

Conclusion

promoting ‘trickle-up’: linking sub- and supra-state peacebuilding

Alexander Ramsbotham and I William Zartman

This Accord publication suggests that, in order to tackle the challenges of cross-border peacebuilding, strategies and capacity need to ‘think outside the state’: *beyond* it, through supra-state regional engagement, and *below* it, through sub-state cross-border community or trade networks. To function effectively, supra- and sub-state initiatives need to be strategically linked.

International peacebuilding responses should be aligned to tackle conflict *systems*. Policy that refers to systems rather than states can shape more flexible and comprehensive responses to cross-border conflicts. It can identify actors and dynamics that exist outside state borders, such as narcotic networks that support insurgent groups, and incorporate these into peacebuilding interventions.

Examples from Asia, Europe, the Caucasus, East, Central, North and West Africa, Central America and the Middle East show that country-based analysis risks limited or flawed conflict responses. A more creative approach is to strategise holistically, focusing on a conflict and its dynamics regardless of borders. How we define the ‘conflict problem’, what constitutes ‘peacebuilding success’ and the strategies we adopt to get from one to the other will be very different depending on whether the analysis and response focuses on an individual state or on a conflict system encompassing dynamics and drivers irrespective of national borders.

States are important peacebuilders. But international policy has become dominated by statebuilding as a response to conflict. Statebuilding involves creating state institutions and the provision of services. While it can be useful to help rebuild fragile societies, it is not synonymous with either peacebuilding or nationbuilding and can ignore or exacerbate cross-border conflict dynamics.

Borderland communities can be politically marginalised and can associate more profoundly across borders than with state capitals. In weak or fragile states, state presence in borderlands can be limited to the police or military, with little evidence of social or welfare services. Legitimacy comes from people, and political legitimacy in borderlands is especially complex. State institutions do not necessarily confer either identity or legitimacy. Borderland communities need to be comfortable with both their identity (nationality), and the legitimacy of the institutions and services of central government (statehood). This can reduce the risk of insecurity in terms of threats to centralised perceptions of sovereignty.

States can do a lot to minimise tensions in borderlands by investing in border areas to reduce the alienation of local communities. More effective border management regimes can facilitate legitimate movement and trade, maintain accountable cross-border security and encourage cooperative management of resources and infrastructure.

Think regional

Regional integration can help to ‘soften’ problematic borders. Shared membership of regional organisations can soothe state sensitivity to sovereignty through collective purpose and goals. But regional organisations do not offer ‘off-the-peg’ solutions to cross-border conflicts. Regional bodies have to navigate strong political currents and regional policy needs to be carefully tailored to local contexts, institutions and capabilities.

European integration facilitated problem solving in Northern Ireland, helping to balance disparity of power between London and Dublin, and providing a more level playing field for talks. And the EU has been supporting regeneration and reconciliation on the Irish border. But the EU has not been able to engage significantly with the Basque conflict, not least due to Spanish and French resistance to ‘internationalising’ the conflict.

Box 3 – Cross-border analysis of the Lord’s Resistance Army conflict system

The LRA conflict has spread from northern Uganda into southern Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR). Joint, regional military offensives like Operation Lightning Thunder (2008-09) have dispersed the rebellion and exacerbated insecurity for civilians across the region. The LRA now operates across an area 20 times bigger than it did before Lightning Thunder.¹

The Ugandan perspective

The problem

- LRA rooted in north/south grievances
- War in the north now over; small risk of LRA return
- Ugandan government desire to end the conflict

The response

- Military pursuit in DRC and CAR
- Amnesty programme; outreach to northern Ugandans
- Recovery and development programme to address grievances

The southern Sudanese perspective

The problem

- Foreign rebel group terrorising communities in the southwest and creating displacement and instability; one problem among many in the south
- Fear of Khartoum providing proxy support to the LRA
- Weak state presence, especially in borderlands

The response

- Authorise the presence of UPDF soldiers
- Local militias and self-defence groups set up

A cross-border perspective

The problem

- LRA is nomadic, unpredictable and primarily in survival mode
- Links with Sudan’s north-south conflict; risk of potential instrumentalisation of LRA following January 2011 referendum
- LRA and government forces pose security threats to civilians across the region
- Amnesty process and messaging are not working regionally; LRA fighters considering return fear hostile communities
- Regional military offensives have primarily served to disperse violence and provoke LRA reprisals against communities
- International Criminal Court arrest warrants for LRA commanders complicate peace negotiations
- Negative perceptions of northern Ugandan Acholi people regionally

