

Global Reconciliation: Responding to Tension through a Local-Global Process

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For a long time now, processes of globalization have intensified and extended the consequences and patterns of political violence, including conflict between nation-states. This is not to imply that globalization causes violence in itself. However, processes of globalization contribute to a world of rapid change and local situations of disruptive, moving, fragmenting, disintegrating and reintegrating social relations. With that, over the last half century the various cycles of political violence from local conflict to international wars have been fundamentally changing. One expression of this change is to fundamentally challenge the sovereignty and organizational capacities of existing nation-states to deal with the long-term consequences of political violence, including how cultural-political difference can be reconciled. Processes of globalization also challenge what local people can achieve on their own in ameliorating social conflict, including their capacity to carry through effective processes of reconciliation independent of national and global engagement.

Part of understanding the complexities of reconciliation across the world thus requires us to examine the meaning of reconciliation in global context. Instances of localized violence and social tension continue, at one level, to be uniquely embedded in local circumstances. However, more and more, the movement of people, practices and ideas mean that layers of global relations frame even the most seemingly localized of examples. In an immediate sense, the kinds of globalizing issues to be dealt with range from the consequences of terrorism, including the globalization of the wars fought against it, to the more hidden systemic violence of contemporary regimes of slavery and indentured labour as those local labour regimes get embedded in the structures of global consumer capitalism. In the broadest terms, issues of violence and conflict now concern a panoply of issues from the globalized movement of people to the role of global media systems in drawing our attention to situations of violence and providing a platform for cycles of media-projected

dissent and counter-dissent. What all this suggests is that addressing the question of reconciliation is now a local-global question of significant complexity.

In this chapter we begin by mapping some basic changes in the pattern of violence across the globe. This is necessary to understand the demands which processes of reconciliation are called upon to mitigate. We then examine the limits of conventional national reconciliation processes, suggesting that they tend to focus on dialogue in the context of state-run reconciliation commissions rather than recognizing the importance of both global processes and local differences. Finally, we argue that responding to the changing nature of violence in a globalizing world requires a different approach that works across all levels from the local to the global – and back again – including but not centring on the national as reconciliation processes currently do.

MAPPING THE CHANGING NATURE OF VIOLENCE ACROSS THE GLOBE

Various United Nations reports from the last couple of decades draw a picture of a frighteningly violent world, with violence taking many forms and reaching deep into the life-worlds of people on the ground. Some of the major points from these reports deserve to be stated again and cast within the current framing awareness of globalization:

- In the early 1990s, genocide occurred in Europe and Africa, with more than 200,000 people killed in 1992–5 and over 500,000 (probably closer to 800,000) killed in Rwanda in 1994.
- Across the decade of the 1990s we saw a major decrease in deaths from interstate conflicts down to 200,000 people over the decade; down from nearly three times that in the 1980s. However, nearly 3.6 million people were killed in wars within states in the 1990s.
- During the 1990s the number of refugees and internally-displaced persons grew by 50 per cent.
- During this period, half of the civilian war casualties were children, and there were estimated to be 300,000 child-soldiers worldwide (UNDP, 1994, 1997, 2002).

Before we can understand the contemporary complexity of reconciliation we need to elaborate changing global patterns of violence that require processes of reconciliation. Notwithstanding continuities in the effects and horror of political violence, a number of changes can be singled out. One global pattern that is crucial to note is that war is no longer primarily an interstate phenomenon. The relative number of violent conflicts between nation-states has declined in recent decades, while the phenomenon of major armed conflict seems increasingly to be characterized by intra-state or what might be called ‘localized transnational violence’.

These conflicts are, in a statistical sense, lasting longer than previous wars with no clear winners. This is partly a reflex of the decline in state authority over large regions of the Global South, and the refiguring of political competition at all levels, but it is also a function of globalizing complexities that do not have a concomitant political expression in an adequate system of integrated global political governance. With the consolidated globalization of the nation-state system over the course of the twentieth century, wars over state boundaries have largely finished and the reconciliation needs that used to be foremost between nation-states, particularly in relation to the two massive global wars of the last century, now remain as background considerations in national histories rather than sources of impending violence.

This perspective was expressively implied, perhaps for the first time, in the UNDP Report of 1994:

with the dark shadows of the Cold War receding, one can now see that many conflicts are within nations rather than between nations. For most people, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of cataclysmic world event. Will they and their families have enough to eat? Will they lose their jobs? Will they be tortured by a repressive state? Will they become a victim of violence because of their gender? Will their religion or ethnic origin target them for persecution ... Human security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity. (UNDP, 1994: 22)

In using the phrase ‘within nations’ to specify the new predominance of what we will call localized transnational violence, the UNDP Report still misses out the way in which such violence tends to have globalizing implications as it stretches along diasporic networks, financial support pathways, internet webs and armaments supply chains, to name just a few. However, it marks an early stage in the increasing recognition of shift away from the predominance of inter-state violence in global politics.

A second pattern to the new wars is that they tend to occur in zones where either consolidated nation-states were made out of the break-up of empire following World War I (states such as Yugoslavia or Turkey), or there was previously a colonial order of authority that left regions of contested power (states such as the Congo or Israel-Palestine). Again these two zones have an obvious relation to processes of globalization. The first is related to global wars disrupting older forms of political power and the second is related to an earlier period of imperial globalization. Violence erupted in colony after colony across the twentieth century as the process of decolonization was globalized for all but a few places. Thus the Third World became the Global South, the predominant site of violent political conflict across the globe today (Harkavy and Neuman, 2001). These post-colonial zones are characterized by states where openly ethnic and/or class entities project a strategy that emphasizes the control of sources of wealth. The post-colonial state has often become an instrument of fragmenting economic enrichment. It is an historical consequence of a global process of colonization/decolonialization where internal and external lines of power have continued to exploit the cleavages between formerly much smaller and differently integrated regions of customary and traditional power.

