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Variables influencing truth reconciliation commissions to promote post-conflict peacebuilding and statebuilding in Africa: a South African experience

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Truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) are understood to offer cheap justice, a justice not bound by the law. South African experience in the post-apartheid era shows that they are significant tools for peacebuilding as well as statebuilding. The experience shows that the use of TRCs has created an authoritative record of what happened; enabled the victims to tell their stories without fear or embarrassment, and recommended legislative, structural and institutional reforms that avoided the repetition of past abuses. Successful peace and statebuilding are based on the above in order to achieve sustainable peace. TRCs promote rule of law, human rights protection, and ensure healing and freedom for all. However, the relapses of conflicts and political tensions, intercommunal hatred and divisions in African countries, create more questions than answers. These continuous issues show that TRCs have instead not resolved conflicts. The paper found that TRCs can only lead to successful peacebuilding and statebuilding if there is willingness on the side of the citizens as well as their political leaders. There is need to learn from the South African experience to ensure that TRCs lead to successful peacebuilding and statebuilding. The paper relied on historical research designed to study TRCs in Africa.

KEYWORDS

truth reconciliation commissions, post-conflict peacebuilding, statebuilding, conflict relapse, South Africa

Introduction

Although truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) are established within a limited timeframe, and have been known to offer inexpensive justice, as they comprise of people who are not professional lawyers who cannot offer legally binding recommendations, the South African experience in the post-apartheid era shows that TRCs have the potential to promote peacebuilding and statebuilding. TRCs lead to successful peacebuilding and establish foundations for statebuilding because they provide an authoritative record of what happened and what caused the conflicts or political violence. TRCs also provide a platform for trauma healing, enabling victims to tell their stories and obtain some form of redress (Oelofse and Oosthuysen, 2014). Moreover, TRCs are significant because they recommend legislative,

structural or other changes to avoid a repetition of past abuses, and establish who was responsible for these abuses, and hold perpetrators accountable for their past (Oelofse and Oosthuysen, 2014).

Considering the successes and positive effects of TRCs on peacebuilding and statebuilding in the South African experience, why is that most countries in Africa that made use of TRCs to bring about peacebuilding and statebuilding have instead experienced a relapse to conflicts and political instability? Countries such as Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone have remained weak and fragile, and Burundi also experienced a relapse of political violence and remain fragile and weak as well. For example, Kenya has remained an ethnic and tribal-state as TRCs have failed to bring about unity and solidarity among its citizens. Furthermore, in Kenya the recommendations suggested by TRCs have not been implemented yet. As a result, the possibility of attaining sustainable peace has been jeopardised. In Liberia, the records of and information obtained from TRCs are withheld from the public. In effect, this withholding of crucial information has denied citizens of the possibility to confront and address past injustices in order to achieve successful peacebuilding that leads to statebuilding, which fosters sustainable peace. Exposing past abuses and records results in providing a permanent public memorialisation that prevents the repetition of the same past mistakes that led to conflicts and/or civil wars.

It is important to note that in those African countries where TRCs have been used ineffectively as one of the mechanisms of peacebuilding and statebuilding, such countries have remained fragile and weak – thus posing threats to both national and international peace and security. A lot of the literature with regards to TRCs, transitional justice, and peacebuilding has highlighted the role of TRCs, their weaknesses, and strengths – and argues that TRCs do not have lasting impacts on peacebuilding and statebuilding. The literature does not provide enough information about methods TRCs have employed to promote peacebuilding and statebuilding in Africa and beyond. Drawing from the facts of South African experiences, the use of TRCs in peacebuilding and statebuilding address conflicts from their root causes and restores justice and peace in society. Considering social order, stability and respect for human rights in the post-apartheid African National Congress (ANC), it is safe to say that TRCs are powerful and useful mechanisms that, if used properly, can lead to successful peacebuilding and statebuilding, thereby enabling the achievement of sustainable peace in Africa.

