Why Disarmament Fails: Thinking 'Human-Human Bond' Approach in Managing Transnational Conflicts

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Abstract

Can the human-human bond (H2HB) explain the 'cooperate to disarm' behaviour among border communities? This article develops the H2HB approach as an explanatory framework for understanding the variations in 'hard' and 'soft' bonds as a mediating factor in cooperative or competitive behaviour in collective interest situations. This article argues that cooperation is a *voluntaristic* and *organic* phenomenon which arises out of informal ethnic kinship networks (herein coined, hard bonds) as opposed to contractual obligation determined by states' foreign policies or organizational formal structures (herein coined, soft bonds). To elaborate on this more theoretical argument, the article utilizes empirical evidence to demonstrate how the C2D model remains delusional. While the C2D was created as a formal structure to coordinate disarmament among the Karamoja Cluster community, the study shows that the model has morphed into a cyclic spectacle leading to a pervasive condition known as, *arming-to-disarm* (A2D). Interestingly, rather than resorting to this pervasive approach, the community has evolved informal kinship networks and connections that are useful for their survival. Thus, the evolution of the informal approach validates the usefulness of the H2HB model in explaining the intractable cross-border (dis)armament phenomenon.

Keywords: H2HB, cooperate to disarm, Karamoja Cluster, SALW, RECSA, Horn of Africa, Great Lakes Region.

Introduction

The notion of 'cooperate to disarm' (C2D) remains a key guiding principle in the fight against the illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in sub-Saharan Africa. In the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Regions, where the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) remain unprecedentedly high (Tar, 2021; African Development Bank, 2015), the principles of C2D have been integrated into the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) as the centrifugal force for pulling states together on this cause. Yet despite the buoyant of the model in prevention, control and reduction of SALW, there has been little explicit theorization regarding the effects of social processes (social bonding) upon the C2D model. Moreover, systematic studies on how the notion of C2D functions in collective action problems, such

as regional cross-border disarmament initiatives under the RECSA arrangement, are scarce.

Scholarship and policy application of the concept of cooperation has largely been concerned with cooperation and competition of individuals and groups, and how such behaviour facilitates or hinders organizational performance, social interaction and productivity (Deutsch and Krauss, 1962) (see Annex 1). Studies on cultural variations have demonstrated how inter-group cultural differences can present significant challenges to achieving cooperation among states (Smith et al. 1995). Experimental approaches to cooperation have developed propositions about conditions under which cooperation is likely to succeed or fail in social dilemmas (Capraro, 2013; Eriksson and Strimling, 2012). However, none of the experimental studies has investigated the theoretical interactions between social bonding and the process of cooperation among ethnic networks, and all these theorizations use open variables and so they are not context-specific, but generic. I argue that cooperation is a *voluntaristic and organic phenomenon which arises out of informal ethnic kinship networks (herein coined, hard bonds) as opposed to contractual obligation determined by states or organizational formal structures (herein coined, soft bonds).* Interactions and kinship connections among border communities in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region offer valuable insight into how best small arms and light weapons can be prevented, controlled and managed among the pastoral cross-border communities, particularly within the Karamoja Cluster, where the proliferation of SALW is interrupting livelihoods and leading to unprecedented loss of human life and livestock.

Cooperate to Disarm Model: Bonding or Bondage?

Although disarmament remains at the heart of the international collective security, as set out in the UN Charter (Rydell, 2020), critiques have maintained that the global model for controlling small arms and light weapons remains fragmented and incoherent (Lamb and Dye, 2009; Krause, 2007). These organizational problems have been exacerbated by the illegality of the arms market and lack of transparency across the chain, which has facilitated easier access to firearms for African states. In view of these challenges, scholars and policymakers (Rydell, 2016; Guterres, 2018) alike, called for the United Nations to pursue a new model for coherent coordination of arms trade.

Within this global pressure for a workable model, the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons (RECSA) was conceived following the Nairobi Declaration on the problem of illicit SALW in 2000. The core of RECSA's mandates lies in building the capacity of Member States to prevent, control and reduce the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW). The approach tended to focus on tackling the cross-border proliferation of firearms and the associated human security problems. On realising the importance of cooperation *vs* competition, countries in the regions adopted the common understanding that cooperation occurs when actors move towards a common goal that positively facilitates the achievement of others' goals. This Deutschian approach to collective problems morphed into what is currently coined '*cooperate to disarm*' (C2D).

