

The Path to Recovery-Insights from Rwanda's Experience for Syria's Peacebuilding Efforts

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How to cite this article: Mohamed Buheji ,Emmanuel Mushimiyimana (2024). The Path to Recovery-Insights from Rwanda's Experience for Syria's Peacebuilding Efforts. *Library Progress International*, 44(6), 301-312

Abstract

This paper highlights the way Rwanda built its recovery, stability and peace after the genocide against the Tutsi, from 1994 up to 2024. After these thirty years, the authors compare the total experience and forecast Syria's recovery and peacebuilding process scenario post-revolution. The rationale of the paper is that most of the countries fail to reconstruct a full recovery in a short time due to a lack of capacity to overcome the significant threats to peace, such as the temptation to revenge, lack of tolerance, lack of justice, and failure to establish long-lasting peace mechanisms including redistribution of wealth, recognition of demanding needs, total reconciliation, and availability of proper representation. Using a qualitative diachronic comparison, the authors compare and forecast Syria's possible future based on Rwanda as a successful case of peacebuilding and stabilisation. The paper makes predictions by showing a possible scenario for Syria's reconstruction by analysing Rwanda's successful peacebuilding strategies, particularly the Gacaca court system and community-driven initiatives. This paper also parallels Syria's context, offering valuable lessons for its journey towards recovery and stability. Ultimately, the study advocates for a comprehensive approach that integrates these diverse perspectives that facilitate effective peacebuilding, recovery and resilience in post-conflict societies that foster stability and solid national unity.

Keywords: Rwanda, Syria, Peacebuilding, Resilience, Capacity for Recovery, Post-Conflict Communities.

Introduction

The journey from conflict towards peacebuilding is a multifaceted process involving diverse theoretical frameworks and practical approaches. Understanding this transformation is essential for societies emerging from periods of intense violence and upheaval, such as Rwanda after the genocide in 1994 or Syria following the revolution that erupted in 2011. This paper explores three major schools of thought that elucidate the transition from conflict to peacebuilding: the institutional, economic, and cultural approaches.

This paper discusses the imperative for a collective commitment to peace and reconciliation in post-conflict societies, using Rwanda's experience as a critical case study. By analysing Rwanda's economic recovery and contrasting it with Syria's socioeconomic challenges, the authors illustrate the importance of addressing economic disparities as a foundation for lasting peace.

This work also emphasises the need to address deep-rooted prejudices and stereotypes that can hinder reconciliation efforts. The paper delves into how educational initiatives and cultural dialogues in Rwanda helped combat identity-based hatred and highlights possibilities for Syria as it seeks to foster a shared national identity amid its diverse populations.

Through the comparative analysis, the paper aims to extract valuable lessons from Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction, drawing parallels to Syria's ongoing journey towards peace. By examining the interplay of institutional, economic, and cultural factors in fostering resilient societies, this research holds critical implications for future peacebuilding initiatives in Syria and similar post-conflict nations.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Transformation from Conflicts Towards Peacebuilding in Schools of Thought

There exist three major schools of thought that help to understand the transformation from conflicts to peacebuilding. These schools are institutional or structural, economic, and cultural.

2.1.1 Institutional School of Thought

The institutional school of thought is linked with structural functionalism used in sociology by Emile Durkheim, who is considered the founder of the sociology discipline. Durkheim argues that there is important to establish collective consciousness, which frames society's regulation and style of life. Durkheim believes that a collective whole influences an individual aspect of thinking. Therefore, society is shaped by collective thinking as shared beliefs and moral attitudes (Misztal, 2003; Ritzer, 2015). Durkheim highlights the importance of religion in this matter as a unifying factor of collective thinking in society. He denotes that the establishment of regulation in society is due to these collective values from it. Regulations that imply cohesion and reconciliation derive from the general value of the society to choose that line. The implication is that the extremist society will probably make immoral and extreme regulations that can neither unite nor build the cohesion of the society.

There might be a collective need for peace and tolerance to establish a regulatory peace mechanism in the post-conflict society. Whether it comes from one opinion leader or a religious institution, it should be collectively embraced. For Durkheim, social facts such as unity, reconciliation, gender norms, children's rights, and the establishment of the nation-state derive from collective consciousness – the way people understand and attribute value to things. Durkheim differentiated two significant social facts: material and non-material social facts.

