Regional Reconciliation in Africa: Policy Recommendations for Cross-border Transitional Justice

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JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION IN AFRICA PROGRAMME

Executive Summary

On 19 and 20 November 2013, the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) convened a Policy Workshop entitled, *Regional Reconciliation in Africa: Policy Recommendations for Cross-border Transitional Justice*. This meeting, which was held at the DIRCO offices in Pretoria, South Africa, brought together senior officials from DIRCO, diplomats, and inter-governmental and civil society representatives from several African countries.

This meeting assessed how the scourge of war, which the 1945 United Nations (UN) Charter was committed to eradicating, continues to persist across Africa. Despite the significant resources that have been deployed to stabilise countries, conflicts in Africa have remained resistant to resolution. Increasingly, conflicts have a tendency to spill across borders, affecting communities in more than one country.[1] In fact, since the end of the Cold War, traditional inter-state wars have been increasingly replaced by intra-state conflicts. However, these intra-state conflicts, more often than not, have an inter-state or regional dimension in the way in which they are resourced and executed. Furthermore, intra-state conflicts usually have a regional dimension, as they include more than one state as

either the primary or secondary actor. These regional conflict systems are notoriously difficult to stabilise, as the implicated state actors do not adopt a coordinated regional strategy to promote and consolidate peace. It is therefore increasing evident that regional reconciliation is required to ensure consolidated peace.[2] Even though Africa has a growing number of regional and sub-regional organisations, the absence of a coordinated approach to reconciliation and the lack of resources and capacity means that these mechanisms remain incapable of promoting and sustaining regional peace, justice and reconciliation.

This Policy Brief is the output of the aforementioned DIRCO-IJR Policy Workshop, and it discusses the strategies that governmental, inter-governmental and civil society institutions can adopt and implement to more effectively promote and consolidate regional reconciliation in Africa. The Policy Brief argues that reconciliation can in fact be operationalised across borders – in other words, regionally. It also discusses the types of process and infrastructure for peace that could be used or established to achieve regional reconciliation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The DIRCO-IJR Policy Workshop adopted a number of policy recommendations, which were targeted at the following stakeholders:

To African Governments:

- Adopt regional reconciliation as a strategic objective of foreign policy.
- Mandate regional institutions to function as the infrastructure or mechanisms for regional reconciliation.
- Allocate the necessary resources and personnel to further develop and implement regional reconciliation.
- Undertake a baseline and mapping of regional reconciliation initiatives with the aim of avoiding duplication of activities.
- Integrate a regional approach in the work of government institutions with reconciliation mandates (e.g. the Ugandan Justice, Law and Order Sector – JLOS; the South Sudan National Committee for Healing, Peace and Reconciliation; and the Kenya National Cohesion and Integration Commission).
- Integrate peace and reconciliation studies at primary, secondary and tertiary education levels through ministries of education.
- Adopt legislation to encourage cross-border media interaction on reconciliation issues.

To the African Union (AU) and Inter-governmental Organisations:

- Ensure that the AU Commission incorporates a focus on regional reconciliation in its Draft Transitional Justice Policy Framework.
- Coordinate mandates to contribute towards regional reconciliation.
- Ensure that the notion of regional reconciliation is adopted as a key pillar of peace agreements, to reflect the interdependence of countries.
- Mainstream gender considerations in designing and implementing AU and member state regional reconciliation initiatives.
- Establish an AU coordinating mechanism to oversee interventions to address trauma. In addition, designate and appoint advisors on trauma and reconciliation for all regional sub-bodies, who will generate policy initiatives to be implemented on the ground.
- Develop specific programmes for youth within regional reconciliation processes (e.g. cross-border radio programmes).
- Coordinate regional exchange of experience and skills to play a reconciling role and strengthen bonds across borders.
- Adopt policies to promote the free movement of people between regions in order to encourage regional economic development.
- Encourage businesses to expand across borders.