Bonding as a Social Phenomenon: Hirschi's Ideas of Attachment and Belief

Ethnic kinship (EK) scholarship, which is the core of this article, embraces the four tenets of Hirschi's social bonding

theory- attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. Like Hirschi's attachment, EK scholars have demonstrated how the primacy of kinship is anchored on principles of egalitarianism- promoting communal living, a sense of social identity and belonging, hence strengthening people's ability to integrate (Hirschi's integration dimension), and bond for survival (Ronfeldt, 1996; Johnson and Earle, 1987; Harris, 1977). Nevertheless, a few scholars have noted discontinuous lines between social bonding and EK. In his overview of the erosive nature of EK, Fried (1967), advances an argument that a society cannot progress on the basis of ethnic bonding. Such a society is vulnerable to clan feuds, the development of aristocratic lineages, dynasties, mafias and the phenomenon of old-boy-networks. Similarly, Kotkin (1993) cautions that EK networks and traditional clan systems, both of which are usually established on the basis of blood or brotherhood bonding, can degenerate into the worst forms of social conflicts. This article builds on two key concepts from Hirschi's theory of social bonding: 1) attachment and 2) belief.

The first concept is the attachment bond. Hirschi's (1969) theory of social bonding emphasizes an individual's *attachment* to the various social institutions- family and peers in social settings. In other words, individuals with strong connections with family members are less likely to commit crimes or get involved in deviant behaviours (Pritchett and Moeller, 2021). This type of social bond builds commitment, aspirations, and actualization of life goals such as education, marriage etc. Although social bonding is explicit about cause-effect relationships in individuals or groups, this has not eliminated the problems of armament through informal networks across borders. These networks, which are mainly driven by blood and brotherhood kinship have been found to exacerbate the proliferation of illicit arms and violence in different parts of the world, including the US-Mexico border (Dube et al., 2013). This inconsistency raises the question of reliability and utilization of Hirschi's theory in explaining cross-border armament and gun violence thriving on EK networks. Given the *blood kinship* and *brotherhood* relationships that often accompany fictive kinship in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region, the possibility of utilizing the human-human bond (H2HB) framework (as opposed to Hirschi's group dynamics) in managing the proliferation of SALW arises.

The second concept is belief. The ability to *believe* in societal values is dependent upon an individual's *attachment* to the very society they belong (Chriss, 2007). Belief is an important aspect of attachment- a person who cares about what other people perceive of him/her is likely to guard against delinquency and violence. Lack of shared values could be predictive of competition- linked to aggressive and obstructive behaviours (Tjosvold, 1984: 746). In cooperation, the positive belief in each other's effective behaviour is generalized to be a predictor of cooperation (Tjosvold, 1984). However, when viewed from a disarmament point of view, it presents the '*chicken-egg*' paradox. Is it EK networks, social bonding or other social processes that encourage armament and gun violence? Which one comes first, the violence or armament? Does disarming one side of the border make the other secure? Is bonding a social or a human phenomenon? In Figure 1, this article proposes a figurative presentation of a minimum set of requisites for the existence of a bond driven by social processes.
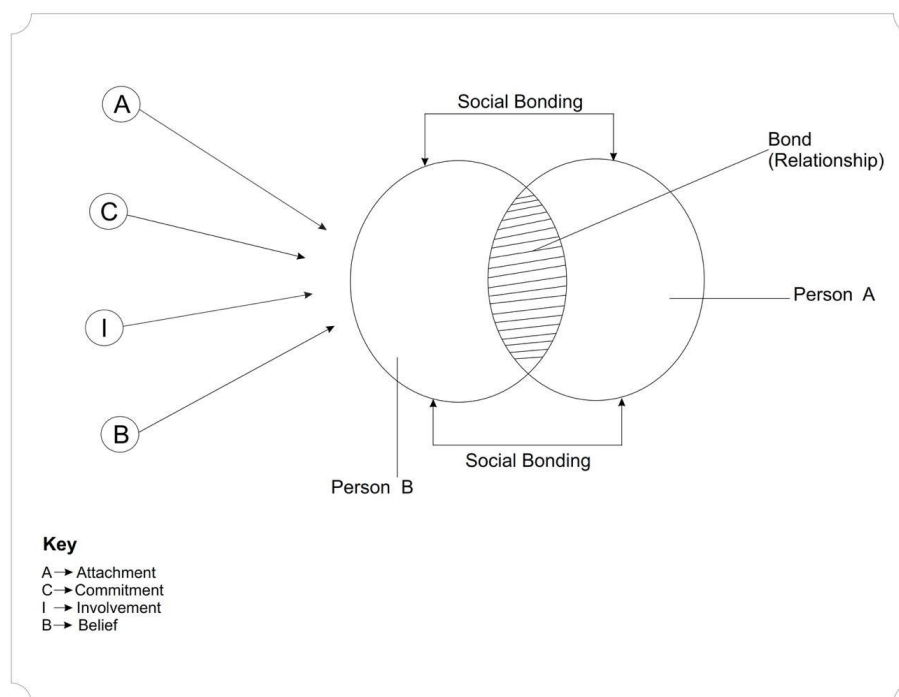
Figure 1. Basics of Bonding in the Hirschi's Four Dimensions of Social Bonds

