



Rwandan Genocide and Mass Communication: The Spiral of Silence and the Role of Group Polarisation in Pre-genocidal Ethnic Relations and Its Implications

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Abstract. Ethnic relations have always been a topic of concern for all countries, and how to do a good job of developing ethnic synergies is crucial for countries with multiple ethnic groups. Rwanda, a country with Hutus as the majority ethnic group and Tutsis and Twa as minorities, was shocked by the 1994 genocide of Hutus and Tutsis by the Hutu radicals under the involvement of the mass communication, the polarisation of groups and the breakdown of ethnic relations. Through the analysis of historical archives, this paper aims to trace the history of Hutu Tutsi ethnic relations in Rwanda, explore the evolution of ethnic relations before the genocide, and analyse the role of the mass communication in this process, to explore how the ‘spiral of silence’ and the phenomenon of group polarisation led to the genocide in Rwanda. Ultimately, the paper concludes that because of long-standing social norms of inter-ethnic discrimination and oppression, complemented by a strongly hate-oriented mass media, the Hutu and Tutsi communities were irreversibly polarised by the ‘spiral of silence’ phenomenon, which led to the Rwandan genocide.

Keywords: Rwanda genocide · ethnic relations · mass communication · the spiral of silence · group polarization

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Ethnicity has been on the agenda of researchers since World War I. It has been one of the characteristics on which most of the world’s modern states have been founded, and an understanding of ethnic relations depends on an understanding of their national identity and sense of community. Identity was first put on the human research agenda by the psychologist Erik Erikson in 1968, who noted that identity derives from a continuum of self-perception and is influenced by cultural and social factors [1]. Benedict Anderson points out that identity cognition is imagined in his book *Imagined Communities*, and

that even in the smallest communities, where the members do not know each other well or have even met or heard of them, the imagery of interconnectedness in the community exists in the minds of each member [2]. As to how such imagined communities are formed, scholars argue that culturally organised group behaviour is a good way to shape the cohesion and identity of a community [3].

As for how to spread and consolidate community, scholars believe that the media and communication plays an important role in it, as it can influence people's perceptions of community through the dissemination of information [4]. In the 1920s, the term mass communication took root in the context of the legalisation of radio broadcasting under the American model for widespread use, blending market-driven commercial ownership with the need to serve the public interest [5]. The broader concept of mass communication emerged earlier in history and can be defined as the process by which a person, group of people or organisation creates a message and disseminates it to a large, anonymous, heterogeneous audience through some medium [6]. At the same time, mass communication with identity propaganda can be used to create divisions and gaps within and between communities, thereby marginalising and alienating communities that do not conform to the dominant national political ideology. The government's preferential orientation towards group perceptions is often accompanied by discriminatory political and economic policies that affect the way different groups perceive inter-group relations, creating a 'spiral of silence' that tends to polarise groups, worsen inter-group relations, and lead to discontent and conflict.

1.2 Research Purpose

Based on this, this paper wishes to select the construction of ethnic relations in the period before the Rwandan genocide as a case study. The Rwandan genocide, as a typical extreme ethnic conflict, took place between 7 April and 15 July 1994. During these 100 days, heavily armed majority Hutu soldiers attacked the minority Tutsi, Twa, and some moderate Hutus, killing nearly 500,000–800,000 people and leaving 4 million homeless, 2 million of whom fled to nearby countries. Regarding the causes of the genocide, scholars generally believe that the ethnic identity registration system enacted by Belgium during its colonisation of Rwanda and the myth of the 'mite' were the root causes of the breakdown of ethnic relations [7]. And many scholars and studies have been conducted on the role of the mass communication in the genocide [8–10]. However, due to the limitations of mass communication as a modern technological term, fewer studies take into account the Rwandan colonial period, or even earlier, when connecting about ethnocide and communication technologies. The discussion of mass communication in this paper is based on possible communication technologies in Rwanda, including government policies, newspapers, magazines, radio, etc. By examining the evolution of ethnic relations before the genocide and the intervention of mass communication, this paper hopes to analyse how ethnic relations had already evolved before its intervention. At the same time, it is hoped that by positioning the role of communication technologies through the 'spiral of silence' and the phenomenon of group polarisation, it will be possible to discuss the current approaches that can be taken in response to ethnic issues.

