THE STATE, ITS FAILURE AND EXTERNAL INTERVENTION IN AFRICA

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CSGR Working Paper No. 175/05

October 2005

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Summary

Accelerated processes of globalisation – in the form of structural adjustment plans and of democratisation processes – have seriously shaken the fragile foundations of African countries. These processes have contributed overall to widening the geographical scope of zones of limited statehood where the traditional monopoly of violence is challenged by multiple oligopolies of violence. During the 90s, this phenomenon was at best considered as a regionally limited problem with less significance for international stability. This however changed dramatically with the terrorist attacks in New York in 2001. The resulting US national security strategy, quickly followed by the EU, considered failed states as a major national security problem due to the fact that the attacks were partly planned in Afghanistan, a then collapsed state.

The present paper is an attempt to shed a clarifying light on the phenomenon of fragile statehood as well as to explore ways of international intervention. Growing on a Weberian conception of the modern state, it identifies three core functions (monopoly of violence, provision of public goods and political order), which should all be fulfilled by well functioning states. The different stages of state fragility in Africa are then defined by the failing capacity of states to fulfil one or all of these functions. Amidst the whole range of arguments about the reasons of this situation, the paper identifies the deeply rooted neopatrimonial understanding of politics as the most salient explaining variable. The paper concludes by pointing to the fact that international attempts to prevent and to stop state failure as well as to rebuild collapsed states are still at an embryonic stage. Given the multidimensional and complex nature of the problem, an integrated approach among the donor countries will be necessary, which comprises coherent analysis and strategies. The concept of structural stability, formulated by the OECD and the EU still needs to be clarified and translated into concrete policy strategies.

Key words

New international peace and security architecture – democratisation process and new wars in Africa – fragile statehood – root causes of state fragility – neopatrimonialism – corruption – international intervention in fragile states – state stabilisation – state reconstruction – state building – structural stability.

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The state, its failure, and external intervention in Africa

In th e 1990s, the international debate on states in decline, by and large, was an expression of post-Cold War representations (Engel 2002). After the terrorist attacks on New York's twin towers in 2001, the issue of state failure became one of the top prioritie s on the global security agenda. The newly gained sense of urgency and relevance resulted from the realisation of European and American decision-makers that the phenomena accompanying collapsed states – transnational terrorism, local and regional conflict, proliferation of arms, influx of refugees, social deprivation, cultural disintegration, and economic hopelessness – were not merely problems confined to developing countries. Ostensively unimportant countries suddenly appeared to threaten industrialised countries' national security and prosperity. After all, the terrorist attacks in America were at least partially planned and prepared in Afghanistan, one of the then -forgotten failed states. To the international community, it quickly became clear that they could not afford any more Afghanistans.

The understanding spread quickly that to prevent more Afghanistans, it was necessary to focus on supporting fragile states in building functioning and sustainable institutions. The crucial lessons learned found their way into the American National Security Strategy 2002, which declared failed states a greater national security problem than conquering ones. The European Security Strategy (June 2003) as well as the British minister of foreign affairs, Jack Straw, argued (6 Sept. 2002) in the same way: "State failure can no longer be seen as a localized and regional issue to be managed only on an ad-hoc case by case basis. We have to develop a more coherent and effective international response which utilizes all of the tools at our disposal, ranging from aid and humanitarian assistance to support for institution building."

This newly inspired debate has also raised international interest in Africa which, in the past, was ascribed a marginal role in world politics. The new attention resulted firstly from rumours of Al Qaeda activity in eastern Africa and by far more well-founded knowledge of Osama Bin Laden's involvement in the diamond business in the west African region (Global Witness 2003a, 2003b). Moreover, the continent moved directly into focus when, in December 2002, Al Qaeda attacked a hotel in Mombasa. This recalled to memory the first heavy terrorist attacks in East Africa, namely the bombing of the US Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Secondly,

Africa appeared on the global agenda because two thirds of its states are affected by structural deficits. Its conflicts, its dire socioeconomic situation and its stalled democratisation offer all the necessary ingredients out of which international security threats can grow.

For all these reasons, fragile statehood has become the central security, peace and development policy issue at the beginning of the 21st century. Understanding and responding to these very complex situations is a political as well as intellectual challenge. This chapter aims to give a comprehensive overview of the current debate concerning statehood and state failure in Africa. Our central argument is that the fragility of state structures in Africa is one of the most important reasons contributing to the continent's permanent crisis (van de Walle, 2001). While looking at the causes of dysfunctionality, it is the neopatrimonial structure, which explains the states' fragility in the most comprehensive manner. This chapter asks: Why is the state at risk in most African countries and what are the options for external intervention? After a brief presentation of the current debate on statehood we identify three core state functions out of which a typology of fragile statehood will be developed. We then discuss different explanations of fragile statehood before analysing the specific features of African politics. The chapter concludes by offering some insights into the current debate about the possibilities and limits for outside intervention and state-building activities.

Great expectations – great disappointments

'Second independence', 'virtual miracle', 'rebirth of political freedom' – all are optimistic slogans used to capture changes in Africa at the beginning of the 1990s. Each of them put into words the hopes for a better future on the continent, marked by democratic renewal and sustainable development. The end of the Cold War seemed to have paved the way for the termination of the continent's civil wars, which, above all, had been perceived as proxy wars. In fact, in the early 1990s the conflict in Mozambique had been resolved, attempts at the pacification of Angola were auspicious, Ethiopia had released Eritrea into independence, and South Africa not only withdrew from Namibia but also showed willingness a to give up its own apartheid system. The events in Eastern Europe, which brought the "wind from the East that is shaking the coconut trees" (Omar Bongo), carried the political protests, which challenged the autocracies and pushed the transitions to democracy and

multiparty systems.[1] Along with the tremendous changes in world politics the international donors also terminated their unconditional support to African dictators in their respective western or communist camps. Many have since made democracy and human rights a precondition for development aid, convinced that successes of economic reforms will follow automatically upon democratic governance.[2]

Yet only a few years after the wave of democratisation had set in, Africa's second wind of change seemed to have lost steam. Huge hopes and mostly unrealistic expectations turned into disappointment and frustration, leading to downright 'afropessimism', which dampened the euphoria inside as well as outside the continent. The majority of the regimes proved to be façade democracies and consolidated themselves as hybrid regimes, fluctuating between dictatorship and democracy.[3] Many authoritarian leaders remained in power through manipulation of the democratic process. New leaders appeared to belong to the same category as the old ones – in this connection the term 'recycling of elites' worked a circuit Corruption and abuse of power soon made their mark even on the politics of former democratic hopefuls.