A third pattern is that regional and localized wars, often in the past having limited impact beyond their immediate region – that is, except when great powers became involved – now have come to have increasingly profound

globalizing consequences (James and Sharma, 2006). It is a misnomer to speak of the ‘globalization of war’ if this is taken to mean that war is now always fought on a global arena *rather than* having international and regional consequences or localized effects. But that is not what we mean by ‘globalization’. Globalization is a process of extension and interconnection. Leaving out the War on Terror, during its height a *global* and totalizing war, what we are seeing is a *globalizing* pattern of specific regional armed conflicts with effects spreading out to the rest of the world. In other words, rather than each war being global, the proliferation of local conflicts within states is, with a few exceptions, predominantly a Global South, phenomenon, and it has globalizing effects. It is not merely a coincidence that conflict and violence are patterned in the way they are across large parts of the world. Apparently localized events, such as an ambush in Mogadishu, a massacre in Račak, or an uprising in Benghazi, are now being treated as indicative of a larger pattern that either entails global military learning or requires a major practical response that affects military and political relations across the globe.

THE CHALLENGE OF RECONCILIATION UNDER CONDITIONS OF INTENSE LOCAL-GLOBAL CHANGE

In some of the sites of major conflict there are signs of slow reconciliation. After years of tension, ranging from hot and cold sporadic violence to tensions generated as states fail to recognize the nature of cultural differences, there are moments and processes that suggest that reconciliation is happening. This has been supported by the phenomenon of national ‘truth and reconciliation’ forums. It is now a globalizing process with forums held in numerous nation-states around the world: Chile, Liberia, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Timor Leste. Even the name ‘Truth and Reconciliation Commission’ with variants has been globalized as an institutional form.

Does this mean that political recognition, reconstruction, and recovery are proceeding productively in such places? Does it mean that now at least in theory we understand the optimal pathways to reconciliation and positive peace? Contemporary history suggests not. Despite global developments such as the move towards nation-states setting up national reconciliation commissions and the global community finally agreeing to an International Criminal Court, the connection between grass-roots security and national and global governance has in practice gone two steps backwards over the last half century for every three steps forward.

Despite the gains in regions that years ago left behind their particular bloody conflicts, the processes of reconciliation and recovery are hindered by numerous problems: global and local inequalities; attempts by national governments to paint over the problems; lack of systematic connection between the different national bureaucracies, non-government agencies, and global interventions. Reconciliation and recovery has been characterized by too many attempts at quick fixes, and by disjointed, self-serving and limited support from most countries across the world. For example, in Timor Leste, after the high expectations of independence and the rigorous work of the Reception, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CAVR), a completely unexpected political divide emerged as the brothers and sisters of *Lorosa'e* and *Loromonu* became enemies, willing to kill and die over status and resources (Grenfell, 2008).

Over and above the limits of national reconciliation forums, there is an obvious and darker side of the planet that has not yet been mentioned. Firstly, even taking seriously the most optimist prognoses for older post-war countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, the hopes for reconstructing the new war-zones devastated by the global War on Terror – in particular, Iraq and Afghanistan – require us to project at least a generation or two in the future (Shadid, 2005). Secondly, genocide and ethnic cleansing are not practices of some primordial past

based on a return to tribal or traditional madness, but a phenomenon of the rational, modern and democratic present (Mann, 2005).

While a lot can be said about what does *not* work, we desperately need affirmative answers to what might be alternative pathways to peace. Inter-state wars may be declining as a global phenomenon, but localized transnational violence and divisive identity politics are more intense and with more impact on non-combatants than ever before (Hironaka, 2005). In such a context, and despite the need to say something positive, it is crucial to begin by addressing the quandaries of reconciliation that in the main continue to be either unspoken or haphazardly insinuated by cynics. There *are* positive pathways to political reconciliation, but at the risk of being misunderstood let us begin with a series of interconnected propositions about the problems associated with any reconciliation process. None of these propositions are remarkable in themselves, but it is unusual for them to be spoken together and by advocates of reconciliation processes.

Dialogue is not the answer – at least not in itself (Burton, 1969). Neither is reconciliation furthered by *just* concentrating on testimony, listening, or memorializing the past. Reconciliation is not simply about individuals feeling better. Some of the best intentions to restore dialogue can aggravate rather than ease conflict. Globalizing the model that (unevenly) worked in South Africa, for example, has proven to be more complicated than first seemed to be the case. Confronting oppressors with their victims, or bringing victims into ritual structures of testimony, are as likely to cause deep pain to the traumatized as bring about reconciliation (Humphrey, 2002).

Dialogue that is organized during a conflict is often entangled with miscommunication, confusion and trauma, such that it can be emotionally, psychologically and even physically demanding for those involved. There are situations where the energy and time required to continue dialogue are more than the parties involved can or will bear.

Sometimes conflict serves as a breaking point where participants choose, either explicitly or otherwise, to walk away rather than continue to work through differences. Depending on context, these are not *necessarily* undesirable outcomes. Sometimes the cost of maintaining formalized dialogue is deemed greater than agreeing to peacefully co-exist without institutionalizing steps to peace. While worth considering, these questions rarely have simple answers and nor will the parties involved always agree. Where power relations are unequal – where there is exploitation or oppression – the oppressed might feel there is a problem and a need for a reconciliation process, while the oppressor does not. Power relations can determine who speaks and who listens (see Sadria, 2008).