To Civil Society:

- Establish regional civil society networks to facilitate and advocate for regional reconciliation.
- Generate and disseminate shared knowledge on regional reconciliation.
- Conduct training programmes on the implementation of regional reconciliation strategies.
- Build the capacity of local leadership structures to facilitate cross-border reconciliation.
- Facilitate cultural and religious leaders to spearhead regional reconciliation processes.

Contextualising Reconciliation

Political reconciliation requires that the affected parties:

i)   recognise their *interdependence* as a prerequisite for consolidating peace;
ii) engage in genuine *dialogue* about questions that have caused deep divisions in the past;
iii) embrace a *democratic attitude* to creating spaces where they can disagree; and
iv) work jointly to implement processes to address the legacies of *socio-economic exploitation and injustices*.[3]

At the heart of reconciliation are justice and equity.[4] Traditionally, the focus has been on national reconciliation. The question is whether or not we can scale up national reconciliation to begin to talk about regional reconciliation. Prior to addressing this question, it might be useful to assess why it is necessary to adopt a regional approach to reconciliation. Specifically, ongoing regional conflict systems have become a persistent feature of Africa's peace and security challenges.

Regional Conflict Systems

Contemporary conflict dynamics defy simple explanations and are not confined neatly to borders. These conflicts are often complex, messy and, without fail, have cross-border dimensions. International relations analysts have defined regionalism 'in terms of patterns and networks of interdependence' and the extent to which that interdependence can impose costs on insiders and outsiders.[5] These networks of interdependence replicate themselves in the majority of conflicts affecting the African continent. Studies show that more than half of violent conflicts in Africa can be linked to conflicts in neighbouring states.[6] Conflicts do not stop at the border but, in fact, spill over, and these inter-state linkages are evident in a range of 'interconnected political, socio-economic and cultural factors'.[7] Specifically, 'transnational conflicts that form mutually reinforcing linkages with each other across state borders' suggest that these regional linkages are so strong and interdependent that a change in dynamics in one conflict often affects neighbouring ones.[8] Specifically, networks of interdependence are evident in the cross-border supply routes for arms and illicit trade. In some instances, co-ethnic groups living in different countries can serve as a network of illicit trade that can contribute towards fuelling conflicts.

Case studies from across the continent have provided insights into the regionalisation of violent conflict and how this can generate new disputes and inflame pre-existing tensions. For instance, the Rwandan genocide, often viewed in isolation, is a contributing and exacerbating factor in the conflicts and violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).[9] Similarly, the conflict system generated by the conflict between North and South Sudan has had a spill-over effect into northern Uganda and Kenya. The protracted political tension in Zimbabwe has precipitated refugee flows into neighbouring countries, which has implications for regional stability. In West Africa, instability and conflict in Côte d'Ivoire have drawn in militia from neighbouring countries in the Mano River region, notably from Liberia. These external militia formed military alliances with ethnicised Ivorian factions and precipitated regional insecurity, which could not be contained by the casualty-prone UN peacekeeping forces in the region.[10] There are a number of other examples that could be cited from across Africa that illustrate how 'seemingly unrelated conflicts become interconnected through alliances, enmity and opportunism'.[11] The regionalisation of violent conflict, therefore, calls for a coordinated regional approach to reconciliation, if these countries and their communities are to be stabilised.

The cyclical nature of conflict points to the critical need to move beyond the temporary stalemates and ceasefires, peacekeeping deployments and military operations that are so common in the current era, and towards regional policies informed by intentionally confronting the grievances underlying decades of animosity and violence on the continent. Instead, however, we seek national solutions or inward-looking, state-centric solutions – to problems that, in fact, require us to adopt a more expansive, regional perspective.