Over time, economic reforms remained ineffective. Some isolated indicators improved in the short-term, but the fundamental data have not changed for the better. Social data, such as literacy rates, income per capita, life expectancy and infant mortality rates, all deteriorated considerably in many countries. In spite of comprehensive efforts, the number of people living in poverty in sub-Saharan Africa today is higher than three decades ago, and a change of development is not forseeable at present.[4] More alarming than the slow and fragile progression towards political freedom, was the fact that a number of fledgling democracies were being buried beneath violent civil wars. The peace in Angola gave way to renewed conflict, and

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[1] It was, among others, the global communication streams, as for example CNN's broadcasts of the events in Prague, Hungary, Rumania, or the fall of the Berlin Wall via satellite, which played a reinforcing role for the African democratic movements; see Schmidt 1994, 241. Huntington speaks of snow ball effects as regards globalised communication consequences. (Huntington 1991, 101).

[2] The newly formulated concept according to which the political general set-up was considered to be the deciding factor for economic development was equivalent to a radical reversal of the previous 'development first, democracy second' maxim.

[3] According to Gero Erdmann the commonality between hybrid regimes and democracies lies with the fact that participation is granted to the people through free elections. On the other hand, however, other civil and political human rights are denied in many hybrid regimes. While human rights violations occur frequently, they are neither grave nor systematic. See Erdmann 2002; Erdmann 2001.

[4] Between 1990 and 1998, for example, the number of people living in poverty in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 242 million to 301 million (World Bank 2001, 36).

states like Somalia, Sierra Leone, and Liberia collapsed entirely leaving hundreds of thousands of people dead or refugees inside and outside their countries. Rwanda underwent the continent's first ever genocide with approximately 800,000 killed. The Democratic Republic of Congo became the setting for the so-called 'first African world war', on occasion involving seven countries.[5] The conflict in Sudan, which not only left an estimated three million people dead and could not be solved after more than thirty years, also brought slavery back onto the agenda. Today, Sudan threatens to become a 'second Rwanda'. Ethiopia and Eritrea fought a bloody war on a tiny strip of land. Even some of Africa's rare success stories have come to the brink of failure. In Zimbabwe, the until-recently respected former freedom fighter and president Robert Mugabe has plunged his country into economic and political chaos because he would not relinquish power after more than two decades. Ivory Coast, which was known as the prosperous Switzerland on Africa's West Coast, put itself on a dangerous powder keg of xenophobic resentments, which now threatens to explode at anytime. Many of the crises mentioned fit into the so-called 'new wars' (Duffield 2001) phenomenon, which is marked by, for example, the establishment of warlords and rebels, war economies, and transitional and privatized violence, as well as increasing illegal arms and drug trades. These informal and illegal sectors of the economy offer excellent opportunities for state elites and rebels to increase their political and financial power. They, together with many international companies, show little interest in ending conflict since they profiting so handsomely from it. It is the civilian population, however, which pays the greatest price; they are the ones who suffer most.

This dark side of globalization (European Commission 2001, 5) can be found, above all, in many western and central African states. In addition to all this armed conflict, Africa has to cope with a massive HIV-AIDS infection rate. The disease is wiping out whole generations of economically active people and deeply damaging the economy as well as the social fabric of many African countries. Because of the disease's non-territorial nature, it represents a serious threat to the region's emerging security architecture and compromises its capacity to carry out national and regional

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[5] In the past six years, at least 3.8m people had died of war in DR Congo, most through disease and destitution (The Economist, 22 January 2005, 60).

peace keeping duties (Ostergard 2002, 342; Elbe 2004).[6] AIDS and global insecurity therefore are linked within a vicious circle as the disease is both cause and effect of instability and conflict (UNAIDS 2003).

What has happened in Africa? Why has the end of superpower rivalry blessed Africa with more violent conflict, instability and political fragmentation rather than the expected 'peace dividend' or economic prosperity? There is a growing literature that attributes state decline to globalisation. For many authors (see, for example Igué 1999, or Mkandawire 1999) accelerated processes of globalisation are considered to be the root causes of the dismantlement of state structures in Africa. Most of these arguments view the continent as the victim of a profound structural change in the world economy, whose origin lies in structural adjustment programmes. Others even rank globalisation as the historical successor of the slave trade and colonization. Serious problems exist in this argument, not only in the problematic definition of the globalization,[7] but also in the underlying confusion between symptoms and causes of state decline. First of all, the state in Africa has never been a welfare state similar to the type arguably being undermined in Europe today. Secondly, the imposition of structural adjustment programmes was not the beginning of state decline but a reaction to the African states' economic dysfunctionalities, especially the massive accumulation of debt. A detailed analysis of this debate cannot be undertaken here. Instead, this chapter concentrates on a more enduring problem, the neopatrimonial state's crisis.

The continent's crisis is the culmination of many of the African states' inability to fulfill central state functions in an adequate manner. While fragility has been inherent to the African state since its creation in colonial times, its higher visibility since the beginning of the 1990s has its proximate cause in the crisis of the neopatrimonial system. The latter was enforced and accelerated through the changes in world politics after the end of the Cold War.

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[6] In a more general sense, AIDS also poses a great challenge to international peace keeping operations. The presence of many foreign militaries attracts sex trade workers, which promotes the spread of the disease on an international scale.

[7] A standardised definition of globalisation does not exist. On the one hand, globalisation is rather a political than a scientific notion and it comprises different economic, political, social, cultural processes for every individual case. Frequently, it is the economic perspective that dominates the debate, in particular, if it concerns the question of the globalisation's consequences in Africa or developing countries.

In the following section an analytical framework will be built from which we deduce the core functions of the modern state. Regarding the grave deficits of the modern state in most African countries, we work on the assumption that a functioning state is a decisive precondition for the powers of democracy and economic growth.