1.3 Literature Review

The 'spiral of silence' was first introduced by Elizabeth Noel Newman at a psychology conference in Tokyo in 1972 and spread worldwide after being published in 1974 in the *Journal of Communication* as 'The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Popular Opinion'. The theory was refined in 1980 in the book *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion--Our Social Skin* as a theory of communication, politics and psychology, the main idea being that once people perceive their views to exist as a minority view in the public, there is a tendency for them to refrain from speaking out due to internal pressures. The main idea is that people tend to refrain from expressing their views if they perceive their views to be a minority view in the public, and conversely, they tend to express their views actively. In stressful situations, people tend to agree with the majority view, and in the long run, the minority voice becomes weaker, and the majority voice becomes louder, creating a spiral of silence [11].

Specifically, this theory emphasises the assessing the climate, which is the general preference orientation of the surrounding environment on the topic under discussion; the fear of isolation, which is the fear of being isolated because one's speech is inconsistent with the preferred orientation, and the quasi-statistical sense, which is the ability of people to judge the opinion climate around them [12]. On this basis, scholars have also identified five premises for the development of the 'spiral of silence' phenomenon: (1) individuals feel isolated when they are isolated from society; (2) individuals often fear isolation; (3) fear of isolation leads people to constantly think about socially acceptable views; (4) whether people will express their views publicly depends on the outcome of their thinking; and (5) people's fear of being isolated depends on the outcome of their thinking. (4) whether people will express their views publicly depends on the outcome of their thinking; and (5) these four elements work in tandem to create and reinforce public perceptions [13].

The 'spiral of silence' can lead to a superficial convergence of views within the community and can subconsciously influence those who have not yet formed their views to become the majority. As a form of community, relations between people are also influenced by mass communication. The 'spiral of silence' can therefore influence the orientation of inter-ethnic relations, which are influenced by the dominant viewpoint, leading to spontaneous conformity of attitudes towards the other to the majority and the desire to maintain one's place in the community, thus leading to changes in inter-ethnic relations.

Group Polarization, a phenomenon first discovered by Stoner, an MIT student, observed what he called a 'Risky Shift'. The concept of risky shift suggests that the decisions of a group are on average riskier than the decisions of the individual members before the group discussion [14]. Subsequently, the term group polarization was introduced into communication by Cass Sunstein and is defined as 'the initial bias of group members, which, after deliberation, continues to move in the direction of bias and eventually leads to extreme views' [15]. Such group polarisation can lead to a gradual convergence of views and a lack of challenge from opposing voices, leading to an 'echo chamber effect', where some group members lose their individuality and become subservient to maintain a common group view. In addition, in such an atmosphere, the

polarisation of the group can lead to pressure on neutrals to agree with the group and to choose extreme attitudes.

In terms of supporting the logic behind the occurrence of group polarisation, there are currently two explanatory pathways that have been developed in academia. Firstly, Social Comparison Theory, which argues that because individuals desire group approval, they constantly observe the behaviour and views of others, leading to similar, but slightly more extreme, views. The second is the Persuasive Argumentation Theory, which argues that individuals' value choices and judgments about the information and communication generated in group discussions and decisions may ultimately lead to or retain a relatively radicalized viewpoint [16]. Ethnic relations, on the other hand, because of their strong communal character, are prone to groupthink and the tendency of individuals to want to be attached to the group. As a result of this, group polarisation can occur and intensify in certain situations among people. As group polarisation intensifies, the barriers of opinion between groups become deeper and more difficult to remove, leading to antagonism and fragmentation between different groups, and ultimately to the 'tyranny of the majority over the minority', making it difficult to implement public decisions effectively and threatening social stability [17].

