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**State of the Displaced:**  
The Role of Returning Displaced Persons in  
Post-Conflict State Reconstruction

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## – STATE OF THE DISPLACED –

### THE ROLE OF RETURNING DISPLACED PERSONS IN POST-CONFLICT STATE RECONSTRUCTION



DEVELOPMENT STUDIES INSTITUTE OF THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

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*Picture taken by the author (Dominik Helling), Néré (Mali), March 2005.*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFP	Agence France-Press
art.	Article
ASC	African Studies Centre, University of Leiden
CCA	Canadian Council on Africa
CERA	Commission for Eritrean Refugee Affairs
cf.	confer
CRSC	Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science
DSE	Deutsche Stiftung für internationale Entwicklung ('German Foundation for International Development')
ed.	editor
eds.	editors
e.g.	exempli gratia
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
et al.	et alii
etc.	et cetera
EU	European Union
FDPs	Formerly Displaced Persons
GoE	Government of Eritrea
$h_{n.m}$	sub-hypothesis
$H_n$	main hypothesis
ibid.	ibidem
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDMC	Internally Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons

IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
km	kilometre(s)
LDCs	Less Developed Countries
LSE	London School of Economics and Political Science
PROFERI	Programme for Refugee Reintegration and Rehabilitation of Resettlement Areas in Eritrea
Q	Main research question
QIPs	Quick Impact Projects
resp.	respectively
RSQ	Refugee Survey Quarterly
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNU	United Nations University
URL	Universal Resource Locator
USCRI	U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
US-\$	US Dollar
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WIDER	World Institute for Development Economics Research

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“[T]he goal of the refugee regime was not to help restore stability to the international system but to destabilize governments [and] cause states to fail [...]”*

– KEELY 2001:308

### 1.1 SETTING THE STAGE

During the Cold War a ‘convenience marriage’ between ‘refugee production’ and the consequent deliberate ‘state failure’ had been arranged. Gloating about every refugee from the Eastern block, the Western capitalist system tried to cave in the communist countries by pursuing a policy of bleeding them of their ‘human capital’ (HELTON 2002:10; KEELY 1996:1058; LOESCHER 2001:36; SØRENSEN/VAN HEAR/ENGBERG-PEDERSEN 2003:15; UNHCR 2000:7). But since the alleged “End of History” (FUKUYAMA 1992) and the supposed victory of capitalism over communism, the Western hemisphere has no longer valued refugees as ideological trophies and the ‘marriage’ was divorced.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, endeavours for international political stability came increasingly to the forefront. However, many African societies were hardly blessed with peaceful state consolidation and a ‘third wave of democratisation’ (HUNTINGTON 1991; NODIA 2002; CAROTHERS 2002), but rather witnessed a myriad of (functionally) ‘failing’ and (institutionally) ‘collapsing’ states (MILLIKEN/KRAUSE 2002:753; cf. BAYART 1993; FORREST 1997; KHAN 2004; RENO 1995; VILLALON/HUXTABLE 1998; RICHARDS 1996; ZARTMAN 1995). In a world system of otherwise neatly organized nation-states these socio-politico-economic ‘accidents’ threatened international peace, security and



sovereignty (BARIAGABER 1999:597). While historically, states that proved unable to perform their required functions ceased to exist, they nowadays keep their *de jure*-state status in the international community and are expected to rise again. Thereby, the anticipated *de facto* states (JACKSON 1990) are required to be rebuilt within their former international borders (OTTAWAY 2002:1001) and to reform in a peaceful manner, although history shows that “nations are freed, united, or broken by blood and iron, and not by a generous application of liberty” (DADDIEH 1999; cf. ANTHONY 1991:575).

One major side-effect of inward-oriented ‘state inversion’ (FORREST 1997) has been outward-oriented population movements. Since the civilian population has got increasingly into the crosshair of violent conflict (BARAKAT 2005:22; SUMMERFIELD 1999:111), the numbers of displacees have augmented dramatically: the 1.5 million refugees recognized by UNHCR in 1951 had, by 2005, reached a total of 12 million, together with an additional 24 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) (IDMC 2006b:9; USCRI 2004:1). Analogous to ‘failed states’, ‘displaced populations’ became being perceived as “failures in governance” (HELTON 2002:12), disturbing the established order of citizenship and their sovereign states. Consequently, the international community does not only strive to rebuild states within their previous borders, but also including their prior populations.

(Re)constructing states, (re)integrating displaced populations and therefore transforming war-torn states and conflict-ridden societies into viable socio-political entities have become crucial tasks in development (BOUTROS-GHALI 1992; OGATA 1994; RSQ 2000). The finding of applicable and sustainable solutions to the ‘problems’ of ‘failed states’ and ‘uprooted populations’ is perceived by the international community not only as key for enhancing national development, but also crucial to increase regional stability and global security (COLLETTA/KOSTNER/WIEDERHOFER 1996; KIBREAB 2002; LOESCHER 1992:3; UNHCR 1992). As “[s]uccessful resettlement and livelihood security are crucial to achieving post-conflict development” (KIBREAB 2001:1; AROWOLO 2000:66), the repatriation of refugees, (re)settlement of IDPs and rehabilitation of ex-combatants have advanced to pressing challenges in numerous societies around the globe. Consequently, the question arises, if the next ‘convenience marriage’ – this time between ‘state (re)construction’ and ‘returnee (re)integration’ – should be arranged?

A quick glance into the literature seems to prohibit such a thought. While ‘state (re)construction’ is a demanding, but positive connotated project, ‘displaced populations’ carry a negative stigma. Since decades, displacees have been perceived as “A Problem of Our Time” (HOLBORN 1975) and “A Third World Dilemma” (ROGGE 1987) since they “impose a variety of security, economic and environmental burdens on host countries” (JACOBSEN 2002:577; cf. AKOL 1987; CRISP 1987; CUNY/STEIN 1988; KIBREAB 1985; ROGGE 1994; TOFT 2000; WOOD 1989). Some authors have even seen displacees as threatening ‘enemies’, as they are “neither seen nor heard, but they are everywhere” (HELTON 2002:8; cf. KAPLAN 1994; LOESCHER 1992:9; MALKKI 1995b:504; ROGGE 1994:19). Consequently, they are expected to be of great burden for such demanding processes as state (re)construction and therefore do not qualify for being considered a prolific spouse.

Refraining from dismissing the possibility of displacees being a potential strain for their socio-politico-economic environment (cf. e.g. AKOL 1987,1994; CRISP 1987,1999; COLES 1985,1989; ROGGE 1994), the available dissertation will focus on an alternative perspective regarding the role of returnees, namely: the beneficial contribution of returnees for development and state (re)construction. It will be argued that (re)integration is significant for state renewal and that formerly displaced persons (FDPs) dispose of great potential for being active agents that stimulate development and state renewal. Therefore, a ‘wedding’ between ‘state (re)construction’ and ‘FDP (re)integration’ should not be expelled *ab initio*. Following BOURDIEU’s model of ‘social capital’ the author will introduce the concept of ‘returnee capital’ as an analytical framework to theoretically grasp the valuable role of FDPs. The article reveals that, upon (re)integration, FDPs do not only rebuild their lives, but also wider socio-economic structures and therefore deserve being valued as “human resources for state building” (HELTON 2002:84; cf. IOM 2001:27; ADELMAN/SORENSEN 1994:xv).

## 1.2 A NOTE ON RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

As it is the aim of this study to explore and possibly redefine the role of FDPs for the task of state (re)construction, the main research question (*Q*) reads:

*Q: How does return and (re)integration of displaced persons interlink with post-conflict state (re)construction, i.e. which is the potential of FDPs to beneficially contribute to the process of state renewal?*

In order to operationalise this question, the following two main hypotheses (*H<sub>n</sub>*) – which are later divided into more specific hypotheses (*h<sub>n.m</sub>*) – are formulated:

*H<sub>1</sub>: FDPs fuel state (re)construction indirectly upon their (re)settlement and (re)integration by acting as stimuli for other actors to extend their respective activities that are beneficial for state renewal;*

*H<sub>2</sub>: FDPs contribute to state (re)construction and renewal actively upon their (re)settlement and (re)integration through making use of their socio-politico-economic ‘returnee capital’.*

The dissertation’s topic was chosen due to a perceived lack in the literature as well as the subject’s need and potential for further research. In writing this thesis the author has mainly the situation in the Horn of Africa in mind, although other cases of state (re)construction and returnee (re)integration are taken into consideration where applicable. One of the major shortcomings of this work is the fact that primary research had to be postponed due to the complexity of the required field work – but will be conducted in the context of further academic studies and consultancy for UNHCR, UNDP and the WORLD BANK during 2006/07. Consequently, the article is based on secondary sources, including legal documents and policy papers.