In this paper, we shall analyse how this was the case of post-genocide society unity and reconciliation and how it was vehemently entered into the minds of Rwandans collectively. Therefore, a coherent and united society produces peaceful and organised state institutions rather than anomic and chaotic ones.

2.1.2 Economic School of Thought

The economic school of thought suggests that peace derives from the capacity to live a better life in society even after conflict; the school's peer suggests that most conflicts are driven by greed and grievance theories. The former is associated with the people who benefit from society's civil wars to benefit economically. These, at the extreme level, create warlords and economic vampires that always like to perpetrate wars for their lucrative benefit. Buheji (2019a)

Wars are likely to prosper in zones with minerals, metal, oil, and gas. Grievances are linked with social injustices; people who feel they have had injustice are more likely to grieve and violently claim their rights. This was the case for most Rwandan refugees in the 1950s and eventually the 1990s. However, the violence from grievances becomes rational when governments fail to respond to significant issues that drive them to complaints and destruction.

Nevertheless, the government's response to claims may create a status of peace, as was clearly explained in the case of Kenya when the youth took to the streets to call the government of President Ruto to stop tax laws, which were undermining their rights. For post-conflict cases, Collier (2005) suggests that government and stakeholders should pump money and raise the economy for post-conflict reconstruction not only for the mercy of humans but as a buffer to the reoccurrence of violence. This paper shows how this happened in Rwanda and what Rwandan lessons can teach the rest of the world, including Syria.

2.1.3 Cultural School of Thought

The cultural school of thought suggests conflict arises due to relative deprivation and ideology resulting from protracted hatred among groups (Gurr, 1970). Failure to overcome such hatred always jeopardises the peace process. There are also ways to develop hate speeches and negative attitudes toward others driven by misunderstanding between groups of people due to deep roots of mistrust and hatred.

In this case, continuous ideology of violence and hate ravage the society. Here, the importance of education and ideological shift play a big role in reestablishing social cohesion. For some scholars of international relations, unexplained hatred

between civilisations may bring in international conflict. Such is explained in the “Crash of Civilization”, where the scholar predicted conflicts of interest between religious civilisations, especially between Christians and Muslims.

Even though Rwanda was not such a case of religious conflict in the 1990s, nowadays, the religious civilisation conflict plays a vital role in major local and international cases like Syria, Central Africa Republic, Mozambique, Israel and Palestine and likely in Syria. Considering religious tolerance and communion, we can predict another good aspect of the peace and coexistence mechanism. In this paper, we shall see the role of society education that helped Rwanda to overcome cultural hatred, besides overcoming how religions, civil society groups and other social actors were used to create post-conflict harmony and how this can be a lesson to other post-violence countries, including Syria.

2.2 Realising Rwanda’s Journey from Conflict to Stability that Led to Socioeconomic Progress

Rwanda's journey from genocide to peace has been highlighted by the following phases: the hurting period of 1994, the establishment of a government of Unity, the establishment of justice and rule of law since 2003, the establishment of the FARG and restitution, the ICTR and Gacaca court system, the reconciliation and repatriation of refugees, and institutional building and cohesion since 2003.

2.2.1 The Healing Period

To understand and design what is required of the healing period, one needs to understand the hurting period. It is one of the main stages of the conflict, where violence escalates and takes the lives of people. It is the main stage in which people feel they are fed off the conflict and start to see how to build peace. In the hurting stage of Rwanda, over a million Tutsi were killed, and millions of Hutus who were members of *Interahamwe* of the MRND party fully participated in the genocide. Luckily, the RPF *inkotanyi*, which emerged from Uganda, liberated the country. The war of toppling up the government of Abatabazi, which perpetrated genocide against Tutsi, did not take long, only three months, from April 1994 to July 1994.

Thus, the main design for the healing period for Rwanda was to (1) form a new government, (2) prevent revenge, (3) build unity and reconciliation among Rwandans, (4) establish justice and development, and (5) guaranteeing national sovereignty in a turmoil region with scars of colonialism.

Forming a new government started in 1994 when the Government of Unity and Reconciliation was established. This was due to the discussion and inclusive strategy of RPF *Inkotanyi*, together with other political parties that did not participate in the genocide against Tutsi and other civil crimes. Extremist parties with divisionist roots, including MRND, CDR, and MDR, were banned from participating in the power-sharing system. However, other parties were allowed to join the new government coalition—*Leta y’Ubumwe* (Unity government).