Based on a discussion of the literature, it can be seen that the hypothesis behind the creation and development of the 'spiral of silence' phenomenon is similar to the explanatory pathway of group polarisation, which emphasises the desire of individuals to maintain their position in the group or to be recognised, and the fear of losing their place in the group due to the isolation of their different views, which leads to the reflection and estimation of group opinion and allows the majority opinion to develop and become more extreme. Regarding the causal relationship between the 'spiral of silence' and group polarization, this paper argues that the 'spiral of silence' phenomenon leads to the occurrence of group polarization due to the dominant position of the viewpoint, while the phenomenon of group polarization leads to the intensification of the 'spiral of silence' phenomenon by echo chamber effect, creating a cycle of interaction and consolidation between the phenomena. By introducing these two theories to the discussion of Hutu Tutsi ethnic relations, this paper hopes to provide a preliminary descriptive analysis of the impact of mass communications on inter-ethnic group relations.

2 Case Study

This paper argues that the process of change in ethnic relations in Rwanda before the genocide should be divided into the following stages: the pre-colonial period (15th century - late 19th century), the colonial period (late 19th century - 1962), and the period from independence to the Genocide (1962–1994). The classification of the phases is based on its different stages in history. Rwanda was in a loose clan phase until the 15th century, when a great clan regime was gradually able to unify a relatively large number of clans. The second stage, Rwanda was not formally colonised until 1884, until the end of the Second World War, that Rwanda was formally colonised by Germany and Belgium. The last stage, with the wave of national liberation after WWII, Rwanda also managed to become independent in 1962 and underwent 30 years of rule before the Rwandan genocide broke out in 1994. The division between the three phases is a clear reflection

of the evolution of ethnic relations in Rwanda under the different regimes, while the constant involvement of the mass media led to the genocide. The paper hopes that a separate analysis of the three phases will provide a reasonable descriptive explanation of the evolution of historical paths.

2.1 Pre-colonial Period (15th Century - Late 19th Century)

The period was generally characterised by class disparities between peoples, but the absence of mass communication, the absence of an opposing view of peoples, and the fluidity of national identities that masked the unequal nature of ethnic relations, with the 'spiral of silence' and group polarisation not yet in place or a preparatory stage. In the pre-colonial period, the first forms of social organisation in Rwanda were clans (*Ubwoko*), which were not restricted to family genealogies or geographical distinctions, but included, for the most part, the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. From the 15th century onwards, the clans evolved into kingdoms, with the Nyiginya clan, a Tutsi clan, ruling from the mid-18th century onwards, reaching the peak of its mastery of Rwanda in the 19th century under King Kigeri Rwabugiri IV (1860–1895) [18].

Under their rule, two of the more prominent feudalist patronage systems existed in the Rwandan region. The first is known as *Ubuhake*, a system of patronage formed by the transformation of the earlier *Umuheto* patronage system, highlighted by the right to use cattle. The Tutsis contracted with the Hutus to become Hutu patrons, and as patrons, the Hutus were granted the use of cattle and the right to graze on Tutsis' land, as well as the right to the proceeds of milk and the right to the descendants of the herd [19]. In practice, the shift from *Umuheto* to *Ubuhake* resulted in a weakening of reciprocity and an increase in inequality in the relationship, as in *Umuheto* the Tutsi were required to provide regular protection for the Hutu, which disappeared in *Ubuhake*. In addition, the *Umuheto* asylum relationship involves the asylum recipient's family giving a cow to its asylum provider regularly, whereas the opposite is the case in *Ubuhake*: the asylum provider cedes the use of a cow to the asylum recipient. This means that *Umuheto*'s asylum relationship is limited to families who own cattle, as they can only give a cow to the asylum provider regularly if they have one, whereas *Ubuhake*'s asylum relationship is more likely to involve families who do not have cattle. In turn, based on this, the *Ubuhake* system exposes asylees to different forms of exploitation, including the possibility of confiscating any asylee's cattle at the will of the asylum provider [20]. Changes like the asylum relationship, in turn, were closely influenced by changes like land tenure, particularly the move from hereditary control of the land to kingly control of land (a process known as *Ubukonde*), where the king allocated land as pasture to his closest subjects through administrative appointments, resulting in the loss of land to a wide range of cultivators.

