

Introduction: Africa's Transregional Conflicts

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ABSTRACTS

Diese Ausgabe von *Comparativ* schlägt eine neue analytische Kategorie für das Studium einer bestimmten Gruppe von gewaltsamen Konflikten in Afrika und Versuchen ihrer Lösung vor – transregionale Konflikte. Ontologisch ist diese Kategorie abgegrenzt von breiter gefassten und zugleich unbestimmteren Begriffen wie „international“, „transnational“ oder „global“, epistemologisch impliziert sie ein unterschiedliches Verständnis transregionaler Konflikte, wie sie im Lake Chad Basin, im Gebiet der Großen Seen oder am Horn von Afrika zu beobachten sind. Die ‚Bunker‘ der traditionellen Wissensorganisation mit ihrer Einteilung in verschiedene Regionen als Untersuchungsfeld der Area Studies (im Gegensatz zu den so genannten systematischen Disziplinen) werden verlassen, stattdessen werden transdisziplinäre Studien angeregt, die nach der sozialen Konstruktion von „Regionen“ fragen.

Transregional conflicts – this collection of articles introduces this new analytical category for the study of a specific group of violent conflicts in Africa while providing perspectives on possible resolutions. Ontologically, this proposed category is distinct from broader, more fuzzy terms such as “international”, “transnational”, or “global”. And epistemologically it implies a different understanding of the way in which transregional conflicts such as, for instance, the ones around the Lake Chad Basin, the Great Lakes region, or the Horn of Africa can be studied. Accordingly, this category of transregional conflicts: leaves the silos of the traditional organization of knowledge, with its division between different areas as studied through area studies (as opposed to the so-called systematic disciplines), and rather engages in cross- and transdisciplinary exercises to unpack the way how “regions” are socially constructed.

We investigated the extent to which armed conflicts conventionally regarded – and coded – as ‘internal’ had, in reality, an internationalized component. We discovered a very high level of clandestine cross-border military operations and various forms of support to proxies by neighboring countries (some covert, some openly acknowledged), not captured in the existing characterization. This analysis caused us to redefine the paradigmatic African armed conflicts from ‘internal’ to ‘internal conflicts with important internationalized political and military components.’ Competition and contestation among states emerged as an important feature of the African political landscape. [...]

One of the striking features of this analysis was the extent to which neighborly engagement in peace processes – both conflict mediation and also PSOs [peace support operations] – reflected earlier patterns of political-military involvement. [...]

This pattern of inter-state competition has significant consequences for how the AU [African Union] engages in armed conflicts in the ‘shared spaces’ of the Mediterranean-North Africa and the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden. These contexts are adversely affected by Middle East inter-state competitions that are fuelling conflicts across the region, a phenomenon that has been particularly marked in the case of Libya.¹

1. The Problem

Arguably most academic observers and practitioners would agree that the nature of violent conflict as well as related African and external interventions on the continent have changed since the end of the Cold War.² Some would also argue that within these past 30 years, or so, substantial changes can be observed in more than one way – from the rise of “complex political emergencies”³ to “new wars”,⁴ not to forget “terrorism and violent extremism”⁵, as well as from the ascent of “emerging security regimes”⁶ to “regional security complexes”.⁷ Looking at today’s balance sheet some of the recent improvements in the peace and security situation on the continent, if any, may be attributed to the rather

1 African Politics, African Peace. Report submitted to the African Union by the World Peace Foundation. Preface by Thabo Mbeki and Lakhdar Brahimi, (Medford MA): The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, 2016, §§41, 42, 42d.

2 See J. J. Hentz, *The Routledge Handbook of African Security*, Abingdon, New York 2014.

3 J. Macrae and A. B. Zwi (eds.), *War and Hunger: Rethinking International Responses to Complex Emergencies*, London 1995; L. Cliffe and R. Luckham, Complex political emergencies and the state: failure and the fate of the state, in: *Third World Quarterly* 20 (1999) 1, pp. 27–50.

4 M. Kaldor, *New and Old Wars. Organized Violence in a Global Era*, Stanford CA 1999.

5 AUC Chairperson, Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa, PSC/AHG/2(CDLV), Addis Ababa: African Union, 2014.

6 K. Booth, *A Security Regime in Southern Africa: Theoretical considerations*, Bellville 1994; K. Powell, *The African Union’s Emerging Peace and Security Regime: Opportunities and Challenges for Delivering on the responsibility to Protect* (= ISS Monograph 119), Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies 2005; S. A. Dersso, *The quest for Pax Africana: The Case of the African Union’s peace and security regime*, in: *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 12 (2012) 2, pp. 11–47; Ch. Bueger, *Communities of Security Practice at Work? The Emerging African Maritime Security Regime*, in: *African Security* 6 (2013) 3/4, pp. 171–190.

7 M. Brosig, *The emerging peace and security regime in Africa: the role of the EU*, in: *European Foreign Affairs Review* 16 (2013) 1, pp. 89–105; I. Castellano Da Silva, *Southern Africa Regional Security Complex: The Emergence of*

successful transformation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union from 1999 to 2002 and the post-2007 emergence of international “strategic” partnerships between the African Union, on the one hand, and the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), on the other. However at the same time, on the downside one could also think of the fallout of the Arab Spring and forced regime change in Libya as well as the related rise of radical insurgencies and violent extremism such as Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin, al-Qaida in the Maghreb, or, somewhat earlier, al-Shabaab in the Horn of Africa. Both the positive and the negative changes on the continent – has opened up the African continent for all kinds of external intervention. Against this background, and very generally speaking, two distinguishable strands of academic debate have received broader attention. First, there is a body of literature that is focusing on the changing nature of violent conflict on the continent.⁸ Second, there is an interest in how over time the conditions for peacekeeping in Africa have become more cooperative.⁹ The languages used in these analyses establishes some common ground between the two debates: both make use of a spatial vocabulary in which notions of border- and region-crossing entanglements, interconnectedness and complexity are interwoven. In most cases, and may be for good reasons, this has remained fairly descriptive. “Transnational” seems to be the single most relevant catchphrase in this respect. A good example of emphasizing seemingly new spatial entanglements that empirically had already emerged over many centuries¹⁰ is Mali, which has recently been reimagined in terms of its “transnational” connectiveness.¹¹ In this case, attention is being paid to the involvement of “terrorists” into all kind of trafficking: arms, cars, cigarettes, cocaine, heroin, people, etc. The focus on transnational organized crime (TOC) is one of the key threads of a discourse that interprets most forms of border-crossing dynamics as “transnational”.¹² The other key thread of the debate is migration.¹³ In a similar way, and

Bipolarity? (= SALLA Occasional Paper 15), Pretoria: Africa institute of South Africa 2012; Ch. Hendricks and N. Keita, Introduction: Security Regimes in Africa: Prospects and Challenges, in: *Africa Development* 42 (2017) 3, pp. 1–12.

8 For general perspectives W. Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*, New York 2011; P. D. Williams, *War and Conflict in Africa*, Cambridge 2011; S. Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations. War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa*, Ithaca NY 2015.

9 R. Tavares, *Regional Security: The Capacity of International Organizations*, London, New York 2010; M. Brosig, *Cooperative Peacekeeping in Africa: Exploring regime complexity*, Abingdon, New York 2015; C. De Coning, L. Gelot and J. Karlsrud (eds.), *The future of African peace operations. From the Janjaweed to Boko Haram*, Uppsala, London 2016.