The state of the state in the current debate

As stated above, one of the central reasons for the state malfunctioning in Africa lies in the individual states' inability to fulfill what can be called their fundamental tasks. Before analysing the specific nature of the state and politics in Africa, it is useful first to have a brief look at the concept of state itself. A description of the preconditions of a functioning state will help us understand better the shortcomings of African states as they are further analysed in this chapter.

The international debate about the nature, size, scope and functions of the state has experienced a renaissance in the context of accelerated processes of globalisation. Since the end of the Cold War, scholars have thoroughly analysed the role of states in managing social regulation not only in the Third World but also in the industrialized countries. At the end of the 1980s, the state by scholars and political actors was seen as a decaying institution that was not able to guarantee enough security and socio-economic welfare to its citizens. Some commentators even put into question the assumed superiority of the state as the most efficient "organizing principle of social life" (Gilpin 1987a, 10) (Tschiyembe 2001; Trotha 2000). At the end of the 1990s, however, state institutions gained renewed attention by being put at the center of social reforms[8]. The reason was that no serious alternative to the state has emerged either in political science circles nor in development cooperation (Spanger 2001). Nevertheless, the question still remains as to whether the state is the *horizon indépassable* of social organisation, particularly in a time of tremendous social transformation, which is due to the imperatives of global governance (Clapham 2002, 1).

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[8] An abundance of literature reflects the changing character of statehood since the beginning of the 1990s. The loss of sovereignty on the national level as a result of processes of internationalisation have been critically examined by the advocacies of the state as a central nucleus of social and international life. Calls upon the end of the national state at the beginning of the 1990s simply became obsolete at the end of the decade when the state was said to be returning. Representative of these partly irreconcilable views is the World Bank, which in its World Development Report 1997 partially revisited its prior conceptions of the small state. See also Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol 1985.

What is the state, and what are its core functions? This has been a central question of political theory. There is a wide range of scholarly contributions on the forms, structures and functions of the state. From the perspective of international law, the sovereignty of a state is the nucleus of its identity and postulates the unity of territory, people and authority. This three-part definition of the state as a political community where citizenship is realised and where state authority is seen as a legitimate capacity to rule over people, can be considered as the classical definition.[9] Most theories define the state either by reference to its goal, its structure and (bureaucratic) organisation (Weber 1980, 824f.), or to its relationship towards the society, for example as an instrument of oppression in the hands of the ruling class (Marx and Engels 1972, Poulantzas 1978). This last point – the tension between state institution and society – is central to the understanding of state functioning or failure. Many authors consider it to be the fundamental element, which guarantees the efficiency of state institutions (Spanger 2002, 11). Drawing on the tradition of Max Weber, the decision-making capacity and functioning of a state apparatus is measured by its degree of independence from society. At the same, state legitimacy and ruling capacity is measured by its anchoring within the society. Efficient states, therefore, are those which combine "well-developed, bureaucratic internal organizations with dense public-private ties. The recipe works only if both elements are present" (Evans 1995, 72). The Weberian tradition of state structure and organisation has had a tremendous influence on social science research into the state. The advantage of Weber's approach consists in the fact that it postulates an ideal-type of state with a well structured, and rationalised bureaucratic apparatus. This concept of state is far from being uncontested but it continues to be an excellent working definition, which allows us to go from the very structure of the state to its cardinal functions. In so doing, we are well aware of the fact that each definition of the state is marked with a certain degree of normativity[10]. The most valid definitions of the effective state are based on the OECD-model, which originates in the Westphalian State.

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[9] This so-called *Dreielementenlehre* ('Three elements theory') goes back to Georg Jellinek, *Allgemeine Staatsrechtslehre*, Berlin 1900. It has gained broad acceptance since the beginning of the 20th century. See Ipsen, 1990, 56.

[10] We do not deem it necessary to reproduce the largely unfruitful discussion about the cultural provences of the Westphalian model of statehood and its postulated inability to regulate societies with different cultural backgrounds. This thesis has proven fallacious since the proliferation of state institutions all over the world is the sign of ist attraction as social regulation model (Bayart 1996).

After more than a decade of renewed academic discussion about the nature, size, functions and scope of the state, scholars now widely agree on minimum functions of states in industrialised as well as Third World countries (Evans 1997, 62 - 87). Accordingly, a state should fulfill at least three basic functions if it is to be considered more than a symbolic apparatus.[11]

Monopoly of violence: One – if not the most central[12] – duty of a state is its capacity to exert control and authority over its territory. The monopoly of force refers to the state's ability to make use of legitimate instruments of violence. Through a military and a police force, the state intervenes to settle local conflicts, to disarm private violent actors within its jurisdiction, and to control the country's borders. To accomplish this, an administrative apparatus is needed to control and manage resources. The state's capacity to enforce its authority by providing security to its people and governing national territory is the indicator of a guaranteed monopoly of violence.

State services (public goods): Besides the basic task of providing territorial and functional security it is also the state's duty to deliver other public goods in a variety of social sectors[13] (education, health system, infrastructure, social services, labour market, environment, and so on) as well as transparent mechanisms for the redistribution of economic resources. To produce these goods in an adequate manner, the state must possess a number of financing instruments like tariffs, taxes and duties. The general quality of infrastructure, the health and education systems, as well as the redistribution capacities of the state are the most important indicators of this core function.

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[11] There are many ways of classifying state institutions. A very common one consists in distinguishing its size (state functions, government objectives) from its power (capacity to plan and enforce government's policy) (See Fukuyama 2004, 19ff). Without adopting the same analytical canvas, we see some interest in the World Bank's categorization of state functions in minimal, average and active functions. See World Bank 1997.

[12] From a symbolic perspective the monopoly of violence holds a high attraction for leaders of newly independent countries because of the power they are now provided with to control the own population. In post-independence Africa, the military and police were not only systematic repressive instruments but also presented interesting career opportunities.

[13] There exists no universal hierarchy of public goods. The states' capacity to provide most public services depends on a range of factors like economic wealth, and distributional capacities as well as the nature of the regime and quality of the leadership. Most people nevertheless will agree that physical security as defined by the UNDP is the fundamental public good a state should guarantee. For a general overview on public goods, see Gilpin 1987b. A renewed discussion on public goods occurred at the end of the 1990s with the question of their transposition in a global scale. On global public goods, see Kaul et al. 1999.