In April 2012, former members of the DRC national army mutinied and subsequently established the M23 armed militia group. In November 2012, the M23 managed to occupy the eastern town of Goma. In March 2013, the UN Security Council authorised the deployment of an Interventions Brigade, which sought to neutralise the M23 armed militia groups in the eastern DRC. This brigade included troops from South Africa, Tanzania and Malawi, which ultimately suppressed the M23 when Kigali withdrew its support for the militia. However, given the fact that its leadership managed to flee into exile, the M23 might morph into the M24, M25 or M26. In a decade or so from now, we could still be referring to the M31 in the Great Lakes region. This would be an indication of the failure to address the underlying causes of conflict in the region, which requires us to ask and answer difficult policy questions surrounding the regional dimensions of Africa's conflicts.

This reality of cross-border violations and the need for cross-border redress is also evident in other countries across the African continent. For example, there is the Ugandan crisis, in which the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has regionalised its grievances against the Ugandan government by spreading into the Central African Republic (CAR), eastern DRC and South Sudan. There is the CAR, where armed forces have generated significant instability, perhaps second only to the DRC, and drawn South Africa into a military altercation with the Séléka-armed militia. There is South Sudan, where on 15 December 2013, the country descended into violent crisis, and the potential for regionalised crisis cannot be discounted. There is the Zimbabwean political crisis, which has affected a number of countries in the region, not least South Africa.

If we turn our gaze to West and North Africa, the aforementioned Mano River conflict system flared up in and consumed the region in the 1990s, drawing in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and subsequently Côte d'Ivoire. The situation in Darfur has drawn in Chad, Libya and South Sudan. In turn, the crisis in Chad has spilt over and drawn in a number of countries including Libya, where the situation is increasingly threatening to

assume regional dimensions. The situation in Egypt and the militant posture of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has regional support and appears to be on a trajectory of escalation, suggests that this may become another theatre in which regional actors need to engage.

Regional Dimensions of the Somali Conflict System

Perhaps one of the most critical examples of the need for regional approaches to reconciliation is the situation in Somalia. Following the disintegration of the Siad Barre regime, the resulting political centrifugal forces fragmented Somalia's central sovereign structure and the state in effect disintegrated. A series of peace agreements ensued. However, following the failed UN interventions in the early 1990s backed strongly by the United States, which led to the death of foreign troops (dramatised in the Hollywood fictional film *Black Hawk Down*), the international community has had a lukewarm approach to further engagement in Somalia.

The current AU mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has singularly failed to stabilise and consolidate peace. Despite the existence of a government that has nominal support within the country, the Somali crisis continues unabated. Furthermore, the Somali crisis has spilt over into Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, has drawn Eritrea into the conflict system, and has generated maritime insecurity and piracy in the Indian Ocean.

Throughout the crisis, neighbouring countries have intervened, ostensibly to address their own self-defined national interests. Ethiopia undertook military operations in Somalia, and the current peacekeeping intervention by the AU includes troops from Uganda, Kenya and Burundi.

Fast forward to October 2013, when we witnessed what seemed a surreal event: a vicious attack over several days by armed militia against unarmed civilians in the commercial Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. This militia was allegedly directed by the Al Shaabab movement, which is fighting the AU troops in Somalia. Indications are, however, that the militia members were not only from Somalia but were in fact drawn from an international array of countries, including the United Kingdom and Norway.

Following the Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi, and assuming that the indications that this was conducted by the Al Shaabab militia were true, the question becomes: Can the Kenyan and international victims find a basis for redress?

We can also turn the question around: Are innocent Somali citizens in Somalia, who may have been negatively impacted upon – as collateral damage –

by the history of military incursions by neighbouring countries, also entitled to some form of redress? Given this new reality, it does not only matter what is done internally in Kenya in terms of reconciliation. If nothing is done in Somalia to promote reconciliation, then we can expect further attacks along the lines of what was witnessed in October 2013 in Kenya.

Today, military operations continue in Somalia to root out and eliminate Al Shaabab, with US drone assistance. This will only get the region so far, however. Even if all of the Al Shaabab militia members are eliminated, the extremist views that they harbour might simply be adopted by another grouping. The battle then becomes a permanent and violent one if the military option is used to the exclusion of all others.

