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To cite this article: Gareth J. Wall (2016) Decentralisation as a post-conflict state-building strategy in Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and Rwanda, Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal, 1:6, 898-920

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2016.1369859>



Published online: 28 Sep 2017.



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Decentralisation as a post-conflict state-building strategy in Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores decentralisation's contribution to post-conflict state building in four Commonwealth countries: UK (Northern Ireland), Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and Rwanda. Drawing on insights from senior local government officials, it explores post-conflict institutional arrangements and finds that decentralisation policy has made a significant, if varied, contribution to community cohesion, reconciliation and state legitimacy in each country. In Northern Ireland and to a lesser extent Sri Lanka, quasi-federal structures have enabled peace negotiations through greater autonomy and state legitimacy in the eyes of former separatists. This has however limited further devolution to sub-provincial local councils. In Sierra Leone and Rwanda, decentralisation has had a more developmental rationale. Greater equity in basic local service provision and more inclusive local governance has supported community cohesion and reconciliation in all four countries, though there are capacity gaps and coordination issues with central government agencies. There is evidence decentralisation has contributed to peace in all four countries although in Rwanda the restriction on pluralism has limited local government flexibility to address community needs. The case studies offer key lessons and signpost continuing challenges, which may help other governments to consider what features of decentralisation may work best for their post-conflict political settlement and the socio-cultural dynamics of the communities they serve.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 8 September 2016
Accepted 17 August 2017

KEYWORDS

Decentralisation
local government
post-conflict
reconciliation
community cohesion

Introduction

Since the founding of the modern Commonwealth in 1949,¹ over a third (20/52) of the current member nations have been affected by internal armed conflict.² While peace and state building processes in each country are unique, reflecting the differing factors that led to each conflict and the socio-political make-up of each country, there is value in analysing cross-country experiences to assess common challenges and lessons about the role that decentralisation plays in promoting nation-building, state legitimacy, deepening democracy, and community and ethnic cohesion in the post-conflict period. The timing of this research coincides with a quarter of a century of increased democratisation which has included a

shift to multi-party democracy in many countries, as well as an increased focus on sub-national democracy.³ We also see an interesting acknowledgement of the role of local authorities in the global development agenda.⁴ Inclusive democracy provides a framework for enabling peaceful conflict resolution encompassing diverse visions and demands, and can be a powerful tool against a return to violent conflict when carefully designed to protect minority rights and ensure that the voices of all ethnic and community groups are heard.⁵ As Larry Diamond⁶ states:

sustained interethnic moderation and peace follow from the frank recognition of plural identities, legal protection for group and individual rights, devolution of power to various localities and regions, and political institutions that encourage bargaining and accommodation at the center [sic]. Such institutional provisions and protections are not only significantly more likely under democracy, they are only possible with some considerable degree of democracy

This paper explores the conditions under which post-conflict decentralisation has helped reduce conflict risk, promoted community cohesion and reconciliation and/or enhanced the legitimacy of the state. After a brief introduction of the relevant literature, and an overview of the research method, four sections summarise the conflict in each of the country case studies and the role of decentralisation and local governments in the peace-building processes. The final section discusses emerging themes and highlights continuing gaps for a future research agenda.

Democratic decentralisation as conflict mitigation

Decentralisation is when national government devolves power and resources to sub-national entities and can range from deconcentration, where national government agencies are geographically spread out across the country but continue to be responsible to the centre; to political or democratic decentralisation, where power is given to sub-national or local governments accountable directly to their populations.⁷ A systematic analysis of the impact of where and how decentralisation has affected such conflict risk is incomplete⁸ but there is a growing body of case-study analysis.⁹ Jean-Paul Faguet, Ashley Fox, and Caroline Pöschl¹⁰ powerfully argue that what they see as a deeper and more supple democracy that can result from successful decentralisation will reduce internal conflict risk in most circumstances. Decentralisation removes the 'winner takes all' issue, reducing the need for political contestants to feel they must 'win at all costs'.¹¹ This was a significant contributing factor towards the civil wars in Sierra Leone,¹² Rwanda¹³ and Uganda¹⁴ and more recently the ethnic-based violence around the 2011 Kenyan elections.¹⁵

Kathleen O'Neill¹⁶ argues that a move towards decentralisation by governing parties can often be seen as an election strategy when analysis indicates stronger support at the sub-national level than national. Further, Richard Crook¹⁷ shows how it is only through the commitment of the central elites to poverty reduction and redistribution of wealth, especially in economies centred on extractive industries,¹⁸ that the necessary autonomy and finances will follow decentralisation. Decentralisation has also been shown to move conflict risk from the national level to the local level, reducing the potential scale of violence but leaving local elites to control the process.¹⁹

When decentralisation exacerbates conflict risk

When centred around geographically concentrated ethnic groups, decentralisation, especially through federalism, can increase the likelihood of separatist movements. Lijphart²⁰ calls this *incongruent federalism*, which we later consider in the context of Sri Lanka. Nigeria provides another interesting example of conflict risk reduction coming from decentralising into units smaller than geographically concentrated ethnic/cultural groups.²¹ This has arguably helped keep the ethnically and religiously diverse nation together.²² Decentralisation has been used by dominant groups as a mechanism to marginalise, exclude, and increase inequality. For example, in Northern Ireland, poorly resourced Catholic schools and better resourced Protestant schools were dealt with separately by local councils. This widened inequality and was a major contribution to the frustration that led to conflict.²³ Similarly in Rwanda, Niamh Gaynor²⁴ has shown how decentralisation not only exacerbated inequalities central to the ethnic tensions, which led to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi,²⁵ but was also a key mobilisation mechanism for much of the violence. This research cautions against seeing decentralisation as a panacea in managing conflict risk and points to how a nuanced understanding of the rationale, design and experience of decentralisation can provide a greater understanding of when and how decentralisation can improve lives and reduce conflict risk.

The legitimacy of the state

Decentralisation can create different legitimate forums in which individuals, communities, and ethnic groups can voice their concerns and grievances, vie for power, and create competition in providing governance to citizens.²⁶ This produces space for a multitude of political actors, which can enhance democratic accountability by providing opposition to dominant central parties and leaders both at the centre and at the local level, giving opposition parties a chance to build and demonstrate competence in the governance space.²⁷ A leading rationale for decentralisation has been enhanced service provision²⁸ and, the perception of equitable access to public services across different community groups is also vitally important for community cohesion and state legitimacy.²⁹ The role played by improved service delivery in post-conflict state legitimacy is however non-linear and non-static, shifting with citizens' changing expectations of what the state, including a local government, should provide.³⁰

Method

The case studies in this paper predominantly draw on interviews with senior political and administrative leaders from the local government sector, with details fact-checked and referenced against academic and grey literature. Four Commonwealth countries³¹ across three regions were chosen, Africa: (Sierra Leone and Rwanda), Asia-Pacific (Sri Lanka), and Europe (Northern Ireland, UK), giving differing examples of how decentralisation and the role of local government have developed since the end of formal conflict. They also differ in whether peace was attained via brokered peace agreements, as in the case of Sierra Leone and Northern Ireland, or via military victory, as in the case of Rwanda and Sri Lanka, the latter following broken peace agreements.