10 R. Austin, *Trans-Saharan Africa in Global History*, Oxford 2010.

11 See S. Shaw, *Fallout in the Sahel: The geographic spread of conflict from Libya to Mali*, in: *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 19 (2013) 2, pp. 199–210; E. Kwesi Aning, *Transnational Security Threats and Challenges to Peacekeeping in Mali*, in: *Conflict Trends* (2014) 2, pp. 11–17; T. Hüsken and G. Klute, *Political Orders in the Making: Emerging Forms of Political Organization from Libya to Northern Mali*, in: *African Security* 8 (2015) 4, pp. 320–337.

12 See, for instance, C. Blum, *Transnational organized crime in Southern Africa and Mozambique*, Maputo 2016; A. L. Mazzitelli, *Transnational organized crime in West Africa: The additional challenge*, in: *International Affairs* 83 (2007), 6, pp. 1071–1090. This, of course, is amplified by politics. See UNODC Annual Report 2016, Vienna: UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017 and UN Secretary-General, *Report of the Secretary-General on transnational organized crime and drug trafficking in West Africa and the Sahel region*, New York 2013, UN doc. S/2013/359, 17 June 2013.

13 R. Black/R. King (eds.), *Transnational migration, return and development in West Africa*, Special issue of *Popula-*

all over Africa, “insurgencies”,¹⁴ “armed groups”,¹⁵ “extremism”, “security challenges”,¹⁶ “security threats”,¹⁷ or “security governance”¹⁸ are imagined in terms of their “transnational” properties.¹⁹ In all these cases, the “transnational” basically is part of a descriptive vocabulary, or a signifier, that denotes border- and/or region-crossing links, connections, entanglements and a somehow felt inability to isolate “cases” or “units of analysis”. In addition to the spatial marking of these interwoven entanglements, they are often also described as “complex” or reference is made to their “complexity”. This may be illustrated by two quotes from books that are certainly considered to be standards in their respective fields:

*Highly complex and dynamic conflict systems are placing significant demands on African peace and security institutions. In response, new practices and cooperative models are emerging in an attempt to try to shape a more peaceful and stable continent ... From experiences to date, a pattern of complex hybridity emerges.*²⁰

And to the same tune:

*The bad news is that the rising number and interconnected complexity of these conflicts will make it impossible for African countries – even with extensive international assistance – to address all of these conflict situations effectively.*²¹

Of course, this raises the question what the nature of this particular “complexity” is and what follows from its observation in analytical terms: how best to study “conflict complexes” and the very nature of their “complexity” in Africa (and elsewhere)?

tion, *Space and Place* 10 (2004) 2, pp. 75–174; I. Freemantle, Exploring transnational spaces of Chinese migrants in Africa”, in: *Africa Insight* 40 (2010) 1, pp. 31–48.

14 D. Deltenre/M. Liégeois, Filling a leaking bathtub? Peacekeeping in Africa and the challenge of transnational armed rebellions, in: *African Security* 9 (2016) 1, pp. 1–20.

15 M. Brubacher/E. K. Damman/Ch. Day, The AU Task Forces: An African response to transnational armed groups, in: *Journal of Modern African Studies* 55 (2017) 2, pp. 275–299.

16 P. N. N. Addo, Ghana's foreign policy and transnational security challenges in West Africa, in: *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 26 (2008) 2, pp. 197–211.

17 C. Obi, Nigeria's foreign policy and transnational security challenges in West Africa, in: *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 26 (2008) 2, pp. 183–196.

18 J. Hönke and M.-M. Müller, Governing (in)security in a postcolonial world: Transnational entanglements and the worldliness of “local” practice, in: *Security Dialogue* 43 (2012) 5, pp. 383–401.

19 For a more reflected analysis of the spatial entanglements of the conflicts in and around Mali, which is informed by new political geography, see K. P. W. Döring, The changing ASF geography: from the intervention experience in Mali to the African capacity for immediate response to crises and the Nouakchott process, in: *African Security* 11 (2018) 1, pp. 32–58. See also the sound analysis by B. Charbonneau, Intervention in Mali: building peace between peacekeeping and counterterrorism, in: *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 35 (2017) 4, pp. 415–431 on the blurred boundaries between “counter-terrorism and “peace-keeping”. Both authors show how agency and space are closely linked. See also the solid overview by the OECD: *An Atlas of the Sahara-Sahel Geography, Economics and Security*, Paris 2014.

20 De Coning et al. (eds.), *The future of African peace operations*, p. 1.

21 S. Emerson and H. Solomon, *African security in the twenty-first century. Challenges and opportunities*, Manchester 2018, p. 253.

This volume is trying to address the dual description of conflict in Africa and related interventions²² as “complex” and “transnational”, by questioning both denotations and developing an alternative angle for examining the material. In the following section, debates about border- and/or region-crossing entanglements of conflict will be briefly addressed. In the second section of this introduction, a very brief history of the various ways to make sense of interconnections and entanglements, that is to say the “complex” nature of things, in the study of African conflicts will be presented. This is followed in section three by an overview on the spatial vocabulary that is mobilized in this respect. Both of this is done with a view to advance, in the fourth section of this introduction, the conceptual debate about the place of “regions” in the understanding of African conflict dynamics. On this basis, in the fifth section, the term “transregional” will be discussed. First, it will be argued that this term not only introduces a so far neglected spatial category of analysis, but also provides a more encompassing perspective, that it is also better suited to engage with the “complex” nature of the subject matter. The spatial lens introduced through the term “transregional”, so the main argument goes, facilitates new relational perspectives that are more precise than, for instance, “transnational”, and have the potential to bridge some of the divides that are addressed in the following section. By bringing in the transregional, a more shared language can be found that may open up the way for further theorizing. Second, the way “transregional” is used here also problematizes the way research is organized on different world regions in what is called area studies, such as African studies. Seen from this perspective, “transregional” is not only an invitation, but surely also a challenge to work across the borders of commonly accepted “regions” and the academic borders authoritatively dealing with them. Finally, in the last section of this introduction, an outline of the organization of this volume is provided.

2. Imagining Etangled Conflicts in Africa

Since the end of the Cold War 30 years ago,²³ research has tried to make sense of fluid and compound peace and security situations in Africa by introducing a series of terms – some mainly descriptive, a few also analytical. The current debate about how to imagine Africa’s conflict-related entanglements actually started in the mid-1990s with increasing observations of *complex emergencies*. Addressing the nexus between war on the one hand and hunger and famine on the other, Johanna Macrae and Anthony B. Zwi²⁴ seem to be the first authors to make use of the term in an African context.²⁵ Parts of the debate con-

22 For an overview see E. Schmidt, *Select Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*, Cambridge 2013.

23 For Africa see U. Engel, *Africa’s “1989”*, in: U. Engel, F. Hadler and M. Middell (eds.), *1989 in a Global Perspective*, Leipzig 2015, pp. 331–348.

