehood that external actors are attempting to promote in Africa". This topic will be discussed more in detail in the chapters on peace making and conflict management.

Ethnicity

The debate on the role of ethnicity as a cause to conflict[5] reflects the territorial dimension when ethnic groups are located in one territory or make claims to a specific area. Kaplan (1994) is among several scholars who have portrayed ethnicity as a major cause to civil wars in Africa. In a literature review, it is held that David Horowitz (1985:12) has few if any academic followers in stating that "'ethnic conflicts is at the centre of politics" and civil wars in Africa. Instead, the review concludes that ethnicity is only one among many factors interplaying in recent civil wars in Africa, and it is a card played by faction leaders mainly when recruiting soldiers (Braathen, Bøås and Sæther, 2000: 18-19). This is not to say that ethnicity do not play a role in conflicts, but that the concept masks other causes which are put forward through mobilising and uniting people through their ethnic belonging.

Keen (2002:22) criticise the "ethnic school" for not explaining why so many ethnic groups live peacefully for decades as well as on their "emphasis on the inevitability of ethnic hatreds can be profoundly disabling and demoralizing" Collier et al (2003:57) argues that societies with many ethnic and religious groups actually are less likely to have civil war than in countries with one ethnicity and religion. However, if there are several ethnic groups, but one forms the majority, the risk of civil war increases by about 50% (ibid.). The central objective should not however be to assess to what extent ethnicity leads to conflict, but rather how it is mobilised and used to further interests that eventually lead to conflict, and why people are mobilised under the ethnic flag in some contexts and not others. These questions are however not to be dealt with in this paper.

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[5] This paper is not a literary review of the role of ethnicity in conflict and we thus exempt ourselves from presenting the entirety of the extensive debate on this matter.

3   Decentralisation and Peace

3.1   Peace making

In this section we will discuss the role of decentralisation in peace making processes. As already introduced, peace making is the first step in the transition from war to peace in a country. Peace making involves demobilisation of fighting parties, disarmament, peace negotiations and the resulting peace agreement. Peace agreements in contrast to war settlements where a winner takes all, depends on some type of voluntary and shared commitment of all the main war factions. Such agreements have three common features according to Varennes (2003:153): "independence/autonomy/power sharing", "human rights guarantees", "fair" distribution of resources/employment"

The literature on peace making in general briefly treats the issue of decentralisation. Decentralisation is in most contributions not discussed as a separate strategy of peace making, but only looked at vaguely in the context of debates over democratic transitions, post-war elections, constitutional power sharing, autonomy arrangements. In the following sections we will briefly present this literature (see annexes for more details) and then our views on the role of decentralisation in peace making processes.

3.2   Peace making and elections

Peacemaking in practice as well as in the literature pays a lot of attention to multiparty elections and procedures to re-install a strong and legal government. UN and other international actors have largely seen elections as a peace making mechanism, (Reilly, 2003:178). Several scholars, on the other hand, point to the potential risks of holding elections as part of a peace making process. For instance, Marina Ottaway (1995:242) believes that elections are not the way to start a democratisation process. Pugh and Cobble (2001) share this view, arguing that one should rather focus on "introducing notions of accountability and participation" (Latto, 2002:12).

Lyons (2004:272) demonstrates the mixed records of holding elections as part of a peace making process:

- Promoted peace and state reconstruction (El Salvador, Mozambique)
- Has contributed to an end to war, but little impact on democratization (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Liberia, Tadjikistan).
- Has lead to more conflict (Angola 1992, Rwanda 1993).

Reilly (2004:274) argues that politics has to be demilitarized before elections otherwise the war power dynamics are likely to influence elections. Likewise, a great challenge lies

in transforming the institutions that have been part of conflict to institutions that can make peace endure (Lyons 2004:269). Luckham et al. (2000:48) supports this in arguing that "the political and institutional choices that are made during periods of transition are crucial", because wrong decisions may easily spur conflict. Decisions on institutional structures is a crucial one, because in many cases the institutions have been one of the central elements that people have conflicted over, such as in Colombia (Luckham et al 2000:53). Otherwise, the democratisation process might result in skewed power balance and a reproduction of war relations, which may eventually lead to war again (ibid.).