The interviewees were either senior elected representatives or staff of the national ministry responsible for local government or national association of local government.³² The interviews explored the practitioners' understanding of the rationale of the post-conflict government in pursuing policies of decentralisation, and the extent to which decentralisation has played a role in state-building, reconciliation, and community cohesion in the post-conflict period. The paper does not attempt an exhaustive overview of each conflict and peace process, or to assess the extent of decentralisation. Rather, it gives a local government-centred snapshot of post-conflict governance in each country, how decentralisation has been used to address underlying issues that led to each conflict, and lessons and challenges which could inform future peace and state-building processes.

The following sections present the four case studies, summarising the political-economy leading up to conflict, how post-conflict decentralisation and equality of basic service access has formed part of the peace-building process, and post-conflict community cohesion initiatives.³³ There is then a cross-country discussion of the lessons of the case studies, and a conclusion reflecting against the literature.

Northern Ireland: 'The Troubles'

The protestant Ulster Unionist Party had held power within the provincial assembly and all local councils since the creation of Northern Ireland in 1921. The population of 1.25 million had 73 elected councils and elections were initially undertaken via a proportional representation system but this was suspended in 1922 to ensure unionist majorities and patronage.³⁴ This resulted in widespread discrimination against the minority Catholic community by the local authorities, leading to segregated communities and in 1968 to the creation of a US-inspired civil rights movement calling for greater equality and participation in governance.³⁵ Unionist and republican clashes followed, with violence and rioting escalating throughout 1969, resulting in Northern Ireland's government requesting support from the British Army to control the protests.³⁶ In 1972, the security situation deteriorated further and direct rule was imposed from London. Local government reforms in 1973 reduced the number of local authorities to 26 single-tier district councils and successfully introduced competitive party politics, breaking the Unionist homogeneity and leading to only three councils with a single party majority.³⁷ Paramilitary organisations from both sides organised violent campaigns, in total claiming more than 3,600 conflict-related deaths.³⁸ The 1998 Good Friday Agreement restored the Northern Ireland Assembly on a power-sharing basis, along with the formalisation of relations with the Government of Ireland as well as between the Governments of Ireland and the UK.³⁹ In the interim 25 years, councils were the only representative body close to the population, and they operated under severely constrained conditions. Many of the functions scheduled to be devolved to local councils are yet to be transferred, with the Assembly reluctant to transfer powers only recently restored to it.⁴⁰ Political capital was leveraged from outside the British Isles, not least from the US,⁴¹ and the EU provided significant support.⁴² In 2014, the number of districts was reduced to 11, with the joint rationale of economies of scale and cross-community integration, and additional powers being granted in areas such as planning.⁴³

Decentralisation and equality of access

The unequal access to council employment and housing that had prevailed up to 1973 was a significant contributing factor to 'the Troubles'.⁴⁴ The reintroduction of proportional representation for the 1973 council elections was a major step in promoting cross-community engagement, and it was unionist and republican councillors beginning to work together at the local level that paved the way for the power arrangements for the Assembly following the 1998 Good Friday agreement.⁴⁵ Further, section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides supportive anti-discrimination legislation ensuring that public authorities must promote equal opportunity in areas such as employment, access to services, etc.⁴⁶

Community cohesion

During the conflict, local councils were granted limited powers, and the gaps left in key local services such as education, welfare, and fire services often had to be filled by NGOs and community groups. Recently devolved powers to the Northern Irish councils in the area of community engagement are already yielding positive results and enabling councils to respond to community issues and enhance community cohesion.⁴⁷ Increased transparency and access to local council meetings and decision-making has enabled greater scrutiny by the community: for example in Belfast City Council, all council meetings are video recorded and uploaded as webcasts to the council website.

Continuing challenges

Ensuring inclusive, effective, and responsive democratic structures at both the local and provincial levels has helped address issues of equitable services and inclusion. There are however tensions between the two tiers. While an empowered provincial assembly has enabled peace, local councils have struggled to be allocated the powers and resources they need for community cohesion and reconciliation. However, the psychological issues stemming from almost three decades of violence can take much longer to heal.⁴⁸ Support and mechanisms are needed for individuals, families, and communities to move forward and build trust with those from 'the other' community. However, the lack of any formal transitional justice has held this back and local government is restricted in operationalising formal mechanisms.

Key lessons

Power-sharing at the provincial assembly level is highlighted within peace-building literature but it is at the local council level that tension and moves towards community cohesion have played out. A joint sense of achievement and pride in the peace agreement has helped forge unlikely coalitions and councils have played a significant role in bringing communities together. Although the fragility of the power-sharing consensus in the Provincial Assembly has recently been highlighted with the collapse of the Northern Ireland Assembly coalition in 2017, the importance of devolution to peace cannot be understated and this has reasserted the vital role of local government in ensuring basic services are delivered effectively and equitably to all citizens.

Sri Lankan civil war

Since independence in 1948, the Sri Lankan minority communities have accused successive highly centralised and overwhelmingly Sinhalese governments of systematic marginalisation. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was formed in 1976 as an armed separatist movement drawn from the northern Sri Lankan Tamil population, with the civil war starting in 1983.⁴⁹ Amendment 13 of the constitution was brokered in 1987 between the Sri Lankan and Indian Governments in the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord,⁵⁰ moving the country towards federalism and promising significant powers and autonomy to the provinces. The conflict-affected Northern and Eastern provinces were merged in 1988 as the accord required, and elections took place for all provincial councils that year. Between 80–100,000 people died during three decades of conflict,⁵¹ and with the Ceasefire Agreement signed in 2002, with Norway acting as mediator, the government agreed to lift the ban on the LTTE, opening up the opportunity for direct negotiations.⁵² During negotiations, both sides agreed to the principle of a federal solution and the LTTE dropped their demand for a separate country. However, violence resumed in 2005 and it was only after a final push from government forces in 2009 that the civil war ended.⁵³ In 2006, the Supreme Court ruled that the presidential proclamation merging the erstwhile Northern and Eastern Provinces was unconstitutional and bifurcated back into the Eastern and Northern Provinces in January 2007. Whilst elections were held in the Eastern Province in 2008, the Northern Province continued to be ruled directly from Colombo until elections in 2013.