The dissertation is structured as follows: The succeeding chapter 2 critically analyses the discourses of ‘state reconstruction’ and ‘refugeeness/returneehood’ and clarifies the basic terminology. It argues that the prevailing, logocentric episteme (cf. DERRIDA), perceiving ‘state failure’ and ‘displacees’ as inherently negative

binary opposites of ‘state functioning’ and ‘citizen’ respectively, leads to circular conclusions and impedes thinking of viable alternatives. Subsequently, chapter 3 outlines the theoretical concepts of ‘state (re)construction’/‘-renewal’, before turning to the analytical framework of returnees/FDPs. In order to show that FDPs do have considerable potential for state (re)construction and in order to analyse this capability, the concept of ‘returnee capital’ is developed. A case study of Eritrea that empirically tests the theoretical underpinnings is presented in chapter 4, before the conclusion in chapter 5 sums up the composition.

## 2. ANALYSING THE DISCOURSE OF 'STATE RECONSTRUCTION' AND 'RETURN'

*"The world is not an accomplice to our cognition [...]. There is no pre-discursive providence that makes the world well-disposed towards us."*

– FOUCAULT 1972, as in NYRES 2006:7

'State failure' and 'displaced persons' are terms with inherently negative connotations, somewhat reflecting theoretical thinking about as well as affecting policymaking towards these 'problems'. In order to find alternative approaches and possibly more adequate solutions to these 'dilemmas' it is useful to explore and critically rethink – at least rudimentarily – the episteme in which these phenomena are thought.

One way to rethink the common episteme is to apply JACQUES DERRIDA (1930-2004), who repeatedly showed that the Western tradition of modern thought relies on logocentrism, i.e. hierarchically arranged binary oppositions in which one privileged and superior term with a pure and incorruptible identity provides the orientation for (negatively) interpreting the meaning of the subordinate term (cf. CULLER 1982:93). One example for such logocentric distinctions is the dichotomy of 'good' vs. 'evil', but the same "violent hierarchies" dominate the literature and policies on 'state failure' and 'reconstruction' as well as 'population displacement' and 'repatriation'.

## 2.1 RETHINKING STATE RECONSTRUCTION – TIME FOR RENEWAL

'Post-conflict reconstruction' is not new and the term has been used by the WORLD BANK since 1995. The notion, having replaced the nation-building debate (HAMRE/SULLIVAN 2002:89), is commonly defined in recognition of the need for "the rebuilding of the socio-economic framework of society" (WORLD BANK 1998), "including the restoration of order, and *particularly addressing the factors that precipitated state failure and collapse*" (KIEH 2001:210, emphasis added).

This notion of 'reconstruction' tends to be misleading. Since 'failed states' are generally perceived as the binary opposite of '(functioning) states', the term of 'reconstruction' tends to suggest the *re*-establishment of the very structures that have given rise to devastating conflicts in the first place (JUNNE/VERKOREN 2005:6). Caught in a framework of such simple dichotomies this view (mis)leads to construct 'failed states' as inherently and solely detrimental, consequently triggering one sole, ultimately circular 'solution'; namely to rebound the state through *re-constructing*, *re-forming* or *re-building* what was destroyed. A different reading of 'reconstruction' derives from another logocentric dichotomy that sees 'Western-type democracies' as the "ideal type of political organization" (KEELY 1996:1046) and any other government structure as binary opposite to it. It follows that 'failed states' are to be turned into 'what has proven superior', thus confusing *reconstruction* with *democratisation* (DADDIEH 1999). Either way, 'reconstruction' roots in the static perception that "once established, a state will persist" (KEELY 1996:1056; NYRES 2006:xii).

Such a perception is at odds with the fact that the politically constructed state is a complex entity of social change (MAGNUSSEN 1990:293) and therefore continuously reinvents itself – even in periods of conflict. In fact, as has been argued by FOUCAULT (1972) and repeatedly substantiated by scholars like e.g. KEEN (1994,2000,2001a/b), everything serves a function. One beneficial function of 'state failure' can be that it allows to learn from the 'failures' and creates space for the establishment of new structures and institutions. Consequently, it might be illuminating not to think of 'state failure' as a doomed process of a static state

breakdown, but to perceive it in a macro-perspective, enabling the observer to see it as a transitional and partially maybe even beneficial phase in the historical process of political (re)organisation. Justification for such a view is given by SALIH (2005:98) who argues that state collapse has never been a permanent condition and the fact that, historically seen, societies have – despite or even due to conflicts – developed from less to more complex forms of political organisation.

Therefore, an alternative to the terms of 'post-conflict state reconstruction', 'reformation' or 'rebuilding' (cf. KUMAR 1997:3) is to be found in 'post-conflict state *renewal*'. The latter term facilitates breaking out of a circular way of thinking with predetermined 'solutions' (i.e.: *re*-turning 'back to the roots'), seizing instead the post-conflict 'window of opportunity' to build new state structures, in order to avoid a repetition of disastrous destruction (JUNNE/VERKOREN 2005:6).

## 2.2 RETHINKING REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND REPATRIATION – THE CASE FOR (RE)INTEGRATION

Refugees are not only clearly defined (cf. Geneva Refugee Convention, 1951), but are also assigned a place in the logocentric worldview. By abiding to the exclusive nation-state as *the* mode of geopolitical organization, the refugee is socially constructed in opposition to the politicised and territorial state-based 'citizen', posing a system-induced threat to the world's order and security (KEELY 1996:1057f.; c.f. GORDENKER 1983; HARRELL-BOND 1986; HEIN 1993; MALKKI 1995b; NYRES 2006; SØRENSEN/VAN HEAR/ENGBERG-PEDERSEN 2003).

Contrary to refugees, *returnees* lack such a clear binary opposite. But, nevertheless, they are thought in a binary framework, too. On the one hand, the returnee-discourse is led in a problem-oriented emergency-language that perceives them, just as refugees, as a challenge to the "national order of things" (MALKKI 1992:25); a view that triggers an automatic 'solution' from the category of the *problem-solving theories*<sup>1</sup> (COX 1986:208). This emergency language not only portrays

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<sup>1</sup> *Problem-solving theories* help answering questions posed within a particular perspective adopted, while *critical theories* reflect upon the processes of theorizing itself, trying to construct a larger picture apart from the prevailing world order.

returnees as passive objects, but generally also excludes them from participation (BRUCHHAUS 1999; COHEN/DENG 1998), silencing them “by the very discourses that attempt to provide solutions to their plight” (NYRES 2006:xiv). On the other hand, returnees are, paradoxically, also seen as something worthwhile, namely the position refugees are to be turned into in order to restore the upset ‘national order of things’.

*Re-storation* is, logically, thought of being achieved through *re-turn* and *re-settlement*, termini that are as problematic as *reconstruction*, *reformation* and *rebuilding*. Generating associations of a ‘natural’ and ‘problem-free’ process of “going back home” to a “place of belonging” and postulating that there was “a natural identity between people and places” (cf. ALLEN/TURTON 1996:10f.; BASCOM 1996:72; HAMMOND 2004:187; MALKKI 1995a:15f.; ROGGE/AKOL 1989:193) they conceal that, in reality, return may be as traumatising as flight (WAX 2004:16) and that ‘returnees’ generally alight in places different from their pre-flight areas of settlement (AKOL 1987:150; JACOBSEN 2002:578; ROGGE 1994:22). Furthermore, these terms contain strong territorial connotations, therefore concealing the fact that ‘return’ is far more than a physical relocation. As MARX has rightly pointed out, “[we] must revise our image of society as a territorially based organism” (ibid. 1990:189). Believing that repatriation was the most desirable solution, as “it has the potential of turning a refugee into an ordinary person” (OPONDO 1996:23), the 1990s had been declared the “decade of repatriation” (UNHCR 2006c:130; BASCOM 2005:165; TOFT 2000:10). But soon, UNHCR had to realize that repatriation was more than simply crossing back over an international border, as this greatly risked simply turning refugees into IDPs (HELTON 2002:179; STEIN 1997:161; PETRIN 2002:8; ALLEN/MORSINK 1994:1). Instead, ‘return’ implies as well a “complex political, economic, social and cultural process” (STEIN 1997:6). And also in these non-territorial respects, ‘returnees’ do not circularly go back to a *status quo ante*, but make use of the opportunity for proactive change to establish new livelihoods in new communities (HAMMOND 2004:187). Thus, it seems to be more apt to think of *(re)integration*, a notion that includes the diverse spheres of return and moreover stimulates policymakers to complement short-termed interventions of humanitarian assistance with long-term development aid.



### 2.3 A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Based on these thoughts the following terminology is applied:

1. The terms of 'state reconstruction', 'reformation' and 'rebuilding' will be used interchangeably to conveniently circumscribe specific structural and institutional rehabilitations of the state's socio-politico-economic characteristics that have proven necessary and valuable for its existence. Applying brackets to the prefixes of the conventional terms signifies that structures or institutions may not be *re*-created, but rather established *for the first time* or *in a new manner*. This is also expressed by using the notion of 'state renewal'.

2. Furthermore, the author defines a 'returnee' as

"a formerly internally or externally displaced person that relocates its centre of livelihood among a society within the borders of his/her country of nationality or habitual residence, aiming at establishing a viable environment in order to pursue a sustainable livelihood."

Additionally, the notion of FDPs is used as a neutral and non-territorial bound substitute.