2.2.2 The Gacaca Court System

It is a Rwandan homegrown court developed to be a community-based justice mechanism implemented after the 1994 genocide. It was an innovative approach aimed at dealing with the enormous backlog of genocide-related cases and promoting post-genocide reconciliation.

The trials of the court focused on the Rwandan genocide led by Hutus and ended with the death of approximately 800,000 people, primarily Tutsis, in a span of about 100 days only. The post-genocide period saw an overwhelming number of suspected perpetrators detained in overcrowded prisons, creating a need for a mechanism to address these cases swiftly and fairly.

The primary goal of the Gacaca courts was to ensure accountability for crimes committed during the genocide. In addition to addressing criminal justice, the courts aimed to promote community reconciliation and healing by involving local populations in the judicial process, Zimmer (2014) . The Gacaca courts sought to help restore the social fabric of Rwandan society by encouraging dialogue and truth-telling among victims and perpetrators. Buheji (2020), PRI Rwanda (2010)

Gacaca courts were set up locally, typically in villages and communities, where local citizens would participate as judges (known as "Inyangamugayo"). This Rwandan grassroots approach aimed to empower communities to address their issues collaboratively, Buheji (2020) . The courts dealt with various levels of offences related to genocide, categorised into

"genocide," "conspiracy to commit genocide," and "lesser crimes." Different categories had different procedures and penalties. PRI Rwanda (2010)

The Rwandan Gacaca court proceedings were public, allowing community members to witness the trials. This transparency aimed to build trust and validate the judicial process. The system emphasised the importance of confessions and truth-telling to achieve justice. Many perpetrators opted to confess their crimes in exchange for mitigated sentences, which also served to provide clarity and closure for victims. Zimmer (2014)

The Gacaca system was implemented in phases, with the first cases heard in 2002. The courts operated until 2012, with established timelines for handling cases. The government of Rwanda, along with various NGOs, provided support in terms of legal frameworks, training for judges, and logistical resources to facilitate the courts' operations.

The Gacaca courts helped accelerate the Rwandan reconciliation process by effectively processing hundreds of thousands of cases during their operation, significantly reducing the backlog of genocide-related trials. These courts encouraged dialogue and community involvement, fostering reconciliation and rebuilding community relationships. However, it is worth noting that these courts also faced some criticism regarding fairness, judgment inconsistencies, and the right to a fair trial. Additionally, some claim that these public trials lead to the re-traumatization of victims. Zimmer (2014)

Figure (1) Photo Representing the Setup of Gacaca Courts in one of Rwanda's Villages



Source: **Reparation in Rwanda's gacaca courts**

<https://journals.openedition.org/temoigner/8633?lang=en>

2.2.3 Importance of Centralised Government During the Healing Period

Kauzya (2021) highlighted the important aspects of Rwanda's government. According to him, centralisation of power, establishment of people-centred government services, and practical and responsive to the society's challenges enabled Rwanda to survive the institutional crisis to become a stable and developing nation (Kauzya, 2021, p. 1). "The institutional, decentralised and coordinated structural arrangement that was designed and implemented ensure that the public of Rwanda effectively participated in the governance and administration of the country" (Kauzya, 2021).

2.2.4 Home-Grown Solutions for the Transformation Period

The transformation towards reconstruction and development for all Rwanda institutions was designed to be based on the history of the country and its traditional practices, Kauzya (2021). This was one of the cornerstones of embedding modernity with tradition. Using ‘home grown solutions’ for the purpose of development but mixing the system of modernity to tradition to accommodate the strength of modern changes grounded in the traditional practices of the people in politics, economy and society as well as ways of thinking. Buheji (2023), Gatwa and Mbonyinkebe (2023), Mushimiyimana (2023).

The Rwandan models of traditions later included the practice of justice, such as the Gacaca courts system and the current Abunzi system, which helped the already existing modern positivist justice system with courts that we see in Europe or America. (Gatwa and Mbonyinkebe) “Most importantly, the history and traditional practices of the country's people were examined, and some of its practices redesigned to modernise public administration through home-grown, people-centred practices that the local people could easily relate to, own and operate”. Kauzya (2021).

The lesson here is that post-conflict countries should learn from the Rwandan experience the essentials of a strong government, represented by its well-disciplined military, administration, and justice. The strong central government leadership, bringing the public back into public administration, and coordinating the central and local in delivering public services, despite the low financial and production economy experienced through the ideology of self-reliance, Buheji (2019a), Kauzya (2021).