And it was the loss of land rights for the mass of cultivators that led to the creation of a second system of patronage, *Ubureetwa*, which had essentially no element of reciprocity. This system of patronage was created by the mountain chiefs who imposed their land on the Hutus by taking it by right of occupation. The *Ubureetwa* required Hutus to perform manual labour for the local mountain chiefs in return for the Hutus 'occupying' the land of the Tutsi chiefs. The manual work was usually of the most menial nature, including collecting and drying firewood for the chief's family, keeping night watch, carrying

water, and ploughing the chief's fields. The Rwandan king, Kigeli IV, further divided the social and class divide between Hutus and Tutsis by imposing *corvée* on the Hutus [21].

However, even in the pre-colonial period when the Tutsi imposed *corvée* on the Hutus, inter-ethnic identity changes were possible. The wealthy Hutus, through their primitive accumulation of capital (mainly through the accumulation of cattle), could achieve the social process of *Kwihutura* (i.e., abandonment of Hutu-ness) and thus politically acquire Tutsi identity by raising their social class [22]. Similarly, if Tutsis become increasingly impoverished to the extent that their social status is forced downwards, they are forced to become Hutus, and this social process is known as *Gucupira* [23]. This 'aristocratic' social process of Hutu to Tutsi conversion prevented the creation of a distinct class of Hutu chiefs that could have been a privileged intermediary between the aristocracy and the population at large.

In terms of performance, this mechanism of ethnic identity transformation leaves open the possibility of ethnic reconciliation, whereby the Hutu can work their way into the Tutsi, but in reality, it deepens the class dimension of relations between the two peoples. The Hutu-Tutsi ethnic question was marked by the gradual difficulty of reconciling classes, and ethnic relations were marked by great class differences, resulting in a very unequal relationship between the two peoples. At the meantime, the technology of communication was still in a relatively poor state. Europe had not yet formally colonised the continent, the fruits of the first industrial revolution had not yet spread to the continent, the primitive kingdom of Rwanda, which lacked modern means of transport, could hardly be said to have been involved in communication technology, and the 'spiral of silence' and the phenomenon of group polarisation were far from having taken place. But one of the necessary conditions for these two phenomena, namely a community in the context of unified communication, has gradually been established. However, in the absence of formal mechanisms, the division into nationalities or groups is still unclear, so this article considers the pre-colonial period in Rwanda to be a preparatory stage for the 'spiral of silence' and the polarisation of groups.

2.2 Colonial Period (Late 19th Century - 1962)

The period was generally characterised by the creation of a formal system of ethnic distinctions by the official authorities, the creation and proliferation of labels based on ethnic differences, the involvement of mass communication, the gradual development of an opposing view of ethnicity, the 'spiral of silence' and the gradual polarisation of groups. With the end of the Congress of Berlin in 1884, Rwanda and Burundi were divided into German spheres of influence by the General Protocol of the Congress of Berlin on Africa, and in 1890 Rwanda was officially colonised by Germany as one of the German colonies of 'German East Africa'. In the First World War, Belgium attacked and occupied Rwanda in 1916 and, under the Versailles Peace Treaty, was entrusted with the League of Nations in 1922, effectively making Rwanda a Belgian colony.

The German and Belgian colonisation of Rwanda was based on the 'Hamitic hypothesis,' which claimed that there was no history or civilisation on the African continent, that Africans did not have the intelligence necessary to build any civilised society, and that any civilisation in Africa was therefore of Asian Hamitic origin. The political and

historical significance of this hypothesis is not only that it denies the history of Africa, but more importantly that it establishes a hierarchical pyramid of races, with European colonists at the top of the pyramid, the Humites in the middle, and the true Africans at the bottom. The existence of this hypothesis led the European colonisers to believe that they were morally and legally obliged to enlighten the backward 'savages' and that the Tutsis, who dominated Rwanda, were the Hutus and the Hutus were the backward races [24].