3. To allow for a broader understanding of 'repatriation', 'resettlement' or even 'return', these terms will generally be replaced by the notion of '(re)integration', defined as

"a process which enables former refugees and displaced people to enjoy a progressively greater degree of physical, social, legal and material security. In addition reintegration entails the erosion – and ultimately the disappearance – of any observable distinctions which set returnees apart from their compatriots, particularly in terms of their socio-economic and legal status" (UNHCR 1997:87).

4. Finally, it is to be noted that the notion of 'post-conflict' does not mean that 'peace' has been restored, as conflicts change in forms of violence and intensity, but hardly disappear altogether by having a peace agreement signed (KOVSTED/TARP 1999:19; NORDSTROM 1999:71; SAID 1995:147ff.; SIMMONS 2000:2). 'Post-conflict' rather circumscribes situations, in which open hostilities have come to an end (HAMRE/SULLIVAN 2002:89; JUNNE/VERKOREN 2005:1; KUMAR 1997:3).

## 2.4 INTERIM CONCLUSION ON THE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The discourse analysis has shown that the wider concepts of 'state reconstruction' and 'displacement' are generally thought in narrow logocentric frameworks of binary opposites. Being perceived from a perspective of the prototype post-Westphalian nation-state and the territorially based citizen respectively, 'state failure' and 'displacement' entice academia and policymakers to think in circular 'solutions' in order to *re*-convert the 'accidents' and *re*-establish the neat, but lost world order. This in mind, it should be recalled that "[t]heory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose" (COX 1986:207), and that this holds true for labels and discourses as well. What can be drawn from the above thoughts is that the international community should abide from seeing 'failed states' and 'displaced populations' necessarily as 'problems' that can be 'solved', but to consider 'state collapse' as a stage on the search for viable forms of political organization and to regard 'displacement' and 'return' as "option[s] for action" (KHAN/TALAL 1986:57).

### 3. POST-CONFLICT (RE)CONSTRUCTION AND THE BENEFITS OF RETURN

*“State collapse has always been a transient phenomenon  
and was never a permanent condition”*

– SALIH 2005:98

War, its causes, components and consequences have been vastly researched by academia, but post-conflict situations and resultant processes of state renewal have been neglected even by philosophers such as KANT, CLAUSEWITZ, MARX and TOLSTOY (cf. GAILLE 1978, in: BARAKAT 2005:9f). Until today, post-conflict (re)construction has stayed in a theoretical infancy (BARAKAT 2005:10), and frameworks analysing ‘failed states’ and ‘state (re)construction’ have oftentimes disesteemed the ‘displacement-’ and ‘return-variables’. This undermines the fact that state renewal encompasses “efforts [...] to construct or fortify societies riven by crisis in order to [...] encourage the repatriation and reintegration of refugees” (HELTON 2002:30; cf. HELTON 2002:121; PETRIN 2002).

The following part will explore the link between post-conflict state renewal and the (re)integration of FDPs. Investigating different concepts of state (re)formation, it will be argued that the (re)integration of displacees can be deviated from, and is a logical consequence of the respective models of state (re)construction.

### 3.1 LINKING STATE (RE)CONSTRUCTION AND RETURNEE (RE)INTEGRATION

Theories of state formation, whatever *couleur* – if being rooted in *social contract* or *predatory* frameworks (cf. DADDIEH 1999; SALIH 2005) – generally agree on the assumption that a state is defined by (1) a politically recognized territory, (2) a population which perceives itself as belonging to the state, and (3) sovereign institutions of power and governance (GOODSON 2001:6). Since providing security and protection is one of the state's core functions (MILLIKEN/KRAUSE 2002:756), a violation of this task through errors of omission or commission constitutes a form of 'state failure'. Consequently, the above given tripartite definition of the 'classical state' allows the conclusion that the state has to (re)assume his responsibility, i.e. guaranteeing protection to the population which perceives itself as belonging to it or resides within its borders, in order to (re)constitute itself.

At a similar conclusion arrive DENG ET AL. (1996) through defining "sovereignty as responsibility". Their concept focuses on a *legal* state definition and consequently perceives people who have fled persecution by the state or third parties as a clear sign of the state's inability to guarantee the protection of human rights. In thus failing its obligations the state loses its sovereignty and hence, non-state-consensual humanitarian intervention or assistance by the international community becomes legitimate. Following this line of argument, the regaining of sovereign power has to be preceded by the state's willingness and capability to effectively reassume its responsibility with regards to the protection of human rights. Accordingly, the post-conflict process of (re)establishing sovereignty includes the resumption of responsibility towards the state's population – resident or displaced. Likewise HESSELBEIN, GOLOOBA-MUTEBI and PUTZEL (2006:33) as well as BARAKAT (2005:30) postulate that the participation and inclusiveness of all stakeholders was of vital importance for the sustainability of a process of state-renewal. The (re)integration of displacees therefore represents a prerequisite for the (re)establishment of sovereignty.

That returnees constitute an important element for state (re)construction and renewal is also realized by the WORLD BANK. It defines 'post-conflict state

reconstruction' according to its aims, namely "to facilitate the transition to sustainable peace after hostilities have ceased and to support economic and social development" (WORLD BANK 1998:4; cf. BARAKAT 2005:10). Among the main elements of reconstruction the WORLD BANK lists the necessity of "targeting assistance to those affected by war through reintegration of displaced populations" (ibid. 1998:4). The (re)integration of the FDPs is therefore identified as being essential.

Having deviated from different concepts of state (re)formation the fact that the (re)integration of a state's population constitutes a central element for state rehabilitation, questions arise about which are to be considered the decisive intersections between state renewal on the one side and returnee (re)integration on the other.

### **3.2. FROM 'SOCIAL CAPITAL' TO 'REFUGEE RESOURCES' TO 'RETURNEE CAPITAL'**

While the literature on the socio-politico-economic consequences of *refugees* on host countries has experienced considerable growth (CRISP 2000; LANDAU 2001; SPERL 2000), the state of literature on *returnees* has remained a "virgin area" of empirical research (AROWOLO 2000:66), undertheorized (TOFT 2000:1; HEIN 1993:43; ZOLBERG/SUHRKE/AGUAYO 1989) and overall underdeveloped (AKOL 1987:143; ALLEN/MORSINK 1994:1; ALLEN/TURTON 1996:1; COLES 1985; CORNISH/PELTZER/MACLACHLAN 1999; CRISP 1987; KING 2000). Comparably, the literature concerning returnees' effects on the state has stayed in its infancy and lacks as well "any systematic theoretical and legal framework" (CHIMNI 2002:164) that would allow an integral and critical analysis of the changes, challenges and chances that arise in post-conflict societies due to FDPs' (re)integration (LOESCHER 1992:3; MASSEY ET AL. 1993:432). Accordingly, repatriation is frequently seen as constituting the end of the refugee experience, failing to acknowledge that it is a half-way point that "coincides with the beginning of a new cycle" (BLACK/KOSER 1999:11f.; WOOD 1989:365) – among others a new cycle of state-building.

Partially due to this lack of a coherent analytical framework, the literature is divided on the issue (IOM 2001:6). While it is undisputed that the (mass) inflow of

populations has an impact on host societies (ALLEN/TURTON 1996:1; cf. BLACK 1998; BAKEWELL 2000; HARRELL-BOND 1986; JACOBSEN 1997, 2001; KIBREAB 1996; KUHLMAN 1994; SØRENSEN/VAN HEAR/ENGBERG-PEDERSEN 2003:16), the opinions about its benefits and burdens diverge. While some authors take the position that returning FDPs are an obstacle to state (re)construction (e.g. MARSDEN 2003), others see their return as its very precondition (e.g. HELTON 2002; JACOBSEN 2002; PETRIN 2002).

The following part develops the concept of ‘returnee capital’ and argues that there are good theoretical grounds to claim that despite the challenges they pose, FDPs can exercise a beneficial role in the process of state renewal.

### *3.2.1 The Concept of ‘Social Capital’*

Doubtlessly, displacement has negative effects, including the “loss of labour, skilled workers and capital for the country of origin” (SØRENSEN/VAN HEAR/ENGBERG-PEDERSEN 2003:14f.). Yet, upon their arrival at another place displacees are not any more attributed these characteristics, but are described as passive and burdensome (cf. 2.2). Nevertheless, refugees are not the plain opposite of citizens. Although having had to forfeit many of the citizens’ valuable advantages, one characteristic was not left behind upon the refugees’ flight: their potential to produce, accumulate and invest ‘social capital’. PIERRE BOURDIEU, who introduced the model of ‘social capital’ (1986) argues that capital does not only exist in its well known economic and materialistic form, but also prevails in the social, cultural and symbolic sphere of individuals within a society. He defines it as

“the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. It is built on mutual obligations and expectations, norms of reciprocity, trust and solidarity” (BOURDIEU/WACQUANT 1992:11).