Political order: This function can be considered as an *acquis* of the redefinition of the state at the beginning of the 1990s. It encompasses forms of political participation, decision-making procedures and the stability of political institutions. Furthermore, it is related to the quality of public administration and the rule of law. Here, relevant indicators are an increasing repression against opposition; elections cheating and fraud; systematic exclusion of certain groups from political decision-making; massive human rights violations; no independent court and legal system; or high level of corruption and clientelism.

A quick look at these core state duties shows how far most African countries are from fulfilling them properly. The majority of states in sub-Saharan Africa are said to be fragile and therefore unable to cope with the huge development challenges they are facing. In fact, many of the post-colonial states have been provided with juridical statehood while lacking empirical prerequisites such as the capacity to provide basic services (education, health, roads, etc.) (see Jackson 1990, Ottaway 2003). Fragility begins when at least one of the core functions is missing or met insufficiently. The following section will deal with the several dimensions of this very complex phenomenon.

Fragile Statehood

Over the last few years, the issue of dysfunctional states has taken up a prominent place within political debate. Nevertheless, the phenomenon is not new as far as Africa is concerned. During the first half of the 1980s scholars were already discussing fundamental problems of the African state. Back then the focus did not lie with the failure or collapse of the state, but more with the qualitiy of stateness. These debates on African states as 'lame leviathans' (Callaghy 1987; Khadiagala 1995), 'quasi-states' (Jackson 1990, 1992; Jackson and Rosberg 1986), 'weak states' (Migdal 1988; Migdal, Kohli and Shue 1994; Reno 1997, 1998), or 'virtual' or 'defective' state increasingly shifted to the analysis of 'state failure' (Cliffe and Luckham 1999; Herbst 1996), 'state collapse' (Zartman 1995; Mair 1999; Tetzlaff 1992) or state 'inversion' (Forrest 1998). The chaos which one believed to observe in those African states on the brink of disaster was mirrored in labels like 'The Politics of the Belly' (Bayart 1993), the 'Criminalization of the state' (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999) or

'Disorder as Political Instrument' (Chabal and Daloz 1999). In the course of the last few years, terms like 'states under crises', 'states at risk', or 'states under stress' have entered the discussion.[14]

State failure appears in various forms. Since the processes' qualities as well as their impacts differ immensely, we argue that they are better understood within the notion of 'fragile statehood'. In contrast to the state failure concept, which suggests a teleological process towards a final state, the concept of fragile statehood is a snap shot which sheds some light on the situation of the state without presuming its further development. Furthermore, it allows a greater analytical differentiation between the different degrees of state dysfunctionality, which is indispensable when it comes to the question of how to reply to the problems of states at risk.

A fragile state cannot fulfill its core functions. This means that its institutions are no longer capable of governing, and are no longer able to provide the population with the basic needs and services outlined above.[15] For the analysis of the phenomenon's different forms, we have to differentiate between the three core functions of modern statehood described above. For each of those dimensions – monopoly of violence, provision of public goods, and political order - there are a series of indicators by which the degree of state erosion becomes measurable.

Firstly, the *monopoly of violence* can be endangered by a series of factors: the incapacity of the state to exert authority over its territory and borders, the presence and growing power of private violent actors (warlords, rebels, terrorists, organised crime networks), the disintegration and privitization of the public security apparatus, the widening circulation of weapons in the civilian population, vigilante justice, or massive increases in crime rates. The more these factors grow in number and intensity, the greater the erosion of the state's monopoly of violence.

Different indicators become visible if the state fails to deliver *public goods or services*: certain groups, for example, are systematically excluded from access to economic resources, private rent-seeking practices flourish, state expenditure on

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[14] Accordingly, the World Bank in 2002 created the initiative 'Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS)'. It is the World Bank's response to improving development aid effectiveness in fragile states; see World Bank: Fragile States: The LICUS Initiative.
(http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/STRATEGIES/EXTLICUS/0,,menuPK:511784~pagePK:64171540~piPK:64171528~theSitePK:511778,00.html).

[15] The following concept was developed within the working team 'States at Risk' at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP, Berlin, under the direction of Ulrich Schneckener. See Schneckener 2004a, 2004b and Schneckener 2003.

health and education falls, tax revenues plummet, and the country suffers from lasting financial and economic crisis. Distribution of wealth is poor and the gap between rich and poor grows wider. Rates of unemployment are high, urbanisation is rapid, ecological problems increase, and public infrastructure, especially the education and the health systems, are devestated.

Finally, if you find increasing repression against political opposition, election fraud, systematic exclusion of certain groups from political decision-making, high levels of corruption and clientelism, the absence of an independent judiciary, massive human rights violations or the break-up of public administration, then you have clear indications that the state is failing to deliver *political order*.

Based on these three state functions, three types of fragile statehood can be developed,[16] wherein special significance is given to the monopoly of violence.[17] For the purposes of understanding this typology, it should be noted that each type/category refers to a process, one which neither inescapably leads states in one direction or another, nor one in which states necessarily passes through all levels one after the other.

The first category is the *consolidated* or *consolidating* state, in which all functions are largely intact over a longer period. In Africa, it is mostly small or island states like Mauritius, Seychelles or Cape Verde, which fall into this category, but also South Africa and Namibia. Benin could be ranked among those states that are on the right track to consolidation.

Weak states: In weak states, failure can be observed only partially. The monopoly of violence, by and large, still exists, but there are overwhelming problems with the public services and/or the political system. It is worth noting that many authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes fall into this category. Despite appearing 'strong' and stable with regard to the monopoly of violence, which is often exercised in ways outside the rule of law, they are 'weak' as regards the other two core areas (state services and political order). The majority of African states belong to the weak-state type; for example Zimbabwe, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Rwanda. Among themselves, however, these states show considerable differences, like for example Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe. While both are ruled by semi-authoritarian

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[16] For a similar typology see Rotberg 2003; Erdmann 2003.

[17] This 'security first approach' argues that security is a fundamental precondition for the field public goods and political order. Without any reasonably warranted security a chance for sustainalbe development is not given.

regimes, Zimbabwe's better initial conditions (natural resource wealth, skilled labour, and developed state structures) permitted a substantially broader distribution of public goods.[18] In both cases, the integrity of state borders may not be endangered, but the security apparatus may be dysfunctional or repressive.