As always, the European colonisers used indirect colonisation to colonise Rwanda, supporting the Tutsi as their agents in the colony to administer the Hutus. And in the absence of criteria for the official distinction between Tutsis and Hutus, Belgium conducted a census in 1933 and decided to introduce a system of identity cards to establish the ethnic identity of Rwandans in an official system. The material used to determine the ethnic identity of the Rwandan people came from three main sources: one was the information provided by the Christian churches on the ethnicity of individuals. As most Rwandans were Christian by religion, the churches and clergy were familiar with the composition of the people in the communities under their jurisdiction and therefore became an important reference for the colonial authorities in identifying ethnic identity. The second was the measurement of the physical characteristics of the Rwandan population, which was carried out by the Belgians based on European 'scientific' ethnographic theories such as 'radiography'. The Rwandan population was distinguished by the measurement of height, weight, the width of the nose and length of the neck, for example. Finally, there is the wealth criterion, which is known as the '10-cow criterion' - those who own 10 cows, or more are classified as Tutsis, while those who own 10 cows or more are classified as Hutus [25]. This mechanism of ethnic differentiation, which was essentially based on wealth, also formally ended the possibility of inter-ethnic mobility, and with the solidification of ethnic identity, the creation and proliferation of ethnic labelling led to the formal division of the two ethnic groups.

Relations between the two peoples gradually deteriorated as the Belgian colonists, wishing to stabilise the colony, continued to stir up trouble among the Tutsi and Hutu, trying to keep the conflict between the peoples. After the end of World War II, Belgium continued to rule Rwanda as a UN Trust Territory, entrusted with overseeing its eventual independence. However, relations between Hutu and Tutsi deteriorated rapidly from 1956 onwards, when in July the Congolese newspaper *La Presse Africaine* published an article written by an anonymous Rwandan priest detailing centuries of abuse against the Hutu by the Tutsi elite. This article was followed by a series of other articles in *La Presse Africaine* and other Congolese and Burundian newspapers detailing the history of relations between these groups and the status of the king, promoting the Hutu's position of oppression by the Tutsi. King Mutara III Rudahigwa and the Tutsi elite refuted these claims, arguing that there was no ethnic barrier to social mobility and that Hutus and Tutsis were indistinguishable.

Rwanda's first democratic elections in September 1956, on the other hand, are another catalyst for the breakdown of relations. The population was allowed to vote for sub-prefects (junior officials at the local level) in this election, of which 66% of those elected were Hutus, yet senior government positions remained appointed, and most of these positions remained Tutsi [26]. The Hutus were disillusioned with the government's

democratic elections, believing that the root cause was instead the unfairness of the system for Hutus. In less than a month, nine Hutu intellectuals responded with the publication of the Hutu Manifesto: An Analysis of Social Factors in Rwanda's Indigenous Ethnicity. The Manifesto addressed the exploitation of Hutus under Tutsi control and, for the first time, formally placed the issue of relations between the two communities in the context of society [27].

In 1958, the Hutu elite, Gitera, visited the king at his palace in Nyanza. Although Gitera was respectful of the past, Murtala III treated him with contempt. During one of his visits, he grabbed Gitera by the throat and called him and his followers the haters of Rwanda (*Yangarwanda*). This humiliation prompted pro-Hutu Catholic publications to take a firmer stand against the Tutsi monarchy. The Hutu magazine *Kinyamateka* published a detailed report on Murtala III's treatment of Gitera, accusing him of supporting Tutsi racism. The magazine also published numerous articles accusing the Tutsi government of oppressing the Hutu people, and these exposures led to a permanent split between the Hutus and the Tutsi monarchists represented by Murtala III [28]. The Hutu Manifesto, which became a major topic of discussion in the Hutu press, spread rapidly, creating a dominant view among the Hutus, and creating a confrontational atmosphere that would lead to the Hutu Revolution.