The response

- Regional strategy to encourage LRA fighters to return
- Work with affected communities to promote reconciliation with ex-fighters
- Shared regional analysis between communities and governments
- Joined-up response from UN missions and teams in countries, focused on civilian protection
- Development of national security capacities and governance
- Deal with local Acholi grievances to undercut rebel support and move from conflict management to resolution

The DRC perspective

The problem

- Foreign rebel group terrorising communities in far northeast; one security problem among many
- Weak state presence, especially in borderlands

The response

- MONUC provides peacekeeping support
- UPDF and FARDC conduct military operations against LRA
- Local self-defence groups set up

The CAR perspective

The problem

- Foreign rebel group terrorising communities in remote southeast; one security problem among many
- Weak state presence, especially in borderlands

The response

- Authorise the presence of UPDF soldiers
- Sideline the problem

Rather, Madrid and Paris have responded to persistent violence by the Basque separatist group ETA with security actions within and across the border, inhibiting external EU engagement on the underlying issues.

In the Horn of Africa, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has not been able to engage with the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea, as neither country has been prepared to compromise sovereignty – territorial or political. IGAD has had more impact in Sudan, where it was central in delivering the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). It is important to differentiate regional interventions by issue as well as geography. The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) is a more useful body for setting up trade corridors in the Horn of Africa than either IGAD or parallel negotiations with states. But it is not the right forum to tackle conflict and insecurity.

Hard power, soft borders

Regional responses to conflict have tended towards ‘harder’ security policy – border security, military cooperation or peacekeeping coalitions. But cross-border conflict dynamics are varied and complex and demand soft as much as hard approaches.

As the case studies in this publication show, cross-border security is difficult to implement in practice, as agents of insecurity often have greater cross-border mobility than agents of security. Regional initiatives that focus on security only address the symptoms and not the causes of conflict, and can struggle to engage in conflict prevention or resolution, leaving in place many of the structural drivers that underpinned cross-border violence in the first place. Security precedes resolution, but resolution must be pursued as a second step.

In responding to cross-border insecurity in eastern Chad, the EU innovatively sought to deploy peacekeepers across the border with the Central African Republic (CAR). But when it became operational, the peacekeeping force EUFOR Chad/CAR did not patrol the insecure Chadian-Sudanese border, in particular after a French EUFOR soldier was shot by the Sudanese army when he mistakenly crossed the border into Darfur. Ultimately EUFOR’s impact on security was minimal. And Brussels’ focus on EUFOR eclipsed vital political engagement.

Regional organisations should focus on conflict prevention and sustainable resolution, working with governments and civil society networks to develop early warning mechanisms and to facilitate local participation and buy-in to peace processes. Regional organisations need internal political support from

member states, and may need external capacity support from donors. Regional organisations should lead and own capacity-building initiatives, independent of the state members.

Social networks

Without grassroots participation or buy-in, even the most constructive regional peace initiatives struggle to produce or sustain broadly legitimate peace agreements. Cross-border conflict response strategies can draw on local perspectives and support local peacebuilding capability. Cross-border community networks can develop shared response practices as conflicts morph and spread into new forms and territories.

The case studies presented in this publication show how affected borderland communities have both the insight and the incentive to contribute essential analysis of cross-border conflict dynamics. They can identify local peacebuilding priorities and structures – and also people. Sub-state cross-border networks and connections exist through social and cultural ties between borderland communities, which can provide policy entry points for regional peacebuilding.

Civil actors can play peacebuilding roles across borders that governments and inter-governmental bodies cannot. Shared experiences, traditions, social structures and kinship provide powerful tools to foster social cohesion and cooperation when diplomatic channels are blocked.

Regional responses to the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) conflict have focused on joint military operations by the Ugandan government in collaboration with its neighbours. But regional military offensives like Operation Iron Fist have served to disperse the rebellion and have exacerbated insecurity for many civilians, as the conflict has spread from northern Uganda into Southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the CAR. As of the end of July 2010, over 600,000 people were displaced by violence in the region, mostly now in DRC (540,000).