24 Macrae and Zwi (eds.), *War and Hunger*.

25 The Ngram Viewer, which allows the PDFs of books to be analysed by Google, indicates that the phrase was first used in 1976 (which does not preclude its use in articles before). It gained currency in the first half of the 1990s and peaked in 1999. See Ngram Viewer on “complex emergencies”, <[https://books.google.com/ngrams/...](https://books.google.com/ngrams/)> (accessed 1 March 2019).

tinued to focus on this dimension of human security,²⁶ while others were more interested in the link between conflict and stateness. For instance, this was discussed extensively in 1999 in a special issue of the *Third World Quarterly*.²⁷ In this volume Lionel Cliffe and Robin Luckham²⁸ sketch a “typology of situations [...] on the basis of the state and its dynamics and of the origins, forms and trajectory of the CPE [complex political emergencies] and of interventions into it”,²⁹ using CPE as a heuristic tool beyond the African continent and arguing that conflict situations and outcomes in these countries are mediated through the nature of the state (the latter is discussed in terms of the state failure” paradigm that gained currency in those days).³⁰

While the term *complex emergency* remained in the realm of humanitarian assistance and was related to a notion of human security,³¹ *complex political emergency* was used by those with a long-standing interest in the interplay of various conflict drivers.³² More recently, this has also been addressed by Dossou D. Zounmenou and Reine S. Loua³³ as well as by Festus Aubyn³⁴ who, however, focuses on *complex political crisis*. In contrast, Jakkie K. Cilliers and Greg Mills locate the idea of complex emergencies in the context of UN peacekeeping.³⁵ In the same vein, Kwesi Aning,³⁶ through this perspective, considers

26 See J. Macrae, *Shifting sands: The search for ‘coherence’ between political and humanitarian responses to complex emergencies*, London 2000; L. Gelot (née Bergholm), *A role for the UN in Africa in the 21st century? The limits of the UN peace operations principles: The case of Congo and the challenge of a complex humanitarian emergency*, PhD, Department of International Relations, University of Wales, Aberystwyth 2005.

27 L. Cliffe, *Regional dimensions of conflict in the Horn of Africa*, in: *Third World Quarterly* 20 (1999) 1, pp. 89–111 (Special Issue: Complex political emergencies).

28 Cliffe and Luckham, *Complex political emergencies*, p. 36.

29 Ibid., p. 27.

30 Again, according to the Ngram Viewer, the combination “complex political emergency” in the singular showed up first in 1995, with a peak in 2003 and increasing again after 2007. However, when used in the plural, “complex political emergencies” already showed up first four years earlier, in 1991, with a peak in 2003, too, and another surge beginning in 2005. See <<https://books.google.com/ngrams/>> (accessed 1 March 2019).

31 See Ch. Hendricks, *From State Security to Human Security in Southern Africa: Policy Research and Capacity Building Challenges* (= ISS Monograph 122), Pretoria 2006; A. Abass (ed.), *Protecting Human Security in Africa*, Oxford 2010.

32 See, for instance, Ch. Scherrer, *Genocide and Crisis in Central Africa: Conflict Roots, Mass Violence, and Regional War*, Westport CN 2002, or C. Obi, *Nigeria’s Niger Delta: Understanding the Complex Drivers of Violent Oil-related Conflict*, in: *Africa Development* 34 (2009) 2, pp. 103–128.

33 D. D. Zounmenou and R. S. Loua, *Confronting complex political crises in West Africa: An analysis of ECOWAS responses to Niger and Côte d’Ivoire* (= ISS Paper 230), Pretoria 2011.

34 F. Aubyn, *Managing complex political dilemmas in West Africa: ECOWAS and the 2012 crisis in Guinea-Bissau*, in: *Conflict Trends* (2013) 4, pp. 26–32.

35 J. K. Cilliers and G. Mills (eds.), *From Peacekeeping to Complex Emergencies. Peace Support Missions in Africa*, Johannesburg 1999. See also F. B. Aboagye (ed.), *Complex Emergencies in the 21st Century. Challenges of New Africa’s Strategic Peace and Security Issues* (= IPSS Monographs 134), Pretoria 2007; Id., *Confronting complex emergencies in Africa: Imperatives of a search for a new doctrine of humanitarian “security” interventions* (= ISS Paper 204), Pretoria 2009. In his presentation of a “complex peace-building model” de Coning (C. De Coning, *Coherence and integration in the planning, implementation and evaluation of complex peace-building operations*, in: *Conflict Trends* [2004] 1, pp. 41–48, here 42f.) also suggests this dichotomy between a relief and a peacekeeping community. As regards the archaeology of the debate on emergencies, the debate seems less clear-cut and more ambivalent.

36 E. Kwesi Aning, *The challenge of civil wars to multilateral interventions: UN, ECOWAS, and complex political emergencies in West Africa; a critical analysis*, in: *African and Asian Studies* 4 (2005), 1–2, pp. 1–20.

UN and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) interventions in West Africa. Discussing the temporality of emergencies, Mark O'Keefe et al. talk about *chronic emergencies*.³⁷

The identification of "(regional) conflict complexes" goes beyond the discussion of complex emergencies, highlighting the relative permanence of protracted violent conflict constellations and their border-crossing effects and specific entanglements that link "internal" and "external" actors.³⁸ More recently, Mikael Erikson has employed the idea of regional conflict complexes with regard to the situation that has developed in and around Libya after the forced removal of Muammar Gaddafi in October 2011.³⁹ In any case, from here the debate took a more analytical route. Somewhat addressing similar empirical observations the terms coined in recent years include "emerging (peace and) security regimes", "regional security complex theory", "regime complexity" and "security assemblages".

Some authors simply focus on *emerging security regimes*⁴⁰ or – considering approaches adopted by the regional economic communities (RECs) – on *collaborative security regimes*.⁴¹ In this context security regimes are simply used as a short form for the dynamics surrounding the negotiation and establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).⁴² The understanding of regime often draws on a combination of James Rosenau's and Göran Hyden's works.⁴³ And in doing so, varying justice is done to the

37 M. O'Keefe, M.-L. Martina and S. P. Reyna, From war on terror to war on weather?: Rethinking humanitarianism in a new era of chronic emergencies, in: *Third World Quarterly* 31 (2010) 8, pp. 1223–1357.

38 Iconic in this respect P. Wallensteen and M. Sollenberg, Armed Conflict and Regional Conflict Complexes, 1989–97, in: *Journal of Peace Research* 35 (1998) 5, pp. 621–634. See also A. Silve and T. Verdier, A theory of regional conflict complexes, in: *Journal of Development Economics* 133 (2018) C, pp. 434–447. Basically, this is looking at the other side of the coin of "regional security complexes" as discussed by D. A. Lake, *Regional Security Complexes: A Systems Approach*, in: D. A. Lake and P. M. Morgan (eds.), *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, University Park PA 1997, pp. 45–67; P. M. Morgan, *Regional Security Complexes and Regional Orders*, *ibid.*, pp. 20–42; B. Hettne, *Regionalism, Security and Development: A Comparative Perspective*, in: B. Hettne, A. Inotai and O. Sunke (eds.), *Comparing Regionalisms: Implications for Global Development*, Basingstoke/Hampshire 2001, pp. 1–53; Id., *Security Regionalism in Theory and Practice*, in: H. G. Brauch et al. (eds.), *Globalization and Environmental Challenges: Reconceptualizing Security in the 21st Century*, Berlin, Heidelberg 2008, pp. 403–412, or M. Legrenzi and F. H. Lawson, *Regional security complexes and organizations*, in: A. Ghescu and W. C. Wohlforth (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Security*, Oxford 2018.

39 M. Erikson, A Fratricidal Libya: Making Sense of a Conflict Complex, in: *Small Arms & Insurgencies* 27 (2016) 5, pp. 817–836.

40 Powell, *The African Union's Emerging Peace and Security Regime*; U. Engel and J. Gomes Porto (eds.), *Towards an African Peace and Security Regime. Continental Embeddedness, Transnational Linkages, Strategic Relevance*, Farnham and Burlington VT 2013; but also Brosig, *The emerging peace and security regime in Africa*; M. Brosig and D. Motsama, *Modelling cooperative peacekeeping: Exchange theory and the African peace and security regime*, in: *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 18 (2014) 1/2, pp. 45–68.