UN has withdrawn troops after elections, which has created instability rather than furthering peace. However, this practice is changing: in East Timor and Kosovo the UN has followed another track. In these cases, one has allowed local level democratization and time for state structures to be established and work before elections were held (Reilly, 2003:178).

3.3 Strategies of autonomy and power sharing

According to Varennes, it is imperative to change the institutional structure of the state in order to get a successful peace agreement that is agreed upon by minorities (ibid.).

One of the main issues in a peace settlement, whether dictated or negotiated, with long term implications for peace building and conflict management, is the post-war reorganisation of the disputed territories. For instance, in the case of Sudan there have been lengthy discussions of how the country should be divided territorially. Already in the first peacemaking arrangements principles of power sharing and autonomy, as well as power checks and power balances, are addressed knowingly or unknowingly. The key issue is: How much autonomy should be granted to certain territories in particular and to various levels of territorial organisation in general?

Most successfully settled conflicts over the last 50 years have involved power-sharing arrangements in which autonomy in some form has been granted (Varennes 203:156).

In the literature, power sharing arrangements at the national level are mostly discussed, more specifically in terms of whether consociationalism[6] or federalism or a combination of these arrangements represent instruments for peace making and conflict management (see chapter 4). Moreover, and more relevant in this context, is the focus on the territorial dimension through the debate over autonomy arrangements. Decentralisation of power may represent a valuable and effective concession to minority groups and thus be a strategy for making peace with minority groups.

One can however in general observe four types of solutions:

1. *Full national independence*[7]. In the rare cases of successful 'secessionist' civil wars, the national boundaries are redrawn and new nations/states are recognised (nationalism).

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[6] Timothy Sisk (2003:144) refers to consociationalism as a system accommodation by ethnic group leaders at the political centre (grand coalition cabinets), guarantees of group or regional autonomy (federalism and regionalism), guarantees of minority rights, "constitutionally agreed upon guarantees ensuring minority groups rights, in which minorities are "protected from the excesses of democracy qua majoritarian rule" (Varennes 2003:158) and 'proportionality in all spheres of public life' (ibid.:144).

[7] The status of Nouvelle Caledonie which is under the nation of France and the island Øland with regards to Finland are two cases which are deviations to this four-fold typology. These two cases represent autonomy

2. *Extensive national autonomy*. Semi-independent entities are established within a federal state (federalism)

3. *Regional self-government*. Regional entities with own administration, elected assemblies and decision-making powers in specified policy areas are established under a unitary state centre (***regionalism***).

4. *Municipal self-government*. District-or city-based entities with own administration, elected assemblies and decision-making in specified areas powers are established (***municipalism***).

The various types, particularly municipalism, appear in different combinations. They vary as to the degree of decision-making powers and autonomy (devolution) attributed to each territorial level of the state. There is a discussion over which solution is the better, but this is not dealt with in this paper, since the aim is to focus on the aspects of regionalism and municipalism[8]. Suffice to say that some scholars believe federalism to be the best solution to achieve peace and stability in divided countries (Harris& Reilly 1998; Ljiphart 1999, referred to in Hartmann 2002). Hartmann (2002:11), on the other hand, argues that federalism does not offer a good solution in conflict management processes, because of the "institutional and financial complexity and the relative small size of African countries". Sudan and DRCongo are listed as the only exceptions in which federalism may provide a solution worth considering.

According to Sisk (2003:148) however, which solution to choose depends on "the level of enmity, between the contending groups, the trajectory of war, and whether or not in negotiations they can accept any degree of uncertainty or vulnerability to political loss".

Fernand de Varennes (2003) treats *territorial autonomy*[9] as one out of three common subjects in peace agreements after 1945. The two other subjects are human rights guarantees and fair distribution of resources/employment". Territorial autonomy is a key wherever there are claims for autonomy from a minority group involved in a conflict. In most cases, such claims are salient because "the discriminatory distribution of power and resources and other violations of the rights of minorities" are seen as the causes for conflict (ibid:155). According to Varennes (2003), it is imperative to change the institutional structure of the state in order to get a successful peace agreement that is agreed upon by minorities (ibid.). Decentralisation of power may represent a valuable and effective concession to minority groups and thus be a strategy for making peace with minority groups.