Bonding as a Human Phenomenon: Formulating Hypotheses for H2HB

Almost every society is bonded/glued together either through formal foreign policy praxis or informal ethnic kinship (EK) networks. In this article, however, I focus on two types of bonds- hard and soft/loose. The soft/loose bonds are sets of rules, structures, institutions, regulations and foreign policy frameworks put in place to control the proliferation of SALW. In this case, the 2000 Nairobi Declaration on the problem of illicit SALW represents the soft bond among the fifteen members of RECSA (Regional Centre on Small Arms). This article adopts David Ronfeldt's (1996) definition of hard bonds to mean informal networks of nuclear families, extended families, clans and other lineage systems operating across borders in search of livelihood, protection, individual security and survival.

A new concept is developed here, that of, *'human-human bonding* (H2HB).' This concept refers to a set of lineage structures, cultural, ethnic, linguistic and civil traditions, through which individuals or groups interact, cooperate or compete for resources, space, and security. Building on empirical and theoretical work in the cooperation-social bonding sphere, this article develops the H2HB model that shows how the connection between individuals and groups who share kinship operates to create social capital and a whole network for their survival. These kinship networks can offer a means for improving livelihoods, it is also a platform through which inter- and intragroup social support mechanisms grow. It is on this basis that the kinship network, and hence, the H2HB, emphases social bonding as a manifestation of social control through a belief system, attachment, and socialization of norms, and values within the context of family and other agents of control. The idea of H2HB is to develop an explanatory framework for understanding how kinship lineage and family

blood connection facilitate or hinder cooperation in an effort to address the proliferation of small arms and light weapons among pastoral communities. However, if this model is not effectively utilized by local authorities for the benefit of society, it can be pathways for cattle raiding and gun trafficking, hence, cancelling out the benefits of kinship.

From C2D to A2D: The Case of Karamoja Cluster

Although for the last decade the Karamoja Cluster region has been experiencing an overall improvement in security and a reduction in armed raiding, recent studies indicate that if the current policies remain intact, 77% of pastoralists and 55% of agro-pastoral communities will have to exit their current form of livelihood or face imminent poverty. (Ayele and Catley, 2019). In other words, communities living in the Karamoja Cluster are both actively and potentially marginalized. This marginalization is driven by several factors. The communities' migratory patterns and a high degree of mobility present yet another risk from seasonal fluctuations. The historical infringement on their lifestyle by the colonial regime imposed artificial boundaries that emphasized ethnic differences (Chapman and Kagaha, 2009). The cross-border ethnic truncation has made it difficult to make gains in the regional disarmament programmes. Researchers have conjectured that for successful disarmament, the governments in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region must draw the link between illicit SALW and socio-economic and political roots (Alusala, 2010). They attribute the failure of disarmament to a lack of human-centered strategies and approaches.

Efforts towards C2D in the Karamoja Cluster

On the issue of the appropriateness of approach, critics have faulted concerned states for applying narrow-minded security approaches to address a multifaceted problem (Alusala, 2010; Easton, 2008). Yet, a comprehensive disarmament process in the Karamoja Cluster could provide an enabling environment for integrated development initiatives and livelihood transformation. In the last decade, governments in the Karamoja Cluster have intervened not only to get rid of illicit arms but also to promote the infrastructural development of the region. The interventions were guided by the provisions of the Nairobi Protocol on SALW.