41 Sh. Field (ed.), *Peace in Africa: Towards a collaborative security regime*, Johannesburg 2004.

42 See U. Engel and J. Gomes Porto (eds.), *Africa's New Peace and Security Architecture. Promoting Norms, Institutionalizing Solutions*, Farnham/Burlington VT 2010.

43 J. N. Rosenau, *Governance in a New Global Order*, in: D. Held and A. McGrew (eds.), *Governing Globalization. Power, Authority and Global Governance*, Oxford 2002, pp. 70–86, and G. Hyden, *Governance and the Reconstitution of Political Order*, in: R. Joseph (ed.), *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, Boulder CO 1999, pp. 179–195. See also G. Hyden, J. Court and K. Mease (eds.), *Making Sense of Governance: Empirical Evidence from Sixteen Developing Countries*, Boulder CO 2004.

conceptual debate about regimes. These contributions to the debate first and foremost aim at empirical reconstructions of an emerging field.

Somewhat differently, Barry G. Buzan and Ole Wæver⁴⁴ as well as Malte Brosig⁴⁵ are trying to make theoretical claims. In their *regional security complex theory* the most known representatives of the Copenhagen school on security studies and securitization, Buzan and Wæver argue that in the post-Cold War period distinct security regimes have emerged in many regions of the world, including Southern Africa.⁴⁶ Their point decidedly brings in the role of “regions” in international security – as opposed to “international” or “global” (in more detail on this point see the next two sections of this introduction).⁴⁷ Already in his monograph on *People, States and Fear*, originally published in 1991, Buzan defines a security complex as “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another”.⁴⁸ While the idea quickly became fashionable in other parts of the world,⁴⁹ it took some time for scholars working on Africa to discuss the merits of regional security complexes. For example, in his discussion of dynamics within the Horn of Africa, Barouk Mesfin, who at that time was with the Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies (ISS), rather affirmatively relates to regional security complex theory.⁵⁰ In contrast, in his analysis on the emergence of a security complex in Southern Africa, Igor Castellano da Silva criticizes the way Buzan and Wæver have constructed a single security regime in the region, without discussing the empirical limits of the concept’s operationalization.⁵¹ Another more sceptical discussion of the concept can also be found in a special issue of the journal *Africa Development*, edited by Cheryl Hendricks and Naffet Keita.⁵²

44 B. Buzan and O. Wæver, *Regions and Power. The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge 2003.

45 Brosig, *Cooperative Peacekeeping in Africa*.

46 Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Power*.

47 For the use of the similar term in a totally different context – concerning the rising density of international institutions in the field of plant generic resources – see K. Raustiala and D. G. Victor, *The Regime Complex for Plant Generic Resources*, in: *International Organization* 58 (2004) 2, pp. 277–309. Their focus is on the emergence of a collective of partially overlapping and non-hierarchical regimes.

48 B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, London 1991, p. 190.

49 For instance, T. Kahrs, *Regional security complex theory and Chinese policy towards North Korea*, in: *East Asia* 4 (2004) 12, pp. 64–82. More recently the concept has also been applied to the policy of Turkey (A. Barrinha, *The ambitious insulator: revisiting Turkey’s position in regional security complex theory*, in: *Mediterranean Politics* 19 [2014] 2, pp. 165–182) as well as interactions between the Middle East and North Africa (R. Hanau Santini, *A new regional cold war in the Middle East and North Africa: regional security complex theory revisited*, in: *The International Spectator* 52 [2017] 4, pp. 93–111). According to the Ngram Viewer, the combination “regional security complex” was first mentioned in 1983, with a huge increase in 1994, a peak in 2000, and another surge beginning in 2002 – though at a lower rate of growth. See <[https://books.google.com/ngrams/...](https://books.google.com/ngrams/)> (accessed: 1 March 2019).

50 B. Mesfin, *The Horn of Africa security complex*, in: R. Sharamo and B. Mesfin (eds.), *Regional Security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa*, Pretoria 2011, pp. 1–29.

51 Da Silva, *Southern Africa Regional Security Complex*.

52 Hendricks and Keita, *Introduction. Security Regimes in Africa*.

Another attempt to theorize regions and conflict in Africa has been undertaken by Brosig, an associate professor in International Relations (IR) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. He builds on Buzan and Wæver to introduce his own concept of *regime complexity*.⁵³ Researching recent dynamics of international peace-keeping in Africa involving the UN, the EU, and African regional organizations, Brosig's main argument is that "these actors are partially converging and forming a regime complex that is reaching beyond dyadic relations".⁵⁴ Accordingly, today

*security governance in Africa is characterised by regime complexity in which individual actors, mostly IOs [international organizations], jointly manage security issues addressing a broad range of questions ranging for example from conflict management and mediation to peacekeeping or post-conflict peacebuilding activities.*⁵⁵

With Kal Raustiala and David G. Victor,⁵⁶ Brosig argues that regime complexity is "being constituted by a number of actors that are starkly interconnected and thus not fully decomposable to its component units".⁵⁷ In addition, and following a rational, functional approach, Brosig strongly relates his model to the evolving literature on inter-regionalism and inter-organizational studies,⁵⁸ which, he claims, is marked by the "absence of a coherent single theory".⁵⁹ It is noteworthy that in this debate the terms "complex" and "complexity" are often used interchangeably, without venturing into the broad field of complexity theory itself and a discussion of the merits of using, for instance, network analysis or discussing fractals, and the like.⁶⁰

In addition to regime complexity, the notion of *security assemblages* has become somewhat attractive.⁶¹ Building on the works of the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) and Félix Guattari (1930–1992), assemblages are considered to be a "bridging concept", an equivalent term to Foucault's epistemes, Kuhn's paradigms, or Callon, Law,

53 M. Brosig, The African Security Regime Complex: Exploring Converging Actors and Policies, *African Security* 6 (2013) 3–4), pp. 171–190; Brosig, Cooperative Peacekeeping in Africa.

54 Ibid., p. 3.

55 Ibid., p. 5.

56 Raustiala and Victor, The Regime Complex for Plant Generic Resources.

57 Brosig, Cooperative Peacekeeping in Africa, p. 5.

58 See, for instance, R. Biermann and J. Koops (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Interregional Relations*, London 2015.

59 Brosig, Cooperative Peacekeeping in Africa, p. 21.

60 In the social sciences complexity theory is increasingly discussed in relation to public administration. See, for instance, E.-H. Klijn, Complexity Theory and Public Administration: What's New? Key concepts in complexity theory compared to their counterparts in public administration research, in: *Public Management Review* 10 (2008) 3, pp. 299–317, and J. W. Meek (ed.), *Emergence: Complexity & Organization* 12 (2010) 1 (Special Issue: Complexity Theory for Public Administration and Policy). On its application to the field of peace and security see Ph. vos Fellman, Y. Bar-Yam and A. A. Minai (eds.), *Conflict and Complexity. Countering Terrorism, Insurgency, Ethnic and Regional Violence*, Berlin 2015, who utilize a particular version of complexity theory to examine terrorism, specifically terrorist networks. I owe my introduction to transdisciplinary complexity theory to the late Paul Cilliers, Stellenbosch University (1956–2011). On the substance of complexity theory see P. Cilliers, *Complexity and postmodernism. Understanding complex systems*, London, New York 1998.