### 3.2.2. *The Concept of 'Refugee Resources'*

Realizing the benefits of this framework, authors like JACOBSEN (2002), BOANO et al. (2003), and VAN HEAR (2004) suggest applying a 'social capital' perspective on refugees. JACOBSEN launches the concept of 'refugee resources', postulating that

“[t]hese material, social and political resources, [...] potentially represent an important statebuilding contribution to the host state. Refugee resources may help develop areas of the country, increase the welfare of citizens, and extend the bureaucratic reach of the state” (ibid. 2002:578).

Analogous to the analytical framework of 'social capital', the concept of 'refugee resources' sheds light on social, cultural and religious ties, skills, information and education that enable refugees not only to *survive*, but also to *contribute* to the development of their host communities. Empirically, this model is substantiated e.g. by DICK (2002), who gives good evidence of Liberian refugees stimulating local community development in Ghana due to their entrepreneurship. The concept's main strength is that it “no longer overlooks the steps taken by refugees themselves to improve their situation” (SORENSEN 1994:69) and that it does not perceive displacees as *voiceless* and *passive victims*, but eventually looks upon the displacees as *active agents of change*.

### 3.2.3 *The Concept of 'Returnee Capital'*

BOURDIEU's concept of 'social capital' and JACOBSEN's model of 'refugee resources' can be extended to serve as an analytical framework to examine the 'developmental' and 'reconstructional' potential of FDPs. Investigations of the impact of 'refugee resources' of (re)integrating returnees on host communities has been done by some authors – resulting in a confusing terminology. While HOLTZMAN (1999:9) talks of (individuals') 'human capital' as distinct of (communities') 'social capital' and (societies') 'physical and financial capital', ZETTER (2005:161ff.) differentiates the respective 'capitals' in terms of their function ('political capital' for the reconstruction of politico-administrative structures; 'social capital' for the rebuilding of social formations; and 'economic and physical capital' for the rebuilding of livelihoods). SØRENSEN, VAN HEAR and

ENGBERG-PEDERSEN (2003:4), on the other hand, examine the ‘human capital’ and ‘economic capital’ in relation to states’ capacity to absorb returnees. Finally, the WORLD BANK differentiates between ‘horizontal social capital’ (between different groups) and ‘vertical social capital’ (between government and communities) (ibid. 2003:19). This terminological multiplicity illustrates the concepts’ meaningfulness and potential for analysis, but it also demonstrates that these frameworks are rather young and, so far, neither one of them could establish itself as the predominant one.

Following from these different models, the author defines ‘returnee capital’ as

“the sum of characteristics, resources and stimuli unified in a formerly displaced person that derive from his/her life experience prior to flight as well as during exile, and are of value for the larger community’s livelihood (re)construction.”

Having provided a definition of ‘returnee capital’ the following questions arise in respect to the dissertation’s main research question: How does ‘returnee capital’ manifest? How does it amend a society’s existing stock of ‘social capital’, therefore enlarging its pool of possibilities for development? What factors determine whether a society uses ‘returnee capital’ in a fruitful or destructive way, therefore fostering or discouraging post-conflict state (re)construction and renewal?

### **3.3 ‘BENEFITS OF RETURN’ – ANALYSED IN LIGHT OF ‘RETURNEE CAPITAL’**

The established framework of ‘returnee capital’ is subsequently used to theoretically investigate the main hypotheses formulated in the introduction.  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  are further broken down into the sub-hypotheses  $b_{1.1/1.2}$  and  $b_{2.1/2.2}$  in order to allow for a more specific analysis.

*b<sub>1.1</sub>: Returnees act as stimuli to national government authorities, prompting the latter to advance national capacity building in terms of administration and power.*

As is well known, civil conflicts generally exercise detrimental effects on the connection between the political centre and the country’s periphery (PETRIN



2002; ROTBERG 2002). Therefore, it is crucial in the aftermath of a disruptive conflict to (re)establish governance structures allowing the authority to administer the peripheral territories and its populations. The consolidation of power is crucial according to OTTAWAY, who states that “reconstruction can only be successful when sufficient power is generated to break the hold of existing groups” (ibid. 2002:1015; cf. HESSELBEIN/GOLOOBA-MUTEBI/ PUTZEL 2006:6). Because the task of (re)establishing power and (re)constructing a war-torn country is immense, the government is likely to concentrate its efforts – at least during the early phases – on and in the state’s capital (WORLD BANK 2003:21), if no incentives are given to reach out into the periphery.

One incentive can be the returnees’ dispersed and decentralized settlement pattern (AKOL 1987:150; ALLEN/TURTON 1996:1; JACOBSEN 2002:578; ROGGE 1994:22; ROGGE/AKOL 1989:193). But how does this affect state (re)construction? JACOBSEN (2002:578), for example, convincingly argues in the case of refugees that their scattered settlement provoked host governments to administratively reach out to the border regions and other under-represented areas of refugee settlement. As returnees show a comparable settlement pattern, i.e. that they frequently alight in border regions (in anticipation of a speedy ‘return’ into exile; ROGGE 1994:31) and infrastructural less privileged areas, PETRIN picks up on this observation and states: “The very nature of the repatriation process increases state presence among formerly displaced populations” (ibid. 2002:6). Whereas pre-flight communities had hardly been in contact with state institutions, she argues, repatriated communities proofed the opposite. Evidence is provided by STEPPUTAT (1999:215ff.) for Guatemala and WHAITES and WESTWOOD (1996:17ff.) for Peru. Therefore, return(ee)s can serve as catalysts for increasing the state’s incentive to improve its presence in the once disregarded periphery.

Of course, it is to be questioned how feasible the state’s reach-out realistically is, due to the fact that mere incentives are insufficient if funds are lacking. But for most LDCs this disadvantage is most likely to be offset during the initial post-conflict period. Not only is the pouring and growth-accelerating contribution of international funds at its heights during the first four post-conflict years (cf. COLLIER/HOEFFLER 2002:7), but the activities of international organisations peak as well. The dispersed operating aid agencies establish administrative and

logistical infrastructures that can greatly facilitate the state's reach-out into and consolidation in formerly hardly accessible areas. JACOBSEN further argues that organisations like

“UNDP and UNHCR, which are obliged by their mandates to work with host states, channel assistance through state agencies and government budgets, and this enables the state to build bureaucratic capacity and associate itself with any benefits deriving from refugees. Refugee amelioration programmes underwritten by aid agencies thus offer state capacity building opportunities for host governments” (ibid. 2002:589).

One form of ‘returnee capital’ therefore is their capacity to create incentives that provoke third actors to take action. They stimulate – due to their settlement pattern as well as their perception as being potentially destabilizing elements – national capacity-building and an improved coverage of the state's territory in terms of administration, power and civil order.

*h<sub>1.2</sub>: Returnees’ (perceived) economic plight and unique position in society triggers humanitarian and development aid that is beneficial for the host community at large.*

The (generally perceived) deprivation and ‘uprootedness’ of FDPs is another important form of (indirect) ‘returnee capital’. These characteristics set the group of FDPs somewhat apart from other social entities and therefore trigger additional provisioning by the international humanitarian. This has been well realized and instrumentalized by host governments and ‘refugee-based’ guerrilla movements, who have an interest in keeping displacees visible and accessible to humanitarian agencies in order to secure constant international funding (ALLEN/TURTON 1996:15). As UNHCR, among others, has increasingly shifted its policy from targeting to more universal approaches and established so-called «Quick Impact Projects» (QIPs)<sup>2</sup> (ADELMAN/SORENSEN 1994:xviii; c.f. AHMED/KULESSA/MALIK 2002:25; JACOBSEN 2002:581; KAISER 2000:7; LOESCHER 2001; JUERGENSEN 2000:17; Vaart 2005:134; UNDP 2000:37), this ‘additional provisioning’ is distributed among the wider community. Thus, returnees contribute – at least during the initial stage of return – to regional development

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<sup>2</sup> QIPs were developed by UNHCR in 1991 to assist the (re)integration of returnees in Nicaragua. Since then, QIPs have become a major component in UNHCR reintegration programs globally (STEIN 1997:170).

and state (re)construction by attracting (significant) flows of international humanitarian and development assistance (JACOBSEN 2002:577). This claim is substantiated by AKOL who finds that

“[a]lthough host governments in Africa have born the heavy burden of refugees for many years, they have nevertheless benefited from numerous rural development projects established by the various international agencies for refugees” (ibid. 1987:150; cf. SMYTHE 1987:61).

Even though this statement was made in the context of *refugees* in exile, it is apparent that it holds water for the situation of returnees and their respective host communities just as well, as, e.g. targeting is applied to returnee communities even less than it is to refugees, because the former generally settle in far more dispersed patterns (AKOL 1987:150; JACOBSEN 2002:578; ROGGE 1994:22). This increases the likelihood that international assistance, even if primarily initiated for FDPs, “finds its way into the host community” (JACOBSEN 2002:581).