Regarding the issue of post-conflict territorial reorganisation, bargaining takes place between the advocates of a strong state centre, on the one hand, and of full local autonomy, on the other. Decentralisation in peace agreements is discussed in the peace making literature in relation to the cases where there are claims for autonomy from a minority group involved in a conflict. In most cases, such claims are present, because "the discriminatory distribution of power and resources and other violations of the rights of minorities" are the causes for conflict (ibid:155). Promises of autonomy in general may

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arrangements which give the respective areas jurisdiction over internal affairs and a special status compared to other devolved units within the country.

[8] See Haug and Schou (2005) for a thorough review of the literature on federalism as a strategy in conflict and peace.

[9] In general, we here use the definition of (territorial) autonomy from Ghai (2003: 185): "asymmetrical relationship of a part of the state to the central authorities, with legal guarantees that can span the range between federalism and devolution" Ghai 2003:185?) In other words, decentralisation is included as one of several autonomy arrangements.

make parties willing to start negotiating (Ghai (2003:187), and may thus represent an effective tool in ceding war.

The central-local relations of a state are however under constant (re-)negotiation. There is a trade off between the concerns for central control and local autonomy, respectively. Reorganisation along federalist or regionalist lines, with specified degrees of regional autonomy built into the reformed state structures (types 2 and 3), is a much applied solution to civil wars with a sharp territorial dimension. However, this is not a domain for technical state craftsmanship. Territorial reorganisation reflects a dynamic combination of the balance of forces, pre-existing institutional set-ups and, preferences of actors in each case. One needs to understand the contextual dynamics.

Just to mention some of the calculations that might take place, one may start to assess the financial-economic strength of the various regions of the country. There are surplus and deficit regions. Representatives of surplus ('rich') regions may prefer a weak state centre and as much regional (fiscal!) autonomy as possible. Representatives of deficit ('poor') regions, by contrast, may favour a strong state centre with capacity to redistribute wealth across territories. Inter-regional differences may thus be decreased, thus mitigating the potential conflict between regions and the central state (Mehler 2001, referred to in Schelnberger 2005:14)

If the centre is lost, due to collapse of the state, or there is very little to redistribute (all regions are equally poor), even the poor regions might opt for optimal regional autonomy. The old central state elite may opt for a solution that contributes to satisfy their primary clients/supporters and/or pacify their main opponents. Technocrats may argue strongly for arrangements with high allocative efficiency and pro-development impacts. Various coalitions between different regional forces, state elite factions, and external actors (like peace process supporting agents) may emerge.

3.4   Decentralisation as a strategy of cooptation

Moreover, decentralisation may be used as a cooptation strategy by the national government, preserving national unity and peace by integrating opposing parties in the political system (Hartmann 2006). Most studies focus on establishing national level government institutions and discuss procedural elements, such as election systems and whether to choose a presidential or a parliamentary system[10] (Hartmann 2006: 2). Two notable exceptions are the studies by Seely (2001) and Forrest (2004). The decentralisation reform in Mali serves as an example of a strategy of cooptation of secessionist groups (Seely 2001). The Malian government launched a decentralisation reform in 1992 in order to integrate separatist Tuareg groups in Northern Mali into a political institutionalized structure at the regional and local levels to contain further conflict (Seely 2001).

The Ugandan peace agreement between the Konjo and Amba groups on one hand and the government on the other is another example of such a cooptation strategy by the central government. Museweni agreed to "a degree of local autonomy" for the two groups of Konjo and Amba, as well as administrative positions and economic benefits (Forrest 2004:222). Having established peace, Museweni regime has used local governments in

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[10] We are aware of that the discussion of whether to choose a presidential or a parliamentary system is more sophisticated and detailed, but in this report, there is no space for summarizing the debate.

the years after the agreement as a peace dividend in the years; "regime opponents" have been included in local and central governments (ibid.:222). However, throughout the 90'ies this politics largely failed to incorporate "traditional authorities", Christian fundamentalists and some local governments functioned as separate units, having their own militias and earning money on "illegal tax collections" (Forrest 2004:223).

Museveni then restored the kingship system, integrated the traditional authorities in a "loose quasiconsociational system" (Forrest 2004:223), and this system was to be based on "cultural autonomy", but the distinction between such autonomy and political autonomy remained vague in principle and practice (ibid.). For instance, it resulted in "Ganda monarchical institutions surpassing the local councils in decisionmaking significance" (ibid.:223). This strategy of incorporation has however not succeeded in all cases, because some of these authorities have claimed full separation from Uganda (ibid:224). This development in Uganda is similar to the process in Ghana, and demonstrates that traditional authorities in general may be seen as a highly unstable political ally for the central government (ibid). Local autonomy may thus spur more conflict in cases where decentralisation of decision making empowers local level actors, such as leading politicians, former warlords and customary authorities. This empowerment may then lead to claims for secession[11].