Moving from the individual level to that of the community-polity, reconciliation is not about the transcendence of the universal over the personal. Reason and interest, the universalizing affirmations of the liberal Enlightenment, and freedoms of capitalism or the hopes of free-market democracy, are as likely to lead to bloody conflict as to peace (Chua, 2003; Friedman, 2003). Actually-existing liberal multiculturalism, tolerance, and democratic pluralism are more likely to lead to self-satisfied, empty, thin, or pleasantly repressive societies than they are to underpin complex negotiation over the dialectic of identity and difference (Wolff, Moore and Marcuse, 1965). Truth and reconciliation commissions tend to be only successful in very limited circumstances, and then only when linked to both fundamental political change (for example, the end of apartheid) and systematic juridical action, such as the trying of serious human rights violators as criminals. Most national courts are conducted at the legal direction of the winners of a particular conflict. All of the international tribunals from Nuremberg to the Former Yugoslavia have been conducted by or from the perspective of the winners. Most tribunal hearings are more concerned with individualized justice appearing to be done than with the oft-cited ‘collective conscience of humanity’.

The list goes on. It could be a never-ending litany of propositions that confront common-sense understandings of peace making. The key point here is that either we are usually so concerned as cosmopolitan humanists to find *the* virtuous pathway from violence to reconciliation, or, as realist pragmatists, to fault the whole endeavour of reconciliation as foolish idealism, that we rarely directly address such points of grey complexity.

There *is* no single pathway to reconciliation, and there *is* no way of overcoming the ambiguities and ambivalences of reconciliation (Rothfield, *et al.*, 2008). *Positive* reconciliation is ongoing and always-in-process. It is not an ultimate state. It is neither a formula for prescriptively ‘fixing’ or ‘curing’ conflict, nor a model to be mechanically applied in order to produce peace. Such an approach thus hints at a parallel approach to the classical discussion of the distinction between positive and negative liberty. Positive reconciliation is defined here not as the final resolution of difference nor as a process of forgiving and forgetting – this can be called negative reconciliation – but rather as a never-concluding, often uncomfortable process of remaking or bringing together (from the Latin, *reconcilare*) of persons, practices and meanings in ongoing ‘places of meeting’ (from the Latin, *concilium*). The definition, relevant to both personal and political reconciliation, is thus careful not to presume that differences will be resolved, dissolved or settled once and for all time, or to presume an ultimate truth or transparency about the source of the conflict. Contingent judgments, and carefully-framed statements of best-available understandings need to be made and witnessed (this relates to the argument below for a Global Reconciliation Forum), but they remain open to revision. *Places of meeting*, in this sense, require the active possibility of return over time, and the possibility of the layering of truths and the contestation of meaning.

In this essay then, we want to take this issue about the irresolution of the reconciliation process as a starting point, and to

suggest a social framework in which the ever-present tensions of violence and peace, trauma and recovery, can be understood and worked through across a number of levels, including the relationship between the local and the global.

RECONCILIATION ACROSS WAYS OF RELATING AND BEING

The present approach focuses on *political* reconciliation. It draws on the work of Geoff Sharp (1993) and others who talk of the constitutive levels of the social. Here ‘the social’ is taken to be the encompassing ground of human being including domains analytically separated out as the political, the economic, the cultural and the ecological. We want to focus upon two different but related ways of conceiving of the social. At the risk of summarizing a complicated method in a few condensed sentences, the social can at one level be expressed in terms of modes of integration and differentiation (*ways of relating*) from face-to-face relations through institutionally-extended relations to disembodied-extended relations. It can also be understood at a second and more abstract conception of the social in terms of *ways of being* – in particular ways of living in relation to the nature of time, space, embodiment, performance and knowing. Examining the manifold formations of *ways of being* allows us to talk about overlaying and cross-cutting *formations of being* – namely, the tribal or customary, the traditional, the modern and the post-modern (James, 2006).

Understanding sociality in these terms of layers of relating and being, has consequences for thinking about reconciliation as an ongoing process, and for understanding the ways that this process can be positively institutionalized so as not to empty out face-to-face relations. Reconciliation conducted as a series of institutional encounters without care about the way in which it resonates with the embodied complexity of face-to-face relations or the symbolic politics of more

extended relations is likely to be deeply counter-productive. Three underlying arguments connect all of this discussion.

The first is that in an intensely globalizing world, successful reconciliation practices and processes can no longer be confined to a national frame – if they ever could. Even in the case of South Africa, the whole world was watching, and this affected the legitimacy of the process. The second argument is that a sustainable process of political reconciliation requires a regime of practice that systematically interconnects across different levels of social integration or *ways of relating*, taking into account and working across all levels of relating, from face-to-face relations through more abstract institutionalized relations to disembodied relations such as extended by the media. The third argument is that a sustainable process of political reconciliation needs to be conducted with an active sensitivity to different *ways of being*, including the tensions and contradictions between them. For example, to consider an issue such as the Israel-Palestine question, a positive reconciliation approach would find ways of bringing consideration of *traditional* claims to *place* into relation with *modern* juridical framing that seeks resolution by talking about political roadmaps and abstract lines of demarcation over territory. Any approach that fails to negotiate these different ways of being misses the tensions that play out across them.

If we begin with basic questions of sociality, and with the proposition that social relations can best be understood in terms of the layering of ways of relating and being, then it is arguable that contemporary dominant understandings of both conflict and reconciliation are misconceived. Models of reconciliation that are most often offered as responses to conflict are likely to be counter-productive because they do not take into account important dimensions of conflict.