It seems that promoting genuine reconciliation in Somalia and linking this to reconciliation processes in Kenya, not least because Kenya has a sizeable number of Kenyan citizens of Somali heritage, is ultimately a more effective and sustainable approach to reducing the war and strife generated by the Somali conflict system.

Given the fact that Kenya is on its own journey of national reconciliation, due to the aftermath of the post-electoral violence, and now with the added dimension of the Westgate attack, there is the increased prospect for further ethnic polarisation and the targeting of Kenyan citizens of Somali heritage. So there is an additional need: to implement cross-border reconciliation between Kenya and Somalia.

Fledgling Regional Peace Initiatives

There have been a number of strategic collaborative efforts to secure regional peace. In February 2013, 10 African countries – Angola, Burundi, CAR, Congo, DRC, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania – signed the UN-brokered *A Framework of Hope: The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region*, aimed at stabilising the DRC and surrounding region.[12] The idea behind this regional initiative is ostensibly to end the decades of conflict in the Great Lakes region. This framework, however, provides only limited guidance on strategies for forging regional stability. In particular, the framework limits the commitment to furthering the agenda of reconciliation, tolerance and democratisation to the DRC. Although it does acknowledge the linkages between regional actors and conflict in the DRC, and renews regional and international commitments to facilitating the administration of justice and strengthening regional cooperation and economic integration, it falls short

on the specifics of how to achieve this.[13] Specifically, this approach neglects the need to promote *regional* reconciliation, rather than limiting the effort exclusively to DRC.

Towards a Notion of Regional Reconciliation

Since conflicts, atrocities and violations straddle borders, we have to determine how reconciliation can also take place across borders. It becomes clear that we are talking about processes for which we do not have any precedent at the level of Africa's international relations and in particular pan-African transitional justice and reconciliation processes.

Regional reconciliation would require implementing processes of truth recovery, accountability and redress across borders as preliminary processes. The practicalities of how we operationalise regional reconciliation are challenging but not impossible to institute. The reluctance of nation-states to devolve their sovereignty and adopt processes that might be seemingly outside of their sphere of authority and control through the establishment of cross-border institutions will be a primary obstacle to implementing regional reconciliation. Articulating the compelling case for a policy of regional reconciliation exposes the limitations of retaining a state-centric approach to dealing with the past and ensuring redress and accountability.

When we apply a regional lens to reconciliation, it becomes evident that the war-affected states and communities in close proximity to one another would need to recognise their regional interdependence. Furthermore, these states and communities would need to engage in a genuine regional dialogue, based on a democratic attitude, in order to identify the issues that have caused deep divisions and generated violence in the past. Ultimately, the states and communities need to purposely and actively work in a collaborative manner to address the legacies of socio-economic exploitation. As with processes for promoting reconciliation nationally or locally, regional reconciliation will require the creation of spaces to develop inclusive narratives on the past and shared visions for the future. There is a need to move beyond transitional justice and reconciliation processes that have been largely state-led and restricted to national borders. Consequently, despite the growing acknowledgment of regional conflicts, regional reconciliation has *not* been the norm. Regions have to find collective solutions to the conflicts contained in their spheres of influence through a new policy framework of regional political reconciliation.

Gender and Regional Reconciliation

There is also a gender dimension to the issue of cross-border redress. What happens when perpetrators of gender-based violations cross borders to seek sanctuary in neighbouring countries? Historically, such persons have avoided accountability for their crimes. It therefore becomes necessary to establish a process for gender justice and redress that can transcend borders. What sort of mechanisms or infrastructure can achieve this? Failure to think outside the imaginary state constructs and to consider the gendered elements of cross-border conflicts and redress will keep the African continent trapped in a self-imposed prison of ineffectiveness in promoting reconciliation. Gender considerations must be considered in the design and implementation of any regional reconciliation initiatives.