Nevertheless, in many cases, decentralisation reforms in general are in many cases difficult to implement, because majority groups or other segments of the population oppose such a reform. Peace agreements which involve decentralisation may thus spur more conflict in a country (ibid.:157).

Majority leaders in a state may also be unwilling to grant autonomy out of fear of losing their political support in the majority population (Ghai 2003:190)

In addition, there are several obstacles to the peace making process in terms of the legacy of pre-war institutional structures. Aron (2002:3) states that the institutions established before conflict are likely to be imperative for institution building after conflict, because it is easier to resort to institutions previously created than to establish new ones.

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[11] A systematic account of the cases in which such local actors have actually managed to mobilize for claiming succession is needed, but is however outside the scope of this report. To our knowledge, an account has not been made yet.

4 Decentralisation and Conflict management

When coming to conflict management, or "the positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence" (Harris and Reilly, 1998:18), the role of decentralisation treated within the wider discussions on the role of democracy and power sharing arrangements, such as consociational or federal political system[12] (Latto 2002:5). According to Horowitz (1990), there are three strategies of conflict management:

1. Accommodation of parties, which rarely succeeds, because it often ends in secessionist movements (cf. Basques, Kurds).
2. Territory arrangements (federalism, regional autonomy)
3. Distributive policies ("preferential policies of recruitment in public or private sectors, business licences, contracts and share ownership" (Horowitz 1990:122).

We add the dimension of power sharing at the national level, which is heavily debated in the literature. An important element discussed is whether or not adopting consociational principles for governing is fruitful for conflict management. The debate over consociationalism is particularly pertinent to African countries ravaged with civil war in which a number of ethnic groups have participated. In general, "proportional representation systems are praised as the more consensual system, which is better equipped to suit the exigencies of ethnically fragmented societies" (Hartmann 2006:7).

4.1 Consociationalism as a power sharing mechanism-effective in managing conflicts?

Consociationalism as a way of power sharing is heavily debated in the literature on conflict management and peace making. In this paper, we do not aim towards a systematic summary of the literature, only a presentation of a selection of various views on the issue. The advocates of consociationalism promote systematic power sharing. According to R.T. Akinyele (2000:229) consociational democracy is the only way one can "guarantee political stability in divided African countries" (referring to Nigeria, Sudan and Rwanda). Binningsbø (2006) also argues, on the basis of a large-scale quantitative analysis of 125 countries, that consociational power sharing is "especially suitable for postconflict societies" (ibid.:3).

Wunsch (2000) states that consociational system of central government, combined with a federal system and following the principle of subsidarity (that the level which is closer to

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[12] In parts of the literature reviewed there is also a debate over presidentialism vs. parliamentarism.

the targeted population should manage it) is the better in managing conflicts in African countries.

Sisk (2003:142) emphasizes that consociational institutions are only one out of many solutions to managing conflicts by institutional means. Moreover, he claims that "consociational theories tend to assume that motives for conflict reduction already exist among the leaders of the groups. Thus, they assume this problem away, and it is not a trivial problem".

Sisk (2003) further points to the potential democratic deficit in consociational arrangements. One democratic deficit is that the parties present in the peace making process may not be the ones who gain power in the post-conflict context. Another is that in many cases the political institutions established have failed to transform themselves into viable democratic institutions with moderate forces, such as happened in Sierra Leone, Angola, Sudan and Lebanon (ibid.:140).

In addition, consociationalism as a principle has a democratic deficit to it, because the composition of a parliament or local government is based on predefined principles for the distribution of votes (Ottaway 1995: 244). Rather than basing a regime on consociational power sharing, one could have a long-term national conference, which may after a while be dissolved and elections be held, Ottaway proposes (1995:244). National conferences have been used in transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes in a number of countries[13] throughout Western and Central Africa (such as Mali, Cameroun and Somaliland). In Somaliland, such conferences have been held and they have provided a platform for discussing and managing tense political problems in the country (see Jama 2003; Spears 2002:133). According to Spears (ibid.), the reason for succeeding in these conferences is however not a result of the consociational organization of power sharing, but to the union of all clans in countering a common enemy: the Somali state.