*h<sub>2.1</sub>: Returnees do not only rebuild their own economic livelihoods, but also act as catalysts for the wider society’s economic (re)construction due to their specific experiences made and skills acquired in exile.*

As theoretical frameworks and empirical studies have identified the breakdown of the dominant economic system as one main factor for ‘state failure/collapse’, concepts concerned with reconstruction appraise the condition of the economy and the prospects for raising revenue as “foundational to state consolidation” (HESSELBEIN/GOLOOBA-MUTEBI/PUTZEL 2006:2; STEIN 1997:162). Without an economic base, state renewal will not sustain, because citizens need viable livelihoods that provide basic goods and the state needs tax-revenues to perform its tasks. Yet, to (re)establish such a state-society relationship, an economic base has to be in place.

Returnees can contribute to the economy through consumption and production. During their period of displacement, forced migrants regularly obtain resources in form of finance or other types of capital (COHEN/DENG 1998; KHAN/TALAL 1986; HOLTZMAN 1999; PETRIN 2002). This kind of materialistic ‘returnee capital’

can contribute to sustainable livelihoods and spur the regional economy, if integrated into the consumption cycle.

Yet, admission to production structures is just as important for the sustainable integration of FDPs, because “local integration efforts cannot be effective unless they are carried out simultaneously with the economic and infrastructural development of the regions in question” (BULCHA 1994:24, in: KOEHN 1994:103; cf. AHMED/KULESSA/MALIK 2002:115; KIBREAB 1994b:60; STERKENBURG/KIRKBY/O’KEEFE 1994:192). JACOBSEN postulates that “[s]ome host countries have benefited economically from refugees as a result of agricultural expansion or intensification made possible by refugee labour or new farming practices” (ibid. 2002:585). KIBREAB, referring to Pakistan, confirms this assessment by stating that “refugee farmers had played a key role during the Green Revolution” (ibid. 1985:120f.). He illustrates that by meeting the challenge they faced progressively, ‘non-natives’ frankly experienced with new forms of production and contributed significantly to agricultural success. For the African context he proclaims similarly that the Angolan refugees in Zaire contributed greatly to the growth of agricultural production (ibid. 1985:124), and research results of BASCOM (1998) and KOK (1989, as in NILSSON 2000:19) on eastern Sudan, BAKEWELL (2000) on western Zambia, DALEY (1993) on western Tanzania and ROGGE (1987) for the cases of Sudan, Tanzania and Botswana further support the argument.

As AKOL shows, the above named observations made in a refugee-framework can also be validated for the case of returnees:

“In the Equatoria Provinces, the most southern sections of the Southern Sudan, parts of the population had been exposed [during exile] to the cash crop economies of Zaire and Uganda, and to a wide variety of farming techniques. On their return some families eagerly experimented with imported methods, and tried out a range of new crop varieties [...]. Where this occurred it seems to have contributed to increased agricultural productivity and to a general improvement in living conditions” (ibid. 1994:90).

In an earlier work, AKOL (1987) had shown that the level of economic well-being of returning FDPs depends on their respective exiles. Sudanese, who had fled to Uganda, for example, had achieved remarkably higher levels of economic prosperity than their compatriots who had migrated to Zaire. Furthermore, upon return, the former also fecundated the societies into which they (re)settled, by successfully transferring the

sophisticated agricultural production technologies they had acquired during exile in Uganda back to Sudan (ROGGE/AKOL 1989:195). Similar events are noted by HAMMOND (2004) for Ethiopians returning from Sudan.

Although cheap labour and agricultural potential are predominant forms of ‘human capital’, the potential of the FDPs’ productive work force goes well beyond these aspects. Among the heterogeneous group of displacees – and consequently returnees – there are likely to be some with higher education and professions that can greatly contribute to the economy of their new environment (SMYTHE 1987:61; DADDIEH 1999). As long as the pre-flight human capital does not vanish during exile, this capital will be ready for ‘investment’ upon return. Substantiating this hypothesis, JUERGENSEN attributes the successful and rather speedy reconstruction of Mozambique partially to the profitable use of the returnees’ human capital:

“No doubt this success [in terms of economic development and reconstruction] can be partially measured on the basis of the speedy and large-scale repatriation and reintegration of the displaced population” (ibid. 2000:26).

Because the viability of a state ultimately depends on its ability to provide its citizens with possibilities for growth and wealth creation (HESSELBEIN/GOLOOBA-MUTEBI/PUTZEL 2006:12) it is important to pay tribute to the potential of ‘returnee capital’.

Due to the widespread destruction of many critical social, political and economic institutions, war-torn societies are generally characterised by an inability to resume their socio-economic activities (KUMAR 1997:2). Also concerning this aspect, remedy may be found in returnees, who can help to (re)establish the economic base of a country by introducing certain (social/political/economic) institutions they preserved in exile that can spur development, if accepted by the wider society as viable alternatives to the war-torn or disused structures. The experiences and skills displacees acquired while in exile can furthermore result in the “creation of economic conditions superior to those existing prior to their flight into exile or to those prevailing among local residents who did not go into exile” (ROGGE/AKOL 1989:195). New skills, ideas, and attitudes of FDPs have a positive impact on the development of the home country (IOM 2001:27; KOEHN 1994:104; ADELMAN/ SORENSON 1994:xv).

*h2.2: Returnees contribute to development and state renewal by offering new options for the establishment of socio-political structures and institutions.*

According to the above stated, it is safe to argue that “[r]esources and skills acquired in exile are clearly a positive force in the reintegration process” (ROGGE 1994:95) – given the possibility that they can be transferred and beneficially integrated into the systems of production and consumption of the respective society. As economies do not float in a vacuum, and due to the fact that especially in post-conflict societies a vast proportion of economic activity takes place outside the purview of the state (HESSELBEIN/GOLOOBA-MUTEBI/PUTZEL 2006:13), one has to seriously consider as well the ‘rules of the game’ (NORTH 1990).

The establishment of formal institutions in the aftermath of a war is crucial for state (re)construction (ARON 2003:472), as they not only lower transaction and transformation costs of exchange, but also because institutions establish a predictable and transparent corpus of norms instead of leaving decision-making processes to the arbitrariness of certain actors or an erratic framework of institutional multiplicity (KUMAR 1997:25).

In this respect, post-conflict societies can be fecundated by ‘returnee capital’. FDPs ‘return home’ not only with newly acquired skills and qualifications (cf. *h2.1*), but also import a wide variety of new attitudes, values and idea(l)s (TERRILL 1983, in AKOL 1987:155). While in exile, displacees generally construct new systems of social practice that do not necessarily entail the adoption of patterns of social behaviour prior to flight. HAMMOND postulates that, upon return, FDPs are often unable or uninterested in picking up social practices they had left behind (ibid. 2004:188). Furthermore, e.g. in the case of Ethiopia, returnees created a new code of citizenship, “where power and legitimacy were redefined by both pressure from above (by political leaders) and negotiation from below (within the community)” (ibid. 2004:205). These experiences, considerations of social values and traditions as well as ideological changes undergone in exile consequently influence post-conflict

processes of society- and state-building. Along these lines KIBREAB states in respect to Eritrea that

“new social organizations and networks transcending the old kinship networks or ethnic affiliations arose. The powers of traditional leaders declined, new leaders emerged with strong links to the liberation movement, and a new organizational culture was created” (ibid. 2001:7f.).

In addition to the knowledge and expertise that displacees might have gained during their time of displacement, they may also have achieved further education, skills, livelihood strategies, approaches to community organization and social interaction as well as political awareness (STEIN 1997:162). Thus, returnees can contribute to political stability by providing an additional electorate and bringing broader representation to electoral processes. Just as *refugees* signify a breakdown in the state-citizen relationship (PETRIN 2002:6), *returnees* can be interpreted as a testimony for their confidence of re-establishing this liaison. Having a political voice concerning the adoption of institutions and establishment of socio-political structures, “[t]he return of displaced persons [...] lends greater legitimacy to the subsequent democratic and state-building process” (CHIMNI 2002:163).<sup>3</sup>

### **3.4 INTERIM CONCLUSION ON STATE RENEWAL AND (RE)INTEGRATION**

In the preceding section, the case was made for the contributory role of FDPs in the course of state (re)construction. Despite the challenges that accompany this process, the author argued that (re)integrating displacees dispose of vast (in)direct human and social capital that supports development and state renewal. In order to identify the developmental capabilities of FDPs, the concept of ‘returnee capital’ was introduced. Having identified (1) the (re)establishment of a sound economy (HESSELBEIN/GOLOOBA-MUTEBI/PUTZEL 2006; SALIH 2005), (2) the (re)consolidation of power (OTTAWAY 2002) and (3) the (re)institutionalisation of a formal set of ‘rules of the game’ (NORTH 1990; HESSELBEIN/GOLOOBA-MUTEBI/PUTZEL 2006; ARON 2003) as three key aspects of state (re)construction and renewal, it was

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<sup>3</sup> CHIMNI is surely right, also it can be questioned, if democratic forms of governance are favourable in the phase of post-conflict (re)construction (cf. HUSSELBEIN/GOLOOBA-MUTEBI/PUTZEL 2006:2)

shown that returning FDPs can beneficially influence the outcome of the respective process. Returnees are not necessarily the *passive burdens* frequently thought of, but can just as well be *active agents of change*.