The Regional Civil Society Task Force described by Archbishop Odama above [see page 54] has employed a strategy of encouraging LRA rebel abductees to return home – for example using the traditional *Mato oput* reconciliation ceremony from northern Uganda to help communities accept them – in order to deplete LRA ranks, reduce violence and rebuild damaged communities. Communities are transforming themselves from LRA victims to become ‘anchors of resilience’ to the violence. Their insight into LRA dynamics makes them uniquely placed to provide essential analysis. By combining and amplifying their voice and capacity regionally, the Task Force is working to connect their efforts with official track one peacebuilding

channels. Inter-community efforts at peacebuilding need to be recognised and utilised by state efforts in order to be fully effective in management and resolution; either effort without the other is insufficient.

Peace economies

Cross-border trade can contribute to building trust, or establishing interdependencies across borders that provide incentives for cooperation and collective action and increase the costs of war. Business reacts faster to cross-border conflict dynamics than diplomacy or civil society. The peacebuilding community has recognised the potential of contact through trade to build trust, breakdown stereotypes and lay foundations for interdependency. Tensions between profit and reconciliation in cross-border trade can dilute its peacebuilding impact, and so peacebuilding needs to be mainstreamed in cross-border trade initiatives as a strategic objective. The challenge is to harness this potential for peace rather than war.

Trade across the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir has been used to develop economic links and build confidence between conflicting parties. Above, Ayesha Saeed asserted that, in order to realise the peacebuilding potential of cross-LoC Kashmir trade, peacebuilding objectives need to be prioritised and clearly articulated. A significant development in the trade regime has been the formation of the Federation of Jammu and Kashmir Joint Chamber of Commerce, the first official cross-LoC institution, which connects Kashmiri civil society and traders to governmental apparatuses on both sides of the line. The Joint Chamber provides a potential mechanism to develop and cohere the economic and peacebuilding functions of the trade initiative: to build grassroots pressure for normalising relationships across the LoC; to support sustained economic interdependence; to develop collective Kashmiri strategies and capacity; and to mainstream peacebuilding objectives.

In eastern DRC, a better understanding of the role of the mineral trade within the regional war economy, and in relation to other conflict drivers and dynamics, can inform more sophisticated and effective policy. Better regulation within DRC and across the region could help to legitimise the mineral trade and channel profits and resources to address more significant conflict challenges relating to ethnicity, citizenship and land rights, borderland marginalisation and governance. In West Africa, regulating the 'blood diamond' trade through the Kimberley certification scheme has helped to de-link it from a regional war economy.

Promoting 'trickle-up'

Connecting supra- and sub-state peacebuilding provides a way to 'humanise' regional peace and security, to develop policy and response architecture that goes beyond conflict management to tackle cross-border conflict dynamics at their roots. The challenge is how? The case studies in this publication demonstrate how civil society and business can provide bridges across borders and into borderlands, to help track one peacebuilding initiatives to listen to the communities who live there and tap into their capability.

Academics in Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador linked up with borderland and other communities affected by the spread of violence from the war in Colombia. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, women's organisations, humanitarian agencies, environmental associations, schools and local governments – all played a role in developing a citizens' cross-border response to border tensions. They engaged with the media and international civil society partners to help amplify their voice. Together they built up cross-border community solidarity and capacity and were able to mobilise at critical moments of diplomatic tension and, ultimately, to challenge populist nationalist discourse between Colombia and Ecuador. The support of the Carter Center helped to connect these efforts upwards, to engage with the Organisation of American States.

In Indonesia, the peacebuilding potential of Achenese refugees was supported by the Universiti Sains Malaysia on Penang Island. Its Aceh Peace Programme enabled Acehnese displaced by the conflict to work for its resolution through advocacy, capacity building, networking, institution building and local (Acehnese) ownership. Postwar, many former refugees have assumed influential positions back in Aceh and have continued to champion peace.

Linking regional civil society and business networks with track one regional policy can help fill the policy gap across borders and in borderlands, and to move from regional security cooperation to conflict prevention and resolution. The overarching message of this issue of Accord is that state efforts at peacebuilding need local inter-community and coordinated inter-state efforts to underpin their action; without such supporting activities 'below' and 'beyond' the state, state policies, even when focused on peacebuilding, are unsupported and insufficient.