Further, Maphai (1999, quoted in Spears 2002: 132) notes on the basis of the South African transition from apartheid to democracy that consociationalism only worked because "levels of hostility had diminished substantially" already. Thus, power sharing in the form of consociationalism is only an effective instrument when conflict is under controlled and is managed. Consociationalism therefore does not have any effect in leading to conflict management, according to Maphai (1999) and also Spears (2002).

Brown and Zahar (2006) suggest a new way of looking at power sharing, criticizing the existing emphasis on consociationalism. On the basis of the cases of Angola and Mozambique, they outline "informal alternatives to traditional power sharing", which includes these two principles:

1. "the modalities for the reconstitution of the armed forces"
2. "The cooptation of rebel leaders through material incentives" (ibid.:2).

However, in "designing appropriate institutions that structure and guide the existing conflicts in such a way that all conflict parties can be accommodated" (Schelnberger 2005:8), what is the role for sub-national institutions based on political representation and with a territorially restricted mandate? To what extent does the restructuring of

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[13] However, only a few of them have been in conflict in the period leading to transition.

relationship between these institutions and the central government, in terms of decentralisation[14], serve conflict management?

4.2   Democracy and conflict management

First, we will take a look at the general broader debate on democracy and politics in conflict management. Luckham (2003: 498) briefly states that democratic institutions and democratic politics at all levels are necessary for democracy to manage conflict. Luckham (2004:500) further states that it is important that the "democratisation process is locally driven and locally owned" (ibid.), and that inclusiveness characterises the process. Nevertheless, the role of democracy as an instrument of conflict management is ambiguous. As Luckham argues, "democratic institutions have often failed to resolve conflicts and in some cases have even aggravated them". Ottaway (1995: 235) further illustrates this ambiguous role of democracy in stating that the democratization process is in itself highly conflictual. Nevertheless, there seems to be a consensus in the literature that democracies are more capable of managing conflicts than other regime types (Latto 2002:5). There are, however, three conditions, according to Ottaway (1995: 242) which decide whether democratisation materialises in collapsed states or not:

1. "whether the fragmentation of the elite is pluralistic or monopolistic"
2. "whether self-determination is defined in terms of individual rights to control the government or of group rights to a separate state"
3. "whether economic interest groups with an interest in a broad market exist and can counterbalance the political elite's attempts to carve out areas of monopolistic control" Focussing exclusively on the local level; to what extent does the restructuring of relationship between these institutions and the central government, in terms of decentralisation[15], serve conflict management?

The record of decentralisation by devolution in conflict management is good, according to Varennes (2003:158). There is "a growing political support for autonomy internationally and regionally, as well as in certain national constitutional laws. In various conflicts the international community or foreign states have become involved, autonomy has been adopted as a solution" (southern Philippines, Bosnia, Kosovo) (Ghai 2003:188). The most widely discussed issue linking decentralisation and conflict management is the question of representation of minority groups, in which decentralised units may represent important concessions to minority groups in society.

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[14] Decentralisation is treated indifferently by various scholars. Varennes (2003) equals decentralisation to territorial autonomy, while Ghai (2003) see decentralisation as a non-specified form of autonomy. Sisk includes decentralisation as one form of power sharing arrangement, while Ottaway (1995) would object to this categorisation, because she believes power sharing involves negotiated sharing of power which is not based on democratic principles as is the case with decentralisation.

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4.3   The ambiguous role of decentralisation

Territorial reform plays an ambiguous role in peace making and conflict management[16]. On the one hand, it is a mechanism for peace and conflict management in granting groups which have been neglected an additional political space and resources for taking part in decision-making (see Haug and Schou 2005). Most of the discussion touching upon decentralisation in conflict management deals with representation of ethnic groups. Some are concerned with other minorities as well, but none explicitly discuss the gender dimension. This type of representation is based on "constitutionally agreed upon guarantees ensuring minority groups rights, and in which they are "protected from the excesses of democracy qua majoritarian rule" (ibid.:158). Reilly (2003:174) also highlight that " [almost] all peace treaties between formerly warring parties involve some changes to the apparatus of the state via revised arrangements for representative bodies, distribution of powers, territorial structure, and the like".

