

Regional integration for conflict transformation: a successful strategy?

Regional Workshop at the Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation, University of Pretoria, South Africa: 3 June

The first regional project workshop hosted by the Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation (GovInn) of the University of Pretoria brought together practitioners, scholars and students in the fields of regionalism, conflict studies and Africa-European Union (EU) relations. This one day workshop was hosted as part of GovInn's annual Governance Innovation Week, which hosted over 70 international speakers and several hundred participants. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss the findings of the African case studies of the project.

The workshop was introduced by a keynote address, followed by three panel sessions, a book launch as well as an evening lecture. The keynote address, delivered by Professor Johan Galtung, the founder of peace studies, discussed creative conflict transformation at all levels, with a particular focus on regional integration as a conflict transformation process. The discussion highlighted new philosophical approaches to conflict resolution and the relationship between basic human needs and conflict. It was concluded that conflict transformation needs to be centred on transforming relationships.

The first panel, presented by Thomas Diez and Nathalie Tocci, summarised the RegioConf project and its conceptual framework, followed by an overview of the EU perspective on regional integration and conflict transformation (Eva Scherwitz). The two-step process of the project was explained and the four pathways of influence (compulsion, social learning, changing context and model-setting) were highlighted. From an EU point of view, the commitment of African organisations to regionalism was questioned. The challenge of definitional clarity and the various roles and forms that regionalism can take were raised by the discussants and during the Q&A session.

This was followed by the first case-study presentation on West Africa by Giulia Piccolino and Stephanie Minou. The paper pointed out that the successes of regional integration in conflict transformation were limited, due to challenges of implementation, but that there had been some important progress. The EU's role as a partner and donor was raised, but speakers also emphasised the African origins of regional organisations in West Africa. The subsequent discussion highlighted the divergent perceptions of ECOWAS as a successful/unsuccessful conflict transformation agent based on recent events in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. The problem of the 'false emulation' or 'syndrome of partial implementation' of EU-promoted models and norms by African regional organizations was highlighted. The discussant also signaled the need to disaggregate between different types of conflicts (international and civil wars) and between impact on peace and conflict at different levels (i.e. conflict management as opposed to conflict transformation).

The final project panel discussed the Great Lakes case study (Sonja Theron). Here, the general failure of regional integration to transform conflict was discussed, together with the need to understand both formal and informal regional processes. The complexities in the region were illustrated in relation to the contradictory and sometimes negative effect regionalism may have on peace. The policy coherence of the EU and the viability of the European model in a different context were questioned. The discussion that followed raised issues of state-building, identity formation and the role of the African Union as a continental body. Discussants pointed to a need to further explain the theoretical assumptions underlying the work.

The workshop closed with a launch of the *Handbook of Africa's International Relations* by Tim Murithi. Here Africa's position in the world was discussed in relation to the potential for a new scramble for Africa. Focus was once again on continental integration and the position of Africa vis-à-vis both the global North and the emerging South. The various speakers brought perspectives from Europe, Africa and Asia, with a view to understanding the extent to which Africa is assuming a new role in the global political scene.

The day was closed by an evening reception and a lecture by Prof. Peter Katzenstein from the universities of Cornell and Harvard. Prof. Katzenstein analysed the intersection between regionalism, globalisation and conflict and provided new frameworks for the analysis of how regionalism is evolving in the 21st century.

All partners agreed on the fruitfulness of the workshop and on the valuable comments provided by discussants and members of the audience.

List of Workshop Participants

Project Partners

Thomas Diez, University of Tübingen
Nathalie Tocci, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)
Eva Scherwitz, University of Tübingen
Giulia Piccolino, University of Pretoria and German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA)
Stephanie Minou, University of Pretoria
Sonja Theron, University of Pretoria

Discussants and other speakers

Johan Galtung, TRANSCEND
Sonia Lucarelli, University of Bologna
Michael Schulz, University of Gothenburg
Laurie Nathan, University of Pretoria
Tim Murithi, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation
Henning Melber, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation
John Kotsopoulos, University of Pretoria
Antonio Fiori, University of Bologna
Luk van Langenhove, UN University