61 See T. Baker and P. McGuirk, Assemblage thinking as methodology: commitments and practices for critical policy research, in: *Territory, Politics, Governance* 5 (2017) 4, pp. 425–442.

and Latour's actor-network-theory.⁶² Assemblage thinking as outlined in *A Thousand Plateaus*⁶³ highlights the fluidity and multiple borders of complex social situations. In the social sciences, the US sociologist Saskia Sassen has been instrumental in framing the assemblage approach as a way of dealing with complexity ("complex systems"), though using it "in its most descriptive sense".⁶⁴ Drawing on Sassen, Ottawa-based political scientists Rita Abrahams and Michael C. Williams⁶⁵ utilize this approach to situate private security companies in Nigeria and South Africa in global governance vis-à-vis the role of states, thereby coining the term "global security assemblages".⁶⁶ Actually, in the field of Critical Security Studies assemblage thinking became "part of the new materialist turn".⁶⁷ Adam Sandor, who did his PhD with Abrahams, has recently used the concept to analyse drug trafficking in West Africa.⁶⁸ Likewise Paul Higate and Mats Utas base their discussion of private security providers in Africa on the notion of global assemblages:

*Complex and fluid networks through and by which assemblages are configured are largely invisible to consumers and perhaps less so providers, yet remain visceral in their sometimes violent materiality. Ultimately, these hybridized forms of governance seek order in the name of capital accumulation [...].*⁶⁹

By drawing attention to the methodological need to be aware of the fluidity and contingency of social constellations, the concept of assemblage offers an interesting lens for conducting research. However, it also seems difficult to operationalize in comparative research on peace and security in Africa. For the purpose of this volume, we, therefore, will settle on differentiating between the *adjective* of something described as *being complex* – as in "complicated", "compound", "convoluted", "heterogeneous", "intricate", "mosaic", "multiplex", "sophisticated", or whatever the antonyms are – and the *noun* complex, that is to say something that is composed of more than one thing and that can be discussed in terms of its *complexness*.

62 R. Luckhurst, Bruno Latour's Scientification: Networks, Assemblages, and Tangled Objects, in: *Science Fiction Studies* 33 (2006) 1, pp. 4–17.

63 G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis MN 1987 [1980].

64 S. Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights. From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, Princeton NJ 2006, p. 5, fn 1. For the political science field of International Relations see the reader edited by M. Acuto (ed.), *Reassembling International Theory: Assemblage Thinking and International Relations*, Basingstoke 2013.

65 R. Abrahamsen and M. C. Williams, *Security Beyond the State: Global Security Assemblages in International Politics*, in: *International Political Sociology* 1 (2009) 3, pp. 1–17.

66 See also R. Abrahamsen and M. C. Williams, *The changing contours of Africa's security governance*, in: *Review of African Political Economy* 35 (2008) 118, pp. 539–553; Id., *Security Beyond the State: Private Security in International Politics*, Cambridge 2011.

67 O. Bures, *Private Security Companies. Transforming Politics and Security in the Czech Republic*, in: *European Review of International Studies* (2016) 1, pp. 123–126.

68 A. Sandor, *Assemblages of Intervention: Politics, Security, and Drug Trafficking in West Africa*, London and Uppsala 2017, p. 2.

69 P. Higate and M. Utas (eds.), *Private Security in Africa: From the Global Assemblage to the Everyday*, London and Uppsala 2017, p. 2.

3. Talking Space and Scales

So how are the various entanglements and interconnections of, in, and around Africa typically imagined in the academic literature? After the end of the Cold War a proliferation of spatial references in works dealing with Africa can be observed. This may be a reflection of uncertainty about the emerging new global order and Africa's place therein. But in most cases, it certainly does not reflect the advent of the spatial turn in the social sciences and humanities in African studies.⁷⁰ Broadly speaking, the following descriptors seem to dominate the field: “cross-border”, “regional”, “inter-regional”, “transnational”, “continental”, and “global”. In this list, frequently an assumed hierarchy of scales is implied; the scales themselves sometimes become containers of social life. The following examples are totally random, just illustrative and not meant to be representative. They are taken from a cross-reading of the Uppsala-based Nordic Africa Institute's online library catalogue.⁷¹ Certainly, the following observations cannot replace a detailed analysis of the development of spatial language and designations as well as their constructed nature and changes over time in the various disciplines dealing with peace and security on the African continent. This will remain a desideratum for digital humanities and big data entrepreneurs.

In many disciplines *cross-border* or *border-crossing* is used as a signifier to denote social or other relations that are cutting across a border. This is often related to the flow of people – as in migration, flight, trafficking or displacement. But it can also be linked to spiritual moves across borders or to the flow of goods. This interest in borders was institutionalized in 2007 when, in Edinburgh, the African Borderlands Research Network was founded.⁷² While the general literature on cross-border is mostly descriptive, borderland studies often looks into how borders can constitute identities and interests, that is to say used in an analytical way that usually reflects some constructivist argument.

The *regional* can be found almost everywhere. Unlike in human geography, the term is not used usually to discuss sub-national regions (for instance, governance units in federal systems), but mainly with reference to the dynamics within seemingly given geographical units – such as “West Africa”⁷³ or “East Africa”⁷⁴ – or between groups of countries that claim to form a region,⁷⁵ that is to say RECs such as ECOWAS or the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Primarily, the coding of something as “regional” is coupled with issues like investment, traffic, infrastructures, food insecurity, climate change, development assistance, cooperation, etc. – and, most importantly, “regional

70 On the latter see U. Engel and P. Nugent (eds.), *Respacing Africa*, Leiden/Boston MA: 2009; U. Engel et al., *Africa in the Globalizing World – A Research Agenda*, in: *Comparativ* 27 (2018) 1, pp. 107–119.

71 Nordic Africa Institute Library, <<http://nai.uu.se/library/>> (accessed: 1 March 2019).

72 The African Borderlands Research Network website. <<http://www.aborne.org>> (accessed: 31 July 2018).

73 E.g. A. Marc, N. Verjee and S. Mogaka, *The Challenge of Stability and Security in West Africa*, Washington DC 2015.

74 E.g. East Africa Regional Conflict and Instability Assessment. Final Report. Burlington VT: Tetra Tech ARD, prepared for US Agency for International Development.

75 See G. M. Khadiagala, *Regional Cooperation on Democratization and Conflict Management in Africa*, Washington DC 2018.

integration". In large part, "regional" is meant to be descriptive. Usually in this kind of literature the constructed nature of region is not addressed at all. Likewise, the term *inter-regional* or *inter-regionalism* is used to discuss cooperation and conflict between these regions.⁷⁶

The most widespread form to discuss conflict and conflict resolution in Africa through a spatial vocabulary seems to be in terms of *transnational* dynamics.⁷⁷ Mainly the term is used for describing connections and interactions among a number of African countries or by relating things that happen on the African continent and somewhere else. So, the notion may be used when it comes to communication, conflict, diasporas, ideologies, infrastructures, medicine, migration, terrorism, trafficking, etc. But it is also employed when discussing resource extraction and the role of foreign (read as non-African) companies. Otherwise anything that remains within the confines of "Africa" and, at least potentially, could affect all African countries is usually referred to as *continental*. This is not only in the context of ideologies and ideas (such as Pan-Africanism), but also with reference to material infrastructures such as transport corridors or peace and security as well as governance "architectures". As a side note, the term *continental* also pops up quite frequently in analysis of post-apartheid South African attempts to define its role in Africa and beyond. The term *international*, however, is only used less prominently when referring to entangled conflicts.⁷⁸