Hartmann (2006; 2002) supports this view in arguing that groups that are marginalised in national level institutions may thus enjoy a major role at the local level.

Moreover, decentralisation offers the opportunity of de-scaling conflict, handling conflicts at the very local level from which they in many cases originate. Several civil wars have a local dimension in parties fighting for access to resources in an area, and a local institution that has knowledge about these resources could be the better to manage such conflicts. Decentralisation may further be a tool of conflict management in increasing political competition, across ethnic boundaries and may be "a breathing space in hostilities" (ibid:7).

For instance, in South Africa, decentralisation was introduced as a tool of conflict management, in which the government "reduced the number of local authorities by constantly merging predominantly white and black areas to build a stronger local government" (Hartmann 2006:12). In Namibia, the government did not abolish the existing system of local governments. Instead new regions were designed "to foster inter-ethnic contact and block separatism" (Hartmann 2006: 12).

In addition, one may further a general argument as Wunsch (2000) does, stating that local governance is the better option in Africa because the nation-states have failed. As GTZ (2006:3) in their newly published guideline on decentralization and conflict wrote: "decentralization can contribute to rebuild failed states", due to their closeness to the population.

Moreover, decentralisation may effectively hinder secession, such as for instance happened in Spain Post-Franco.

Decentralisation may also ensure a more fair distribution of resources across the country. Inter-regional differences may thus be decreased, thus mitigating the potential conflict between regions and the central state that Mehler (2001; referred to in Schelnberger (2005:14) describes as one of four types of conflict in which decentralisation can play a positive role. The case of autonomy movements within the regions is ambiguous because on one hand they may be satisfied by having more local autonomy, while on the other local autonomy may lead to conflict over separation of the state,

According to Hartmann (2006:17), the conditions for local government being conflict management institutions rather than leading to more conflict are firstly, the resources

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[16] Reorganisation of boundaries is another issue involved in this process in some cases.

(ibid.:17). The lack of resources, which is a frequent problem in many decentralisation reforms may lead to or increase conflict (ibid). "Still, for ethnic conflict management, even symbolic authority may have importance (such as political representation in a council that has no effective powers)" (ibid.:18).

Schelnberger (2005) further argues that the legal framework of the decentralisation policy, the freedom from outside interventions into the workings of local government, the inclusiveness of local government, and the type of conflict influence whether or not decentralisation succeeds as a tool of conflict management.

In all, decentralisation thus plays an ambiguous role in conflict management. Given this role, decentralisation seems to be an intermediate variable- expected to institutionalise and facilitate conflict management at lower levels of the state. This aspect of decentralisation, the decentralised units as conflict management institutions is however not further discussed in this paper[17].

At the same time, decentralisation in this respect may lead to the creation of new sub-local groups which 'de-scales' conflict dynamics from the national to the local level. Providing an arena of influence for nationally marginalised groups may create new minorities within these groups, spurring more conflict (Ghai, 2003:190). The local government areas, if composed in terms of ethnicity, may actually reinforce cleavages", such as for instance was the case in Bosnia (Hartmann 2006:7).

Crook (2001) supports this argument, stating that in areas where there are majority groups of ethnic-religious character, decentralisation will not evidently lead to conflict resolution. Decentralisation as part of a conflict management process may thus reproduce power patterns during war and thus spur conflict instead of being an instrument of managing conflict. Moreover, decentralised units based on ethnic or religious groups may create new minorities within these groups, which "might mobilise to demand further devolution". One example of such mobilisation within territories is the Muslims in the Eastern district of Sri Lanka (Ghai 2003:190)

This problem of creating new minority groups can be dealt with through for instance, special representation of these groups in local governments "but these methods have seldom been effective" (Ghai 2003:190). It has been especially feared if the group which gets some autonomy has special relations with a neighbouring country (Ghai 2003:190). Special representation may also contribute to "manufacture ethnic communities" (Ghai 2003: 190).

The Peace Agreement in South Sudan 2005 is a good example of the great challenge of majority versus minority groups at the local level. Decentralisation had been launched in South Sudan in 1996. There was devolution of decision-making powers within the Civil Authority. However, the SPLA did this without the consent of the minority ethnic group, the Equatorians. They felt they were left out and that the Civil Authority was dominated by the majority group, the Dinkas linked to SPLM/A (Branch and Mampilly, 2005).