The aim of this paper is to examine the variables that influence TRCs to promote peacebuilding and statebuilding in Africa. The paper is divided into four main sections. The first section defines the terms used in the paper and explains the linkages between TRCs and peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives to understand their roles in achieving sustainable peace. The second section examines the nature of conflicts or civil war in South Africa, which necessitated the establishment of TRCs. The third section explains the variables of TRCs drawn from the South African experience to understand the contributions of TRCs to attain peacebuilding and statebuilding in Africa. The fourth section consists of a conclusion and recommendations for policymakers and practitioners in the field.

Definitions

Peacebuilding means those activities that establish policies that help achieve long-term development, which focuses on developing

social, governmental, and non-governmental mechanisms to promote constructive means of resolving conflicts (Waldman, 2009). Peacebuilding interventions after violent conflicts often address the same concerns as developmental interventions. Peacebuilding often occurs after civil wars or political instability and after the disputants have reached some agreement that established platforms for them to rebuild their society and salvage relationships damaged by the conflicts. Peacebuilding therefore becomes a reality in post-conflict situations and recognises its effects and role in reconciliation as criteria for statebuilding and achieving sustainable peace. It also recognises its ability to develop the disputants' capacity, which enables them to own the process of addressing the root causes of their conflicts and allows them to establish structures and systems that serve, as warning mechanisms should conflict threaten society again. Peacebuilding involves a wide range of approaches and processes, and one of these approaches is using TRCs. Peacebuilding can therefore be defined as those approaches undertaken by local, national, and international actors to restore peace and justice in society and enable people who were enemies to live together again in society without any hatred or animosity.

Boutros-Ghali (1992, p. 5) defines it as the “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse to the conflict.” Peacebuilding has “gradually expanded to refer to integrated approaches to address violent conflict at different phases of the conflict cycle” (Necla, 2003, p. 1). Murithi (2009, p. 3) sees it as “a medium to the long-term process of rebuilding conflict-affected societies.” Murithi (2009, p. 4) further argues that peacebuilding includes the process of rebuilding the political, security, social, and economic dimensions of a society emerging from conflict. From the above definitions, it can also be argued that the concept of peacebuilding can be understood as the process in which people work together to address conflicts from their root causes and establish measures that make societies become better places for all of humanity.

For this reason, Niyitunga (2020) argues that peacebuilding centres around building healthy relationships at both individual and collective levels, and the duty of citizens is to nurture such relationships to attain peace for all humankind (Niyitunga, 2020). The concept involves measures used to address the root causes of conflict and help the disputant parties revert to peaceful ways, such as mediation and negotiation, to address the differences that intensify conflicts among them. This means that peacebuilding is one of the nonviolent ways to address conflicts, and if used properly, it strengthens the process of statebuilding, resulting in sustainable peace. Schilling (2012, pp. 29–30) sees “peacebuilding as a peaceful way of addressing conflicts and it consists of a wide range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation and societal transformation.” This means that peacebuilding activities can be undertaken when conflicts arise. These activities, initiated by the people, are ongoing and are used to resolve conflicts and build peace (OECD, 2011). These activities are also undertaken when violent conflicts loom, which once again threaten the peace of society (OECD, 2011).

For peacebuilding to succeed it must be informed by the willingness of the people to address the conflicts and to find solutions for them. Therefore, the use of social empowerment, telling the truth, establishing memories, dealing with the past, healing the victims' trauma and reintegrating the fighters to live and stay in society once again are critical ways that enable the success of statebuilding. The use of TRCs, as we'll see, enables the pursuit of justice, equality and

fairness in society, transforms relationships and dignifies society through the principles of truth and mercy. Salehi and Williams (2016) argued that the use of TRCs in peacebuilding promotes reconciliation and healing because the commissioners persuade people to forgive each other, foster patience towards one another and advocate for non-violent and creative means to resolve their differences that could lead to conflicts. This means that the success of peacebuilding that leads to sustainable peace depends on the outcome of the authentic use of TRCs.