Much of the literature on peace building and reconciliation focuses on high-profile hard cases of conflict and their aftermath. The most dramatic, violent and devastating manifestations of conflict – armed warfare,

massacres and other international and intra-societal conflicts that make news headlines – become the case studies for which strategies are built to resolve conflict and restore social relations to harmony and peace. Conflicts are often mapped with neat diagrams illustrating their emergence, peak, and decline. The global media too encourages the short-term fixation on the most dramatic moments of conflict, providing limited contextual insights into the layered complexity and continuity. The global media spotlight focuses momentarily on a situation of violent upheaval, a flurry of attention turns towards the conflict – attempting to unravel and understand it, before the show moves on, shifting elsewhere and repeating the process. In this process, some of the most brutal and devastating conflicts have been largely ignored, including Africa's conflicts in recent decades such as those in the Congo, Angola, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, and Guinea.

While understandable, the limited and often short-term focus in much of the peace and conflict and liberal peace literatures on hard cases of conflict can contribute to a skewed categorization of some societies as 'conflict-based' or 'post-conflict' – that is, as problematic cases – and others as peaceful, harmonious – and thus unproblematic. Such a dichotomy obscures lower-level tensions and conflicts, pays insufficient attention to the conditions leading to violent conflict, and limits the possibilities for preventive reconciliation strategies. A positive global-local reconciliation approach begins with the premise that perfect peace and harmony cannot exist and that the potential for conflict, including the potential for conflict to erupt into violence, is always present, even in the most ostensibly harmonious of social settings. Clear endpoints of perfect peace and harmony are not envisaged therefore. Reconciliation is seen as rather an ongoing and inevitably complicated and untidy process of building resources for dealing with difference and conflict in ways that minimize destructive outcomes and maximize well-being of individuals and communities.

Reconciliation is all too often understood as a one-dimensional practice set within the dominance of single ontological formation – *the modern*. The strengths of positive reconciliation are often lost in confusion about the intersection of different modes of integration. The dominant tendency is to treat the face-to-face as primary in the theory and practice of reconciliation, while at the same time reducing those face-to-face relations to thin (even if momentarily passionate) encounters situated within a technique-driven enactment of what might be called 'reconciliation as one-dimensional peace'. That is, most enacting of reconciliation has really only been interested in the face-to-face not in a way that contextualizes conflict within multiple layers of the ongoing life-world but as a symbolic gesture for a brief bounded period and within an overwhelmingly disembodied framework of ambiguous forgiveness/othering aimed at achieving abstracted peace/justice.

A brief bounded period of intensified violence or upheaval is lifted out of the everyday and comes to be publicly understood as 'the conflict'. Sometime later, another brief bounded moment – this time usually as a symbolic act – is lifted out of the everyday and comes to be understood as 'the end of the conflict' or 'the beginning of justice' or 'the outbreak of peace'. Peace – that is, negative peace – occurs when 'the victims' have testified and been given a few minutes of fame and the world can safely move on. In the process, there is a tendency for deponents to be constructed as victims who have forgiven, and who now can be forgotten. In other words, for all the importance of face-to-face testimony or facing the other and 'saying sorry' as a base level of the process of reconciliation, face-to-face engagement tends to be left without much support or with limited time to carry the substantial weight of on-the-ground practice. In Timor Leste, for example, after an initial Herculean stage of collecting testimony for the Chega Report (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, Timor Leste, 2005), the process of community-based hearings was

ended and the global community stopped sending the still-needed financial support.

In reality both conflict and peace are regularly misconceived; they are dissected from and lifted out of that which constitutes them – the multiple and intersecting layers of different ways of relating and being, and the ongoing passage of time, including that which took place before ‘the conflict’, between the conflict and the ‘forgiving’, and that which continues even after the ‘return to peace’. Beyond the glare of the global media’s spotlight, there is no global institution or process that gives slow, careful attention to reconciliation over time, which pays attention to the more subtle dimensions of a conflict, including the embodied and everyday in its less conspicuous forms as it continues to unfold long after global media attention has moved elsewhere.

Each of those points needs more illustration and elaboration. The core problem is not how reconciliation tends to be limited to the abstract symbolic – symbolic politics can be important, and achieving personal reconciliation and extending particularistic justice to everyone is simply not possible given the complexity of contemporary zones of violence. The problem is rather that there tends to be little energy given to relating and coordinating the different levels of engagement from the personal to the institutional and from the local to the global. The following discussion moves in turn across the three levels of integration introduced earlier: face-to-face relations, institutionally-extended relations, and disembodied relations.

THE LEVEL OF FACE-TO-FACE INTEGRATION

The trope and the actuality of the face, as well as the concepts of face-to-face ‘interaction’ and ‘integration’, are important to rethinking the nature of the kind of engagement that needs to occur in processes of reconciliation. Emmanuel Levinas writes: ‘the relation to the face is straightaway ethical.

The face is what one cannot kill, or at least it is that whose *meaning* consists in saying: “thou shalt not kill”’. His point here is not that looking into another’s eyes stops one from killing. The possibility of murder, as Levinas adds, ‘is a banal fact: one can kill the Other; the ethical exigency is not an ontological necessity’ (Levinas, 1985: 87). However, it does provide a ground for human engagement. It is in this fundamental and messy sense of ethical exigency – facing the pain and having that pain acknowledged – that occurs at the base of a positive reconciliation process.