The Hutu revolution can be roughly divided into several stages. In the first phase, on 1 November 1959, Dominique Mbonyumutwa, one of the few Hutu deputy chiefs and a Parmehutu activist, was attacked after attending mass with his wife in a church near their home. Mbonyumutwa fought off the attackers, but rumours began to spread that he had been killed. Following the tensions of the previous months, the attack on Mbonyumutwa proved to be the catalyst for violent clashes between Hutus and Tutsis. Protests against the Tutsis soon turned into riots that spread throughout much of Rwanda, and it was not until December that the riots were considered to have subsided [29].

The second stage was the nationwide municipal elections held in Rwanda in June 1960, organised by the Belgians. Faced with the demographic advantage of the Hutus, the democratic vote resulted, unsurprisingly, in a landslide victory for the Hutu candidates. Of the 229 newly elected mayors (Burgomasters), all but 16 are Hutus. The Hutu party also dominated the municipal council, winning 2,623 of the 3,125 seats (83.94%). The Tutsis instantly lost control of the grassroots in this democratic election [30]. The third stage was the Gitarama coup, when on 28 January 1961, Hutu leaders such as Logiest and Kayibanda took it upon themselves to gather more than 2,800 municipal councillors and hold a national assembly. The assembly decided to abolish the monarchy and unilaterally declared the establishment of a democratic republic of Rwanda. On 1 July 1962, Rwanda officially declared an independent republic, separate from Belgium.

In the early years of Rwanda's colonisation, the colonisers played an important role in the creation of groups through the formal division of ethnic groups, while in the later years, with the intervention of communication technologies, oriented messages gradually began to emerge. This information was disseminated among the Hutu people through newspapers, magazines, and other communication technologies. News about ethnic relations was widely disseminated, even if it was a rumour. One of the catalysts for the gradual breakdown of relations with the Tutsi was the involvement of the press, which began to polarise the Hutu as a group, and at a time when the mainstream media

was promoting Tutsi oppression of the Hutu, even attempts by pro-Hutu Tutsi to salvage ethnic relations were buried due to the 'spiral of silence' effect. The independence of the Rwandan Republic, with the Hutus as the ruling class, was the result of a Hutu revolution caused by the polarisation of the group through mass communication, a period when ethnic relations had already begun to fall into the 'spiral of silence' and the phenomenon of group polarisation.

2.3 The Period from Independence to the Genocide (1962–1994)

After the independence of Rwanda in 1962, with the Hutu as the ruling class, two regimes were established. The first was the regime of Grégoire Kayibanda, which lasted from 1962 to 1973. Under this regime, the former ruling Tutsi people were subjected to a policy of repression and exclusion by the government. Ethnic fights between Hutus and Tutsis were common and many Tutsis fled to neighbouring countries to survive [31]. The Kayibanda regime publicly referred to exiled Tutsis as 'cockroaches' (*Inyenzi*) and claimed that violence from exiled Tutsis in the country was the cause of violence against Tutsis in Rwanda [32]. Subsequently, the Kayibanda regime, while removing Tutsis from public office, also restricted access to public schooling, making Tutsis de facto second-class citizens. In addition, the government emphasised through official documents and the education system that the distinction between Hutu and Tutsi came from being ethnic rather than national, stating that the Tutsi were not purely Rwandan citizens but were an alien race [33].

The second regime was that of Juvénal Habyarimana, which lasted from 1973 to 1994. After the coup against the Kayibanda regime, the Habyarimana government realised that the problems of the previous regime were discrimination and inequality against the Tutsi, so the Habyarimana regime was more moderate in its approach to Hutu Tutsi ethnic relations than the Kayibanda regime. From 1973 to 1994, Rwanda had only one Tutsi governor, one Tutsi officer in the Rwandan armed forces, two Tutsi members of parliament and only one Tutsi minister in the government cabinet. The proportion of Tutsi students in primary and secondary schools and universities was limited to 9% [34]. In 1990, the Rwandan Civil War was sparked by the invasion of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a rebel group whose members were mostly Tutsi refugees, from the north of the country. The civil war ended in 1993 with the signing of the Arusha Accords as a sign of peace, but on 6 April 1994, the Rwandan genocide took advantage of a window of power to erupt in a shocking tragedy when the special plane in which Juvénal Habyarimana and Burundian President Ciprian Ntariamira were travelling was shot down by a missile near Kigali airport, killing both men instantly.