Statebuilding is “an endogenous process to enhance capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state driven by state-society relations” (OECD, 2011, p. 7). It is “primarily a domestic process that involves local actors, which means that the role of international actors is necessarily limited” (OECD, 2011, p. 20). The World Development Report (WDR) of 2011 states that statebuilding takes place in countries affected by civil wars, political instability and violence. However, the concept can also be applied to countries that are afflicted by environmental deterioration due to for example global warming, as well as tsunamis and other deadly disasters that devastate the lives and stability of citizens. The process of statebuilding must be legitimate with inclusive institutions able to provide citizen security, justice, and jobs (World Development Report, 2011). Hence it has been argued that statebuilding is a “political process because it is based on the long-term historical and structural factors that contribute to state formation and the nature of state-society relations” (OECD, 2011, p. 17).

Statebuilding activities are primarily conducted by local actors. This means that citizens must own the entire process for it to succeed and must be willing to reunite to run the state business. During the process, the involvement of international actors is limited. This is similar to the process of TRCs in which there is strong local ownership by domestic citizens, therefore international actors’ roles are limited from start to finish. Therefore, statebuilding needs to be understood in the context of TRCs as it is based on healthy relationships between local citizens, as is the outcomes of TRCs during the process of addressing conflicts from their root causes. As conflict destroys state infrastructure and sovereignty and legitimacy in the international system, statebuilding is at the heart of building the state and restoring its legitimacy and dignity in the global system. As TRCs are informed by local dialogue among citizens to foster love and forgiveness, they enhance legitimate politics, national security (economic, environmental, and social security), reconciliation and justice, and the respect and protection of human rights and people’s ability to achieve their basic and fundamental needs on an equal footing.

TRCs are official, non-judicial bodies of limited duration established to determine the facts, causes, and consequences of past human rights violations (Hayner, 2011). Freeman (2006) argued that TRCs consider testimonies, recognise the pleas of victims, and address the issues related to social stigmatisation and skepticism, which might hinder peacebuilding and statebuilding processes. TRCs further suggest the need for prosecutions and reparations and address societal hatred and animosity that can intensify conflicts. TRCs also assist in addressing mistrust and distrust and play a critical role in identifying institutional reforms needed to prevent the emergence of new conflicts (Freeman, 2006). According to Benyera (2014, p. 14), TRCs are the *ad hoc* and autonomous body of inquiry established to investigate patterns and causes of conflicts, determine periods of human rights violations and make recommendations to address the violations and prevent them from recurring in the future.

The violations of human rights and abuses might include extrajudicial killings, genocide, discrimination and segregation, disappearance, sexual harassment and rape, torture, and other harsh treatments committed by a previous government against its own people, essentially preventing them from obtaining freedom (Crocker, 2000). Moreover, the government’s opponents and/or combatants can also commit these atrocities and violations in their fight against a tyrannical regime. This was also the case in South Africa, Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Kenya. Hence, the use of TRCs during peace and statebuilding has emerged as a critical way to address those abuses from their root causes and bring about healthy societal relationships. It is essential to note that several conflict-affected states seeking to achieve a just society and wishing to transition from discriminatory regimes and civil wars to good democratic governance have used TRCs to investigate systematic violations and address them from their root causes during peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives.

The nature of South African atrocities

The South African experience shows that South Africa suffered from structural violence that was deadly in nature, and necessitated the establishment of the TRC. Structural violence is violence in which the systems of governance promote institutionalised discrimination and segregation. It has been noted that apartheid in South Africa was a process of racial segregation that lasted from 1948 to 1994 (Daly, 2008), and it caused atrocities and mental distress to black communities. Apartheid regimes were deadly in nature and were crueller than known civil wars occurring in many parts of the African continent. Moreover, Amstutz (2005) argued that apartheid was a terrible, silent war that geographically separated and segregated people according to race, with a white minority rule. Under the system of apartheid, education, medical care and other basic needs and services were limited to the white minority only. Black communities received low-quality services and were mostly employed as labourers to earn a living.