Decentralisation and equality of access

It is still early days but there continues to be an expectation across the political spectrum that peace can bring prosperity to all provinces,⁵⁴ which could lead to greater tolerance of pluralism within governance, at least at the local level. One innovation was the ability of community-based political parties to field candidates and win seats in councils in multi-ethnic areas, enabling representation on councils. Local government officials feel that this has helped the different communities to organise and articulate their priorities⁵⁵ and concerns and to influence council policy, enabling grievances to be resolved before tensions increased.⁵⁶

Community cohesion

The Community Livelihoods in Conflict Affected Areas Project was started during the last years of the war and designed to assist with building community cohesion in conflict-affected areas in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Known as the Re-awakening Project, the programme was designed to restore livelihoods, increase incomes, support agriculture, and develop the capacity for sustainable social and economic integration.⁵⁷ The project provided capacity-building activities for elected councillors on conflict resolution, community participation, and public auditing. Sub-objectives included empowering communities in decision-making, a support programme for vulnerable people, as well as creating, restoring, and improving essential village level social and economic infrastructure. One key condition was the cross-community nature of the activities to help build inclusive governance and community cohesion.⁵⁸

Continuing challenges

Key functions of policing, foreign trade, and land are yet to be devolved to the provincial councils and continue to be a source of tension. The Sri Lankan Provincial Governors are appointed by the president and duplicate the chief minister's role. However, one positive incremental step is that the provincial governors for the North and East are now senior civil servants rather than military commanders, and that a Tamil governor has been appointed for the Western Province. Adequate finances – either as untied transfers of funds from the centre, or devolved tax raising powers – are yet to supplement these already devolved functions.

Key lessons

It was important for reconciliation to occur before political will could be mobilised to ensure inclusive governance and development. There must be concerted effort from the government to ensure the defeated community becomes part of the wider national identity, treated as equal citizens as opposed to being further marginalised.⁵⁹ There are now 18 cross-party independent parliamentary commissions holding ministries to account on areas such as bribery, public services, police, elections, and crucially, decentralisation. These commissions draw together representatives from Muslim, Tamil, and other minority parties with the Sinhalese majority parties, enhancing the ability to seek joint solutions and promote a greater understanding of other communities' issues. Politicians at both the national and local level are learning to respect the views of politicians from other parties/communities in public political debate, both in parliament but also importantly on TV and radio shows.⁶⁰

It is too soon to assess the long-term impact of decentralisation on peace-building but representatives interviewed felt that devolution had enabled more inclusive and tolerant politics and that community political participation is growing. With local councils currently suspended and substantial changes to local government law in the pipeline, there is an urgent need to complete the review and for local elections to take place so that citizens have their representatives within the governance system. Empowering effective local councils whilst assisting provincial councils to act as coordinating entities and implementing regional level infrastructure, policing, etc., will reduce concerns over empowering provinces and the risk of re-igniting separatist-inspired conflict.

Sierra Leone civil war

When civil war broke out in 1991, Sierra Leone had suffered two decades of deteriorating economy and governance.⁶¹ In 1972, local councils were replaced with centrally appointed and highly corrupt 'Committees of Management' and many in the regions felt that they were being systematically excluded from power, which lay in the hands of a few elites in the capital, Freetown.⁶² Perceived exclusion, corruption, lack of sharing of revenues from natural resource extraction and poor service provision were cited as justification for the civil war by the leaders of the Revolutionary United Front.⁶³ Estimates of conflict-related deaths during the decade-long war range from 50,000 to 300,000.⁶⁴ A further 2.6 million were displaced – over half of the population – with many seeking protection from the UN in the capital.⁶⁵ The Association of Women's Organizations of Sierra Leone and the inter-religious Council of Sierra

Leone played a vital role in bringing rebels to the negotiating table.⁶⁶ After failed peace agreements in 1996 and 1999, the civil war ended in 2000 when the UK military assisted the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in enforcing a ceasefire, and peace was brokered with the signing of the Lomé Accord.⁶⁷

Decentralisation and equality of access

Following the peace agreement, much of Sierra Leone's Local Government Act 2004 was adapted from the Ugandan framework. Local council elections were held in May 2004, two years after the national parliamentary and presidential elections.⁶⁸ Despite resistance from government, decentralisation was insisted upon by lead donor agencies, including the World Bank and DFID, and championed by President Kabbah. The national decentralisation programme that followed was designed to reverse the negative trends that contributed to the war.

Decentralisation improved access to political participation and government resources and institutions, increasing accountability and building trust through tangible progress in service delivery.⁶⁹ Information and public awareness were promoted via print (brochures, handbills, etc.), television and radio interviews, discussion programmes, jingles and drama story-lines. There has been a drive for widespread citizen participation, advocacy for improved revenue mobilisation, civic education, particularly for young people, and 'decentralisation corners' in regional libraries. Following each local election, induction workshops are organised for the new councillors and ward committee members on their roles, responsibilities, and relationships with other stakeholders. There is also a drive to encourage greater transparency and the posting of council minutes on public notice boards is now mandatory. Additionally, the capacity of council staff has been significantly improved with support from the Local Government Service Commission. All 19 local councils have had funding for 'state of the art' office complexes with solar electrification for six local councils off the national grid. Another accountability innovation is the pilot Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), enabling citizens to hold their leaders accountable especially for service delivery.

Sierra Leone's decentralisation model calls for the transfer of functions and accompanying resources to local councils. Creating a special account within the Ministry of Finance to ring-fence devolved funds helped to push the devolution process and removed unnecessary bureaucracies, which had previously delayed the flow of funds to the local councils.

Community cohesion

Interviewees considered that provincial and district councils have a key responsibility for peace building, reconciliation, and community cohesion for the promotion of development. The Decentralization Secretariat within the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has coordinated the training of councillors and communities on their roles and responsibilities including the identification of development challenges in communities undergoing reconciliation, and how to address such challenges.⁷⁰ It was felt that local councils had played a pivotal role in diffusing latent or open animosity against ex-combatants not only through reconciliation and community cohesion sessions, but also through the institution of measures/by-laws aimed at ensuring ex-combatants and victims could live alongside each other peacefully. Additionally, there was a sense that new leadership

opportunities provided through decentralisation had eased the frustrations of aspiring politicians, enabling leaders of community associations, social groups, and other interests at the grassroots level to become political figures in their communities. It was suggested that decentralisation had also awakened the spirit of volunteerism and prompted a renewed drive towards bettering the country and the lives of its citizens.⁷¹

Part of the rationale for decentralisation in Sierra Leone was to rebuild social capital in communities and to address issues of social exclusion. There has been an emphasis on trust, information sharing, collective action, social and gender inclusion, and networking with community-based organisations in rural communities. Following training delivered through World Bank and other development partners' projects,⁷² local councils include strengthening social capital as a mechanism to promote community cohesion.