First was the livelihood improvement initiative. This included community empowerment programs (OPM/MfKA), strategic large water reservoirs for livestock and crops, improvement of road infrastructure, connecting Karamoja to the national electricity grid with an almost 80% coverage, and supporting private sector investment in small-scale business enterprises and tourism as part of livelihood diversification. Second was social and economic transformation initiatives. This included joint government interventions aimed at transforming Karamoja into a food basket for the region. One of the program participants highlighted that "*investing in social service infrastructures, such as education, health, access to safe water as well as mineral development and manufacturing, is the surest way of transforming gun violence in our region.*"

The second intervention focused on the consolidation of peace and security in the Karamoja Cluster. Police infrastructure was constructed and equipped in every district and sub-county in the region. More police officers were recruited and deployed across the region. By December 2019, per capita police ratio in Karamoja increased by 118%

(Ayele and Catley, 2019). Police officers increased from 534 in 2015 to 1,163 Officers in 2019 (Police per Capita Ratio of 1:71,591 to 1: 39,330; compared to the national averages of 1:772 in 2015 and 1:892 in 2019). Yet despite this remarkable institutional development, recent studies show a widening disparity between the wealthier livestock owners and the poorer herds (Stites et al., 2016). The alternative livelihood activities that were offered to the poor households neither improved their food security status nor increased income.

The third and final initiative was the bilateral cross-border collaboration and policy co-ordination in the Karamoja Cluster region. On this initiative, a joint ministerial commission between Uganda and Kenya was established. IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) facilitation unit for the Karamoja Cluster was established to allow the free movement of goods and persons; Improved Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs) surveillance and control being undertaken. Finally, the RECSA Partner States endeavored to promote peaceful co-existence in border communities by commemorating local peace agreements, including the Lokiriama Peace Accord; *Moru-a-Nayeche* Peace Accord & *Tobongu Lore* Peace Accord. Despite this impressive development as guided by the C2D model in the Karamoja Cluster region, incidences of raiding, resurgence of militia groups and proxy tactics of *arming-to-disarm*, remain a thorn in the flesh for the community.

Why C2D remains Delusional in the Karamoja Cluster

Governments in the Karamoja Cluster did not intervene in a vacuum, but rather within the principles of the Nairobi Protocol on the prevention, control and reduction in the proliferation of illicit SALW. The joint disarmament program is based on the cooperation arrangement among the four countries within the Karamoja Cluster- hence, the notion to cooperate to disarm (C2D). The concerned governments through the C2D model tried different interventional strategies that were both formal and informal. In turn, pressure from changing livelihood dynamics, especially the skewed ownership of livestock between the rich and the poor households, added another element to the disbarment dynamic, leading to the clash between formal (soft bonds) and informal (hard bond) approaches in disarmament, hence, delusional C2D. In this section, I discuss how this '*clash-of-approach'* morphed into cycles of armament and disarmament in the Karamoja Cluster. I focus on the approaches as they were most instrumental in reinforcing the cyclic metaphor, '*arming-to-disarm'* (A2D).

In Karamoja Cluster, the cooperating states used*cordon-and-search* operation as a strategy for disarming the pastoral communities. This approach was characterized by soldiers surrounding villages, imposing curfews, while at the same time conducting a search in their homes for firearms. In short, this operation succeeded in accessing weapons. However, the excessive use of force in this operation applied mainly by Uganda's UPDF led to human rights violations. On the issue of trust, one of the participants in the Entebbe seminar retorted "*given the violations (killings, torture, arbitrary detention, destruction of property and arming of opponents), we the pastoral community have lost trust in the police, and local administrators."* A change of approach to embrace H2HB would have improved trust and relationships between the state and local community. However, the continued deployment of state apparatus (soft bond) in conducting joint cross-border disarmament operations in Uganda's Karamoja districts and Kenya's Turkana County might reinforce the notion of A2D.