Finally, the *global* serves as a code word for discussing "Africa's" relations with the rest of the world, be it in terms of aspirations, dependency, global order, identity, security, and so on. In this respect, very different understandings of "globalization" appear with regard to its historicity (is it recent or does it at least go back to the mid-19th century?), to its content (is it just economics or in addition somethings else?), to its nature (is it one process or many?), and to its geographical centre (is it spreading from the Western trials and leading to homogeneity or are we talking about multiple non-convergent processes that are developing everywhere?). A relational use of the term "global" that does not assume a process of homogenization and accepts the idea of multiple, competing globalization "projects" would then raise the question of how to study Africa in the world and the world in Africa in a different way.⁷⁹

76 According to the Ngram Viewer, the term "inter-regional" has seen its heydays in the 1970s and 1980s (obviously linked to the booming literature on the European Union); while the term *inter-regionalism* started its ascend in 1998 – after a huge increase in numbers a first peak was reached in 2005. See <<https://books.google.com/ngrams/...>> (accessed: 1 March 2019). Momodu actually uses the term *pan-regionalism*, see R. Momodu, *Nationalism Underpinned by Pan-Regionalism: African Foreign Policies in ECOWAS in An Era of Anti-Globalization*, in: J. Warner and T.M. Shaw (eds.) *African Foreign Policies in International Institutions*, London 2018, pp. 95–112, at 201.

77 As shown by the Ngram Viewer, internationally the term appears for the first time in 1870, though not really playing a role until around 1967/68. A first peak of its use is in 1983, with a sharp increase after 1990/91. See <<https://books.google.com/ngrams/...>> (accessed: 1 March 2019).

78 That is if one disregards references to the International Criminal Court, international norm diffusion and other forms. This somehow contradicts attempts to embed African peace and security relations into "international relations". See T. Murithi (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Africa's International Relations*, Abingdon 2014.

79 See A. Appadurai, *Globalization and Area Studies: The Future of a False Opposition* (= The Wertheim Lecture

This incomplete look at a spectrum of spatial references and the need to explore all of them in far more detail, is neatly summarized by Brosig,⁸⁰ when he stated:

*De facto we need to analyse events that are “multilateral, transnational, global, continental, regional, interregional, national, and subregional [...] overlapping interrelated and interconnected”.*⁸¹

So before offering a critical assessment of some of these spatial imaginations and their presumptions in the section after next, let us quickly turn to the question of how “regions” relate to all of this.

4. Discovering Regions

Prima facie, the relevance of regions as units of analysis in African peace and security studies is nothing new. It has been established a seemingly long time ago, mainly with a view to the liberation struggles in Southern Africa in the 1970s and 1980s.⁸² “Regions” usually were treated as much as containers of social action as nations, being static and bounded, and thus, by extension, of John Agnew’s argument facing a “territorial trap”.⁸³ These conflicts, and also the international diplomacy surrounding them, sometimes have also been imagined in terms of transnational entanglements.⁸⁴ Recently, the same theme has been re-invoked with regard to the Horn of Africa.⁸⁵ After 2000, some authors have stimulated a debate about the interplay of regions vis-à-vis processes of globalization.⁸⁶ So, acknowledging the relative importance of regions, the question was posed how these regions relate both in practical and in theoretical terms to what commonly is conceived of as “globalization”.⁸⁷ A succinct example of such an enquiry is the article by University

2000), Amsterdam 2000; R. Abrahamsen, Africa and international relations: Assembling Africa, studying the world, in: African Affairs 116 (2017) 462, pp. 125–139; Engel et al., Africa in the Globalizing World.

80 Actually quoting R. Roloff, Interregionalism in theoretical perspective, in: H. Hänggi, R. Roloff and J. Rüland (eds.) Interregionalism and International Relations, London, New York 2006, pp. 17–30, at 18, 24.

81 Brosig, Cooperative Peacekeeping in Africa, p. 11.

82 See, for instance, D. Geldenhuys and W. Gutteridge, Instability and conflict in Southern Africa: South Africa’s role in regional security, London 1983; A. F. Isaacman, Mozambique and the regional conflict in Southern Africa, in: Current History 86 (1987) 520, pp. 213–216, 230–234; Ch. Brown, Regional conflict in southern Africa and the role of third party mediators, International Journal 45 (1990) 2, pp. 334–359.

83 J. Agnew, The territorial trap: the geographical assumptions of international relations theory, in: Review of International Political Economy 1 (1994) 1, pp. 53–80.

84 See G. W. Shepherd (Jr.), Anti-Apartheid: Transnational Conflict and Western Policy in the Liberation of South Africa, Westport CN 1977.

85 R. Sharamo and B. Mesfin (eds.), Regional Security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies (= ISS Monograph 178) 2011.

86 See, among many others, A. Acharya, Regionalism and the emerging world orders: sovereignty, autonomy, identity, in: S. Breslin et al. (eds.), New Regionalism in the Global Political Economy. Theories and Cases, London 2002, pp. 20–32; G. Buzan, Security architecture in Asia: The interplay of regional and global levels, in: The Pacific Review 16 (2003) 2, pp. 143–173, and A. Hurrell, One World? Many Worlds? The Place of Regions in the Study of International Society, in: International Affairs 83 (2007) 1, pp. 127–146; on “comparative regionalism” also T. Börzel and T. Risse (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism, Oxford 2016.

87 For an excellent overview J. Agnew, Evolution of the regional concept, in: A. Paasi, J. Harrison and M. Jones (eds.) Handbook on the Geographies of Regions and Territories, Cheltenham, Northampton MA 2018, pp. 23–33.

of Sussex scholars Cairtriona Dowd and Clionadh Raleigh on the interplay between “the global” and “the local” in “Islamic terrorism”.⁸⁸

The debate on what exactly constitutes a “region” has developed intensively since the launch of a discourse on “new regionalisms” around the turn of the millennium.⁸⁹ Essentially, the argument was advanced that after 1989/90 a proliferation of regional organizations, regional integration processes and regionalisms outside the traditional role model of regional integration, that is to say the European Union (EU), took place.⁹⁰ However, on balance there is little consensus in the research community on the nature of regions and the processes leading to their successful constitution,⁹¹ apart from the somewhat constructivist idea that regions are socially constructed, hence always contingent and necessarily fluid⁹² – as any other spatial frame of reference. This insight, by the way, is discussed at very different levels of meta-theoretical reasoning and with varying degrees of alignment to the spatial turn in the social sciences and humanities.⁹³

And in addition to this theoretical irritation, real world developments often defy the permanence of neatly carved regions. In fact, in many cases the borders of regions have become blurred exactly because of the unfolding of transregional dynamics. The situation between the Horn of Africa and the Gulf region is a case in point.⁹⁴ But the same can also be said about ECOWAS, to name but one other example from the world of formal regionalisms: In 2017, Morocco (which had been admitted to the African Union in January 2017 after years of absence from the OAU since 1984) expressed its intention to join the West African group of states, thereby adding an interesting touch to this regional project, and Tunisia followed suit aiming at some form of cooperation agreement – as both do not share a common border with ECOWAS member states.⁹⁵

88 C. Dowd and C. Raleigh, The myth of global Islamic terrorism and local conflict in Mali and the Sahel, in: *African Affairs* 112 (2013) 448, pp. 498–509. For general overviews on regionalism in Africa see D. Bach, *Regionalism in Africa. Genealogies, Institutions, and Trans-State Networks*, London, New York 2015, and F. Mattheis, *African regionalism*, in: A. Paasi, J. Harrison and M. Jones (eds.) *Handbook on the Geographies of Regions and Territories*, Cheltenham and Northampton MA 2018, pp. 457–467.