Failing states: Such states may retain some degree of legitimacy, and show signs of a functioning political system able to deliver public services to some of the people, but they find themselves failing if their monopoly over violence and taxation is significantly eroding or eroded. Failing states have lost control over their territory, and grapple with numerous violent non-state actors and regional conflicts. Guinea, Burundi, Central African Republic and Republic of Congo fall under this category, as does Angola, which only recently advanced into this category from being a failed state.

Failed or collapsed states: We can speak of failed or collapse states only in cases in which none of the three state functions exists in a meaningful manner, or where statehood as such has collapsed or never exisited. However, this situation does not necessarily lead to chaos or anarchy as other, often competing non-state actors, take the place of the state. Nevertheless, this situation is, almost without exception, linked to violence, as the non-state actors primarily base their domination on war and repression. Examples of failed African states are Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Root Causes: endogenous meets exogenous

All over the world, state building and state failure are complex processes, which are influenced by many elements and triggered by a series of internal and external factors, which differ from case to case. Therefore, a general theory of state failure seems beyond reach. Though it is not possible to establish mono-causalities, it is possible however to identify the conditions which hamper or prevent the development of stable and functioning states, as far as Africa is concerned.

When it comes to the explanation of fragile statehood in Africa, several reasons are mentioned, which lack validity or are too general or too simple. Complexity is often reduced by focusing on only one major explanatory factor. Most arguments miss structural correlations, and some confuse causes with consequences. Generally speaking, the international discussion about unsatisfactory state

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[18] Zimbabwe's greater capabilities in some fields are mainly due to the different colonial legacies.

performance in Africa suffers from being confined to development studies and controversial debates over modernisation and dependency theories. One important characteristic of these debates is the interpretive divide between western and African thinkers[19] when it comes to identifying the responsibilities. While the culture of externalizing the origins of the continent's problems is still strong among African intellectuals, the European tradition of explaining Africa's actual situation generally tends to minimise the burden of the continent's past and its unfavourable connection to international trade. As a result, the tensions between internal and external causes of state failure reflect the divergent analytical trends.

It is not our aim here to reproduce the virtually inexhaustible list of potential reasons, which are often invoked to explain the shortcomings of African states. For the purpose of demonstrating their analytical inadequacy, however, we will just mention some of them. A very common argument consists in reminding us of the African state's western origin, which was violently introduced during colonial times. As an alien body, the colonial state is said never to have penetrated the countryside, whose socio-economic and cultural conditions were simply ignored. The brutal transformation from a colonial to a sovereign state in the 1960s even worsened the situation. According to Jackson "Africans were catapulted by the rush of events into the state system of the later twentieth century with very limited preparation for large-scale self-government and still attached to indigenous practices and institutions of which most were rooted in kinship duties and clan or tribal (ethnic) identities that were contrary to the obligations and other requirements of modern sovereign statehood" (Jackson 1993, 140). Apart from the fact that this thesis completely underestimates the agency of African political actors, it is an illusion to explain the weakness of state institutions in Africa by invoking the 'importation argument' after more than 40 years of independence and about 80 years of colonial rule. From a historical perspective, it cannot be denied that the state was imported and that its implementation led to the destruction of other forms of social, political and cultural life. But the import of the state went hand in hand with its re-appropriation by African

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[19] This, of course, is a radical simplification of varying positions, which do not automatically reflect the authors' respective cultural backgrounds. There is neither an African nor an European school of thought as such. Too different and complex are the ways of thinking among Africans and Europeans alike. However, the enthusiastic reception of Axelle Kabou's writing in Europe as well as its rejection in Africa shows a real tension between African and Europeans thinkers as far as the role of colonization in African history is concerned. See Kabou 1991.

political and economic elites who sought to shape it for their own personal purposes.[20] This re-appropriation process not only took institutional but also material and symbolic forms, which contributed to the indigenisation of the state in Africa (Mbembe, 2000, 64ff). Diagnosing state failure as a result of the ill-suited European model in Africa ignores the fact that the continent presents a picture of heterogeneous state formation (Herbst 1996), which defies generalisations.

A further widely accepted explanatory variable for state failure is the artificiality of African state borders. The extremely diverse ethnic composition of the population is supposed to have prevented the emergence of a national identity, thereby paving the way to ethnic tensions and conflicts in most African countries. This argument is based on the problematic assumption that the ethnic diversity, which resulted from the foreign imposition of borders, is per se a problem that undermines African development efforts. Two disqualifying reasons could be given: First, state formation very often is a violent and war torn process, which also in Europe led to the unification of ethnically diverse communities. Their national identities emerged out of these state shells as well as out of the legitimacy of the political class. The ethnic diversity as variable to conflicts argument has been convincingly challenged by some authors, who consider available material resources as a primary cause of conflict (Collier and Hoeffler 2001). Furthermore, the obverse thesis would assume that countries with less diverse ethnic communities would be immune to state disintegration and violent conflicts. However, the examples of Rwanda and Somalia – showing some of the most homogeneous ethnic structures in Africa – prove the exact opposite. Second, some empirical studies have been able to demonstrate the existence of national identities, which correspond to the national borders despite ethnic diversity (see e.g. Unesco 1986).

Taking the relationship between economic crisis and state failure as a starting point, some authors argue correctly that processes such as globalisation, privatisation or structural adjustment have contributed to the continent's economic marginalisation and to the indirect undermining of state institutions (Shaw and Nyang'oro 1999). In fact, there is now enough empirical evidence to suggest that globalisation-driven privatisation measures have accelerated some processes of state deterioration. As the demands of structural adjustment resulted in cutbacks within already underfunded and

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[20] This process was explained thouroughly by Bayart 1981.

poorly functioning sectors like education, health, and security, the International Financial Institutions indeed hindered development and contributed to state weakening. Though these points alone do not explain the whole process surrounding weak states, they have to be taken more seriously than others, which consider colonialism, slave trade, unfavourable natural conditions or the exploitation of resources to be responsible for the problems. Just as others who blame the weakness on poverty, ethnic diversity, religious conflicts, the decreasing integrity of armies, increasing rebellions and sub-national movements, family structures, the lack of private property and school, or the absence of a bourgeoisie (see Erdmann 2003; Emmer 2003). All in all, all these arguments certainly play an important role in explaining some features of the multidimensional processes of state failure in Africa. However, they are aggravating, rather than causal, factors. Most of the factors named are able to produce their negative effects on African states because they operate in a context of neopatrimonial politics. The importance of neopatrimonialism for the explanation of the African state's inefficiency lies with the fact that it underlines the dual character of the continent's post-colonial politics and polities.