Another factor reinforcing the cyclic A2D is the incongruous link between international cross-border migrations and internal Karamojong mobility. Given the blood kinship and cultural connection among the communities in the Karamoja Cluster, there exist uncontrolled informal multiple-country migrations. However, the formal structures between the concerned states proscribed free migration citing several reasons, trade irregularities, the export of terrorism and the need to maintain law and order. Despite the formal regulations, the Cluster continues to experience a resurgence of conflicts and commercialization of raiding, with some of the raids far away from the international borders. International borders are still extremely porous in many parts of the Karamoja Cluster because of the difficult terrain and its sheer expanse. From the H2HB point of view, individuals or groups become uncooperative if existing structures are unsupportive of family or fictive affiliation, such as when the state imposes rules that separate families or when state agencies build a mental wall between communities that are biologically bonded together. As per the H2HB theory, cooperative behaviour is likely to hold water when communities are supported to pursue a strategy of reciprocity and a sense of belonging.

Deliberate efforts to render a *community powerless* can inhibit cooperative behaviour. In most cases, the joint disbarment operation was incapable of monitoring the supply side of disarmament. As a result, weapons have become an indispensable means to defend livestock and to access water and pasture for livestock. The skewed disbarment left a paradox (A2D) and communities that have undergone disbarment vs. those still holding weapons, left fear among those who are perceived powerless. The groups that were still in possession of weapons raided the powerless ones. In most cases the state apparatus (soft bonds) used strategies such as intelligence, including relying on local informers for changes in pastoralists' behaviour, to prevent raiding from happening. As one of the interviewees stated:

He asserted the predominance of the Nation-State as the Center of Power the Axis of all (ethnic groups) encompassed by it. Rather, the social bonding is key in understanding the flow of conflict within the transnational networks and hence, developing peace pathways should consider salient kinship relationships; clans, extended families, cross border homes and nuclear families. While emphasizing the need to understand cross border conflict through the "cross border homes" phenomenon, he identified the main challenges fueling the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as politics of exclusion and social vulnerability.

When states were unable to detect raiding or access illegal weapons or were unable to mobilize the local community into voluntary disbarment, they blamed this failure on the unwillingness and uncooperative behaviour of the communities. Further, they deployed tactics such as supplying weapons to a proxy anti-armament group to fight local community Warriors. This A2D strategy turned out counterproductive as it created inter-group competition for weapons. The formation of the arms black market is attributed to this phenomenon. But as noted by Tjosvold (1984), promoting interdependent goals can be used to facilitate social interaction, hence, cooperative behaviour, rather than blaming it on the affected communities. In other words, successful disarmament was more likely if the demands relate to the communities' goals-livelihoods, protection of their livestock and in some cases provision of alternative sources of livelihood assets and activities. For this to be fulfilled, there is a need for an organizing agent to coordinate all the elements of livelihood activities among the border communities. The H2HB model postulates that 'like-minded individuals and groups are likely to achieve positive cooperation in resolving social dilemmas, if, they are familiar with each other.' In other words, individuals

or groups that have kinship identities care about the interest of others in the community enough to sacrifice their own individual interests to benefit the broader society. The proposed H2HB approach is based on the kinship fabric of the society, and could as well serve as a model for the formulation of informal strategies for disarmament in various parts of the Karamoja Cluster and beyond, including the migratory corridors.

The main risks associated with the erratic mobility in the Karamoja Cluster are the negative impacts emanating from the cyclic civil wars created by the internally displaced people, state securitization of refugees at the borders and lack of sustained economic recovery policy and strategy within the C2D framework. This, however, does not necessarily imply human mobility in the Cluster does not support meaningful livelihood. The historical relationship among communities that share close ancestry indicates that cyclic mobility helped to construct new realities. For instance, in the Kenya-(South) Sudan migratory corridor, the Toposa (South Sudan) and Turkana of Kenya who are close cousins, were found to utilize their kinship (H2HB) networks in identifying wrongful gun owners and provide useful information to the local authorities. On the contrary, the use of state apparatus in the broader framework of C2D, weaponized group networks by deploying tactics that aimed at arming proxy groups against those perceived "outsiders", leading to skewed disarmament and the evolution of yet another complication- *arming-to-disarm* (A2D) phenomenon. Within the Cluster, however, there are pockets of the population who resisted this pervasive approach. For instance, among the Karamajong of Uganda, there exist multilevel strategies of kinship network, including self-organizing through the establishment of clan-based vigilante groups and local peace committees, based on the community's day-to-day migratory lifestyle.