Continuing challenges

Local government political autonomy is weak across Sierra Leone and has been reduced with the reintroduction of centrally appointed district officers, whilst the devolution of functions remains incomplete.⁷³ Almost 50% of the functions slated for devolution had yet to be transferred to the local councils by 2016.⁷⁴ Severe capacity issues persist, exacerbated by a weak and politicised Local Government Service Commission, which restricts councils' ability to hire and fire. Whilst a decentralisation policy was introduced in 2010, the review process of the Local Government Act 2004 and other related laws is yet to be completed. The lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities leads to conflicts especially between the chiefdom authorities, local councils and members of parliament, hampering effective development. The influential paramount chiefs have contributed to lack of revenue mobilisation for local councils, particularly local tax revenue and market dues. This has constrained domestic resources such that local councils are unable to operate without central government fiscal transfers. The ward committees are yet to function properly so the electorate is not linked to local councils, leading to frustrations within communities.

Key lessons

Development-focused decentralisation was viewed by interviewed officials to have re-enfranchised citizens who felt ignored by the state in the pre-war period. Whilst increased social capital at the local level may have renewed hope for the future, acute capacity gaps, especially in rural district councils; lack of coordination between local councils and line ministries; and a lack of clear responsibility in functions with appropriate devolved finances have hindered local councils in becoming resilient to shocks and provide core basic services. There continues to be resistance to decentralisation in central government ministries, as well as severe capacity deficits highlighted in the 2014 Ebola outbreak which killed almost 4,000.⁷⁵ Progress in basic services and accountability at the local and national levels has reduced inequality compared to the pre-civil war period and has helped achieve important peace-building objectives such as community cohesion and poverty reduction. However, persistent acute poverty continues throughout the regions and will continue to pose a threat to peace until the limited capacity and restricted autonomy of local authorities is addressed.

The Rwandan civil war and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi

Prior to and during the colonial period, the Tutsi occupied almost all important public offices at the national and local level.⁷⁶ Following the 1960 United Nations-mandated elections, the Hutu gained a large percentage of local leadership positions, though national offices remained with the Tutsi.⁷⁷ Following the death of the mwami (king) in 1959, the Hutu, supported by the Belgians, had risen up against the leadership and many Tutsi were murdered. In 1961, following the abolition of the monarchy, Tutsi were again attacked and at independence in 1962 widespread persecution and violence against Tutsi grew and many fled to neighbouring countries, especially Uganda, where the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was formed. Tutsi remaining in Rwanda were denied political representation as the nation became a one-party state with limited autonomy of local government, and were denied public sector jobs with a quote much local that their proportion in the population.⁷⁸ In 1990, the RPF started a civil war from Uganda leading to three years of guerrilla fighting, with the RPF gaining control of the north of the country. Peace was brokered in 1993 with assistance from the United States, France and the Organisation of African Unity, and the signing of the Arusha Accord in August opened the way for members of the RPF to return to Rwanda.⁷⁹ In April 1994, President Habyarimana's plane was shot down near Kigali Airport, killing him and President Ntaryamira of Burundi, giving the pretext for a radical group within the supremacist Hutu Power movement to launch a campaign of genocide against the Tutsi. This resulted in the deaths of between half a million and a million Tutsi and tens of thousands of Hutu in less than 100 days, which only ended after the RPF re-launched their offensive and took Kigali, and then the rest of the country the following month.⁸⁰

Decentralisation and restructuring

A four-year period of reflection followed the formation of the new government and whilst there was a keen appetite for home-grown solutions, the president's national consultations and conferences reviewed the governance structure in other African nations including Ghana, Tanzania, and Mauritius.⁸¹ Despite donor support bringing many foreign experts and advisors, the focus on locally developed solutions has been maintained to a much higher degree than in other heavily donor-financed post-conflict reconstruction programmes such as in Sierra Leone.⁸² Prior to the Rwandan civil war, the local government system, the *bourgmestre* (mayor), had significant local authority as both legislature and executive⁸³ which resulted in many local elites being instrumental in encouraging and participating in acts of genocide.⁸⁴

After an extensive national consultative consensus-building process led by the president,⁸⁵ the 2000 Decentralisation Policy was developed and local elections held. The policy's main strategic objectives include empowering communities and promoting participation, strengthening accountability and transparency; enhancing sensitivity and responsiveness to local needs, to develop sustainable economic planning and management capacity at local council levels, and to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in planning, monitoring, and delivering services.⁸⁶ In 2006, the 106 districts (*akarere*) were reduced to 30 and raised in status. An additional lower tier was created: the village or *umudugudu*, used to channel grassroots mobilisation and information dissemination.⁸⁷ One well-researched innovation was performance contracts for local mayors known as *Imihigo*, introduced with the second wave of decentralisation in 2006.⁸⁸

Community cohesion

A National Unity and Reconciliation Commission⁸⁹ (NURC) was created in 1999 and continues to propose home-grown policies to promote national over ethnic identity, supporting reconciliation and community cohesion.⁹⁰ Drawing inspiration from traditional Rwandan practices, the Commission proposed a number of radical and wide-ranging policies, pursued with vigour across the country and led by the central government but with significant delivery responsibility at local level. These include: the Vision 2020 *Umurenge* Program with community involvement in infrastructure development through cash for work⁹¹; *Itorero ry'Igihugu*, a mandatory civic education programme focusing on an official national history, patriotism and human rights through *Ingando* camps; and *Umuganda* 'voluntary' work days, which are seen as a civic obligation, bringing people together from both sides of the conflict to improve the local area.⁹² Additionally, there are two community-focused poverty reduction programmes implemented by local councils: *Ubudehe*, a community managed micro-finance programme through which the community identifies projects put forward by poorer households for financial assistance⁹³; and the *Girinka* 'one-cow per poor family' programme whereby poor families are organised into groups with the local government giving one family in the group a pregnant cow, which in turn gives a female calf to the next family in the group, and so on, until all families have a milk-producing asset.⁹⁴