89 See, for instance, E. D. Mansfield and H. V. Milner, *The New Wave of Regionalism*, in: *International Organization* 53 (1999) 3, pp. 589–627; B. Hettne and F. Söderbaum, *Theorising the Rise of Regionness*, in: *New Political Economy* 5 (2000) 3, pp. 457–474; F. Söderbaum and T. M. Shaw (eds.), *Theories of New Regionalism: A Palgrave Reader*, Basingstoke, New York 2003.

90 For a critique of the underlying assumptions see U. Engel et al., Introduction. The challenge of emerging regionalisms outside Europe, in: U. Engel et al. (eds.) *The New Politics of Regionalism. Perspectives from Africa, Latin America and Asia-Pacific*, London, New York 2016, pp. 1–15.

91 For example, as institutions, see J. Branch, *Territory as an institution: spatial ideas, practices and technologies*, in: *Territory, Politics, Governance* 5 (2017) 2, pp. 131–144.

92 U. Engel, *Regionalismen*, Berlin 2018.

93 See H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, London 1991 [1974]; E. W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London 1989; D. Massey, J. Allen and Philip Sarre (eds.), *Human Geography Today*, Cambridge, Malden MA 2005 [1999]; and J. Murdoch, *Post-Structuralist Geography. A Guide to Relational Space*, London, Thousand Oaks, CA 2006.

94 See R. Abusharaf (ed.), *Africa and the Gulf Region: Blurred Boundaries and Shifting Ties*, Berlin 2015.

95 There are very few regionalisms with member states not sharing common borders, such as the Lusophone Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) where in fact none of the members has a common border.

5. Developing a Transregional Perspective

In this second to last section of the introduction, a short critique of some of the proposed spatial denotations will be discussed on the basis of the spatial turn in the social sciences and humanities and, against this background, perspectives on a transregional studies agenda will be developed.

In the context of the conflicts considered, reference to the “international” does not add much in terms of analysis, but if taken seriously, it rather limits the discussion to only a certain type of actors and dynamics between them. True, many of the conflicts discussed in this volume indeed also happen in the international realm and it is states – both African and others – as well as international organizations that respond to them.⁹⁶ But this space is only comprised by and between states. Ontologically “international” is just an extension of the “national”, that is to say it is taking these containers for granted. They appear as “frozen frameworks where social life occurs”.⁹⁷ But rather, relational thinking on space reminds us,

*they are made, given meanings, and destroyed in social and individual action. Hence, they are typically contested and actively negotiated. [...] Spatial organizations, meanings of space, and the territorial use of space are historically contingent and their histories are closely interrelated.*⁹⁸

In our case, they are contested by non-state insurgencies, forms of violent extremism, organized trafficking, and the like, with little or no interest in national boundaries. So, the reference to the “inter”-national sphere is an inept way of conceptualizing the specific kinds of conflicts that are at the heart of this edited volume. The same holds true for the term “inter-regionalism”, which usually refers to relations between regions organized on a state-by-state basis. Somewhat similar, one could argue that reference to the “global” takes it a step too far, as it is often assumed without any question that certain dynamics are indeed of a global character, such as the “global war on terror”.⁹⁹

Thus, to avoid some of these connotations and possible pitfalls, many authors have reverted to using the term “transnational” – but mostly without discussing the underlying spatial implications. And, undoubtedly, the prefix “trans-” does not solve the problem of underlying methodological nationalism.¹⁰⁰ Also, the term “transnational” sometimes

96 On Africa in international relations Murithi (ed.), *Handbook of Africa's International Relations*; S. Cornelissen, F. Cheru and T. M. Shaw (eds.), *Africa and International Relations in the 21st Century*, Basingstoke 2015; J. W. Harbeson and D. Rothchild (eds.), *Africa in World Politics. Engaging in a Changing Global Order*, 6th ed., Boulder, CO 2016.

97 A. Paasi, *Territory*, in: J. Agnew, K. Mitchell and G. Toal (eds.) *A Companion to Political Geography*, Malden MA etc. 2003, pp. 109–122, at 110.

98 Ibid.

99 On Africa in global international relations see P. H. Bischoff, Kwesi Aning and A. Acharya (eds.), *Africa in Global International Relations. Emerging approaches and to theory and practice*, London, New York 2016.

100 The prefix “trans-” goes back to the Latin word for “across” (also: “beyond”, “through”, “changing thoroughly” or “transverse”).

is indeed blurring the boundaries of the described topic, diverting attention away from specific actors and their spatial embeddedness.

Alternatively, the term “transregional” has two ontological and two epistemological advantages. First, “transregional” can accommodate both formal political regions (as in RECs) as well as informal, cultural, or geographical regions that are not made up of states but made by shared imaginations. These regions refer to commonly understood spaces that are transcending nations (that is to say, also do not include sub-national entities). This could be regions within Africa comprising geographical consensus on regionness (for example, “West Africa” or the “Sahara”) – though debates on what exactly makes up the “Horn of Africa” already indicate how fluid and contested regions can be over time.¹⁰¹ This understanding of regions could also involve entities that are arranged through political or economic projects, like the RECs. In this case, “transregional” would refer to dynamics between these African regions. The transregional conflicts that are emerging at the interface of African geographical, cultural, and political regions cut across those institutionalized RECs that are representing the regions politically (such as ECOWAS, the Economic Community of Central African States [ECCAS], the East African Community [EAC], the Intergovernmental Authority on Development [IGAD], and SADC). They are producing their own, new regions. In fact, to talk about transregional, rather than transnational, entanglements in and around Africa is nothing entirely new,¹⁰² but it seems to have got lost over the past decades.¹⁰³

Second, the assertion that something is “transregional” in nature is delimited by claims of processes of globalization. It is an open invitation to empirically validate which dynamics are truly global (that is to say encompassing the world) and which are “just” transcending a certain (world) region but are not (yet) truly global. Mainstream perspectives on the global, we would argue, are actually hiding transregional processes. A detailed examination of the transregional will thus not only produce more accurate descriptions, but as an analytical category it also has the potential to differentiate often fairly abstract theories on globalization and capture in a more detailed way the entanglements of different scales of space and activity. In this case one could think of relations between regions – “Africa” vis-à-vis “Europe” – that may entail formal organizations, such as AU and EU, as well as

101 See K. Mengisteab, *The Horn of Africa*, Cambridge 2014; A. De Waal, *The Real Politics of the Horn of Africa. Money, War and the Business of Power*, Cambridge 2015; Ch. Clapham, *The Horn of Africa: State formation and Decay*. London 2017.

102 D. E. Lampert, *Patterns of transregional relations*, in: D. E. Lampert, *Comparative regional systems: West and East Europe, North America, the Middle East, and developing countries*, New York 1980, pp. 429–481, or W. T. Tow, *U.S. alliance policies and Asian-Pacific security: a transregional approach*, in: W. T. Tow and W. R. Feeney (eds.), *U.S. foreign policy and Asian-Pacific security*, Boulder CO 1982, pp. 17–67, and more recently A. B. Tickner and A. Mason, *Mapping transregional security structures in the Andean region*, in: *Alternatives: Global, local, political* 28 (2003) 3, pp. 359–391; H. Loewen and D. Nabers, *Transregional security cooperation*, in: *Asia Europe Journal* 3 (2005) 3, pp. 333–346, and also G. Segell, *A Decade of African Union and European Union Transregional Security Relations*, in: *South African Journal of Military Studies* 38 (2010) 1, pp. 25–44.