The circular migratory behaviour among the Karamoja ethnic groups is a reflection of nature, patterns of livelihood as well as adaptational strategies. There has been both internal and external migration among the pastoral communities for water, food, safety and pasture for their livestock. The circular migration is mostly linked to alternating wet and dry seasons. For a long time, the community has been forming long *kinship associations* with each other, termed as, '*stock associates*'. The archival review, reveals that, during periods of severe drought, the Karamajong children would be sent to the *stock associates* to live and work and they would return when the conditions are favorable. For example, the Bokora community of Uganda is the most notorious with the highest number of circular migrants. Through the *stock associations,* the Bokora people are able to access peri-urban areas for water, food and safety. They also share familial, village and clan connections with their neighbours within the Cluster, which are helpful during migration.

Finally, the *'One-Stop Border'* model of managing cross-border communities has not been effective. The Kenya-Ethiopia border in particular has not worked due to restrictions in Ethiopia, yet it could be useful in controlling the smuggling of illegal goods including drugs and arms. The ownership of weapons between Kenyan and Ethiopian communities varied considerably. In most cases, the Kenyan border communities were rendered vulnerable as their neighbouring Ethiopian Oromo were armed. In this case, disarmament could only succeed if the operation involves an effective partnership between the Kenyan and Ethiopian Oromos. After all, communities from both countries trace the same lineage. The militarized disarmament operation (soft bonds) could not work because their goals are incompatible. In such contexts, allowing extended family interaction across borders can help in building trust for C2D.

Conclusion: Some Thoughts on How to Apply H2HB Model in Pastoral Communities

The discussion in this article reveals that a balanced disarmament among cross-border communities remains a mirage. The cooperate to disarm (C2D) model, currently applied by the regional arrangement-RECSA, has been less effective in facilitating this cause. The use of state apparatus deployed tactics that aimed at arming proxy groups against the "others" perceived "outsider", leading to unbalanced disarmament and the evolution of yet another complication- *arming-to-disarm* (A2D) phenomenon. Rather than resorting to this pervasive approach, pastoral communities demonstrated multilevel strategies of kinship networks, including self-organizing through the establishment of clan-based vigilante groups and local peace committees. Based on these informal networks and connections, this article develops a hard bond (human-human bond, H2HB) approach, which is ideal for explaining and informing cooperation dynamics in resolving social dilemmas in an environment where formal state approaches seem to take precedence, yet the day-to-day lifestyle of the community demonstrates informality and organic nature of things. To benefit from the principles of H2HB, which can be instrumental in the creation of backwards-forward connections across communities of varied linguistic backgrounds, kinship linkage is necessary.

Pastoral communities in the Karamoja Cluster are glued together mainly by the "hard" bonds. The predominance of the Nation-State as the Center of Power – the Axis of all (ethnic groups) seems to be retrogressive to the disbarment efforts. Rather the social bonding is key in understanding the flow of conflict within the transnational networks and hence, developing peace pathways should consider salient kinship relationships; clans, extended families, cross border homes and nuclear families. On this note, it is important to emphasize the need to understand cross border conflict through the "cross border homes" phenomenon- which is often reinforced through the cyclic migration of pastoral communities. Cyclic migration is a desirable attribute among pastoral communities that could be reinforced through various regulatory mechanisms: a) establishing and regulating cross-border livestock markets; b) undertaking regular electronic livestock branding; and c) establishing more border posts to allow ease of movement of people and goods.

Even though there are several structural and socio-economic environmental challenges associated with circular migration among pastoral communities, still a lot can be learnt from this lifestyle. While on the *move*, the migrants are able to sustain their livelihood by selling charcoal, brew, hawk goods and items and making crafts to get some income. There are also challenges faced when they settle in a place. They are often accused as "strangers" by the autochthonous ("first comers") communities. The "outsiders" undergo harassment from the locals, verbal and physical abuse, lack of basic services and lack of adequate housing. Some of these lessons are can be difficult to apply with respect to resource constraints. On the other hand, the application of the H2HB model to the control of small arms and light weapons requires time to be fully developed as an alternative to the C2D approach. The H2HB model would fit in well with the border communities since it emphasizes social bonding. Yet it also demands careful consideration of existing border policies, legal frameworks and foreign policies of concerned states. Adoption of H2HB should be an open system that requires constant monitoring of community activities while at the same time allowing for free interaction along the kinship network.