In 1960, the ANC, the primary party of the black community decided to use violence to combat the atrocities caused by apartheid. In 1973, the United Nations General Assembly condemned apartheid as inherently unjust and racist and therefore the violation of human rights (Curtis, 2000). However, from the 1980s onwards, the country was in a state of emergency because the regime of those days was faced with regular civil unrest and violence. In 1990, President FW de Klerk, recognising the state of the nation, lifted the ban on the ANC and called for the release of Nelson Mandela from prison (Cole, 2010). These actions soon resulted in the end of apartheid, and in 1994, the first ever democratic elections were held, which resulted in Mandela becoming president. During this time, the TRC was established to investigate the root causes of apartheid atrocities and human rights violations in an attempt to reconcile black and white communities to stay and live together as one, and to establish trauma healing centres.

The TRC emerged because of political negotiations and operated between 1995 and 1998 with the ambitions to establish the truth about the gross human rights violations which took place during apartheid (Cole, 2010). The TRC uncovered the truth about the human rights violations that occurred in the apartheid period and healed citizens’ wounded hearts (Promotion of National Unity and

Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995, 1995). It has been further stated that public hearings, research, reparation payments and individual amnesty were the main ways in which reconciliation instead of vengeance was achieved between victims and white perpetrators (Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995, 1995). According to the TRC mandate, understanding the past was meant:

to establish as complete a picture as possible – including the antecedents, circumstances, factors, and context of such violence as well as the perspectives of the victims and the motives and perspectives of the persons responsible for the commission of the violations, by conducting investigations and holding hearings (Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995, 1995).

It is important to note that for the TRC to achieve the abovementioned aims, the commission was given a wide range of powers and resources, including the ability to search premises, subpoena witnesses and seize evidence (Hayner, 2011). The citizens also supported the commission through their willingness to build peace and were committed to assess the past with the aim of forging a peaceful and healthy future.

South African experience: possible variables

South Africa's TRC is the most successful tool that helped to build peace and heal the divided society to achieve an all-inclusive society. It paved the way to freedom and allowed victims to experience relief regarding their trauma. A number of variables including (1) accountability, (2) reconciliation, (3) reintegration of former enemies to live together, (4) trauma and mental healing, and (5) open public hearings were employed to enable the TRC to establish foundations for building peace.

TRC enhances accountability

The South African experience shows that the TRC enhanced accountability, which is a critical ingredient in peacebuilding and statebuilding processes. Accountability is an important variable for ensuring the achievement of sustainable peace. From the perspective of the TRC, accountability is embedded in the transitional justice process and aids the process in addressing past human rights abuses and upholds the rule of law (Democratic Progress Institute, 2015, p. 10). During the processes of the TRC, accountability also helped establish a historical narrative of the conflict by identifying victims and perpetrators of human rights abuses and other crimes (Democratic Progress Institute, 2015, p. 10). During the process of peacebuilding and statebuilding, accountability contributes to reconciliation. That means without accountability reconciliation will not be possible, and without reconciliation peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives may collapse resulting in conflicts relapse – as has been the case in Burundi. It has been argued that reconciliation is more of a forward-looking process that focuses on the future of society (Democratic Progress Institute, 2015, p. 11).

Drawing from the South African experience, the practise of accountability in the TRC can be understood in two categories. While the first category is retributive, the second one is restorative justice. It is important to note that retributive justice concerns the working of the formal justice system. It has been argued that such a justice encompasses the lodging of a complaint by the victim or on behalf of the victim. It also involves the investigation of the complaint that includes the gathering of truth and evidence (Democratic Progress Institute, 2015, p. 11). Moreover, it consists of a trial where those suspected of having committed a wrong are prosecuted and either found guilty and sentenced or declared innocent and set free (Democratic Progress Institute, 2015, p. 11). Kiss (2000, p. 78) further argued that the retributive justice process and its outcome concern the victims, the witnesses, and the perpetrators in the community. Therefore, it means that this kind of justice implemented by the TRC seeks to end mistrust among people, heal victims and bring about healthy relationships inspired by mutual trust between the perpetrators and victims in society.