Rwanda also worked on promoting a national identity beyond ethnic identity, using the Ndumunyarwanda ideology and integrating it into regional integration to help maintain strong regional political and economic interests and accrue capacity for trade, security, and production. Buheji, M (2019a) Mushimiyimana (2017).

The institutions that have vehemently fostered this reform were establishing an advisory committee composed of local and foreign actors. These are, for instance, the establishment of Abarininzi big hang, Inyangamugayo, honest people who were transformed into local judges for genocide criminals, the current Abunzi (mediators) who are used to solve the conflict of the local people, the Abajyanama b'Ubuzima (health advisors) at the local level, etc. Some advisors from top leadership offices were also established, including former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Rwandans continue to develop their local governance and socioeconomic plans to meet international standards while reforming, including adopting New Public Management, women's and children's rights, and generally effective governance. Through this mix of Rwanda's approach to effective governance, the country has developed fast in the UNDP indicators and thrived since the end of the genocide. Buheji and Mushimiyimana (2023)

2.2.5 Balancing between Centralised and Decentralised Systems

Though there have been centralised governance and leadership systems, this operated concomitantly with decentralisation – a unique feature of most of the government structure – both centrally and locally oriented features. The decentralisation process started in 2000 and was consolidated in the 2003 constitution. Every decentralised entity has a local executive committee and local advisory committee for representation and control through a checks and balances system. Due to this structure, most of the mayors and vice mayors have been controlled, and some resigned while they failed to deliver effectively and respond to local needs. The leadership of Paul Kagame ensures the effectiveness of the government, as mentioned earlier, in the framework of people-centred service delivery, the alleviation of poverty, anti-genocide ideology, and inclusion.

2.2.6 Dealing with the Rwandan Refugees

Most of the Rwandan refugees have been repatriated to consolidate citizen rights and to avoid future claims or grievances like what happened from 1960 to the 1990s when most Rwandans in refugee camps were denied the right to repatriate until the liberation struggle of 1st October 1990. Rwanda has had millions of refugees in DR Congo during and after liberation and had the challenge of repatriating them since some had leaders who were propagating hate against the new government and who wanted to host civilian refugees as a safe haven from any military attacks.

The prediction of Rwanda was accurate because if the refugees of Congo were not repatriated and sometimes by force, the country might have had a huge insecurity problem as in 1996, there were already military incursions from Eastern

DRC to Rwanda from the refugee areas. Some refugees and former combatants (exFAR and *Interahamwe* militia) regrouped into ALIR just after reaching DRC, and later, in 2000, they had already changed into FDLR and exacerbated the genocide ideology in Eastern DRC, attacking Tutsi and other Rwandans by ancestry, including *Banyamurenge* and killed some of them. The failure to dismantle the military power of refugees by the government of Congo induced the government of Unity of Rwanda to attack DR Congo and to repatriate the refugees. Those remaining and formed forces were also weakened by the joint military attacks done by the government of Congo and the government of Rwanda at the same time through operations of Umoja Wetu and Kimya I and II in 2008 and 2009.

2.2.7 Pre-emptive Strategies for Maintaining Rwanda's Internal Security

Finding a solution in its own way made Rwanda's government and foreign powers and institutions disagree. However, it at least kept Rwanda internally secure through pre-emptive strategies, especially in joint operations in Eastern DRC. The survival of the country from *Abacengezi* (armed infiltrators) from ALIR to attacks and ravage the border and proximate region to the border between Rwanda and Congo in both North and West was due to the diligent government of Unity to restore unity inside the country, teaching the people the good of peace and fight against the genocide ideology. The people who were taken from these attacks were demobilised and reintegrated into society through the demobilisation and reintegration process like in Mutobo Camps.

2.2.8 Managing Youth and Opinion Leaders

The youth joining universities and other opinion leaders had to be engaged and transformed into *Ingando* (training camps) for security, development, and mental and ideological change suitable for a new life of peace and sustainable development rather than conflict and violence. These *Ingando* used to accommodate thousands of the new intake of the university and opinion leaders for one to three months period generally). Buheji (2023)

Socially, religious groups have been restored and increased massively in the country, and the right to pray and form religious groups was guaranteed. The mushrooming of churches and Mosques allowed Rwandans to return to God and bring humanity and love among people. Attempts for revenge were severely punished, and genocide survivors were asked to forgive the criminals for the sake of unity and national restoration.