These have been brought together since 2013, along with an annual national unity and reconciliation week, under the unified national identity programme known as *Ndi Umu Nyarwanda* – 'I am Rwandan'. Since the end of the civil war, discussion of ethnic identity has been taboo⁹⁵ and there is currently no official data showing socio-economic indicators by ethnicity, no reservation by ethnic group and no breakdown of local council membership by ethnicity. However research by the Institute for Reconciliation has shown that Rwandans still view themselves 'at an alarming scale/level' through ethnic stereotypes.⁹⁶ Susanne Buckley-Zistel⁹⁷ has shown how collective amnesia, how she refers to the national choice not to remember certain aspects of the violence and to contribute to a collective narrative that helps cohesion, has enabled co-existence following the genocide. Since the launch of the *Ndi Umu Nyarwanda* programme in 2013, the official line has been somewhat relaxed so as to encourage Hutus to publicly self-identify and apologise for the genocide.⁹⁸

Continuing challenges

Whilst local government has been given significant responsibility for community cohesion and poverty reduction programmes, all planning is conducted at the central level. For example, the *Imihigo* system has been criticised for having a top-down accountability mechanism, evaluated by high officials from sectorial ministries, the Prime Minister's and the President's Office.⁹⁹ Similar observations around the lack of community accountability have been made concerning other programmes.¹⁰⁰ Alongside the understandable and laudable emphasis on community cohesion and reconciliation through a single Rwandan identity, there is a lack of pluralism in the political system, with all local councils effectively being run by local chapters of the governing party,¹⁰¹ and the lack of independent and critical civil society voice reduces accountability mechanisms and results in deconcentration rather than political decentralisation.¹⁰²

Key lessons

A centre-led focus on nationally developed solutions inspired by traditional practices has enabled an effective and distinctively Rwandan set of policies to enhance community cohesion and reconciliation. Additionally, providing adequate resources for national programmes has helped capacity development within local councils, enabling rapid poverty reduction. There are still capacity gaps, not least in the ability to raise revenue.¹⁰³ Upwards accountability through initiatives such as *Imihigo* has helped to create reasonably effective service delivery in most if not all councils. However, with little space for civil society or community oversight and accountability, no political opposition coupled with virtually no opportunity for local authority practitioners to practice discretion according to locally specific needs and circumstances,¹⁰⁴ national-derived policy is being pursued as a blanket 'one size fits all' leaving some behind.

Whilst the developmental and peace-focused achievements of the Rwandan state are impressive, the lack of accountability that comes with the one-party state, not just at the centre but in local government, means that community checks and balances on local officials are largely absent. As the country enters a third term under the current administration, the pressure to deliver national rather than local priorities will only increase. Instituting downwards local accountability by enabling the development of independent civil society and plural voices in the governance space could help the government achieve its developmental, statebuilding and peacebuilding objectives.

Discussion

In all four case studies, the situation prior to conflict was characterised by poor, centralised governance which was a significant contributor to the outbreak of violence. In Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, and Rwanda this included perceived systemic marginalisation of minorities, and in Sierra Leone of the rural population. Poor and inequitable services and exclusionary governance practices coupled with perceived corruption and in the case of Sierra Leone inequitable sharing of natural resource wealth contributed to pre-conflict frustrations. In Rwanda and Northern Ireland, where pre-conflict local government existed, it was dominated by the Protestant and Hutu majority communities to the almost universal exclusion of Catholic and Tutsi minority communities, which has been shown to be complicit in the worst of the abuses.¹⁰⁵

Decentralisation was a key pillar of the post-conflict governance reform in each of the case study countries, initiated as a feature of the internationally brokered peace agreement in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, or included as part of the immediate post-conflict, donor-driven, governance institutional reform in Sierra Leone and Rwanda. Once peace was secured, developmental and community cohesion objectives were the main factors in decentralisation policy-making. For example, restructuring councils in Northern Ireland and Rwanda to reduce their number and increase their catchment areas was justified on grounds of economic viability and efficiency, as well as equity, combining ethnically diverse poorer and wealthier councils to assist with redistribution and community cohesion.

There has been a focus in all four countries on capacity building in local authorities so that they can be effective, efficient and responsive. Building citizens' trust in government for inclusive development reduces the risk of future conflict and a move to greater

decentralisation has been seen as instrumental in this. State legitimacy is built not just on which services the local councils deliver effectively and inclusively, but also the perceptions and expectations of these services. It was therefore considered important for councils to communicate this equitability in service delivery to their citizens.¹⁰⁶ Transparent communication was seen as central to enabling greater accountability, managing expectations and challenging negative perceptions. For example, Belfast City Council makes all its meetings available as webcasts, and in Sierra Leone it is mandatory for all councils to post minutes on public notice boards.

The kinds of activities a local council can undertake to help reduce conflict include providing responsive, effective redress for grievances such as ensuring minorities are represented not just through formal representation on councils, but particularly in planning and consultations. A number of the interviewees expressed the importance of initiatives being grounded in local realities and not imposed by national governments or international programmes, so that the nuances of the still fragile social fabric can be brought to bear on design and implementation. This was viewed as the best way to maximise benefits across communities whilst balancing developmental priorities with essential peace-building cooperation.¹⁰⁷ Whilst the national context had informed the development of such initiatives, in all four countries there was limited scope for flexibility to re-design initiatives to suit local needs and dynamics across different councils.

Learning from others helped to broaden the options available to the policy makers by informing the development of home-grown initiatives. In the early post-conflict years, high-level national policy-makers in Sierra Leone and Rwanda both drew on examples of governance structures in other African countries. A further institutional development considered important was a non-partisan country-wide national association of local government to provide a voice for the sector, capacity development of its member councils and coordinating knowledge exchange.¹⁰⁸ It was important that local governments not only ensured multi-ethnic representation on their councils, but also that council leaders from areas with overwhelming single ethnic majorities engaged and cooperated with those from other ethnicities and parties.

Conclusions

The interviews with senior local government practitioners confirm that within the sector it was felt that the decentralisation strategies adopted in the immediate post-conflict period in all four countries had made a contribution to reducing conflict risk. Either through addressing calls for autonomy, as in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, or other key drivers of conflict such as systematic exclusion from governance and basic services. This has been through instituting political structures that are more inclusive and representative than these prior to the conflict, as well as by improving the perception of equality of basic local services across the communities. Whilst the Good Friday Agreement is founded on decentralised power-sharing in Northern Ireland, a commitment to decentralise was not part of the peace agreement in Sierra Leone. Similarly, military victories in Rwanda and Sri Lanka meant that peace was not contingent on brokered peace agreements based on promised decentralisation. All four countries implemented substantial decentralisation policies as the most effective way for central government to achieve its dual objectives of improved reach of the state and poverty reduction through more equitable service delivery across the country along

with much needed community cohesion and reconciliation. Central elites' commitment though prevailing post-conflict political settlements to poverty reduction and community cohesion has been the main driving force behind decentralisation. In Northern Ireland, local government played a pivotal role in the emerging post-conflict governance arrangement. The building of trust and cross-community partnerships of unionist and republican councillors in the 1973–1997 period prior to the Good Friday Agreement paved the way for the power-sharing arrangements in the Northern Ireland Assembly, which would otherwise have been unthinkable.