103 According to the Ngram Viewer, the term “transregional” has been in use since 1927, showing smaller waves of wider use in the mid-1930s as well as in the 1950s. It really took off in 1970 with an exponential rise in the 1990s, reaching a first peak 2004. See <[https://books.google.com/ngrams/...](https://books.google.com/ngrams/)> (accessed: 31 July 2018).

non-state actors, such as migrant smugglers, narcotraffickers, proselytizing groups, and special forces – or what Latham (though in the context of a debate on transnationalism) has called “transterritorial deployments”.¹⁰⁴

Third, “transregional” also is a chance to rethink the organization of knowledge construction established through seemingly given regions, such as a “sub-Sahara Africa”, “Northern Africa and Middle East”, “Europe” and so on. Transregional entanglements, being one conclusion coming from the spatial turn, not only transcend existing regions, but they are also creating new ones. The emerging field of transregional studies therefore seems particularly suitable to reflect on the kind of conceptual Eurocentrism that still dominates research in non-European cultures.¹⁰⁵ Thinking about transregional entanglements calls into question the essentialization of taken-for-granted “world regions” that have been established “long ago”. Existing research on transregionalism indicates that maybe a new epistemology also has to be developed, as no single discipline alone any longer is able to meaningfully deal with transregional topics. This requires some form of intellectual as well as organizational innovation in trans- and interdisciplinarity, including a solid practice of “doing research with” rather than “doing research on” non-Western regions.

And, fourth, thinking “transregional conflict” also allows one to focus on the social processes involved in making things transregional, such as in assemblage. Accordingly, emphasis is placed on the actors involved, their interest, repertoires, and means of communicating the “transregional” character of something – be it through naming and framing or be it through violent action or intervention.

Interestingly, for a number of disciplines or fields transregional studies is not that novel. After the beginning of the new millennium, global history and cultural studies have begun to nurture a transregional studies agenda.¹⁰⁶ The term is also quite common in some “niche” IR sub-fields, for instance in works on the relations between the former territories of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as well as with countries to their east.¹⁰⁷ Also, research in learning and knowledge management increasingly seems to be expressed in terms of transregionalism. However, one may have to question the extent to which the last two examples are merely characterized by adopting a new vocabulary, rather than really defining a new perspective of how to conduct research on regions and their interactions in the social sciences and humanities.

In any case, this volume is developed around a set of ontological and epistemological assumptions that are rather new to African studies and neighbouring fields of research. The editors have asked contributors to map conflict dynamics and interventions pertaining to their case study through a transregional perspective, and through comparison to substantiate this perspective. In order to disentangle hybridity, complexity, interconnec-

104 R. Latham, *Identifying the Contours of Transboundary Political Life*, in: T. Callaghy, R. Kassimir and R. Latham, *Intervention & Transnationalism in Africa: global-local networks of power*, Cambridge 2001, pp. 69–92.

105 See M. Middell (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, Abingdon 2012.

106 See *ibid.*

107 Nordic Africa Institute Library, <<http://nai.uu.se/library/>> (accessed: 1 March 2019).

tivity, and overlaps – as opposed to the rather static view on “regions” – they were also asked not only to look into the historicity of the dynamics playing out today, but also to describe dominant entrepreneurs of transregional dynamics and the emergence of new alliances in more detail. Furthermore, contributors to this volume were asked to analyze the emerging forms of governance in their respective case studies.

In more practical terms, the African Union, as the continent’s most important multi-lateral actor, has started reflecting these developments in terms of conflict prevention and mediation: In the past eight years or so, the AU has increasingly acknowledged the relevance of transregional conflicts. While in the 2000s the chairperson of the AU Commission (AUC) appointed special envoys or high-level representatives only for specific country-based conflicts, there has been a more recent trend to appoint these representatives for transnational and even transregional conflicts. Thus, out of the currently 13 special envoys, some are responsible for Guinea (appointed in 2009), Tunisia (2013), or Darfur in Sudan (2012), whereas others are addressing “Mali and the Sahel” as well as the “Great Lakes region”, respectively (both 2012).¹⁰⁸

Increasingly the language of “transregional” is also entering the world of policy analysis and response option formulation. For instance, in its section on policy recommendations, the 2016 Word Peace Foundation report on “African Politics, African Peace” – which was quoted at the very beginning of this introduction – concludes on the topic of “AU-Trans-Regional and Extra-Regional Organizations”:

*The AU and TIXROs [transregional and extra-regional organizations] such as the Arab League, OIC [Organization of Islamic Cooperation], GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council], EU and NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], need mechanisms for the shared spaces such as the Mediterranean Sea and its southern littoral, and the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden. [...] A host of issues in relation to the “shared spaces” need to be addressed in such forums. These include: resolving the Libya conflict; addressing the migration and refugee crisis; tackling transnational organized crime; addressing the conflict in Yemen and the Red Sea-Gulf of Aden crisis; responding to threats of maritime terrorism and piracy.*¹⁰⁹

Although this volume concentrates on the African continent and the transregional entanglements of conflicts playing out on African soil, the ideas developed here are certainly meant to be relevant for other world regions too, as the cases of Syria or Iraq in their respective transregional entanglements clearly demonstrate.

108 See “Special Envoys of the Chairperson of the Commission”. URL: <<https://au.int/en/cpauc/envoys>> (accessed: 31 July 2018).

109 African Politics, African Peace. Report submitted to the African Union by the World Peace Foundation. Preface by Thabo Mbeki and Lakhdar Brahimi, [Medford MA]: The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, 2016, §§194, 195. The primary authors of this report are Mulugeta Gebrehiwot (Addis Ababa) and Alex de Waal (Medford MA). A conceptual definition for “AU-Trans-Regional and Extra-Regional Organizations”, however, is not developed.

6. Organization of this Volume

In the following article, Nickson Bondo offers an analysis of the conflicts in the Great Lakes region. He focuses on attempts to mitigate violent conflicts that have broken out after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the subsequent Congo wars of 1996/97 and 1998–2003 through the establishment of a new intergovernmental organization, the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), which is headquartered in Bujumbura (Burundi). The ICGLR cuts across existing RECs such as the SADC, the EAC, and ECCAS. The following two articles discuss African transregional conflicts-in-the-making. Katharina Döring explores whether the deployment of the G5 intervention force in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad in 2017¹¹⁰ actually started a process of region-building that will lead to the emergence of another transregional conflict in the Lake Chad Basin. This is followed by Jens Herpolsheimer who enquires if and how the maritime security debate on the Gulf of Guinea, the so-called Yaoundé Process, which cuts across ECOWAS and ECCAS, can be analysed in terms of an emerging transregional conflict. The next article is on a transregional conflict that links Africa with another world region: Dawit Yohannes and Fana Gebresenbet investigate the emerging transregional conflict that is connecting the Horn of Africa across the Red Sea to conflict dynamics that are determined by, among others, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Qatar and currently mainly playing out in Yemen.

110 Döring, The changing ASF geography; K. P.W. Döring/J. Herpolsheimer, The spaces of intervention for Mali and Guinea-Bissau, in: *South African Journal of International Affairs* 25 (2018) 1, pp. 61–82; Finding the right role for the G5 Sahel Joint Force, Brussels: International Crisis Group, 12 December 2017.