2.2.9 Application of Consensual Democracy Framework

From 2003 until now, the national constitution prohibits any injustice, discrimination, marginalisation, genocide ideology against Tutsi and any other forms of divisive ideology. It applied the consensual democracy framework where people give opinions and requests through peaceful means and established institutions such as media, public gatherings, and grand open meetings between government officials, civil society, diaspora and nationals residing in Rwanda once a year. This meeting is called *Inama y'Umushyikirano*. Even local people can contribute individually through physical participation or social media.

2.2.10 Rwanda's Framework for National Unity and Resilience

Culturally, the National Itorero Commission was established in 2015 to replace *Ingando* and restore values like unity, peace, democratic thinking, proactivity in development and production, working effectively and hard, etc. Most importantly, the Itorero Commission helps to build good social values that lead to national unity and resilience. Other clubs, unions, and organisations foster social and economic development among people, including NGOs, INGOs, and people-based unions.

2.2.11 Establishment of Rwanda's Resilience Ideology

Only a few challenges were seen in the legitimacy of local governments at the early age of decentralisation in Rwanda and the techno-democratisation of the regional leadership, Gaynor (2016). This made the cost too high for the local people to reform at an early stage of decentralisation and development and much effort to endure change. The government established a resilience ideology to foster an understanding of what people were going through. With Paul Kagame's authentic leadership mechanism, the people immensely accepted and supported the transformation journey of Rwanda.

Resilience is crucial for any social organisational change (Buheji 2018, p. 36). Society is built on organised social control that helps to develop the minimum cohesion and organisation with it; therefore, change in that social organisation in its construction or component leads to disintegration (Buheji, 2012, p. 36) because change is challenging and requires total people involvement (TPI) and total people engagement (TPE). Total people engagement (TPE), as per Buheji (2012), is

crucial for achieving community cohesion and development but is very hard to implement. Resilience then triggers this to happen, a process from TPI to TPE. These engagements require overcoming the past, doing new things, like forgiving criminals, and setting up inclusive governance and economy with all factions and groups of people while maintaining socioeconomic and state unity, pro-poor economy and development at large. Buheji (2020)

2.2.12 Capitalising on the Rwandans in Diaspora

Since the beginning, Rwanda has appreciated the difficulties of managing its people in the diaspora. In some conditions, diaspora can be a major threat that can jeopardise the nation's interests and trigger home violence instead of solving it (Hall, 2016). In the framework of aligning with peace principles of unity and reconciliation, Rwanda established Rwanda Day Abroad. It happens once a year or twice, depending on the country and occasion. Moreover, the Rwanda Directorate of Diaspora has been established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which facilitates the linkage between Rwandans abroad and citizens living inside. This office also supported the Tri-partite agreement to abolish the refugee status of many Rwandans and repatriate many of them. The agreement has been signed between Rwanda, the host country and UNHCR for different cessation closes.

Rwanda also promoted a One-dollar campaign in which the diaspora contributed to reconstructing Rwanda economically, especially in building houses for orphans of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi in Bugesera. The achievement and other remittances between diaspora members and their families in Rwanda contribute not only to the economic boom but also to the unity and reconciliation process, as highlighted by Caarls et al. (2012) in their field study in Huye Districts where they interviewed more than 300 homes who receive remittances from their relatives abroad. Diaspora contributed to financial reconstruction, investment, social support, and even marriage and social life in general. Some aspects of extremism and even organized and militarized threats from the Rwandan diaspora also occurred but in vain, thanks to the strong government well-established both militarily, ideologically and socially.

2.3 What Syria needs to learn from Rwanda?

Syria has undergone revolutionary change after the military group led by Mohamed Al-Jolani toppled the 50 years of leadership of Al-Assad and his father, who were seen by most of the world as dictators. The government of Assad has tortured, imprisoned, repressed, and killed hundreds of people. Over a hundred thousand people have been tortured in the prisons of the government of Assad or kidnapped or executed without any proper trials.

The challenge after this dismantlement of Assad regime created five major puzzles to tackle: (1) to unite the people again and reconstitute the entire state, (2) to punish the criminals who participated in repression, imprisonment, torture and killing of the victims, and (3) to unite the people and restore peace and tolerance, (4) to form an inclusive governance after the victory of one faction, and reconcile the different factions operating in the country and the region, and eventually (5) keep the national sovereignty amidst influence of polarised regional powers struggle between countries as Russia, Israel, Iran, Turkey and USA.