The quasi-federal structures in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka have however stifled further decentralisation from provincial to local councils, limiting the role of local government in reconciliation and inclusive development. In Sri Lanka, the government is rightly concerned that expanding the incongruent federalism to the North Province could reignite calls for a Tamil nation and trigger a return to violence. This has resulted in hesitation over devolving the core functions of policing, foreign trade and land. This hesitation, however, is creating its own frustrations. The literature tells us that sub-provincial devolution and the empowerment of local councils is the best way for the government of Sri Lanka to achieve its developmental, community cohesion, and reconciliation objectives without risking a return to conflict. In Northern Ireland, with significant buy-in to the peace agreement from all parties, especially with the successful decommissioning of the major paramilitary organisations on both sides and the increased importance of electoral politics, the concern is more with the stability of the fragile consensus-based power sharing in the Northern Ireland Assembly than by calls from republicans for unification with the Republic of Ireland and a risk of return to violence.¹⁰⁹

In Sierra Leone and Rwanda, the challenges of ensuring effective decentralisation for effective service delivery are not particularly related to the countries' post-conflict status, and are common in many non-post-conflict countries: the reluctance of central ministries and agencies to devolve functions and finances to local councils, and an acute capacity gap at the local level. Post-conflict capacity-building programmes have helped to address some of these gaps, but fall far short of what is required. Whilst having many similar features to those highlighted in Sierra Leone, aspects of Rwanda's approach to post-conflict state-building make it unique and against the trend towards a deeper and more supple democracy. Whilst the 2000 Decentralisation Policy was developed initially with participation as an important principle, subsequent amendments focus more on service delivery and have restricted citizen participation.¹¹⁰ As in Sierra Leone, there was substantial donor funding and support for a decentralisation policy fitted squarely within what the World Bank and DFID saw as essential post-conflict institutional reforms. The local councils in Rwanda have received substantial capacity building and infrastructure support and responsibility for delivering centrally determined poverty reduction and community cohesion programmes, enabling significant developmental progress across the country. However, under the *Ndi Umu Nyarwanda* – 'I am Rwandan' – programme, citizens the almost total restriction on use of ethnic identity means Rwandans are not recorded within official figures by ethnicity, making it impossible to assess inclusivity or identify systematic marginalisation and exclusion. Citizens are not encouraged to organise or voice concerns which means the councils are unable to realise their potential to become units of reconciliation and inclusive dynamic local democracy.

Rwanda therefore uniquely provides a counter example to Larry Diamond's quote at the start of the paper, which pre-supposes the continued existence of diverse ethnic identities

that must be recognised, protected and accommodated within decentralised governance structures. It is clear that given the extreme situation faced by Rwanda during and immediately following the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, most Rwandan citizens do support such extreme measures, and is too early to assess if this social engineering will prove successful. However, there is some scope for local initiatives to start emerging citizens on some issues. For example, Ashish Shah¹¹¹ suggested that centrally led programmes such as *Ubudehe* could enable 'hidden democracy' to emerge at the village level, enabling citizens to organise and engage with each other. Shah suggests this could promote the 'citizenship enabling' qualities that facilitate democratic engagement, enabling discussion and debate on collective strategies for local issues and whet the appetite for further deliberation and debate, moving the country away from an 'obedience culture' to a 'citizenship culture'.¹¹² However, this maybe an optimistic position with further recent restriction on such space for embryotic deliberative democracy being reduced.¹¹³

In Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka and Sierra Leone, there is evidence of what Faguet et al.¹¹⁴ see as 'deeper and more supple democracy' emerging, with more inclusive decentralised governance structures, and an opening up of democratic space to other key democratic institutions such as NGOs, community groups and the media, which has enabled the countries to build resilience to shocks and stresses. Analysing decentralisation policies through the experience of the local government sector practitioners has revealed some significant successes and a number of ongoing challenges in implementing decentralisation as a post-conflict state-building and reconciliation strategy. However, to varying degree in all four countries, persistent disenfranchisement of marginalised sections of society threatens to undermine the positive developments in democracy, state legitimacy and, therefore, the peace process and reduced conflict risk.

There are a number of good practices and successful innovations in each country and further research is needed to better understand the local nuances that contribute to their successes and limitations, and what lessons they offer other post-conflict countries. Such research would contribute to building a fuller picture of the lived experiences of citizens and their interaction with other key actors, such as chieftains, ministry and line agency officials, the private sector and civil society. Key areas for further research which came through in the discussions with the local government sector officials but that were unable to explore in this paper include: the role of women in post-conflict state-building, reflecting especially on efforts to encourage greater representation and engagement with local government, planning and consultation; and the role of local government in the reintegration of ex-combatants as part of the reconciliation process. There is also a need to capture the stories of individual councils' efforts on post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction, to enable local dynamics and innovations to inform policies of other councils. Such insights would assist national and governments to consider what features of decentralisation may work best for their post-conflict political settlement and the socio-cultural dynamics of the communities they serve.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Acknowledgements

Gareth would like to thank the elected representatives and staff of the local government sector organisations whose insights formed the bases of the case studies for this paper. He would also like to thank three anonymous reviewers for their valuable insights and suggestions, along with Paul Jackson, Madeleine Hatfield, Lucy Slack, Andrew Nickson, Philip Amis, Benjamin Chemouni, Oliver Walton, Niamh Gaynor, Terry Parker, Lewis Brooks, Alfariany Fatima and Aleks Dubaic for their helpful comments. He would also like to acknowledge the support and encouragement provided by colleagues at Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) and the International Development Department (IDD) at the University of Birmingham. The views expressed in this paper are his own and not necessarily those of CLGF or any of the organisations interviewed. All errors remain his own.