Trauma and Psycho-social Support for Regional Reconciliation Processes

Regional reconciliation must be predicated on a commitment to providing a comprehensive and coordinated trauma and psycho-social support system to address the emotional consequences of violent conflict. In addition to the psychological trauma that is often associated with conflict and violence, regionalised conflicts often involve high rates of movement and displacement, in turn often resulting in the upheaval and dissolution of cultural support systems for addressing trauma and providing psycho-social relief to victims. The establishment of trauma support groups across borders should be integrated into an overall regional strategy, and bodies mandated with implementing regional reconciliation initiatives should appoint advisors on trauma and reconciliation, who can generate policy initiatives to be implemented on the ground.

Infrastructure for Regional Reconciliation

Regional reconciliation cannot proceed without the establishment of carefully constructed and coordinated infrastructure for promoting peace. We can make the distinction between *formal* and *informal* mechanisms for promoting regional reconciliation.

Formal Regional Reconciliation Processes and Mechanisms

Formal regional reconciliation processes could be facilitated by the state or by inter-governmental bodies, such as the AU or other regional bodies. These institutions would derive their legitimacy, and hence formality, from the authority of the sovereign states that constitute them.

There might be an argument made that reconciliation cannot proceed through regional mechanisms without the presence of national mechanisms. However, it might rather be useful to interrogate how national mechanisms can be enhanced by regional mechanisms. Regional institutions are necessary to oversee regional or cross-border reconciliation processes. This is predicated on the acknowledgement of regional interdependence, the need for regional dialogue and the pursuit of regional socio-economic justice. Regional mechanisms can function as catalysts of national reconciliation, through their ability to reinforce the sense of interdependence and their capacity to facilitate regional dialogue. Regional reconciliation infrastructure can also promote shared economic interests as a means of creating wealth and eliminating poverty. There are a number of regional mechanisms that seek to promote peace, security and economic development – notably those of the UN, AU, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) – but they do not have definitive policies on how to promote regional reconciliation. Most regional organisations like the AU, ICGLR, SADC, EAC and COMESA already have the mandate to promote regional socio-economic development. Some institutional structures have already laid the platform for this approach, notably the African Economic Community (AEC), which was subsumed into the AU, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is now an AU agency. The Southern African Customs Union (SACU) also falls into this category and fulfils this same objective of enhancing socio-economic development driven by the objective of promoting closer community between the peoples of southern Africa. So there is a convergence between the need for regional reconciliation and ongoing efforts to promote regional socio-economic development.

The issue of whether regional reconciliation mechanisms should be stand-alone institutions or constituted through already existing regional economic communities such as ECOWAS or EAC is one that requires further policy analysis. For example, would it be necessary to establish the following bodies, respectively:

i)   a Great Lakes Regional Reconciliation Commission;
ii)   a Horn of Africa Regional Reconciliation Commission; and
iii) a Southern Africa Regional Reconciliation Commission?

Or could these be 'housed' within the ICGLR, IGAD and SADC, respectively?

Informal Regional Reconciliation Processes and Mechanisms

Informal regional reconciliation processes would operate outside state structures. This would include civil society interventions in regional reconciliation. In addition, the Diaspora could play a role in actively participating in and supporting regional reconciliation initiatives. Typically, informal regional reconciliation processes could complement the more formal processes, and ideally they should proceed without the sanction and imprimatur of the affected states. In practice, state-actors would want to be informed of potential informal regional reconciliation processes due to their claim of sovereignty over their territory. Similarly, civil society needs to coordinate itself to more effectively support formal regional reconciliation initiatives. Where state and inter-governmental initiatives are lacking, civil society organisations can nevertheless pursue cross-border regional reconciliation initiatives. For example, given the novelty that would be associated with the notion of regional gender reconciliation, these processes are unlikely to receive the attention and resources that they deserve. This may require informal processes and non-governmental organisations to take the initiative to put in place processes to promote redress for victims of gender-based violence and other atrocities across borders. This would then require an appropriate infrastructure, such as civil society organising itself through a decentralised regional network, to advance work on regional reconciliation.