Yet, the unfolding of ‘returnee capital’ depends on many more variables than the returning individual alone. It is, among others, influenced by the state’s and society’s ability to replace a system of ‘refugee production’ by one of ‘returnee consumption’, i.e. an environment that productively uses and unfolds ‘returnee capital’ in order to make it available for processes of development. But for an in-depth assessment of the factors that aid or impede the productive ‘consumption’ of ‘returnee capital’ – including, among others, aspects like land, property and housing rights (LECKI 2000:4;ADELMAN/SORENSEN 1994:xv;EU 2004:5ff.;PHUONG 2000:169;PONS-VIGNON/LECOMTE 2004), landmines and disarmament (HELTON 2002:82;JACOBSEN 2002:593;IDMC 2006a:95f.), or the attitudes, actions and expectations of other actors involved – another dissertation would be needed.



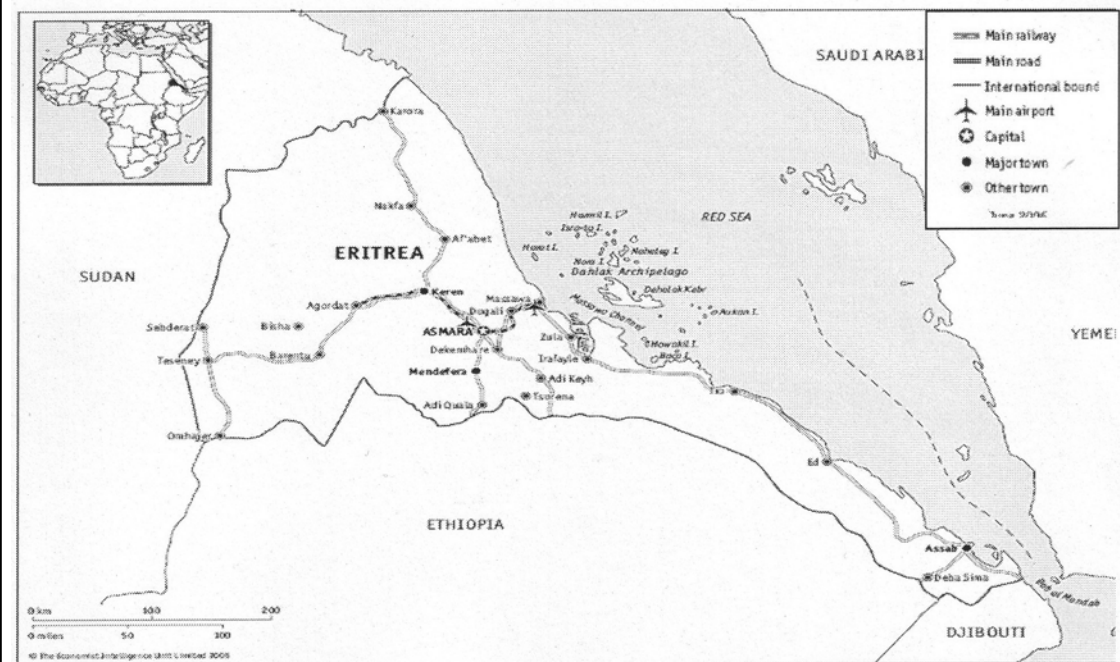
## 4. CASE STUDY – ERITREA

*“Africa’s human resources, the very engine of development...”*

– DADDIEH 1999

The wars Eritrea fought in its process of state formation demanded some 80,000 lives. At warfare’s end in 1991 Eritrea was indeed free of financial arrears (IMF 1998:76), but its human debts amounted to 95,000 (ex-)combatants, 420,000 refugees in Sudan (mostly from the lowland provinces of Gash, Barka and Sahel (WORLDBANK 1996:1; cf. figure 2)) and 100,000 IDPs (HABTE-SELASSIE 1996:45;

FIGURE 1: Map of Eritrea



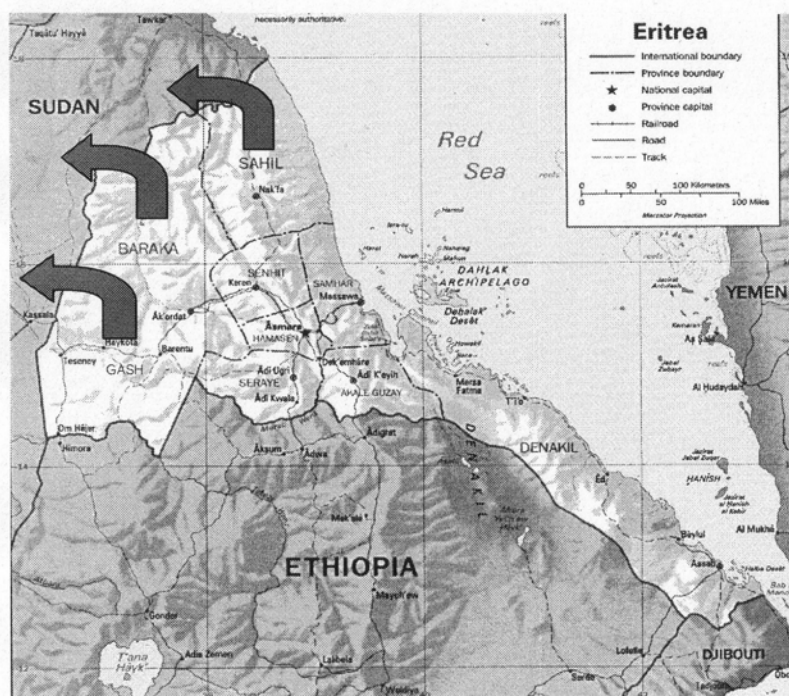
KIBREAB 2001:1; ROCK 1999:133). Immediately after liberation the Government of Eritrea (GoE) aimed at repatriating its widely displaced citizens, some of which had stayed more than 20 years in exile (WOLDEMICHAEL/IYOB 1999:38; MCSPADDEN 2004:34). The COMMISSION FOR ERITREAN REFUGEE AFFAIRS (CERA) had initially prepared an integrated and comprehensive «Programme for Refugee Reintegration and Rehabilitation of Resettlement Areas in Eritrea» (PROFERI; cf. e.g. W/GIORGIS 1999:64f.) for a phased repatriation of some 500,000 refugees from the Sudan over a three-year period. But due to great lacks of donor funding (only US-\$32 million materialized, instead of the requested US-\$262 million) Eritrea had to settle for a pilot stage designed to repatriate an estimated 24,000 refugees (ROCK 1999:133f.; BASCOM 2005:167; BARIAGABER 1999:608). While during the height of the crises the number of displaced persons had climaxed at about 1.1 million, the number of FDPs had decreased to an estimated 210,000 at the turn of the millennium and some 50,000 in 2006 (EIU 2006:11). This observation of (re)integration follows the question of the returnees' impact: How could the FDPs integrate their potentials and contribute to state (re)construction?

Hereafter, the formerly developed theoretical framework is applied to the case of Eritrea. Being aware of the fact that this case is, for several reasons, a special one, it was chosen for mainly three reasons: (1) the Eritrean situation has constituted UNHCR's most protracted large-scale refugee caseload in the world (UNHCR 2003:2); (2) Eritrea's repatriation process draws to an end, while e.g. in Sudan and Uganda large population movements are still taking place, therefore hampering even the more a well-founded assessment; (3) throughout 2006/2007 the author will conduct research in this world region.

#### **4.1 CLOSING RANKS: STAYEES AND RETURNEES IN DISCOURSE**

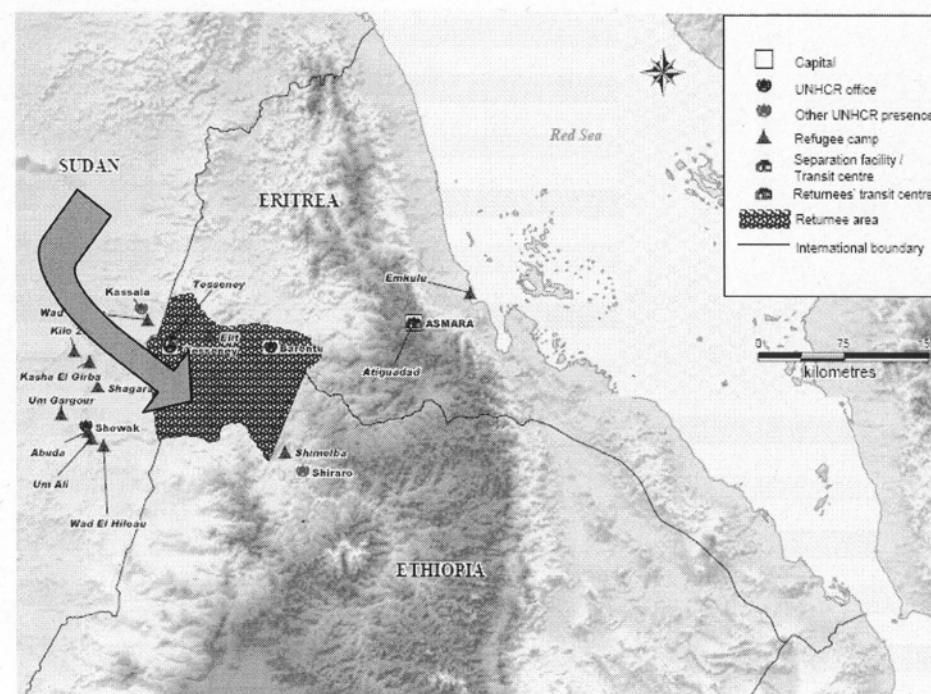
Great parts of the Eritrean population did not only escape the war-atrocities, but they also fled the Western logocentric episteme that perceives displacees as negative and burdensome aberration of the norm (cf. 2.2). But several studies

FIGURE 2: Principle Refugee Flows out of Eritrea



Source: CCA (2006), slightly changed by the author.