By contrast, the dubious hope of final and complete resolution (negative reconciliation) can only be achieved either through a fog of remembering-then-forgetting or through a rationalization of remembering that denies the issue that subjective pain continues to be embedded in the bodies of the aggrieved long after the act of truth-telling, and long after outsiders deem a conflict to have ended. By the same process, the notion that ‘time heals’ is dependent on a *modern* conception of abstract empty time. Within a traditional or even neo-traditional ontology of time, healing occurs within ongoing practices of both intense remembering, including carrying past pain into the present as real now (such as through the transsubstantiated body of Christ) *and* ritually distancing that pain. By comparison, the use of a title such as *Burying the Past* for a book on reconciliation and justice (Biggar, 2003) is indicative of the modernist framing of the very different pathways to reconciliation. The past cannot always be buried in the modern sense of covering over. Equally inappropriate in places crossed by non-modern ontologies is modern memorializing. The fixed marble monument in Denpasar to the victims of the Bali bombing was erected with no sensitivity to the traditional cosmology known as the *rwa bhineda*, which ‘delicately suspends the forces of good and evil in an infinite and irresolvable dialectical combat’ (Lewis and Lewis, 2008: 194).

There can be no categorical imperative to find reconciliation. Nevertheless, in the messy

humanness of pain and suffering, guilt and remembering, a pressing need arises to find an ethically-framed and positive way forward. The problem is that if political reconciliation (as distinct from personal reconciliation) occurs only at this level of the face-to-face it is bound to fail. Part of the fundamental irresolution of the political reconciliation process is that the ending of trauma effectively requires the renewal of a sense of face-to-face *integration* that has been cut to pieces by ‘the enemy’. This kind of renewal simply cannot be achieved through an abstracted, isolated face-to-face *interaction*, including testimony or forgiving the Other. Neither can the Other saying ‘sorry’ remake that remembered past. Often, in fact, it serves to accentuate the loss or to create a spectral presence of the past. More fundamentally, a person who is seen as Other to oneself is rarely someone that can be drawn into such a relationship of *integration*. Reconciliation needs to be built locally from the ground up (and supported from the top down, nationally and globally) by actual practice that is sustained and begins to transform the everyday. This can be done through mutual projects that may or may not be labelled reconciliation projects, but bring estranged and suspicious peoples together to do something that is socially beneficial across the boundaries of suspicion and pain. This process will not occur either spontaneously or through politicians’ road maps, but it will require some form of collective effort and institutionalization.

In summary, reconciliation conducted as face-to-face testimony and acknowledgement is fundamental, but unless it is at once re-embedded in the continuing moments (and projects) of the everyday *and* lifted to a level of more abstract engagement (usually as a series of institutionalized practices) with a larger community or civil sphere then it is likely to fail. In other words, reclaiming the face-to-face as one level of engagement is crucial, but it needs to be held in a clear and negotiated relation to both the ongoing everyday realm of face-to-face and to the more abstract levels of integration, including the

institutionally-extended and disembodied or mediated level of mass communications.

The problem is that alongside moments of emblematic face-to-face forgiveness, practices at the level of the institutional integration tend to be reduced to modern juridical proceduralism, notwithstanding its symbolic effect, around questions involving individual guilt or innocence. For example, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda dealing with the genocide of approximately 800,000 persons over its first ten years from 1997 made only 22 judgments involving 28 accused.² Equally, practices at the level of disembodied integration are largely left to a sensationalizing global media which, fuelled by the propaganda of self-invested states, tends to turn ‘the face of the enemy’ into an icon of evil – an abstract other – while ‘the face of the victim’ becomes a living martyr. For example, Saddam Hussein was constructed as evil personified with little sense of the complexity of what underpinned the emerging and violent dominance of the Ba’ath Party in Iraq from 1968 to 2003.

THE LEVEL OF INSTITUTIONALLY-EXTENDED INTEGRATION

Lifting face-to-face testimony to the level of civil society (local, regional, national and/or global) has been the putative task of tribunals as spaces of truth-telling, however in practice they rarely become what we have been calling *places of meeting*. In these formal venues, victims tend to be selectively chosen for their unambiguous innocence or the illustrative nature of their suffering (Humphrey, 2002: ch. 8). And, while they sometimes face the alleged perpetrators of violence as persons, they also tend to be subordinated to the process of legally churning through the material. There are important exceptions where symbolic politics and institutional framing have been handled well. For example, the first of the national hearings of CAVR in 2002 was given the title of ‘Hear our Voices’, *Rona Ami-nia Lian*, and the subsequent hearings

had thematic foci such as political imprisonment or forced displacement. This meant that while only a few were able to testify, the symbolic purpose of speaking to the nation was recognized for what it was – a partial process that had to be linked to other places of meeting such as village-level participatory workshops to healing workshops. It was again symbolically and ritually important that they were held in Dili at CAVR's national office, the ex-prison Comarca Dalide, previously used by the Indonesians to hold and interrogate political detainees. For all the strength of that process, however, only six such healing workshops were held and they were wound down in 2004 with the task of reconciliation barely begun.