Annex 1: Methodology for Scoping Literature Review in Deutschian and Hirschi's Ideas of Cooperation and Social Bonding Respectively
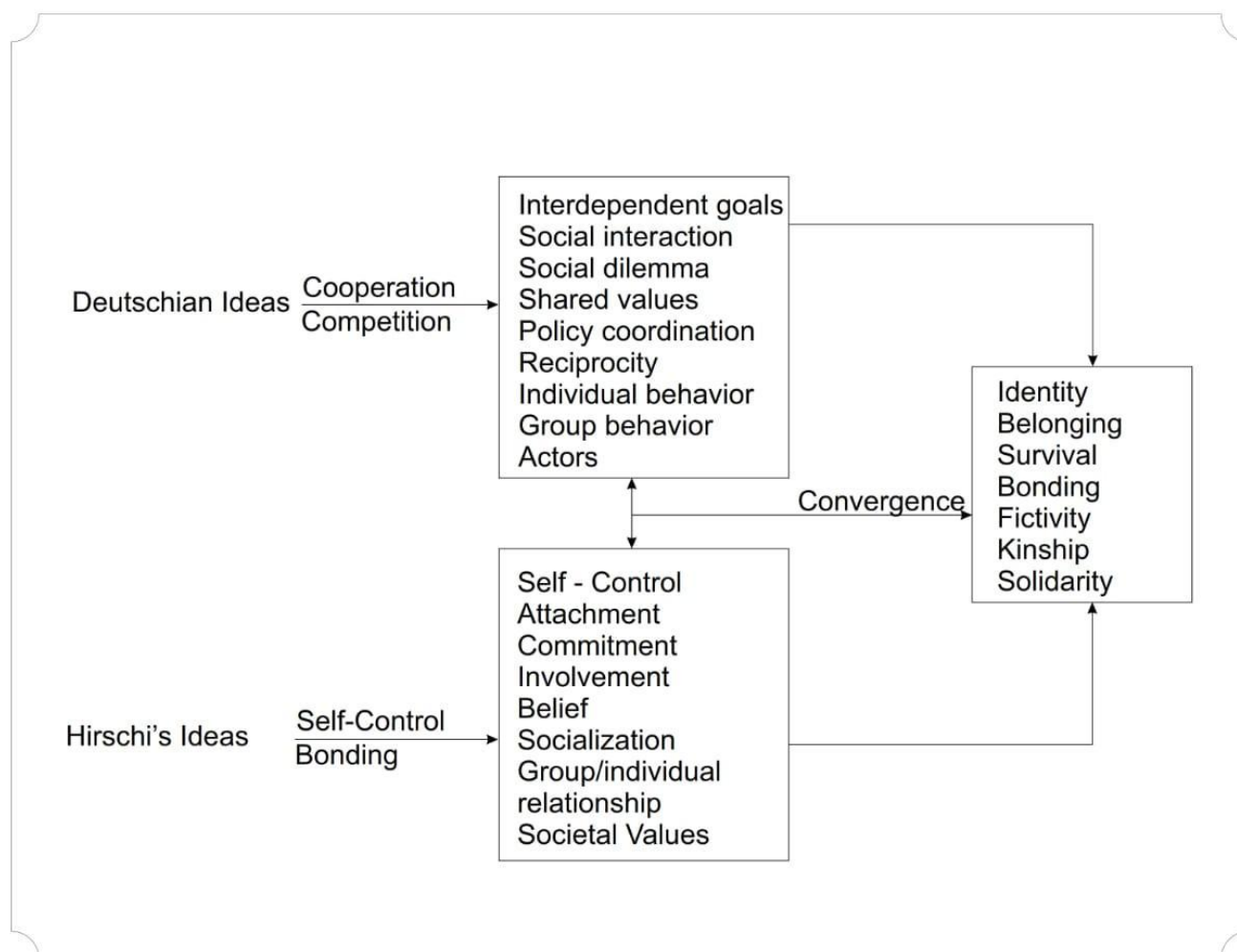
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