FIGURE 3: Main Resettlement Area in Eritrea



Source: UNHCR (2006b), slightly changed by the author.

show that FDPs returning to Eritrea were generally seen positively by the local population (BASCOM 2005; KIBREAB 2002). In a survey conducted by KIBREAB (2002:57f.), 92% of the stayees expressed their contentedness that returnees settled among themselves or in their neighbourhood. This was mirrored, firstly, by statements of the returnees who noticed to 86% that their reception by local residents has been congenial and, secondly, validated by the fact that returnees received considerable support from local residents during their initial phase of (re)establishment in form of moral support, food, labour contribution etc. (KIBREAB 2002:57f.; cf. Table 1). This positive atmosphere towards the returnees can surely be attributed in parts to the “widespread aura of joyful optimism” (BASCOM 2005:170) and the fact that nearly all incoming individuals were from the same ethnic group (Saho). But the following sections will unveil that there were also other reasons for which the returnees were welcomed.

TABLE 1: How would you describe the reception accorded to you, as a returnee, by the resident population?

	Self-repatriates		PROFERI returnees	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Friendly	115	86.0	77	75
Not friendly	15	11.0	18	18
Hostile	2	1.5	5	5
No local residents living in the area	0	0.0	2	2
Other	2	1.5	0	0
Number	134	100.0	102	100

Source: KIBREAB 2002:57

## 4.2 ERITREA'S BENEFICIAL RETURN

### 4.2.1 *Coming to Rest: The Settlement Pattern and its Consequences*

Firstly, it is to be stated that when considering the (re)settlement pattern, the situation of the Eritrean returnees is comparable with that of refugees insofar, as the overwhelming majority of the repatriates have not returned to their homelands or places of origin, and consequently were new to their natural and social environment (KIBREAB 2002:71). For example, only approximately 7% of the PROFERI returnees settled in places where they had lived prior to their displacement (KIBREAB 2002:71f.). This was partially a result of the fact that, according to BASCOM, 89% of his study's subjects identified their former agricultural land as either overgrown, confiscated, or damaged (ibid. 1996:72). And also WOLDEMICHAEL and IYOB state that displacees originally from highland areas have settled in fertile lowlands (ibid. 1999:34; cf. figure 3). Beyond, OPONDO argues that "the process of flight has largely become indistinguishable from the process of return" (ibid. 1996:24), therefore allowing for a comparison between refugees and returnees.

The domiciliation of the (re)integrating Eritreans followed a rather common scheme (cf. 3.3, *h1.1*): the FDPs settled dispersed (KIBREAB 1994a:59), often in border areas (HAPTE-SELASSIE 1991:8; KIBREAB 2002:71), and in sites that were remote, sparsely inhabited, and not easily accessible by road (W/GIORGIS 1999:66). From this settlement pattern follow four direct consequences:

- Eritrea hardly knows the problem of land disputes, as FDPs are knowledgeable about local conditions and consequently seldom return to areas of land shortage (KIBREAB 2001:5; cf. W/GIORGIS 1999:76);
- The organized (re)settlement of FDPs in the regions of Gash Barka and Debub is to reduce Eritrea's dependency on international aid (HARRIS 2006), as the displacees are supposed to (and also voluntarily do) return to fertile border

regions to resume (large-scale) agricultural activities (IDMC 2006a:90; ROCK 1999:136);

- The dispersed (re)settlement leads to improved state presence in the country's peripheral regions and improves the welfare of the 'non-returnee communities' as well (cf. 4.2.2);
- The trans-ethnic and trans-religious social networks made during exile that were estimated more precious than the 'old' social relationships to relatives and former neighbours by most displacees, proved sustainable and have been "an indispensable asset for construction of communities and livelihoods" (KIBREAB 2002:72; cf. 4.2.3).

#### *4.2.2 Indirect 'Returnee capital': Creating Incentives for other Actors*

As deduced in theory (cf. 3.3), the scattered settlement pattern of Eritrean FDPs led in combination with the GoE's increased attention towards them to an outreach of governmental structures and a greater state presence in peripheral regions.

First of all, FDPs led to an improvement of the infrastructure: "Over 90 km.-long road has been cleared to facilitate the return of the IDPs and health stations and schools have been renovated in the villages of return and are ready for use" (IDMC 2006a:90; AFP 2006; ICRC 2003). But not only the rehabilitation of infrastructure is linked to the (re)integration of returnees (HOEFFLER 1999:7), but so is education. The opportunities for school-age children increased dramatically in returnee-prone regions, thus contributing to the congenial relationship between FDPs and local residents. KIBREAB states:

"When it became clear that the [Gash Barka] region was going to receive a higher proportion of the returning refugees than other regions in the country, the government in collaboration with UNHCR and other agencies, including NGOs, decided to expand the supply of primary, junior and secondary education designed to benefit local residents and returnees equally" (ibid. 2002:65).

Moreover, the arrival of displacees and returnees led to a substantial improvement of physical security, the supply of water, veterinary services and the provision of extension services (GoE 2006; KIBREAB 2002:67). Thus, the good relationship between ‘stayees’ and ‘returnees’ does not only root in enthusiasm about the war’s victorious end, but also derives from the considerable (material) improvements that accompanied FDPs upon their return.

#### *4.2.3 Direct ‘Returnee capital’: Actively Engaging in Livelihood-Development and State (Re)Construction*

The case of Eritrea is a prime example for the hypothesis that returnees are *active agents of change*. Eritrea’s (re)integrating FDPs spurred regional economic development by way of consumption, their labour force and the introduction of formerly unknown production patterns.

That displacees are of economic benefit, had been realized by Sudan’s government. Since the country profited economically from the refugees, it created artificial roadblocks in the Pilot Project for refugee repatriation to Eritrea, finally leading to its collapse (BARIAGABER 1999:609). Expectedly, once returned, FDPs boosted the economy, partially because of their *role as consumers*. As returnees were short of own livestock (cf. table 2), they purchased – with capital generated in Sudan – milk, butter, chicken and eggs and many other products from neighbouring communities. The high demand for small stocks, milk and chicken drove prices in Ad Frjul, Goluj, Hagaz and Tekreret so high that livestock owners had been able to earn ‘substantial’ incomes (KIBREAB 2002:62).

On the other hand, returnees helped bringing the economy back on its feet by exercising a *role as producers*. Among them there are commercial farmers who have brought large tracts of land under cultivation and are major employers of seasonal labour – thereby benefiting both returnees and local communities more generally (KIBREAB 2001:6). As refugee households had undergone considerable degrees of occupational transformation resulting from increased participation in diverse economic activities as well as from acquisition of new skills in exile, the informal sector represented the major source of livelihoods for returnees (KIBREAB 2002:69).

“The proportion of skilled individuals such as mechanics, carpenters, drivers, teachers, nurses, medical assistants, laboratory technicians, masons, shoemakers, tailors and electricians is also remarkably high” (KIBREAB 2002:70; cf. table 2). Furthermore, FDPs had brought opportunities such as marketing outlets, employment and self-employment opportunities. In Sudan, Eritrean refugees had become much more involved in (inter)national wage labouring than was the case in Eritrea (BASCOM 1994:68). KIBREAB describes that

“[i]n comparison to the past, employment, marketing and income-generating opportunities have expanded substantially since the arrival of the returnees. Prior to their arrival, places such as Tessenei, Goluj, Um Hajer, Ali Gidir and Telata Asher had been ghost towns. These sites have now become thriving regional markets where traders from many parts of Eritrea, and also Sudan, interact in pursuit of diverse business activities” (ibid. 2002:62).

Furthermore, returnees boosted the economy with their trading activities. Due to the proximity of their former refugee host communities (BASCOM 1996:73), cross-border trade became one of the most important economic activities and is considered to be a crucial source of income and important exchange market (KIBREAB 2002:72). This whole economic potential could be used even the better, if the GoE was able to improve conditions for a formal market, ultimately one of a government’s central responsibilities (OPONDO 1996:29f.).