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Notes

1. When the independent nation states of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) became the founding members in free association as the Commonwealth of Nations. From an analytical and policy perspective the Commonwealth is an interesting collection of countries given their shared history and similar legal and legislative frameworks. See <https://thecommonwealth.org/history-of-the-commonwealth/beginning-modern-commonwealth>
2. Uppsala Conflict Data Programme. *Armed Conflict Database*.
3. 'In the last quarter century, over 75 countries have attempted to transfer responsibilities of the state to lower tiers of government. Significantly, most of these lower-tier governments have been elected, so that the decentralization is not just administrative or fiscal, but also political.' World Bank, *Decentralization and Service Delivery*, 1.
4. This is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal 16 which commits nations to 'promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions *at all levels*.' United Nations, *Transforming our World*, 12. This emphasis recognises the role sub-national and local government plays in ensuring no citizen 'is left behind'. This acknowledgement is echoed elsewhere in the SDGs, such as through goal 11, the 'cities goal' and in other key global declarations as part of the post-2015 agenda, including paragraph 34 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing development post-2015, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris agreement on climate change. Satterthwaite, "Successful, Safe and Sustainable Cities."
5. International IDEA, *Democracy at the Local Level*.
6. Diamond, *Promoting Democracy in the 1990s*, 8.
7. Ribot, *African Decentralization* and Crook; and Manor, *Democracy and Decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa*.
8. Jackson and Scott, *Local Government in Post-conflict Environments*.
9. Jackson, *Local Government and Decentralisation in Post-conflict Contexts*.
10. Faguet, Fox and Pöschl "Decentralizing for a Deeper, more Supply Democracy."

11. Lyons, "The Importance of Winning."
12. Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98"; and Jackson "Reshuffling an Old Deck of Cards?"
13. Goodfellow and Smith "From Urban Catastrophe to 'Model' City?"
14. Green, "Decentralization and Conflict in Uganda"; and Kauzya, *Political Decentralisation in Africa*.
15. Cheeseman, "The Kenyan Election of 2007. An Introduction"; and D'Arcy and Cornell, "Devolution and Corruption in Kenya."
16. O'Neill, "Decentralization as an Electoral Strategy."
17. Crook, "Decentralization and Poverty Reduction in Africa."
18. Jackson, "Chiefs, Money and Politicians."
19. Green, "Decentralization and Conflict in Uganda."
20. Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy*.
21. Faguet, Fox and Pöschl "Decentralizing for a Deeper, More Supple Democracy."
22. Rustad, *Between War and Peace*; and Osaghae, "Ethnic Minorities and Federalism in Nigeria."
23. Gallagher 1998, cited in Bush and Saltarelli, *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict*; see also Fontana, "Educational Decentralisation in Post-Conflict Societies."
24. Gaynor, *Decentralisation, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Rwanda*.
25. In 2014, the Rwandan government successfully lobbied the UN Security Council to officially refer to the Rwandan Genocide as the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi: see United Nations, *Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2150 (2014)*.
26. Faguet, Fox and Pöschl, "Decentralizing for a Deeper, More Supple Democracy."
27. Sisk, "Democracy at the Local Level."
28. World Bank, *Decentralization and Service Delivery*; Crook and Manor, *Democracy and Decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa*; Faguet and Pöschl, *Is Decentralization Good for Development?*
29. Brinkerhoff and Johnson, "Decentralized Local Governance in Fragile States"; Järvinen, "Promoting Inclusive Local Governance and Service Delivery"; and Parker, "Improving Institutional and Service Delivery Capacity in Conflict Affected Areas."
30. McLoughlin, "When Does Service Delivery?"; and Fisk and Cherney, "Pathways to Institutional Legitimacy."
31. An earlier version of this paper included a fifth country, the Solomon Islands, where ethnic violent 'troubles' from 1998 to 2000 killing over 200 people and displaced at least 20,000 (Jeffrey, "Enduring Tensions," 153). This prompted a capacity building for Honiara City Council programme to provide more inclusive governance and greater equitable services across communities (for more detail see Parker, "Improving Institutional and Service Delivery Capacity.")
32. Two or three in-depth interviews were undertaken per country with senior officials or elected representatives of local government associations or ministries responsible for local government in each country. References to the interviews: NILGA = Northern Ireland Local Government Association, FSLGA = Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities, MLG = Ministry of Local Government Sierra Leone, and RALGA = Rwanda Local Government Association.
33. Whilst the history of the conflict is drawn predominantly from secondary sources, the discussion of the post-conflict decentralisation policies and how these have impacted community cohesion draw on interviews with senior practitioners with additional references added where possible.
34. Minogue, *A Consumer's Guide to Local Government*.
35. Knox, "Local Government in Northern Ireland."
36. Whyte, *Interpreting Northern Ireland*.
37. Minogue, *A Consumer's Guide to Local Government*.
38. Paolini et al., "Effects of Direct and Indirect Cross-Group Friendships."
39. Bush and Houston, *The Story of PEACE Learning*.
40. NILGA, interview.
41. In 1995 the Clinton administration appointed George Mitchell as Special Envoy to Northern Ireland, who chaired a commission on disarmament and the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement – see Arthur, *Special Relationships*.

42. EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. The four programmes ran consecutively for four-year periods from 1995, with the current fourth phase 2014–2020. To date EU PEACE has totalled almost 2.3 billion Euros, approximately £1.8billion. See Potter and Egerton *The EU PEACE and INTERREG Programmes*.
43. NILGA, interview.
44. Minogue, *A Consumer's Guide to Local Government*.
45. Bush and Houston, *The Story of PEACE Learning*.
46. UK Government, *Northern Ireland Act*.
47. One example comes from Belfast City Council where they recently launched their first community plan, the Belfast Agenda, which brought community groups and stakeholders together to develop a vision 2035 for the city. Improved community relations are at the heart of the plan see Belfast City Council, *The Belfast Agenda*.
48. NILGA, interview.
49. Bush, *The Limits and Scope*.
50. Rotberg, *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka*.
51. Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, *Armed Conflict Database*.
52. Winslow and Woost, *Economy, Culture and Civil War in Sri Lanka*.
53. Goodhand, Klem, and Walton, "Mediating the Margins."
54. However, to date there is little evidence of this – see Sarvananthan, "Elusive Economic Peace Dividend in Sri Lanka."
55. For example, one local government initiative showed how community harmony outweighed need assessment during community allocation of a housing scheme (Bush, *The Limits and Scope*).
56. FSLGA interview.
57. World Bank, *Sri Lanka: Fostering Inclusive Growth*.
58. The impact was considered modest (World Bank, *Project Performance Assessment Report*).
59. FSLGA interview.
60. Ibid.
61. Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98."
62. Tangri, "Central-Local Politics in Contemporary Sierra Leone."
63. Gaima, "Establishing the Legislative, Political, and Administrative Framework"; and, Jackson, "Reshuffling an Old Deck of Cards?"
64. Marc, Verjee and Mogaka, *Responding to the Challenge of Fragility and Security in West Africa*.
65. Kaldor and Vincent, *Evaluation of UNDP Assistance to Conflict-affected Countries*.
66. Amedzrator, *Breaking the Inertia*.
67. Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991–98."
68. Nickson and Cutting, "The Role of Decentralisation in Post-Conflict Reconstruction."
69. Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), interview.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. e.g. GoBifo, piloted in the Bombali and Bonthe Districts, focused on strengthening trust, collective action, information sharing and communication exchanges, local groups and networks and social inclusion. It has delivered real benefits through the creation of local infrastructure and contributed to community cohesion see Casey, Glennerster, and Miguel, *The GoBifo Project Evaluation Report*.
73. Nickson and Cutting, "The Role of Decentralisation in Post-Conflict Reconstruction."
74. CLGF, "The Local Government System in Sierra Leone."
75. 3,956. See Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, *2014 Ebola Outbreak in West Africa*.
76. Throughout the colonial period, the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan monarchy had been supported by colonial powers: first by the Germans and then by the Belgians after the First World War, see Newbury, "Ethnicity and the Politics of History in Rwanda"). The 1933 Belgian administered census was organised to classify all citizens as either Hutu, Tutsi or Twa, see Jean, *The Rwandan Genocide*.
77. MSU, *Imagining Genocide*.