Functions of the Infrastructure for Regional Reconciliation

The infrastructure for regional reconciliation would have a range of activities, including the following:

i)   designing and articulating policy frameworks to guide regional reconciliation processes;
ii)   deploying the necessary resources to ensure their effective implementation;
iii) monitoring progress in implementing regional reconciliation initiatives; and
iv)   coordinating the media and communications relating to regional reconciliation: for example, through the use of social media to target youth stakeholders.

Capacitating Regional Reconciliation Mechanisms

It is therefore necessary to capacitate regional reconciliation mechanisms to enable them to support cross-border reconciliation, as well as to enhance national reconciliation processes.

At the civil society level, as already mentioned, there is the need to establish regional civil society networks to facilitate and advocate for regional reconciliation. Such networks could generate shared knowledge, conduct training programmes and build the capacity of local leaderships to facilitate cross-border reconciliation. In most contexts, it is also vital that cultural and religious leaders play a role in spearheading cross-border reconciliation, due in part to the legitimacy they have among the populations they represent. At the state and regional levels, regional reconciliation mechanisms can be capacitated when governments and inter-governmental organisations allocate the necessary resources and personnel to developing and implementing regional reconciliation. Regional reconciliation processes can also gain greater legitimacy when regional reconciliation is included as a strategic objective of foreign policy, and when institutions are clearly mandated to develop and implement regional approaches to reconciliation.

International Examples of Cross-border Redress

In the trial of Charles Taylor, former warlord president of Liberia who was in command when atrocities were committed in Sierra Leone, Taylor was prosecuted in a Special Tribunal for Sierra Leone, which was relocated to The Hague. Its ruling convicted Taylor of having violated the rights of Sierra Leoneans. The limits of the reach of international criminal justice are seen in the actual victims on the ground in Sierra Leone, who have yet to experience the tangible reparation or judicial dividends of the Taylor prosecution. As with other examples of international criminal justice, genuine redress for past injustice does not seem to affect the victims in a tangible manner that transforms their lives and experiences. The judicial dividends are limited when far-removed prosecutions are conducted on a small number of perpetrators who were the most responsible for the war crimes, and such judicial dividends are experienced by an even smaller group of victims. Cross-border reconciliation, as evidenced by the case of Sierra Leonean victims who were subject to violations by Liberian perpetrators, remains a distant aspiration.

While he was prime minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair apologised for the Irish potato famine. An apology along these lines is not sufficient to promote reconciliation, but it acknowledges the truth of the past, which lays the foundation for some form of restitution, which can enable reconciliation. The UK–Irish rapprochement provides an example of a cross-border initiative to heal a fraught historical relationship. The Japanese government has paid reparations to Korean 'comfort women' who were abducted during the Second World War and used as sex slaves for Japanese troops. In the 1990s, women's groups in Korea put pressure on the Japanese government to recompense former comfort women and prosecute the perpetrators who were still alive. In 2001, the Japanese government compensated three former comfort women and acknowledged its 'moral responsibility' for the suffering the women had endured. The Asian Women's Fund (AWF) is a regional reparations mechanism to redress the injustices faced by women at the hands of the Japanese government during the Second World War.

Germany has paid reparations to Israel for atrocities committed by the Nazi regime against Jewish people. US companies have been compelled by courts to pay reparations to victims in South Africa arising out of those companies' complicit engagement and collaboration with successive apartheid governments in perpetuating crimes against humanity against the country's so-called 'non-whites' during that era.