As presented in the South African experience, during the TRC hearings, restorative justice generally consisted of a formal process with four main goals. It affirmed and restored the dignity of the victims of human rights violations (Kiss, 2000, p. 79). Restoring the dignity of the victims requires an investigation of historical injustices in order to understand their root causes as well as the perpetrators of such injustices. Investigating historical injustices thus begs for the rectification of abusive actions (Nozick, 1974, p. 150) to restore unity and implement policies that lead to a positive future. This is because investigating past abusive actions or what happened in the past has tremendous effects on the present as well as the future stability of justice for all in society (Nozick, 1974, p. 150). This crucial element is still left out in the TRCs hearings in Burundi and Kenya. The failure to adequately investigate the past in order to understand what happened and why it happened so that a future can be visualised hinder successful peacebuilding and statebuilding in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Kenya. As in Zimbabwe, the final report from the established commission of inquiry, which is actually the TRC, was withheld from the public on the grounds that its publication could spark violence over past wrongs. This means that the goal of successful peacebuilding and statebuilding was not properly achieved, and the past remains hidden from the people – subsequently many people continue to live with unhealed wounds.

Restorative justice also requires that the perpetrators be held accountable for their wrongdoings, and they should apologise to their victims. However, in South African experience shows that the accountability of perpetrators was not taken seriously in certain cases. However, this omission was transcended by the black community's willingness to build peace and patriotism towards their country. Lack of willingness to build peace and patriotism to one's country has been a barrier to peacebuilding and statebuilding in Burundi, Kenya, and Zimbabwe thus hampering the achievement of sustainable peace.

The willingness and desire to build peace is a process that requires dialogue among divided communities to build harmony. This is because dialogue is a process that involves peoples from different walks of life in a community gathered together to foster understanding and share information on issues of importance to them (UNICEF, 2021). Dialogue is an ingredient for peacebuilding and statebuilding because it engages diverse and divided

communities in a constructive conversation in order to break down stereotypes and rebuild trust (UNICEF, 2021). The South Africa experience shows that employing restorative justice during TRC proceedings helps create social conditions in which human rights are not only restored, but also establishes institutions that enable the respect of human rights in the future (Kiss, 2000, p. 79). These social conditions serve as the basis of communication to each other and the code of conduct in society.

TRCs are powerful tools for peacebuilding and statebuilding because they venture into the past to understand the pattern of abuse to restore the dignity of victims. For example, through public accountability, TRCs are significant tools to fight impunity and the abuse of power (Raga and Taylor, 2006). They also ensure that resources are efficiently and transparently delegated to improve the efficacy of government to deliver essential services to citizens without any discrimination (Raga and Taylor, 2006). As seen, the lack of accountability in TRCs in African countries did not result in peacebuilding and statebuilding as the outcomes of these hearings led to growing unhappiness among citizens that led to the relapse of conflicts, electoral violence and crimes as well as corrupt activities in society (Sikhakhane and Reddy, 2011).

The South Africa experience teaches us that effective peacebuilding and statebuilding depend on the successful process of uncovering past crimes and abuses committed during a conflict or civil war (Royer, 2017, p. 79). The use of transitional justice mechanisms such as TRCs enable peacebuilding and statebuilding to address past wrongs, heal wounded hearts, hold perpetrators of atrocities accountable, and prevent the relapse of future abusive actions (Elster, 2004). This is because literature on peacebuilding emphasises the significant importance of addressing past human rights abuses, demands for justice and apologies from perpetrators to victims as means of maintaining sustainable peace (Minow, 1998; Tutu, 1999; Teitel, 2000; Teitel, 2003; Posner and Vermeule, 2004; Philpott, 2012; Porter, 2015). This crucial component has not been implemented in African countries where TRCs were used in peacebuilding and statebuilding processes. Lack of accountability and willingness to build a sustainable environment in which peace is highly valued, was hindered by the failure of TRCs to bring the past to light in order to understand what caused the massive oppression, human rights abuses and what led to political instability and armed conflicts.