The concept of 'places of meeting' or *concilium*, introduced earlier, is used here across the layers of meaning of spatiality from its expression as designated *places* to meet in the face-to-face and negotiate over differences to abstracted institutionalized or technologically-extended *spaces* where communities and polities negotiate over differences. Tribunals and commissions in theory should provide such places. However, whether they are criminal courts such as International Criminal Court on the Former Yugoslavia or reconciliation venues such as the *Nunca Mas* (Never Again) tribunals in Argentina, such institutions tend not to have the capacity to provide either the institutional stewardship required or the capacity to reach beyond juridical process and individual testimony. *Nunca Mas*, for example, was skewed towards a legalistic understanding of testimony in order to collate the truth as part of the larger project of bringing alleged perpetrators to trial. The Court on the Former Yugoslavia brought persons from the villages of Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo to testify in The Hague. They then had to face as their legal interrogator the man who stood in the dock, symbolic of all the horror – Slobodan Milošević. And, for all that, the Court had only two support staff to look after the psychological well-being of such displaced deponents. Those testifying

were people who in many cases had never before been out of their local region. They came to The Hague wanting to talk about what they experienced, but were cross-examined on such issues as the trajectory from which a bullet entered the body of the person they saw murdered before their eyes.

What is needed in reconciliation meeting places is both talking and doing. When the emphasis is on personal testimony, the talking ideally should be conducted across the binaries of victim and perpetrator, of us and them. This needs to be done without taking away from the possibility of individual criminality on the one hand and collective culpability on the other. Firstly, from the perspective of individuals, this requires a negotiated and articulated division and relationship between forums of testimony/admission and courts of evidence and judgment. This is different, for example, from the South African 'trading' of peace for justice where full testimony was enough for a perpetrator of torture or illegal killing to be given amnesty. Secondly, from the perspective of the collective, whether community or polity, this requires a movement beyond either individual testimony or judgment of guilt or innocence to the possibility that an abstracted entity such as a nation or state or institution or corporation or even global community can be taken to task for deeds of commission and omission.

In the current Western regimes of truth, reconciliation and justice only individuals are called to account (Broomhall, 2003). Positive reconciliation requires a challenge to the dominant notion that only perpetrated action can be adjudicated upon, and that only individuals can be brought to task. Addressing these limitations requires understanding and responding to violent acts from multiple perspectives, including actor-oriented, structure-oriented and culture-oriented perspectives (see Gultag, 2001: 5). It may also require looking beyond Western approaches of reparation/restitution, apology/forgiveness, juridical/punishment. Under a Buddhist approach, for example, based on the concepts of interacting causal

chains and *karma* that is always collectively intertwined, no single actor can ever be entirely responsible for a violent act. Responses to violent acts do not include individual allocations to roles of defendant, prosecutor, counsel, judge but rather a roundtable arrangement with symmetric seating. This process of outer dialogue is combined with inner dialogue focused on grappling with conflicts and forces within the self (see Gultag, 2001: 11).

Dominant global retributive approaches by contrast have tended to treat the categories of 'victim' and 'perpetrator' as fixed, easily distinguishable from one another and unproblematic. Based on such assumptions reconciliation options are offered: restitution, forgiveness, punishment and so on. These categories become more difficult to apply when considering perspectives other than modern individual actor-oriented ones. Even from this perspective, the clear categories of victim/perpetrator, guilt/innocence are straightforward enough to apply in some cases, but less so in others. A child is wounded on the way to school by a stray bullet that flies out of an armed conflict that she has neither contributed to nor understands; few would dispute that she is a victim. Few would dispute that a person who is raped by a group of strangers while walking home from work is a victim, and the strangers the perpetrators. Not all conflicts are so stark, however, even within an actor-oriented approach. In many cases of conflict, all parties involved see themselves as victims of injustice and the other as the cause of the discord.

Where is the line to be drawn that determines who is the perpetrator and who is the victim of a conflict in cases emerging from complicated entanglements of social relations? A Brazilian child decides 'of his own free will' to join the drug trade, which could be for any number of reasons such as seeking money to survive, pursuing social status, or simply because it is what his friends or family are doing. If he is lucky, he survives to see his 18th birthday, by which time he is likely to have shot and killed countless times. Change his mind as he might, he can no longer change his destiny or unravel his

entanglement in a cycle of 'kill or be killed', for fear of losing his own life, and so he continues as long into his adult life as he survives (Dowdney, 2003). Who is the perpetrator here? And who is the victim?

The categories of victim and perpetrator are often filled according to power dynamics. In a legal dispute, the party with resources available to hire the most competent legal team often wins the right to frame a conflict in his or her own terms. In political disputes, history is written by victors.

How do International Tribunals work for collective violence? As one would expect. The accused would tend to be the perpetrators of person-to-person violence: lower-class people who kill with missiles and atom bombs. And, they would tend to be the executors of violence rather than the civilians giving the order, or setting the stage; *in bellem* rather than *ad bello*. As a result, the general moral impact will probably be relatively negligible. Victor's justice. (Gultag, 2001: 10)

Some have argued that reconciliation is neither prioritized nor possible within global modern retributive justice approaches:

Reconciliation is not the goal of criminal trials except in the most abstract sense. We reconcile with the murderer by imagining he or she is responsible to the same rules and commands that govern all of us; we agree to sit in the same room and accord the defendant a chance to speak, and a chance to fight for his or her life. But reconstruction of a relationship, seeking to heal the accused, or indeed, healing the rest of the community, are not goals in any direct sense. (Minow in Estrada-Hollenbeck, 2001: 68; see also Van Ness, 1996)

The most significant challenge to legalistic justice models in the Western world has come from the (re)emergence of *restorative justice*. A restorative approach justice requires a drastic reorientation from a retributive approach. Under a restorative approach, conflict is seen as causing damage primarily to communities (including victims and often also perpetrators) and injury to the state is secondary. Following from this is the view that the justice system should be primarily oriented towards restoring damaged relationships so that parties may continue to live alongside one another in the

same community (Estrada-Hollenbeck, 2001; see also Galaway and Hudson, 1996; Lingis, 2008; Zehr, 1997). However, this still leaves the question of how restorative justice might negotiate different levels of engagement and different processes of extension from the local to the global. Propositions for what positive reconciliation might look like will be discussed later through a proposition that we need a global reconciliation forum that addresses collective rather than individual responsibility. Before that we still need to elaborate how reconciliation figures at the most abstract level of integration – the disembodied. This is the level at which social relations are carried on the wings of mediated interchange such as through the media of electronic communications.