78. United Nations, *Rwanda: A Brief History of the Outreach Programme*.
79. Curtis, "Development Assistance and the Lasting Legacies."
80. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis, History of a Genocide*.
81. RALGA, interview.
82. Hasselskog and Schierenbeck, "National Policy in Local Practice."
83. Former Minister of Local Government Protasis Musoni in Hausman 2010, "Civil Service Interview 4."
84. Timothy Longman (1995) shows through case studies of two neighbouring villages during the genocide that the violence was political in nature and dependant in large part on the local elites.
85. Ankut, *The Role of Constitution-Building Processes in Democratization*.
86. Musoni, *How Decentralization Policy is Promoting Reconciliation*.
87. Chemouni, "Taking Stock of Rwanda's Decentralisation"; and Chemouni, "Explaining the Design of the Rwandan Decentralization."
88. Scher, *The Promise of imihigo*; and McConnell, *Institution [Un]Building*.
89. The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission's own report states that the commission has been 'pivotal in the process of unity and reconciliation policy implementation, social trust and social cohesion towards the main goal achievement of building a united country' (NURC *National Unity and Reconciliation Commission*).
90. The Government of Rwanda's guiding policy is the 2007 National Policy of Unity and Reconciliation.
91. National Itorero, *Commission Strategic Plan (2013–2017) Final Report*; Musoni, *How Decentralization Policy is Promoting Reconciliation*; Nikuze, "The Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda"; Purdeková, *Rwanda's Ingando Camps*; and Purdeková, *Rwanda's Ingando Camps*.
92. Musoni, *How Decentralization Policy is Promoting Reconciliation*.
93. Niringiye and Ayebale, "Impact Evaluation of the Ubudehe Programme in Rwanda; and, Musoni, *How Decentralization Policy is Promoting Reconciliation*.
94. Kim et al., "Cattle Manure Management in Rwanda."
95. Prior to 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the proportions of the three Rwandan ethnic groups, Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were estimated at around 85, 14 and 1% respectively (see United Nations *Rwanda*) and these will have been significantly affected by the genocide, given that it is estimated that the genocide killed over half and possibly up to 70% of Tutsi in Rwanda (see MINALOC. *The Counting of the Genocide Victims*). In recent official census statistics however, ethnicity is not captured (<http://microdata.statistics.gov.rw/index.php/catalog/65>).
96. 'Participants indicated that ethnic stereotypes are commonly expressed in everyday life, either openly or more secretly in the company of the individual's family or relations from the same 'ethnic' background. Workshop participants pointed out that ethnicity shaped mind sets are still a challenge to the process of reconciliation. In its telling, Rwanda's history is often distorted by different and diverging interests, yet trauma caused by such historical distortion is seen as a hindrance to reconciliation. Participants also spoke of the denial among many Rwandans of the facts of the genocide.' (Uwimbabazi, Hajayandi, and de Dieu Basabos. *Forums for Reconciliation in Rwanda*. 4).
97. Buckley-Zistel, "Remembering to Forget."
98. Williamson, "Genocide, Masculinity and Posttraumatic Growth in Rwanda."
99. Scher, *The Promise of imihigo*; and McConnell, *Institution [Un]Building*; Gaynor, "Beneath the Veneer"; and Gaynor, *Decentralisation, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Rwanda*.
100. Purdeková, *Rwanda's Ingando Camps*; and Purdeková, *Making Ubumwe*.
101. Ingelaere, "What's on a Peasant's Mind?"
102. This is seen in the lack of opposition in the recent presidential elections, August 2017, where Kagame is won 98.8% of the vote.
103. For example, property tax was recently devolved to local councils, but had to be recentralised to the Rwanda Revenue Authority when it became clear there was a lack capacity to manage property tax administration (MINALOC interview).
104. Michael Lipsky (*Patterns of Democracy*) has called this street-level bureaucracy.

105. The 1998 judgement by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda against the former mayor of Taba, Jean-Paul Akayesu, became the first to hold that rape constituted an act of genocide and a war crime as it was committed with the intent to destroy the Tutsi ethnic group (Samuel, *Plight and Fate of Women*).
106. Mcloughlin, "When Does Service Delivery?"
107. For an interesting example of how peace objectives and development objective are balanced see Bush, *The Limits and Scope*.
108. This is not the case in all multi-ethnic post-conflict countries. For example in Kosovo alongside the national Association of Municipalities of Kosova (AMK) there is also the Community of Serb majority Municipalities in Kosovo (ZSO). Such institutional separation contributes to policy fragmentation and weakens the voice of local government (Gjurgjeala and Malazogu, *Local Government and Administration in Kosovo*).
109. This can be seen in the UK Government's recent agreement with the DUP and the condition that the power-sharing assembly is reformed. Concerns over managing the Ireland – Northern Ireland border following the UK's exit of the EU and what this means for the Good Friday agreement are both significant risks to peace.
110. Gaynor, *Decentralisation, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Rwanda*.
111. Shah, *The Paradox of 'Hidden Democracy' in Rwanda*.
112. Ibid, 125.
113. Gaynor, "Beneath the Veneer."
114. Faguet et al., "Decentralizing for a Deeper, More Supple Democracy"

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