The neopatrimonial understanding of politics

The above description of African realities, including problems associated with state fragility, lack of economic development and democratic processes, can be linked to and explained by neopatrimonialism - a certain logic of political rule found in Africa. Though this logic may not be valid in all contexts and places in an all-embracing manner, there is no alternative concept, which seriously explains how politics works in Africa. Its strength, thereby, lies within the inclusion of a sociology of power, related to Max Weber's (1864-1920) typology of political domination and legitimacy.

Neopatrimonialism describes the overlapping of two obviously contradictory logics of politics: the patriomial and the legal-rational bureaucratic, whereby the former penetrates the latter determining its output. As a result, the distinction between the private and the public sphere formally exists, but hardly applies in social and political practice.[21] Clientelism and patronage have to be considered an integral part of neopatrimonialism's bureaucratic logic.

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[21] The concept of neopatrimonialism is a widely used concept in political science. A detailed review of all relevant publications is offered by Engel and Erdmann forthcoming. The definition employed here originates from their conceptualisation. See also van de Walle 2001.

While the pre-colonial era was characterised by patrimonial systems of domination, the historical origins of neopatrimonial practices begin with colonisation. The colonial state was never a modern state, but rather a traditional one with some rational features. The legal-rational sphere, dominated by the modern bureaucracy, existed primarily in the capital's center of power where it reached only the European colonialists and small expatriate communities. The vast majority of the population was under indirect rule, governed by intermediary local authorities, who were appointed by the colonial administration. This remained the sphere of patrimonial rule. The colonial state benefited from the socially rooted logic of patrimonialism, and utilized it for its own purpose by creating a privileged small local elite.

After independence the new African leaders reshaped the inherited structures and newly defined the principles of political conduct. This Africanisation of politics makes the securing of political legitimacy the focal point of every ruler's behaviour. In the neopatrimonial system the ruler's political credibility only depends on his abilities to fulfill his personal supporters' expectations and to provide them with sufficient resources. Ultimately, it is all about the maintenance of power.

Three main characteristics follow this particular approach to politics. First, the population has to cope with a high degree of insecurity because the state institutions as well as their agents do not proceed according to rules which apply equally to everyone at all times. Second, the state institutions lack legitimacy as they fail to provide public services according to their universalistic purpose. And third, politics and social relations are characterised by increasing informalization. The informalization of politics and the economy reaches all parts of the society until it comes to the fore as a separate type of political culture. Above all, it is in this informalised sphere where Africa finds itself intensively connected to and involved in globalised processes of politics, trade, and exchange of all kinds.

In the everyday experience it is probably the notion of corruption that is most comprehensible as the visible result of the described neopatriomonial system. Thereby, the difference between corruption, clientelism and patronage are not sanguine. Corruption seems to be omnipresent in Africa where productive resources are deployed to the profit of those in power, and their families, clans, and tribes who hold their hands open. It is not the ability to do a job or the best qualification that directs appointments to positions in government, public administration or private

enterprises, rather it is kinship or the loyalty towards the person who makes the decision or offers the sinecure. Import licences for foreign currency and goods of high demand go to influential intermediaries. Trading licences are issued favorably and not according to economic rational arguments. It is those people who get medical treatment who are in a position to top up the doctors' salary. Above all, the system takes its toll on the people's and state's output. As a consequence, the institutions get more and more dysfunctional and lose their legitimacy. 'What is in it for me?,' becomes the guiding question people ask (Akol 2004, 57).

Despite this indisputable omnipresence of corruption in all areas of life, one should desist from using the sterotypical conclusion that Africans are more corrupt by nature than Europeans, Americans or any other population. It is rather the conditions that determine the behaviour, and in all probability most people in any form of power would behave the same way within a system like that. The difference, however, lies with Africa's weak state institutions, which are unable or unwilling to check and counteract corrupt practices. Therewith, it is especially the dysfunctional legal systems, which prevent the rule of law from establishing good governance and accountability. Without the successful application of the rule of law, you could go on talking about the fight against corruption indefinitely, but it will remain empty talk.

Above all, the neopatrimonial system has done its bit to develop an understanding of corruption among Africans, which is not rarely different from the meaning western observers have in mind while condemning corrupt practices. Though most Africans condemn corrupt practices, corruption at the same time is a widely accepted instrument for the organisation of social and political life. Practices called corrupt by the West are often socially accepted because of their similarity to more 'traditional' forms of reciprocity and solidarity. Though this argument, in our view, is important as regards the better understanding of what happens in Africa, it must not be considered an all-embracing excuse for corrupt behaviour. The process of globalisation, in particular, has also changed appreciation and knowledge about the nature of corruption in Africa. Most of the elites today are aware of the negative implications of corruption.

The neopatriomonial state in crisis

How did this neopatrimonial understanding of politics make the state so visibly dysfunctional by the 1990s? In the first period after independence, the neopatrimonial system worked quite well politically, but was inherently instable. It was, above all, a fundamental obstacle to economic development. By failing to promote economic growth it took away the preconditions for development. Clientelism forms a sharp contrast to the principle of competition and is marked by a high degree of ineffectiveness. It makes political legitimacy dependent on the patron's abilities to perpetuate displays of personal wealth and, at the same time, feed the clientelistic networks on which their power is based. In such a system, political and economic decisions are inherently shortsighted. The patrons, acting directly through personal relations or via state structures, have to give and take immediatly forestalling investment in productive and sustainable activities.

Compounding these difficulties, the world economic crisis in the 1970s destroyed Africa's relative prosperity, which had stemmed from capitalizing on useful colonial assets and stable export prices. The African countries had to face a double shock as oil prices increased while profits for their own agricultural export products dropped. Certainly, other regions' economies had to cope with these problems as well. For Africa, however, they were disastrous in so far as they shook the foundation of the political system the new elites had been establishing. It becomes clear at this point that the negative development in Africa can neither be explained solely from its disadvantaged position on the world market nor the consequences of globalisation. While the debt mountain grew and revenues fell, the patrons began to run out of the means they urgently needed to keep political support. As the crisis shrunk the state's revenue base, the search for resources became more and more intense, power struggles increased and violence often broke out.