Media technology played an important role in propagating discriminatory policies and ideas in the thirty years between Rwanda's independence and the genocide. Although only 66% of Rwanda's urban population was literate, 29% of them had radios, and this undoubtedly made the mass media very successful as a mobilisation and propaganda tool [35]. In addition to the usual news, radio broadcasts notifications of appointments and dismissals from government posts, announcements of government meetings and lists of candidates accepted into secondary schools. It also broadcast daily reminders from the President urging Rwandans to work hard and live clean, ethical lives. Not only is the national radio station the official voice of the country and a propaganda channel for a

single political party, but it also helps to connect families with estranged relatives by broadcasting news of deaths so that relatives can return home for funerals, thus giving the national radio and television station an important place in the hearts of the people.

On 3 March 1992, the radio station repeatedly broadcast a communiqué, purportedly from a Nairobi-based human rights organisation, warning that Hutus in a southern province of Rwanda would be attacked by Tutsis. Local officials on the radio bulletin convinced the Hutus that they needed to attack first to protect themselves. Led by soldiers from a nearby military base, the Hutus attacked and killed hundreds of Tutsis. At the end of October 1993, the radio repeatedly and forcefully emphasised many extreme statements and ideas, including the inherent differences between Hutus and Tutsis, and the foreign origins of the Tutsis. It constantly stressed the need for the Hutus to remain vigilant against Tutsi plots and possible attacks and asked the Hutus to prepare to 'protect' themselves against the Tutsi threat. After the shooting down of the presidential plane, the radio reported the assassination of the Burundian president in a highly sensationalist manner, and highlighted alleged Tutsi atrocities, fuelling Hutu fears of the Tutsi [36]. With such repeated broadcasts highlighting the dangers and horrors of the Tutsi, a greater resentment and fear of the Tutsi had already developed in the minds of the Hutus. In addition to this, the Hutu print media also played an important role in the formation of group polarization. The Hutu newspaper *Kangura*, published as early as No. 6 in 1990, called for the Hutus not to pity the Tutsis and to draw a line under them; any Hutu who disagreed with the Ten Commandments would be treated as an insider [37].

The role of the media in ethnic relations in the thirty years following independence shows that ethnic relations deteriorated considerably under the Kayibanda regime and that the subsequent Habyarimana regime did not do much to reverse the trend of ethnic breakdown, but rather ignited the genocide with his assassination. In addition, the mass media played its most important role at this time, thanks to the spread of media technology, with radio stations broadcasting violent and extremist messages against the Tutsi in the years before the genocide. The newspapers also promoted the majority viewpoint and regarded the minority, those who held anti-Tutsi views, as traitors, and the 'spiral of silence' grew, with Hutus unwilling and unable to speak out against it. As a result, group polarisation grew and reached its peak, and Hutu violence against Tutsis was seen as a normal act of defence, culminating in the power vacuum following the assassination of the President, which led to the horrific Rwandan genocides.

3 Discussion

The spread of media technology and mass communication also continued to play an important role in the Rwandan genocide, with radio stations continuing to encourage Hutus to take up arms and carry out brutal killings of their innocent Tutsi neighbours or moderate Hutus. As a result of the methodical seizure of Rwanda by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), centred on the current President Kagame, Rwanda finally began the millennium with a long-awaited peace and development. It is worth noting that Paul Kagame, who was a Tutsi, did not act out of hatred against the other ethnic groups, as the Kayibanda regime had done, but actively pursued a policy of national reconciliation,

one of the most far-reaching of which was the complete abolition of the ethnic identity system. Since then, there has been no distinction between nationalities in Rwanda, and Hutus, Tutsis and Twa have been able to live together as a new community of Rwandan nationals [38].