THE LEVEL OF DISEMBODIED INTEGRATION

Most citizens of the globalized world are experiencing an ever-increasing exposure to images of faraway conflicts, in ever more graphic visual detail delivered by a global mass media. As distant disembodied observers we are (often silent) witnesses to conflicts that do not seem to belong to us but nevertheless filter through our consciousness and imagination in ways that can provoke urgency, anxiety, trauma, helplessness, and, increasingly, indifference. The disembodied observer has little or no direct lived knowledge of the conflict, and little or no capacity to connect with the situation or directly intervene. At any given moment, we are passive observers of multiple conflict situations at once, our attention continuously whipped from one context to the next, following news media that chase rousing headlines. Global media coverage, while powerfully influencing international responses to crises, thus contributes both to bringing us the world and exposing us to the globalization of alienation – at once producing sympathy and a fatigued, estranged and often disaffected global audience (Ben-Zur, et al., 2012; Kinnick, et al., 1996; Moeller, 1999;).

While at this level of integration the bodies and faces of others become technically irrelevant, the great irony is that modern universalizing polities, processes and connections always seem to require particular faces to mark their existence – from the faces on our currencies to the photo-op representations of our leaders' faces on the front page of newspapers. These faces are variously abstracted beyond the particularities of the individuals from whom the images are taken. The face of the body politic, for example, tends to draw on the possibilities of the female face where the person is available because of her gender for being abstracted from particularistic history as iconic history. Joan of Arc, Bodicea and Marie as historical figures, through to 'Liberty' and 'Justice' and 'Peace through Justice' as iconic figures, are taken out of history and come to express a collective entity. Similarly, the faces of innocence and victimhood are abstracted from the particularities of their experience and dependent upon being 'unknown' persons, so to speak – for example, a child screaming as she runs from a village being attacked became the icon of pain during the Vietnam War. Again, even if the faces of evil remain individualized in a way that the faces of the body politic do not, they are similarly turned into iconic spaces to be filled with public prejudices – this time, all too often, of one-dimensional blame. There are counter-examples to this process, but when the violence cannot be carried in the face of a single person, significatory chains of connection tend to be used as a homogenized entity: Al-Qa'ida becomes the name of evil, and a group associated with Al-Qua'ida becomes simply evil by association.

The argument here is not that the abstraction process is bad in itself, but that in treating more abstract levels of integration and representation as if they are ontologically continuous with the face-to-face, collectivities get away with murder. In the context of the globalizing mass media, responses to crimes against humanity are as likely to turn into star-chamber theatrics as to work through the complex meaning of causation, guilt,

criminality and forgiveness. Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Pol Pot, Slobodan Milošević, Saddam Hussein, and Osama bin Laden remain local figures of particularistic intrigue, but by being lifted into the realm of abstracted communication they are paradoxically turned into global scapegoats to be sent into the wilderness carrying our collective guilt. Their abstracted presence (using an oxymoron here to describe the ambiguity) allows us to escape the necessity of dealing with the complexities of reconciling past periods of pain, including periods not named by association with such figures. Who is responsible for the destruction of approximately one million Ottoman Armenians? What rationale can there be for the death of 600,000 civilian Germans at the end of World War II by British firebombing when such tactics were irrelevant to winning the war? (Sebald, 2003). Why is it that the only country to use atomic weapons against civilians still has not sought a process of atonement?

These questions and dozens of others closer to home, take us to the final part of this essay, the question of reconciliation at a collective level. The articulation of reconciliation at the level of disembodied relations entails developing a global public sphere, including through mediated communications, that provides a forum for a careful dialogue about issues that few want to treat as a global issue – from the Hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki,³ and the ‘Comfort Women’ of Korea and China, to the families who lost members in the NATO bombing of Kosovo, or the families of the 45,000 persons who across the 2000s died each month of war, disease and malnutrition, years after the putative end of the Congolese war.⁴

TOWARDS A GLOBAL TRUTH, RECONCILIATION, AND JUSTICE FORUM

There are lots of issues that continue to be badly understood, both as general phenomena and as events. We can add to the earlier

list of general propositions that usually remain unspoken. For example, putting in place an occupying external force to stop immediate violence may be necessary to save lives, but it tends to confirm the axiom of peace through repression, while necessitating a long-term military presence that is often counter-productive (Paris, 2004). Or to give another example, more wars have been fought across the globe *in the name* of peace, order and long-term justice than in the name of greed, interest or acquisition. These are general issues that need public dialogue and debate. To reach a deeper level of understanding, we need a process of global learning that gets beyond the current shallowness of the mass-mediated civil sphere. When media commentators, for example, blame nationalism, civilizational difference, religious adherence, traditionalism or tribalism as the cause of violence, they tend to be contributing more to the self-confirming process of violence-begetting-violence than to the task of understanding peace-making and the possibilities of reconciliation.

One way of providing an institutional *concilium* that brings together relations from embodied to the mediated and disembodied would be to develop a Global Truth, Reconciliation and Justice Forum. This would build upon and go beyond the approach of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, formed in 1899 to adjudicate on international problems between nations, corporations and organizations. Institutional funding might take a similar form to the Permanent Court with its activities supported by an annual payment from institutional members. However, in other respects the Forum’s way of operating would cut across the dominance of modern juridical concerns to become an institution of social dialogue in the global public sphere.