TRCs promote reconciliation

The South African experience presented that TRC hearings committed society to the path of reconciliation. Scholars have argued that the South African TRC is a significant stepping stone in racial reconciliation (Gibson, 2006, 2009; Bickford, 2007). They have further argued that the South African TRC served as a catalyst for consolidating democracy, restoring human rights and domestic values that promote economic growth (Gibson, 2006, 2009). From a TRC perspective, reconciliation is viewed as “a process that allows a society to move from a divided past to a shared future” (Democratic Progress Institute, 2015, p. 12). It is a way of bringing together “former enemies to live side by side, without necessarily liking or forgiving each other, and without forgetting the past” (Hazan, 2009). During a TRC hearing,

reconciliation seeks to transform relationships in order to create a society in which former enemies are able to peacefully co-exist and work together (Doung and Ear, 2009). Thus, reconciliation is a major tool and process that contributes to healing past traumas (Doung and Ear, 2009), leading to successful peacebuilding and statebuilding. Lederach (1997) and Bar-Tal and Bennink (2004) have argued that during a TRC process, reconciliation comes about in four different ways:

- Truth: truth about what happened in the past.
- Mercy: the ability and willingness to forgive those who committed wrongs in order to rebuild relationships in society.
- Justice: this is enabled through accountability and social restructuring.
- Peace: the envisioned goal is a common future of well-being and security for all parties involved.

The South African experience shows that the TRC as a process of peacebuilding and statebuilding in the country succeeded because reconciliation led to inclusive national dialogue, increased political will, granted everyone the security and freedom to speak and move, and imparted to citizens the bigger picture of national cohesion as well as a vision for the nation. Due to this reconciliation, mistrust and hatred were eliminated between and among white and black communities. This therefore served to prevent any situation that could spark the recurrence of structural conflict such as apartheid. It also led to the consolidation of peace, thereby enabling the realisation of sustainable peace. TRCs as used in other African countries lacked this variable of reconciliation that serves to know the past, reconciles enemies and unites them around the same table, helping citizens to achieve a strong political will, and takes into account the bigger picture of national cohesion. This failure has therefore led to the inability of preventing the recurrence of conflicts. As a result, some of those countries have faced conflict relapses that impacted badly on peacebuilding and statebuilding processes. There is still the need to explore the role of reconciliation from the perspective of the TRC so that perpetrators are reconciled with their victims and both are brought together around the same table without any inequality and any kind of discrimination. Moreover, overcoming mistrust and hatred is crucial to peacebuilding and statebuilding – and this is achieved through the TRC hearings.

TRCs bring former enemies together

The South African experience showed that TRCs brought former enemies together to dine together at the same table while calling each other comrades. The experience shows that its use enabled former enemies to live and stay together once again to build state infrastructure and peace together. The process of reintegrating former combatants is crucial for successful peacebuilding. In the aftermath of conflicts, the need for a ceasefire and reintegration of former enemies into a unified army symbolises the start of the journey towards social protection and rule of law. This process is crucial because it promotes the reconciliation process at national, societal, and individual levels. A positive outcome means that the hatred that led to conflicts had been replaced with love and forgiveness, which enable citizens to

cooperate and work together. It has been noted that the military as part of state infrastructure and TRCs results in cooperation between former antagonists (Gaub, 2011, pp. 132, 137–138).

Enabling former enemies to work together creates a more secure society and restores relationships. Military and police integration can help build peace as it increases security for everyone, which improves unity and solidarity. It, therefore symbolises unity for society at large (Wilén, 2015). Using TRCs in peacebuilding and statebuilding processes results in stability, creating an environment ripe for peace and stability (Wilén, 2015). However, as we see in the case of Burundi, the conflict relapse in 2015 showed existing hatred and division among the military and the soldiers. This is because the army had been divided into several sects, as some soldiers remained loyal to the government regime while others sided with the ruling party. The ethnic divide between the Tutsis and the Hutus became ever more visible, and revenge within the army began. However, the South Africa experience shows that even in times of national protests such as #FeesMustFall in 2015, and #FreeZuma in 2021, the army and the country remain on friendly terms. The army was utilised to resolve the protests indiscriminately. The reintegration of former antagonists combined with the willingness of disputants to consent to the terms and conditions of such reintegration, is a variable that enabled the achievement of stable peace in South Africa. It has been pointed out that enabling former enemies to stay and work together is crucial in bringing about successful peacebuilding and statebuilding (Wilén, 2015).