The problem with the Peace Agreement of 2005 was that actors from the eastern part of South Sudan country again felt ignored and that it was an agreement between SPLM/A and the national government. However, opposition leaders in the eastern part acknowledged that the peace agreement was a good starting point, since it lists decentralisation as an aim (Patnuliano 2005: 24). The two most essential issues for peace and reconciliation will have to be handled at the local government level: 1) "the mass repatriation of Equatorians to Dinka-occupied land" 2) "equal access to foreign-provided

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[17] See Hartmann (2006) on this theme.

development and reconstruction resources" (Branch and Mampilly 2005: 10). If failing to distribute land that could result in more violent conflict within South Sudan (ibid.:11). Legal guarantees, as advocated by the consociationalists, may not count much in these societies.

Moreover, decentralisation provides yet a political arena for competition over state resources and positions.

Decentralisation may also increase inequality between regions, because some regions may be equipped with for instance natural resources that it benefits from, while others have poor income. This inequality may thus spur conflict, either between wealthy and poor regions, or between one of these regions and the central government. One example which is related to this argument is the conflict in the Niger River Delta in Nigeria. The central state may however reduce regional inequality by limiting the devolution of fiscal authority and through central redistribution measures.

4.4   From regionalism to municipalism

Is it possible at all to identify various impacts of different decentralisation strategies?

Yes, if we distinguish between regionalism and municipalism. Regionalism emphasises institutions at the regional level, sometimes even institutions that are despotic or embedded in the traditional authorities. Municipalism favours democratic institutions at the district or city level. One also needs to distinguish between the short and the long term, and the different contexts must be taken into account. It seems that regionalism eases conflict on the short term, but perpetuates and even aggravates conflict over time. At least, that is what central government actors may have experienced, such as in Uganda, where the granting of some regional autonomy to traditional authorities has led to claims for succession. This development in Uganda is similar to the process in Ghana, and demonstrates that traditional authorities in general may be seen as highly unstable political ally for the central government (Forrest 2004:122-124).

If the government fears uprisings or other minority reactions, "then it will often adopt a decentralisation scheme which deliberately fragments potential local power bases into smaller, weaker, non-politically significant units (Crook 2001:10). This happened in Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire. Only village councils are directly elected. The intention behind this organisation of institutions is, according to Crook (2001:10) "to diffuse and fragment any institutional bases around which ethnic or sub-national political identities could re-form themselves". Since ethnic groups are geographically concentrated, it would have been wise to devolve powers to them qua regions. Regionalism in terms of devolution of authority would probably have paid more off than municipalism, in terms of effectiveness and development.

The national rulers often combine the two strategies, but with change in emphasis over time. For example, post-apartheid South Africa and post-Mengistu Ethiopia started out with emphasis on confederalism/regionalism, mainly to pacify key players and/or partners. Once the new regime has consolidated itself, and territorial peace has been secured, regional autonomy has been undermined. District and municipal councils are increasingly emphasised in national policy making.

In Uganda, there has been a parallel tendency as seen above to decentralise cultural autonomy at the regional level, to traditional authorities, while devolve decision-making powers politically to the lowest level of government: the village level. This strategy has

not been successful in keeping peace in the country as is seen in the persistent conflict between LRA and government forces. In Mali, the shift from regionalism to municipalism happened in the planning of the decentralisation reform. The background for the reform was the Tuareg claim to regional autonomy from early 90'ies and the democratisation process in the country in the same period. According to the national pact signed in 1992, the Northern regions were to be granted a particular status within the country (see Seely 2001). However, with the introduction of the overall national decentralisation reform, its particular status was derailed in favour of equal emphasis on all regions. The Tuaregs themselves saw the nationwide decentralisation reform as a positive development, because it would be more difficult for the state to redraw the powers given through decentralisation because of the nationwide coverage (Seely 2001). Furthermore, with this decentralisation reform, the attention shifted to the local (municipal) level, in which the municipalities were seen as the primary level of conflict management and development. The shift towards municipalism has contributed to social development and peace building in South Africa, but less so in Ethiopia, Mali, Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire. Why?

The explanation may lie partly in the narrow power interests of the national rulers, not allowing for optimal size of the municipalities. Politics matter in designing decentralisation reforms (Crook 2001).