It could be set up with the following aims:

- 1 To provide a meeting place, witnessed by the world, in which issues that sit behind contemporary grievances and pain, could be brought by civil society groups for public documentation,

- debate, dialogue, and deliberation. At the end of that four-dimensional process there would not be a definitive deliberation on guilt or otherwise, but a voicing of 'majority' and 'minority' judgments by learned arbiters based on both supported testimony and expert research.
- 2 To provide the conditions for a global learning process about the effects and consequences of conduct during past international crises. The aim would be to learn from the past by investigations of the causes of crises, conduct during those episodes and the consequences of the particular way in which the global community responded. In this process the aim would not be criminal prosecution or to bring particular regimes, institutions or corporations to legal task, but rather to provide an institutional base for thinking through how international practice might have been conducted otherwise.
 - 3 To provide for an institutionalization of ethical authority about the need for deep consideration of the relationship across different levels of extension – global, regional, national and local – and to provide ways of approaching the articulation of practices of truth, reconciliation and justice.
 - 4 To provide a clearinghouse for collecting material on current international crises.
 - 5 To provide information, considered social and legal frameworks, critical reflections on past tribunals, and moral support for local and national truth and reconciliation tribunals currently in process, or being set up or discussed, in many places around the world. This dimension would have to include critical reflection on its own long-term effects.
 - 6 To provide a place for registering and learning about exemplary grass-roots reconciliation projects.

The global forum could also explore possibilities for building direct supportive links between different local contexts around the world in ways that might counteract the alienating effects of passive observation. In other words, by contrast with disembodied globalized encounters with faraway conflicts via the news media, the forum might organize opportunities for longer-term direct face-to-face encounter and exchange between local people struggling with conflicts and working on grass-roots reconciliation projects in different local settings around the world. It could do

so in such a way as to allow cross-pollination of ideas and experiences which may provide sources of strength, support, hope, understanding and the potential for establishing long term local-local collaborations. The organization of Global Reconciliation has already begun to work at this level of local projects connected to global protocols and support, but its projects remain limited to a small range of places such as in Sri Lanka, India, Israel/Palestine, Jordan, and Papua New Guinea (www.globalreconciliation.org).

Such a forum need not be located in a single centralized venue, but could be coordinated as a series of interconnected places with delegated secretariats for particular enquiries. It could be asked to conduct a series of enquiries into past breaches of the principles of good international citizenship, particularly in relation to massacres, genocide, the death of civilians in military conflict, the state-sanctioned or institutionally-perpetrated use of terror, including torture, violent regime-change including coups, and invasions of national sovereignty. This could include acts of intentional harm, acts that unintentionally contributed to harm others, and inaction that allowed harm to escalate in dangerous ways.

Working on the basis that most nation-states do not release sensitive state documents for a 30-year period, the Commission could investigate those events with ongoing, unresolved, and intense international symbolic importance. For example: the fire-bombing of Germany; the timing of the D-Day invasion; the bombing of Hiroshima; the Cuban Missile Crisis; the 1965 massacre in Indonesia; the 1972 coup in Chile; the systematic killings in Kampuchea; and so on. In relation to current events, it could also develop an ongoing auditing of the recent history of international responses to global crisis. This would entail an ongoing auditing department, coordinated with delegated secretariats such as in university research centres that are given the task of documenting and setting up the conditions for seeking the 'truth' on what actually happens during contemporary or recent crises

that involve extended violence or systematic harm to a significant population.

There is, of course, very little chance in the immediate future that powerful governments and regimes would support the formation of such a forum. Fear of adverse deliberation will keep them wedded to councils and assemblies where vetoes can be enacted, votes can be influenced and power can be exercised more comfortably. A Global Reconciliation Forum, or some variation, remains however one of the forms of institutionalization that should be considered in taking this complex area of reconciliation more seriously. And, given the emergence of a complex and rich global civil society over the past few decades it is possible to initiate such as a global forum without national government support.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 In what ways do power relations influence the terms of reconciliation?
- 2 Has globalization rendered conflict and suffering both emotionally and geographically more distant for the global majority?
- 3 Should reconciliation processes be limited in place and time to the resolution of lingering differences between former conflict parties or is there a broader need for trust-building, restorative justice, and truth-telling across global society?

NOTES

- 1 This essay draws heavily on research done for an earlier essay by Paul James in Rothfield, Fleming and Komesaroff (2008).
- 2 This is not to criticize legal rationality and the slow process of procedural justice in itself. It is rather to question the way in which truth and reconciliation at this level of institutional extension tends to become only expressed in modern proceduralism. The South African and East Timorese national reconciliation processes were for the time of their enactment partial positive exceptions to this concern. The Jakarta Ad Hoc Human Rights Court, which concluded in 2004, was an example on the profoundly negative side. Of the 16 Indonesian military and police defendants, all were acquitted under dubious circumstances

- 3 These are the victims of atomic bombs at the end of World War II. Memorials in Japan record the names of almost 440,000 hibakusha; 280,959 in Hiroshima and 158,754 in Nagasaki. In 2007 there were 251,834 living Hibakusha certified by the Japanese government. In 2012 the figure was 210,000 including children who were in utero in 1945.
- 4 Reuters at www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L22802012.htm (first accessed 2 June 2008). Between four and five million people are estimated to have died in the Second Congo War that began in 1998.

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