TRCs promote the healing of trauma

The South African experience shows that TRCs lead to trauma healing, which benefits successful peacebuilding and statebuilding endeavours. Trauma healing brings trust and unites people in society. This occurs because civil wars not only result in successive and cumulative injuries to individuals but also in psychological trauma (Kornfeld, 1995). Trauma in the context of civil wars and human rights violations can be viewed as “the destruction of the individual and/or collective structures via a traumatic situation, which in turn is defined as an event or several events of extreme violence that occur within a social context” (Becker, 2006, p. 3). If unattended to, trauma can cause mental health disorders. Mental disorders pose a threat to peace and security. The positive impact of trauma healing on peacebuilding and statebuilding is that it leads to social tolerance and brings victimisation to an end. It also erases and heals mental and/or psychological distress, leads to individual resilience, and forgiveness and overcomes revenge tendencies (Kivelitz et al., 2004).

It must be noted that one of the critical areas of post-conflict statebuilding and peacebuilding includes trauma healing to overcome mental disorders. This plays a crucial role in establishing political governance institutions that ensure security, justice, rule of law, and the construction of state administrative institutions resulting in the achievement of sustainable peace. The institutional reforms that TRCs generally recommend depend on the mental status of policy makers and citizens as a whole. Mental status in turn depends on a successful trauma healing process and the willingness of people to build healthy relationships that promote peace. The South African experience shows that TRCs, being one of the important tools for peacebuilding and statebuilding, address trauma

from its root causes and offer recommendations that help prevent the recurrence of any impunity that can harm relationships in society. By healing trauma and psychological problems, it has therefore been argued that TRCs contribute to achieving sustainable democracy that leads to good governance for all (Crocker, 2000). It has also been argued that TRCs not only promote psychological and societal healing, they also protect people from future crimes and abusive actions in society (Royer, 2017, p. 78). Leebaw (2008, p. 102) argued that TRCs cannot be seen as a second-rate alternative, but rather a vital remedy for and medicine to combat systematic atrocities.

However, Royer (2017, p. 79) argued that TRCs must combine restorative justice and retributive justice by merging psychological healing and the truth with the rule of law in the transitional process (Royer, 2017, p. 79). However, in other African countries, the processes used during TRCs did not focus on trauma healing as a vital component of peacebuilding. As a result of this lack of emphasis on trauma healing in countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Uganda people’s wounds remain unhealed, and tyrannical regimes that do not respect human rights still exist. As a result, people in those countries live in fear of death and hunger, and conflicts and civil wars feed on fear and hunger. The need to combine trauma healing and retributive justice with the truth and rule of law were lacking in some TRCs processes – and yet the combination thereof is essential for successful peacebuilding and statebuilding.

TRCs foster open public hearings

The South African experience teaches us that for TRCs to bear favourable fruits that lead to successful peacebuilding and statebuilding, they must be enhanced and supported by public hearings. Public hearings mean that none of the processes are hidden from the people, and the outcomes or findings of TRCs must be made available to the public. The reason for this is the knowledge of past mistakes prepares one to create a promising future – as it is said that the history of the past is the key to the future. The South African experience shows that TRCs are powerful tools that enhance inclusivity because they pave the way for public hearings. It has been stated that because of their legal nature, public hearings form part of liberal democracy that combines all elements of deliberative and consultative democracy (Johnson and Johnson, 2000). Consultative democracy means that this is a democratic governance that consults citizens, a governance in which people have their say, and their voices are also taken into consideration. Public hearings are also public social phenomena that combine elements of representative democracy, direct democracy, and participatory democracy (Johnson and Johnson, 2000).