And "weak decentralised units may be ill-equipped to manage conflicts" (Hartmann 2006:7).The lack of resources, which is a frequent problem in many decentralisation reforms may lead to or increase conflict. One example which is related to this argument is the conflict in the Niger River Delta in Nigeria, where the local population from time to time stages violent actions directed towards the government and the oil companies, demanding a higher share of the revenue from the production of oil in the area. Decentralisation must ensure a fairer distribution of resources across the country.

Partly the explanation is different capacities and opportunities (such as the extent of mass literacy, public transparency and state financial/human resources of the state). These factors may decide whether decentralisation is linked with a national transformation project that earns wide popular support and emphasises democratisation both at central and local levels. Strategic choices matter, but resources and structural constraints decide?

The most successful, developmental and peace building types of decentralisation seem to prerequisite a strong state centre with powers and political will to (i) redistribute national resources to optimally sized municipalities and (ii) ensure competent local administrations under effective democratic control. In that way, the government is brought closer to the people, it is more capable to include and respond to the people's grievances, and it can pre-empt central-local conflicts. Government becomes a central-local partnership.

Within the strategy of local independence, central-local relations are often portrayed as a zero-sum game, in which the central state retains full control or there is local autonomy. In contrast, the inter-dependence strategy puts forward 'plus-sum' thinking: both central and local levels of a nation can benefit from a shared decentralisation policy. In other words, decentralisation that emphasises the inter-dependence rather than independence of the local tiers in their relationships with the central ones, are important for any post-conflict state building strategy to produce lasting peace dividends.

Although decentralisation may prevent secession as argued in the section above, it may as well as increase the chance of secession, because the local government structure and/or other local power structures may facilitate easy organisation of secession (Hartmann2006

:7). Forrest demonstrates the relevance of this argument in his study of several cases of sub-nationalist movements throughout Africa. In some of the cases where traditional authorities have been revived and given political authority by central government, these have coupled with "autonomy-seeking movements" and thus in the longer run undermined the authority of central government.

4.5 The gender dimension in peace making and conflict management

UN resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (see UN Security Council 2000) calls for awareness of the gender dimension in peace making and conflict management processes through inclusion of women in peace negotiations, demobilisation activities and in "conflict resolution" (ibid.:2). The literature on peace making and conflict management reviewed does not integrate the gender dimension in its discussions, and, in our opinion, this reflects that the literature on gender and peacemaking and conflict management figure as two separate fields. For instance, in discussing how important it is to involve all striding parties in a conflict in peace negotiations, women are not mentioned in particular. In our opinion, the literature thus rules out a factor that in the long run may impede upon the peace making and conflict management processes.

5   Conclusions and the way forward

This paper has discussed the role of decentralisation in peace making and conflict management processes. The main standings in the literature have been presented, which deals mostly with the wider debate on democracy and power sharing. However, as the literature review and the cases treated show, the territorial dimension is a crucial aspect in most civil wars on the African countries and is a necessary element of all peace making and conflict management processes. When focussing on the territorial dimension and decentralisation, it is crucial, we have argued to look at both regionalism and municipalism. We have argued that there is a political trend within African countries of moving from regionalism to municipalism. This trend has to be seen as a political strategy by national elites for reinforcing levy over local politics. This trend may go both ways: either reinforce national unity or create tension between local and national levels, increasing the chance of returning to conflict. Decentralisation thus serves as an intermediate variable.

We have argued that in order for decentralisation to be an instrument for peace and conflict management, the central state has to play a key role and ensure that transfer of authority and resources (fiscal, staff, etc) takes place. In addition, the central state has to oversee that local democratic governments are established. Maintaining a relationship of interdependence between central and local levels of government is thus crucial in achieving a lasting peace building decentralisation process.

There is evidently a need for more studies of the move from regionalism to municipalism and the wider role of decentralisation in peace making and conflict management processes. Moreover, we agree with Hartmann (2002:11) in that we know little about "the impact of decentralisation policies on the interests and strategies of local stake-holders". How are local power brokers adapting to the new institutions and in what ways do they seek to transform their war-politics to peace-politics? The only way to get answers to these questions in an African context is to follow closely cases in which decentralisation has been introduced as part of a peace making and conflict management process. We thus believe that formative process research on these issues would be a fruitful way to go about, given that such an approach may capture the moves and set-backs throughout the introduction of decentralisation.

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