A big part of the economic losses in the 1970s and 1980s however, was checked by external financial and development aid. But, as a whole, the donors' generosity decreased during the 1980s, and further support was attached to economic conditionalities under the directive of structural adjustment. The African rulers managed to adapt themselves to the new situation by applying the economic reforms advised by the international community. The structural adjustment programmes were considered the price to pay for continued assistance. By demanding change in conditions and practices, these programmes seemed to strike at the heart of the neopatrimonial system – in theory, at least. In practice, renewed aid and flows of

resources continued to support the maintance of the state and thereby of the political elites, and their neopatrimonial rule. But the high social costs of the state's austerity measures weighed heavily on the already poor population.[22]

In the course of the post-Cold War reforms of the 1990s, all major donors carried out a general reduction of foreign aid while simultaneously linking development aid to political conditionalities. As a consequence, external transfers were less and less available for patrons seeking to maintain their clientelistic networks, which is why the patronage circle of beneficiaries had to be reduced. These conditions increased the democratic movements in the early 1990s as political elites who no longer were admitted to the privileged inner group, joined the opposition. This, however, only partly explains the demands of freedom and democracy. The decisive factors were rather the populations' political and social disenchantment, which had been simmering since the 1980s and was further encouraged by the Eastern European transformations.

The authoritarian leaders' handling of the political conditionalities followed the same strategy as economic reforms had done before. To re-gain access to public foreign aid they made democratic concessions. At first sight, authoritarian governance seemed formally to have come to an end, giving way to democratic transitions. Behind this façade, however, the old mechanisms of domination remained powerful. That the new powerholders, in the end, differed only marginally from their predecessors is due to the fact that the majority of new incumbents belonged to a relatively narrow circle which had been at the political apex for decades. Others, who might have started with the best intentions, didn't manage to escape their determining social structures in the short run. Many went ahead with political reforms to grant a new democratic legitimacy to their domination. By means of divide and rule and clever manipulation of the process, many regimes managed to remain in place. Elections did not become the criterion for credible and convincing policy agendas but as instruments for the mobilisation of group factions. In fact, in some cases the outcomes of elections simply made it possible for the leaders to endow themselves with an aura of 'democratic' legitimacy. From the perspective of Western donors, this strengthened their patrimonial claim to rule.

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[22] An excellent analysis of this vicious circle of external policies, neopatrimonial system, state decline, and its consequences for the population in Sierra Leone gives Keen 2005.

Where financial aid proved to be insufficient for stabilising the neopatrimonial domination, some governments developed new sources of revenue through illegal or criminal ventures in the form of money laundering, the smuggle of arms, diamonds, timber, drugs, and consumer goods, or the plundering of resources in neighbouring countries. Some governments were usurped by warlords. They established comprehensive control over lucrative markets while keeping any potential resource-seeking rivals at a distance – violently, for the most part. The warlords' options grew, first with the privatization of state enterprises which allowed them to take direct control of economic resources (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999, 71); and second with the development of a new sector of the economy. This 'shadow economy' now supplies the warlords with the partners they need for the protection of resources as well as for the high-profit transformation of resources in to wealth (Reno, 1998, 8-9). Within the mentioned areas of trade and business, the different non-state actors cooperate effectively to run a lucrative division of labour. Warlords and rebel movements smuggle drugs and raw materials into the world market via structures of organized crime; in return they receive arms, communication equipment and consumer goods. Rebel and warlord controlled territories also have been known to provide operational bases and safe havens to terrorist and organized crime networks.[23]

Most African states have had to struggle with deficits, especially within the area of public services, for a long time. In the 1990s, however, those states increasingly lost their ability to provide security for their own people and maintain the monopoly of force over their territory. Consequently, state weakness in many cases gave way to state failure or even collapse.

Intervention or indifference?

In terms of the increasingly postulated principle of *ownership* the current efforts to resolve conflict in the Sudan's Darfur region as well as in the Ivory Coast, suggest that the political will and competence are increasingly at hand in Africa. However, the technical, financial and human resources are rather limited. The African community will not be able to overcome its challenges alone. While external support seems to be indispensable the question is, what exactly can be done by the international

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[23] For this as well as for a detailed analyses of non-state actors, see Mair 2002, 2003.

community to deal adequately with the different forms and dimensions of fragile states.[24] Many obstacles have to be dealt with in finding the right answers.

France's precarious position between the fronts in the Ivorian conflict perfectly demonstrates the difficulties of an intervention by a former colonial power. While having been accused by the ruling party of backing the ex-rebels, and conversely by the rebels of supporting President Gbagbo, France was eventually accorded the status of a conflicting party by the Ivorian government. This clearly complicated its mediation efforts (Mehler 2004). At the same time, due to its history, France possesses more field experience in the Ivory Coast then any other European actor. It is therefore unlikely that another country will overtake France's leading role in figuring out political solutions to a conflict that can best be explained as the crisis of the Ivorian neopatrimonial system.

Since any mode of intervention of this kind will have to deal with sovereignty issues, there is an urgent need for developing international criteria aimed at identifying circumstances requiring or justifying intervention. Moreover, although there is a growing consensus regarding the risks of inaction or indifference, international mechanisms for strengthening eroding state institutions before their complete collapse are still lacking.

