

Research statement for GARNET Mobility Found for Junior Researchers

Regionalism and post-conflict transition.
Does integration improve post-conflict peace reconstruction?
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Aim of the research:

The purpose of this project is to analyse the impact of regionalism on the post-conflict reconstruction in African states. In order to achieve this aim, two important issues must be taken into consideration: 1. Is it regionalism which stimulates post-conflict reconstruction, or 2. on the contrary, what is the influence of reconstruction on regionalism? To answer these two core questions, it is necessary to examine the concept of "new regionalism" (Stadtmüller, 2005, Söderbaum and Shaw, 2003, Shaw, 2000), which for the purpose of this project is understood as a conscious process of creating the identity of a certain group, which is unifying on the basis of a long-term program. The characteristic feature of the "new regionalism" is the co-existence and penetration of three different actors: not only states, as it is explicit in the classic idea of regionalism (Ethier, 2001), but also organizations/institutions and communities/groups (Shaw, 2000). Therefore, the analysis of "new regionalism" will focus on trilateral state-economic-social relations.

The aim of this research is to bring us closer to answering the following questions:

1. Why the underdeveloped countries' engagement in post-conflict peace-building should be interested in creating and supporting the peace and security mechanisms?
2. What is the role of pivotal states and great international NGOs in this process?
3. What is the potential role of regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security in post- Cold War system?

The most important outcome of the project will be the possibility of deep research on the relations between regionalism and post-conflict transition, what is of the uttermost importance for the current EU foreign policy. EU and especially APC are deeply involved in conflict prevention as well as post-conflict reconstruction all around the world (including African countries), which is why this study might have considerable implications in the future.

Description:

Along with the emergence of the so-called Third Wave of Regionalism ("new regionalism", Stadtmüller, 2007) in the 1990s, the region of Africa experienced a "flirt with regional cooperation" (Farrell, 2005). In the face of instability, poverty and famine some African leaders began to consider regional and sub-regional organizations as a remedy for apathy which affected the whole region. Some old organizations (as Organization of African Unity, whose name was changed into African Union when the new 2001 Treaty was signed) underwent institutional modernizations, and new organizations (like NEPAD) came into being. Most scholars are skeptical about describing this new regional movement in Africa; however, some of them from 100 regional groupings (like SADC, ECOWAS or IGAD) are still considered the last hope for African regionalism.

The relations between conflicts and regionalism are well-described by scholars from all over the world (see e.g.: Duffield 2001, Rubin 2001, Wallensteen and Sollenberg 2001); however, the integration processes and post-conflict peace reconstruction have not been analysed thoroughly yet. Furthermore, it is still unknown whether the abovementioned peace rebuilding stimulates regional integration. This project will not only take this challenge on, but it will also try to deal with the question about the possible side-effects of global economic processes on the integration in sub-Saharan Africa. The relations between these two will be analysed in depth.

To answer the abovementioned core questions, the history of conflicts in the Great Lakes Region (Burundi, DRC, Rwanda) will be examined, with special regard to the post-conflict history of Rwanda (1994-2007) and its engagement in activities of regional and sub-regional organisations, such as African Union, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), East African Community (EAC) and International Conference on Great Lakes Region (IC/GLR). Also the reverse analysis will be conducted – an analysis of the influence of those regional initiatives on the social and political reconstruction in Rwanda. In this case, the significance of the President of Rwanda gen. Paul Kagame will be crucial; his support for “new regionalism” is well-known in the whole region, which he proved by joint-actions of the Rwandan Army and the AU-forces in Darfur and his strong pressure to access EAC and play a key-role in NEPAD.

The two other case studies – Burundi and DRC – will show states at different stages of peace reconstruction. Analysing these two cases will provide a broader view of not only the situation in the whole region, but also integration and reconstruction in those countries. “Theory says that there is a period of 6 to 10 years in which the underlying causes of conflict must be addressed in order for conflict not to resume. Experience says however that this sensitive period can last much longer “ (Felicio, 2006). That is why analysing these three case studies, where every country is at a different level of integration and post-conflict rebuilding, will give us better and more general outcomes.

Since the mid-20th century, when many of the African countries became independent, the African continent has been afflicted by the plague of different types of conflicts. However, since the mid-1990s, when most of those conflicts started to decrease or were resolved (Stadtmuller, 2005), in some of the countries we have been able to notice a very slow process of rebuilding peace and reconciliation. This process is one of the most significant milestones in African history. Therefore, examining the “new regionalism” in Africa and its influence on peace reconstruction is of the highest importance for the whole region, which was described by John Pendergast as the “deadliest conflict cluster in the world”. It seems that in order to foster peace and security in the Great Lakes states the regional involvement must be enhanced. That is also why the idea of Regional Conflict Formation (e.g. Rubin, 2001) will be used.