2.4 The Challenge of Maintaining Syria's National Sovereignty

The toppling down of Assad jeopardises the interests of Iran and Russia in the region's geopolitics. Turkish government forces have entered Syria, and Israel has occupied by force the region of the Golan mountains. This threatens the sovereignty of Syria as many actors are entering into the territory with military interventions.

Israel is attacking Syria after Assad because they want to counterbalance Iran but also to threaten Syria so that it would not back up other Islamic groups who are against the colonisation of Palestine by Israel. Israel is not sure of the government, which will take place as a transition until next year, 2025. The Qatar government, the USA and other countries are threatened by the fact that the Syrian new government are struggling to make sure that the new government would be moderate rather than extreme against the interest of Israel. Given the nature of fighters of the revolution, moderating the different interests of foreign rather than domestic actors is a challenge to the new government but crucial for its survival.

Since the success of the revolution in early December 2024, Israel has destroyed approximately 300 military bases and arsenals in Syria and seized the Golan strategic region. Turkey and Israel are key stakeholders in bringing back the sovereignty of Syria.

Adlib, Aleppo, Southern Damascus, and Eastern Syria are disintegrated now and this is a challenge to national sovereignty, unity and peace. It is the same as people's ideas, including the Muslim Sunni and Shia, the Kurds and other Syrian Ethnicities.

Israel, with the Zionist movement's dominance in foreign and regional policy, jeopardises the peaceful survival of Syria and its sovereignty. Syria may be a scapegoat of the Zionist future movements, and therefore, it is today a major threat to its survival and reconstruction. Hence, Syria is still at risk of the Israeli-Arab conflict, which might change the strategies for the normal state reconstruction mechanism.

3.0 Methodology

This research uses qualitative and appreciative enquiry mechanisms and techniques such as diachronic comparisons between theories and empirical aspects of Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction and the prediction of Syria's own reconstruction. The researchers trace empirical evidence Syria can retrieve from Rwanda for its post-conflict reconstruction.

The paper analyses not only the empirical cases of Rwanda's success story after the genocide against the Tutsi but also the existing theories from renowned schools of thought, including structural functionalism, cultural, and economic schools. This enables researchers to triangulate the research with existing theory and showcases the link between Rwanda's success and existing post-conflict society and state reconstruction.

Based on the forecasting mechanism, which involves taking current facts to create future scenarios, the researchers were able to provide future scenarios of activities that the new Syrian government can use to create a stable, united, and living state.

4.0 Analysis and Findings

4.1 Analysis of the Fragmentation of Rwandan Society vs. Syrian Society Caused by Conflicts

The fragmentation of society due to conflict has profound implications for social cohesion, governance, and post-conflict recovery. This analysis explores how the Rwandan genocide and the Syrian civil war have led to the fragmentation of their respective societies, identifying key factors that contributed to this disintegration and the paths taken towards recovery or further division.

4.2 The Journey towards Defragmentation of the Rwandan Society

Historically, the Rwandan society was deeply divided along ethnic lines, primarily between the Hutu and Tutsi populations. Colonial rule exacerbated these divisions, establishing a system of differential privilege that laid the groundwork for future conflict. The genocide decimated entire communities, leading to mass killings and an exodus of survivors. Many fled to neighbouring countries, creating a diaspora and exacerbating ethnic fragmentation.

Rwanda's genocide against the Tutsi caused collective psychological trauma, which was experienced by the survivors, and contributed to a fractured social fabric. Emotional scars influenced community relations, creating barriers to reconciliation.

Post-genocide, Rwandan society grappled with the challenge of reintegrating survivors and perpetrators. Divisions persisted in personal relationships and community interactions. The Rwandan government implemented policies aimed at national unity, including promoting a single national identity and establishing gacaca courts. These initiatives sought to facilitate healing and reconciliation but were not without challenges, as they sometimes deepened existing divisions due to differing perceptions of justice and accountability.

4.3 The Journey Proposed for the Defragmentation of the Syrian Society

Syrian society is characterised by a rich tapestry of ethnicities and religious groups, including Arab Sunni Muslims, Shia, Alawites, Druze, Christians, Armenians and Kurds. These complexities were often politically manipulated under the ruling Baath party. The outbreak of protests in 2011 against the Assad regime escalated into a multi-layered civil war, leading to a dismantling of the state's legitimacy and the emergence of various armed factions.