These initiatives indicate two important facts. Firstly, redress across borders and through a regional perspective is possible. Secondly, there is no statute of limitations on redress initiatives for the violations visited on victims of atrocities. This has implications for the gender-based violence, for example, endured by women in eastern DRC. Similarly, in the long term, this will have implications for cross-border violations in a number of African conflicts that are currently flaring up, and for the violations suffered by victims of drone attacks in Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Towards the Practical Implementation of Regional Reconciliation

While there is growing recognition of the value of regional interventions, the idea of promoting 'reconciliation' across borders remains uncharted territory for states and inter-governmental organisations alike. Regional mechanisms also tend to place an emphasis on security interventions – such as conflict management and peacekeeping – that merely address the symptoms rather than the deeper causes of Africa's conflicts. These approaches overlook the structural origins of conflict that manifest themselves so violently across borders.[14] Consequently, cross-border and joint peace and security operations focus resources on military operations – such as those of the South Sudan-Great Lakes region in pursuit of the LRA, or the war against Al Shabaab. If state resources were deployed in equal measure to lay the foundations for regional reconciliation, this would be a more effective way to stabilise countries and improve their relations

with their neighbours. Military operations are only a temporary stop-gap measure for containing violence, and are ultimately doomed to fail unless concrete efforts are geared towards dealing with the past and promoting regional reconciliation in Africa.

The military and intelligence sectors are also struggling to introduce a regional security and intelligence approach. The proposed African Standby Force (ASF) remains only an aspiration, as AU member states have not yet assigned the necessary resources to the structure.[15] It is self-evident that the sharing of critical intelligence information is vital for a comprehensive approach to solving some of the regionalised conflicts. This is due to the fact that the majority of African armed forces are limited in their ability to project power over the vast distances occupied by their borders. Specifically, such an approach could contribute towards addressing human and drug trafficking, as well as poaching and the illicit trade in natural resources. In addition, the AU has mooted the idea of a 'joint air defence' system to secure the continent's skies.[16]

If the military generals are busy looking for regional approaches to security, it is necessary for the peace practitioners and diplomats to look into regional reconciliation strategies. We cannot afford to continue along the same path and expect different results. It goes without saying that regional coordination is a necessity not a luxury when it comes to regional recon-ciliation. African governments and intergovernmental organisations are increasingly recognising this reality.

According to scholar Peter Wallensteen, 'the lack of a regional framework indicates the absence of shared thinking'.[17] Fostering regional reconciliation requires a more innovative approach that deals with a region in its entirety.[18] It requires identifying new ways of facilitating synergy between regional, national and local processes for reconciliation. It requires national policies to support regional frameworks, and regional frameworks to support the development of national policies.[19]

The Limits of Regional Reconciliation

There will obviously be limits to regional reconciliation. For example, border restrictions will enable perpetrators to evade justice by seeking sanctuary in other countries, as is the case with former perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide. As an illustration from the Southeast Asian context, victims in the Timor-Leste Truth and Reconciliation Commission felt that they were denied justice because they could not seek redress from their perpetrators who were hiding in Indonesia. In general, though, the opportunities associated with regional reconciliation far outweigh the potential limitations.

Conclusion

If our intention has been to ensure regional stability in Africa's various regions, then the model we have been using has not succeeded in achieving this. To date, policy analysts and decision-makers have been unable to see the wood for the trees. In other words, historically, interventions to promote reconciliation have been overly state-focused and unable to consider what is transpiring from a wider perspective and in a larger context and thus have been unable to determine the correct course of action. It is therefore time to rethink our state-centric approach to reconciliation, and to work increasingly across borders and in regional formations. Reconciliation is necessary for stability. Policy coherence on this notion of regional reconciliation needs to be pursued, in order to provide concrete modalities for governments and inter-governmental organisations to use in implementing these processes.

NOTES

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11 Wallensteen, 2012, 3.

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17 Wallensteen, 2012, 5.

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19 Nyambura Kimani, 'Kenya's Northern Frontier: Opportunities and Threats for Regional Peace and Security'. *New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Action*, 17, 27.

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ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) was launched in 2000 by officials who worked in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with the aim of ensuring that lessons learnt from South Africa´s transition from apartheid to democracy are taken into account and utilised in advancing the interests of national reconciliation across Africa. IJR works with partner organisations across Africa to promote reconciliation and socio-economic justice in countries emerging from conflict or undergoing democratic transition. IJR is based in Cape Town, South Africa. For more information, visit http://www.ijr.org.za, and for comments or enquiries contact info@ijr.org.za.

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