TABLE 2: Livelihood Profile for Interviewed Households in Ghinda and Gahtelai						
	Pre-Flight		Exile		Return	
Farmland						
Proportion who own	73%		77%		41%	
Average hectares/owner		2.2		3.8		0.5
Livestock						
Goats (proportion who own)	67%		60%		24%	
Average number/owner		41.5		11.0		2.4
Cattle (proportion who own)	66%		19%		0%	
Average number per owner		26.0		4.0		0.0
Labour						
Unskilled wage work	5%		14%		16%	
Skilled wage work	17%		25%		12%	
Trade	N/A		20%		7%	
Source: BASCOM 2005:174, slightly changed by the author						



Overall, accounts of KIBREAB (2001,2002) and W/GIORGIS (1999) allow the conclusion that the (re)settling and (re)integrating FDPs have almost certainly had a positive economic impact on the regional development.

#### *4.2.4 Changing Society: The Social Side of 'Returnee capital'*

Eritrea's case shows well that returning refugees do generally not become *re-integrated* into their former communities. Firstly, they usually do not inhabit the same areas of settlement as prior to their flight. Secondly, the stayee populations are no longer what the returnees had left behind. And thirdly, the social networks of the FDPs had changed just as well (KIBREAB 1994a:60). While W/GIORGIS argues that "there is no evidence of a lack of social cohesion among the various groups being reintegrated" (ibid. 1999:83), KIBREAB (2002:74) postulates that the relationship between returnees and stayees, although genial, was not as tight as among members of each community. Consequently, case-to-case investigations have to trump clumsy generalisations about FDPs' (re)integration.

Nevertheless, the exile experiences forged new modes of social interaction. On the one side, moral ties that maintained extended family life have been replaced by social networks transcending the old forms of religion, ethnic and clan-based loyalties. Traditional forms of leadership became meaningless, while new leaders established themselves, showing strong links to the liberation movement. Furthermore, collective decision-making processes were substituted by individual decision-making in respect to production and resource allocation. Moreover, returnees have developed interpersonal trust, optimism and other values that foster co-operation and readiness to do business with each other (KIBREAB 1994a:60, 2001:7f.).

"Owing to their shared experiences of suffering, struggle and the dream of returning to an independent and prosperous country [...]most of the returnees were reluctant to part from the cohesive trans-ethnic and trans-religious communities they had constructed in exile" (KIBREAB 2002:70ff.).

For the case of Eritrea, there is much proof that social capital was and is a positive force for development and that the vast amount of social capital existent in

its society has provided the country with a great advantage if compared to (re)construction processes in e.g. Angola and Guinea-Bissau. Nevertheless, it is to be pointed out that ‘returnee capital’ depreciates over time – just as any other form of capital. Consequently, Eritrea has to ‘put’ and ‘consume’ its ‘returnee capital’ productively and wisely to preserve and extend its initial opportunity.

### 4.3 INTERIM CONCLUSION ON ERITREA

Concerning the Eritrean case, the initially formulated hypotheses and wider theoretical assumptions could be validated. Firstly, the study shows that the returnees have stimulated the state’s increased presence in the remoter areas of the country and triggered humanitarian assistance and development programmes that have been beneficial for the whole community, wider society and state (re)construction at last. Secondly, Ethiopian FDPs dispose of significant ‘returnee potential’ in terms of agricultural production, trade and business enforcement as well as structural social change. Their (re)integration into the society has provided the latter with new inputs in the socio-political and economic sphere – some of these by the returnees ‘imported inputs’ will stand the test, be adopted by the society and be institutionalised, while others will be outlasted. The GoE’s centrepiece of the ‘re-integration’ policy has been based on the principle of creating economic and social capacities of absorption in the areas of return from which both returnees and stayees have benefited (KIBREAB 2002:68). Therefore, the case of Eritrea clearly shows that it is not necessarily true that “returnees put a burden on a population that has little or nothing itself” (MAYOTTE 1992:293), but that the two communities live “side by side [...] benefiting mutually from the presence of the other” (KIBREAB 2002:61).

The case study also revealed that, as discussed in the discourse analysis (chapter 2), ‘state reconstruction’ and ‘return’ are second-choice terms, as they do not terminologically exactly mirror the processes on the ground. As has been shown, Eritrea’s society did not merely *re-construct* old socio-economic patterns, but partially *renewed* its structural base. Furthermore, Eritrean FDPs did neither *return* as the persons they had been upon their departure, nor did they *re-settle* in their pre-

conflict communities (BASCOM 2005:173). Therefore, it is more apt to speak of the *FDPs' integration* into the respective communities and their beneficial role for state's and society's *renewal*.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

*“Successful resettlement and livelihood security are crucial to achieving post-conflict development.”*

– KIBREAB 2001:1

In 2005, Europe allowed the lowest number of refugees and asylum seekers since 1988 (UNHCR 2006a:3). Western countries have increasingly closed their borders for immigrants, being paranoid by the Southern ‘population explosion’ and the resulting ‘floods of refugees’ that were imagined to sweep over the ‘European stronghold’. Thus, setting ‘state (re)construction’ up with ‘returnee (re)integration’ is obviously in the interest of, if not even explicitly driven by the Western dominated refugee regime in order to save international peace and stability. Consequently, one has to realize that the West is prone to arranging the next ‘wedding’ – this time between ‘state (re)construction’ and ‘returnee (re)integration’; yet once more not out of sanity, but, again, rather political expediency. Nevertheless, the antecedent pages have demonstrated that there are also other, non-political but cogent reasons to merge, wherever and whenever wise, the two issues at stake.

Along the lines of BAKEWELL (2000), DOLAN (1999) and HAMMOND (1999), this dissertation aimed at explicitly pointing towards the positive potential of a ‘marriage’ between state (re)construction and returnee (re)integration. The theoretical considerations in chapter 3, as well as the empirical evidence in chapter 4 allow to argue that FDPs can beneficially contribute to post-conflict state renewal

upon their (re)integration by fecundating host communities with social, political and economic capital.

The analysis of Eritrea supports the hypotheses ( $H_1/H_2$ ) formulated at the essay's onset. For once, it has been shown that the dispersed (re)settlement of FDPs entails greater state presence in the previously neglected periphery. Returnees provoke the state to reach out and improve the connection between the *hinterland* and its core ( $b_{1,1}$ ), therefore fostering greater state capacity in terms of administration and power. Moreover, even for the case of Eritrea, that exhibits an extremely low level of international aid agency, it could be demonstrated that the 'dismal, underprivileged and aid-dependent' returnees attract humanitarian assistance and development aid that is beneficial for the wider community ( $b_{1,2}$ ). Infrastructural projects, establishing schools, health centres, etc., which were primarily called into existence in order to improve the FDPs' dismal situation, have spurred wider community development.

The second set of hypotheses, theoretically attributing the (re)integrating FDPs an active role in development and state (re)construction ( $b_{2,1}/b_{2,2}$ ), is also confirmed by the case study. Applying the concept of 'returnee capital' it was demonstrated that FDPs dispose of considerable human resources and social capital that benefit the country's post-conflict situation. By introducing new social and economic structures, values and idea(l)s as well as integrating formerly unknown skills and techniques into the production process, returnees exercise a developmental role on their environment. The potential to contribute actively to host communities in particular and state renewal in general depends nevertheless on the society's capacity for 'returnee consumption' – only under fertile circumstances can 'returnee capital' be unrolled and yield fruit.

It is out of question that repatriation and (re)integration are by no means easy tasks (cf. ALLEN/TURTON 1996; AKOL 1987,1994; COLES 1985,1989; CRISP 1987; KIBREAB 2001; KUMAR 1997; ROGGE 1994; PETRIN 2002) and that the conducted case study of Eritrea does not necessarily lend itself to wider generalization, as the contributory role of FDPs and the beneficial 'returnee capital consumption' dependent on many different and case-dependent variables. Consequently, a general statement pro or con a 'wedding' between '(re)construction'

and ‘(re)integration’ cannot be made – it should take place if the two elements reciprocally complement each other, but should be avoided if either based on political expediency or risking to exacerbate the already delicate processes of state renewal and (re)integration. Even though the elaborations of this essay have only touched upon what is a large and urgent set of issues and more could be said, from the evidence at hand it can be concluded that state (re)construction and returnee (re)integration go in tandem, possibly benefiting each other.

Thus, policy-makers in charge of state (re)formation and (re)integration must assign FDPs a central role as they are, after all, one among the state’s principal sources – whether in the Horn of Africa, Colombia, Afghanistan or Lebanon. But, nevertheless, the international community is strongly advised to interrogate its underlying epistemological assumptions, especially at a time in which cases of involuntary repatriation increase. Being possibly caught in the logocentric episteme, one should be cautious about circularly deviating from Article 13 (2) of the « Universal Declaration of Human Rights », which declares that “everyone has the *right* to return to his country” (UN 1948, emphasis added), the *anankastic duty* to do so. Although theoretical and empirical evidence in this essay has shown that returnee (re)integration *can* be contributory to state renewal, this should neither (mis)lead (1) to see ‘returnee (re)integration’ as ‘state renewal’s’ sole possible spouse, nor (2) to arrange a ‘forced marriage’, i.e. to forcibly repatriate FDPs for the sake of eventual ‘state reconstruction’ and the ‘*re*-establishment’ of an alleged ‘national order of things’.

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