The war has resulted in one of the most significant refugee crises in modern history, with millions displaced internally and externally. This migration fragmented communities not only geographically but also emotionally and socially. The conflict has intensified sectarian divisions, with different groups aligning against one another. Incidents of violence and reprisals have deepened mistrust among communities. Thus, Syria needs a cohesive, inclusive approach that brings governance and reconciliation to the various actors that would help address all community segments' needs and fears.

In Rwanda, the fragmentation was primarily driven by historical ethnic divisions, exacerbated by colonial legacies and culminated in a horrific genocide. The attempt at reconciliation faced the challenge of deep-seated trauma while fostering a national identity. While in Syria, the fragmentation is marked by a complex interplay of ethnic and sectarian identities aggravated by a multi-faceted civil war. The diverse allegiances complicate the prospects for a cohesive national identity.

To response to this fragmentation by the Rwandese has focused on restorative justice and reconciliation initiatives aimed at healing the broken societal fabric, emphasizing unity over ethnic identity. In Syria a unified governance framework that work to bring effective reconciliation efforts can bring room for effective dialogue and societal healing.

Rwanda post-genocide recovery involved significant international support, though initially slow to respond during the genocide. In Syria the international response has been complex and might even become more complex, with multiple foreign interests complicating the situation. Humanitarian aid is often politicised, making it challenging to address the country's urgent needs.

Table (1) captures the findings of this research. It highlights the post-conflict reconstruction theories, compares them with empirical cases and success stories of Rwanda, analyses the present situation of Syria, and provides scenarios of post-revolution reconstruction.

These puzzles can be answered by embracing the empirical example of Rwanda and embedding the theories of schools of thought in conflict studies, as highlighted above. There are three schools of thought on social conflict and peacebuilding: structural or institutional, cultural and economic. The first would focus on bringing collective values and religion to society as the cornerstone of establishing moral and unifying values in society. The second would be to avoid protracted hatred and intractable conflict between society and establish forgiveness and tolerance. The third theory, as mentioned above, together with the empirical aspect of Rwanda, would be to raise the economy, distribute money to people and adopt an inclusive governance and society. Buheji (2019b)

Table (1) Comparison and prediction of the reconstruction mechanism of Syria

Post-conflict Theories	Reconstruction	Rwanda cases of success stories	Perceived Situation of Syria	Possible Scenario for Reconstruction of Syria
a)Structural functionalism/ institutional approach:	-Collective thinking, opinion, and religion to shape the new institution.	-Collective ideology of unity and reconciliation -Establishing the right to pray and form religious organisations to participate in reconstruction and building a collective idea of peace among Rwandans.	-Millions of refugees are still abroad -People are worried about the balance of regime changes and alliances with regional powers.	-Repatriate millions of refugees -Allow people to pray and consolidate Mosques and churches to bring back a collective divine behaviour of forgiving, reconciling, and unifying. -Setting commissions and establishing inclusive and unifying government
2) Cultural school of thought:	-Dealing with intractable hatred to establish unity, tolerance, and a positive mindset toward other fellow people. -Fighting negative and weakening ideology and scars of the violence.	-Establish genocide commemoration every year and set up sites with genocide memorials in every district of administration. -Punishing criminals, especially the elites, of	-List of the Victims and the trauma caused by Assad regime and war. -Problems of Long-time marginalisation of people that need inclusion	-Recognition of thousands of tortured people in prisons and those who have been victims of Assad regime -Representation of survivors in society and government