Decisions to intervene are not only determined by the political will of respective parties, but by the fact of restricted budgets and resources. The limited resources and political will available for the global task of *state-building,* combining security and political development imperatives, runs up against the post-9/11 strategic importance of doing so. The British government, in particular, is currently showing great commitment to the African-European relationship and to putting high on the priority list a solution to Africa's precarious situation. The protection of human rights was defined as a priority of political and military intervention. Tony Blair's Commission for Africa, and its recently released report[25] form the basis for Britain's effort to put Africa at the top of the agenda at the July G8-summit. Apart from

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[24] The imperative for the international community to intervene for state-building purposes is not an uncontroversial issue. It marks a radical change from the development strategies in the 1990s, which considered the state to be inefficient in providing public goods and security for its citizens. However, avoiding the state and focusing instead on civil society organisations as recipients of external goods and services – as was done during the euphoric NGO years in the 1990s - had the unintended consequence of weakening an already fragile state with even more far-reaching effects for the society. It should be noted that international research on the nature and the forms of external interventions in cases of state failure is still in its early stages. For a useful account of the state of the art, see Roehder 2004.

demanding complete debt relief for all developing countries one of the most important recommendations consists of the redoubling of development aid and for the realisation of a Marshall-plan for Africa. The establishment of such a relief programme, so successful in Germany after the Second World War, has lately been given high priority in efforts to address Africa's problems. Whether a new 'Marshall Plan' for Africa would be apposite, however, is doubtful The chances are that old mistakes would be repeated. Substantial funds would be transferred to African states still lacking the social, political and economic structures, which enabled Western Europe to recover after 1945 despite massive devastation.[26] Is it really more money, which has to be transferred to Africa for the improvement of the state's functioning? Probably not. The reasons for the poor results after more than forty years of development aid are not to be found in the amount of money transferred, but in the quality and substance of the programmes, many of which have not adequately taken into consideration local conditions.

To strike at the root of the problem with the objective of strengthening statehood, stabilising and reforming weak states as well as reconstructing failed ones, it is necessary to loosen the neopatrimonial structures of African politics. Given the multidimensional nature and complexity of fragile statehood, there is no universal panacea. Nevertheless, it is not impossible to escape the neopatrimonial logic, though it will likely require long-term strategies of change geared towards the development of a new political class; a political class, which increasingly manages to follow an understanding of politics removed from patron-client logics and interests. External support in such a process should be part of an overarching plan, which targets the structural factors of state failure. However, selectivity will be necessary, sometimes moving short- and mid-term measures to the top of the priority list. Attention should be focussed on those states, which already show a degree of failure without having yet reached the point of collapse.

The instruments which are available for the stabilisation of state structures should be aimed at intervening in different areas of statehood – the monopoly of violence, public goods, and the political system. However, tensions may arise between the different state functions, making the selection of adequate measures more

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[25] Commission for Africa, Our Common Interest. Report of the Commission for Africa
(http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/report/introduction.html).

difficult. For example, on the one hand, improvements in the security sector are of paramount importance. On the other hand, however, it may occasion risks that police and military forces are misused for internal political repression or aggression towards the outside. Similarly, external economic and financial support necessarily increase the state's revenues and therefore its investment options, but, on the other hand, they risk feeding the neopatrimonial structures and its related corruption, clientelism and mismanagement. This is similar when it comes to democracy assistance practices. They are necessary, but can add to the politicisation of collective identities especially in plural societies (Schneckener 2004b, 184-187). In principle, any outside intervention should aim at avoiding what German development practitioners call *Verschlimmbesserungen.*[27] That is when outside intervention aggravates and worsens the conditions it was supposed to change. In order to avoid verschlimmbesserungen, a high degree of coherence should be achieved at two levels. The first level concerns the policy formulation and decision making between the different fields of politics. In countries like Germany, for example, where foreign and development policy is made in different departments, conflicts of interest may emerge regarding the classification of states (weak, failing or failed) as well as the necessary modes of intervention. The second level is about the coherence of foreign and development policies among different European countries. These shortcomings complicate the effectiveness of external intervention.

It is not possible to escape from these interdependences completely. The more different policy areas are involved in the scope of intervention, the higher the chances they absorb the conflicts at least partly. This integrated *state-building* approach corresponds directly with the concept of structural stability[28], firstly formulated by the OECD and the EU, and then demanded by some German researchers, which formulated new approaches to development and Africa policies (Engel et al. 2000). Practical experience, however, makes further prioritisation necessary, which is why increasingly demands are made focussing on the state's monopoly of violence in

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[26] Among others, skilled labour, good transport and communication infrastructure, and a tradition of strong bureaucratic structures (see for example, Fukuyama, 61).

[27] This word is the combination of two substantives: *Verbesserungen* (amelioration) and *Verschlimmerung* (aggravation). It points to the fact that development programmes often unintentionally produce negative side-effects conflicting with the original intentions.

[28] In the year 2000, six German researchers published a memorandum for a new African policy, which was followed by un unusually vivid debate among political scientists and practitioners. It contributed to a readjustment of the official German policy in Africa.

terms of 'security first'. The most important manifestations of state failure are the break-down of internal security, and the increasing inability of states to control their borders and territory and exert their monopoly of violence. To counter this phenomenon the state needs reform of the security sector (army, police, judiciary) as well as demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration of rebels and child soldiers. Though the underlying problems of economic development and good governance are not denied general relevance, they are still attributed to the long-term reforms, which are not appropriate to eliminate the potential for failure in the short run.

This approach is not without criticism either. It could be argued that concentration on security to the neglect of structural challenges (unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, etc.) becomes a problem when international actors withdraw after a relatively short deployment. At the same time, however, it is hardly possible to guarantee the supply of international emergency assistance, let alone public services or the rule of law and democratic participation as long as violence is a constant threat (Rotberg 2003a). How difficult it is to confine the different areas is demonstrated by the example of Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (DDRR) processes in Liberia for example. While both of the Ds cleary fall into the package of security sector measures it is the Reintegration and Rehabilitation, which already go deep into the socioeconomic domain. Only if former fighters can be offered concrete prospects for their futures, do the chances of peaceful political order increase. These examples demonstrates the necessisity to shift quickly from a 'security first phase' to a comprehensive approach which considers (re-)building measures in different areas of state services.

A fixed formulation for solving the external actor's dilemma does not exist. By no means, are successes assured. Each intervention changes local relations of power and as a consequence, has the potential for a destabilising impact. It remains a difficult balancing act between stabilisation and reform of statehood. Non-intervention and half-heartedness are not valid options. Interdependences of world politics are too strong, humanitarian implications too sensitive, and risks for national security too high.

In spite of presently emerging tendencies, the state will not escape its conflicting role in the end. The following conclusion can hardly be denied: The state is an important precondition for the provision of people's security and well-being. Whatever goals internal and external actors are seeking, they should avoid adding to

unrealistic hopes. With all concerned persons this only leads to frustration, which could easily turn into pessimism and unwillingness. This, obviously, only hinders urgent problem-solving. A pragmatic commitment, which is geared to a realistic concept, is all the more necessary.

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