This is a way of governance that is represented by all people and citizens who can participate in its governance processes. Public hearings are designed to provide an open, independent, and free discussion of social significant problems (Miloradova and Ishkov, 2015). During public hearings, issues of good governance, past atrocities, the root causes of these atrocities, and the consequences of these atrocities on the country and people’s mental health are publicly discussed. During the process of peacebuilding and statebuilding, public hearings are critical tools in establishing public participation and are essential tools in building a robust public system that not only addresses the current atrocities but also prevents any other atrocities

from happening again (Pavlycheva, 2017, p. 4). This means that public hearings are all-inclusive processes that involve all citizens in decision-making processes at local, provincial, and national levels. It can be noted that public hearings help transform conflict from its root causes and therefore pave the way to successful peacebuilding.

Public hearings are tools that enable the success of peacebuilding and statebuilding because they foster public accountability, which addresses the conflicts leading to sustainable peace. Social accountability is perceived as a mechanism to strengthen the voice of citizens and builds citizens' capacity to demand greater accountability and responsiveness from authorities and public service providers (Malena et al., 2004). Agarwal et al. (2009) argued that social accountability promotes good governance. Public hearings enhance citizen information and the voices required to build and maintain societal peace. These hearings create mechanisms for participation in monitoring and evaluating all events to detect what caused human rights violations and atrocities. Linked with social accountability, reconciliation, and trauma healing mechanisms as well as public hearings, enable citizens to report and address any situation that might result in a return to civil wars or atrocities (World Development Report, 2004). It can be said that public hearings enhance public opinion, promote citizen participation, and strengthen participatory democracy, therefore being the primary way of achieving sustainable peace.

Conclusion

The use of TRCs as one of the mechanisms in generating post-conflict peacebuilding and statebuilding is crucial and vital. The South Africa experience shows that TRCs are key ingredients for conducting successful peacebuilding and statebuilding, thus leading to sustainable peace. The paper found that one of the variables that made South Africa's TRC effective in promoting successful peacebuilding and statebuilding is the willingness of both black and white communities to build a culture of peace. This variable was coupled with the spirit of patriotism mostly shown by the black community whom suffered greatly because of the impact and effects of the apartheid regime. The black community to a large extent decided to not to pursue their grievances for the sake of developing peace. This attitude was not present in other African countries where TRCs had been used for peacebuilding and statebuilding processes – and the absence of willingness resulted in creating fragile states which intensified conflict relapses instead of achieving sustainable peace.

It is important to note that reconciliation under the guidance of TRCs can only lead to social cohesion and healthy relationships and can unite former enemies to stay and live together again if it's done in the spirit of patriotism and supported by the willingness to develop a culture of peace. Moreover, the other variables, such as public hearings, accountability, investigating the past, and healing trauma and depression, can only result in successful post-conflict peacebuilding and statebuilding if they are centred in the spirit of

patriotism, forgiveness, and the desire to let go of grievances for the sake of building a culture of peace in society. It is necessary to understand that if any of the abovementioned facts are missing, there will always be a huge gap between the victims and their perpetrators. Subsequently, the perpetrators will always regard themselves as superior, while the victims will suffer from an inferiority complex.

Moreover, the memorials and outcomes of public hearings should be made public to warn the next generation. If this information is hidden from the public, unhealed wounds will continue to bring agony, which will result in victimisation resurfacing while intensifying the possibility of conflict relapses. This remains the case in Rwanda, where TRCs have become politicised to the extent that their processes have polarised communities and created divisions, thereby dividing communities into categories that represent “winning” or “losing.” Inhabitants of the winning community still regard themselves as superior, while the losing community remains suppressed, and its inhabitants are subjected to hard labour to make ends meet. Therefore, the sense of failure is increased, which opens doors for the repetition of victimisation that can spark deadly conflicts between communities. It is crucial to learn from the South African experience in order to embrace patriotism, and effect willingness to abandon grievances for the sake of nurturing a culture of peace. If this happens, the current generation will enjoy the benefits that TRCs are able to bring to fruition and will prevent the relapse of conflict that will have a negative impact on future generations.

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