	<p>crimes and decreasing punishment for ordinary people for the sake of unity, increasing the recognition of people who behaved well and were not involved in the killing of neighbours.</p> <p>-Setting up traditional courts to supplement the ICTR and normal courts to increase the delivery of justice and know the truth about over-committed crimes and where the remains of victims are to bury them in respect.</p>	<p>Radicalism and social polarisation</p> <p>-Trauma over the use of chemical weapons during the war and former tyrannical regime.</p>	
<p>3)Economic school of thought.</p> <p>-Rising economy, production, distribution to people and especially the orphans, widows and widowers, as well as the old victims of the struggle.</p> <p>-To keep territorial sovereignty to avoid the resource curse.</p>	<p>-Rwanda focused on production and investment</p> <p>Agricultural reform to feed people</p> <p>-Preaching self-sufficiency and decreasing sharp dependency</p> <p>-Prioritising state territorial sovereignty and trying to counterbalance foreign intrusion even local powers who claimed to help the liberation struggle.</p>	<p>-Loss of some territorial sovereignty due to Turkey and Israel's military intervention,</p> <p>Post-conflict economic crisis</p> <p>-Loss of property right</p> <p>-Regional powers need interference</p> <p>-Destruction of economic sectors has increased the number of economically and financially vulnerable people.</p>	<p>-Strengthening production and trade,</p> <p>-Strengthening transparency in governance and the rule of law</p> <p>-Strengthening sovereignty because the economy cannot exist under colonialism or territorial occupation by regional and global powers.</p> <p>-Support the victims by establishing funds, for instance, for orphans of wars or revolution and the most vulnerable people.</p>

Source: authors, December 2024

Table (1) summarises the findings on what Syria can learn from Rwanda's reconstruction after the genocide against the Tutsi and the liberation war of RPF *Inkotanyi*. It highlights what existing schools of thought can inspire Syria's reconstruction. The table also highlights the empirical evidence of Rwanda's success stories, including building unity, reconciliation, accessible traditional justice concomitantly done with the existing justice system, and maintaining economic growth and sovereignty.

The reconstruction of Rwanda took time, and the reconstruction of Syria might take time, too, despite the Syrian's calibre and the financial status of those in the Syrians in the diaspora. The new Syrian government and society might face challenges and resistance, which will require establishing resilience strategies for survival. This includes creating unity, repatriating refugees, establishing justice, fighting for territorial sovereignty, and triggering an economic boom and regional trade and integration.

Establishing a transition government and legal institution for Rwanda took about ten years, from 1994 to 2003. Syria's transition government is expected only for a few months only, i.e. until March 2025. This was a very short time; fighting for cultural transformation took Rwanda about six years, from 1994 to 2000, but this helped Rwanda realise what to do for cultural change and bringing unity ideology among Rwandans as a starting point. This also helped prevent revenge

and property grabbing of refugees and the immense repatriation of refugees from Congo. The economic renaissance in Rwanda and the decrease of huge dependency took almost 15 years and is still ongoing. It was only in 2010 that one could claim that Rwanda started to go beyond the recovery process to progress.

4.4 Role of the Gacaca Courts as a Model of Transitional Justice in Syria

The Gacaca courts created a model for transitional justice, demonstrating a unique approach to handling mass atrocities in a post-conflict setting. Their experiences have garnered attention and analysis from scholars and practitioners in fields related to justice, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. The Gacaca courts' experiences provide important lessons for Syria in issues related to accountability and reconciliation after its people went through large-scale violence and torture.

The Gacaca court system in Rwanda represents a pioneering approach to justice and reconciliation in the aftermath of genocide. While such court model achieved notable successes in addressing the vast number of cases and promoting community involvement, Syrians can develop the model further to reduce questions about justice, fairness, and trauma. Syrians could use such a model towards transitional justice and reduce the complexities of rebuilding societies in post-conflict contexts.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

This paper discusses post-conflict reconstruction strategies in Rwanda and how the new Syria can learn from them. It argues that Syria can learn a lot from Rwanda's genocide reconstruction process, including the establishment of a unity government, restoration of justice and reconciliation, and adoption of moral and reconciliatory justice in a short period to focus on building socioeconomic progress and governance of the society.

The paper concurs with existing post-conflict recovery theories, including the structural functionalism of sociologist Durkheim and others, which promote a collective mindset for good social facts such as setting up institutions and unity. The researchers abide by Emile Durkheim's theory and prioritize the importance of religion in establishing post-conflict reconstruction and tolerance.

The paper also sticks to establishing reconciliation, representation, redistribution, and recognition of victims of the Assad regime and trying to safeguard the territorial sovereignty of Syria, which is crucial for the country's survival and development.

This research agrees that the reconstruction process takes time, but at least the recovery could be much faster than 15 years, as in the case of Rwanda. However, there are some steps that need quick solutions within a short time, including prioritizing the repatriation of refugees, creation of internal stability, fighting for territorial integrity and establishing peace, tolerance, unity and reconciliation among citizens. Both economic schools and cultural schools of thought highlight the importance of sovereignty, production, distribution, and unity by helping vulnerable people and victims of war.

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