An analysis of the different three different historical periods shows that inequality in ethnic relations began during the early Kingdom of Rwanda without the intervention of mass communication technologies. The history of mass communication intervention in Rwanda pales in comparison to the history of ethnic inequality, but in just a few decades, it pushed the conflict in ethnic relations to an irreversible position, which eventually led to tragic events. Mass communication, as a technology or tool of ideological communication, has played a significant role in the formation and construction of the modern state, but it is the ideological construction of the tool used that deserves more attention. The definition of ideology has been discussed by many thinkers, with Marx arguing that ideology is a system of lies deliberately propagated by the ruling class for its own self-perpetuation [39]. Louis Althusser defines ideology as 'the imagined existence (or idea) of things as it relates to the real conditions of existence' [40]. Antonio Gramsci, on the other hand, sees ideology as an integrated social worldview that exerts an intellectual 'hegemony' over the minds of even subaltern classes, to the extent that challenging class domination seems conceptually impossible [41]. This paper does not wish to innovate in the definition and expression of ideology, but rather to discuss the role and implication of ideology.

In Rwandan ethnic relations, the ideology of hatred of another ethnic group has been present throughout the genocide and its preceding history. When Kagame came to power, he adopted an ideology of national amnesia [42] that truly liberated Rwanda from centuries of ethnic antagonism and led to national harmony and co-development. As a result of path dependency, leaders often tend not to change previously existing ideologies or development paths [43]. In the pre-colonial era, Rwanda under King Mwami Rwabugiri became an expansionist state that considered the ethnic identity of the conquered peoples as simply Hutu, so that ethnic relations gradually became associated with conquest under early Rwandan history, depriving Hutus of power socially and politically and economically. Although ethnic relations had become unequal, this inequality tended to be more class-based, and class mobility was present due to the existence of ethnic conversion mechanisms that shaped social norms in early Rwandan society. This ideology of class division was apparently well inherited by the European colonisers, based on which they extended class differences to ethnic differences, thus forming the beginning of the deterioration of ethnic relations. After gaining power, Kayibanda, influenced by the Hutu declaration and the ideology of the long-standing breakdown of relations with the Tutsi, implemented oppressive policies against the Tutsi under path dependency, which led to a further deterioration of relations between the two communities.

It is now clear how ethnic relations as an ideology have flowed and remained consistent throughout Rwanda's history, and how it has been difficult to 'reasonably' choose the path of development under the invisible pressure of path dependency. Apart from undergoing huge social changes to completely break path dependency, similar to the Rwandan genocide, the other widely accepted way to break path dependency is to adopt successful incremental phases with junctures to achieve institutional change [44] as more

and more modern countries cannot and will not undergo such huge social changes. However, this only explains how to act beyond path dependency' limits under the influence of it, but it does not explain how a decision maker can make rational decisions in its development that are best suited to its long-term goal.

The literature on rational choice has been studied in the sociology for several decades. American sociology usually credits George C. Homans with first introducing the study of rational choice into sociology, and Ruth A. Wallace and Alisan Wolf, in their book *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, discussing rational choice theory, 'In modern sociology, the rational choice approach to research first came to light through social exchange theory' [45]. In his study of exchange behaviour in small groups, Homans argues that people all choose to maximise their benefits in their interaction behaviour, and that the process of people's interaction is essentially a process of exchange of benefits [46]. Blau, on the other hand, studies the problem of social exchange not simply by stopping at exchange acts between individuals, but by revealing macro social structures such as social power, social institutions, and social impregnation through the analysis of exchange acts at the social level [47]. At the same time, Coleman also proposed his theory of action at the individual level, or theory of the internal analysis of systems, which aims to study the systemic movement of society through the purposive action of individuals, and he defined individual action has three basic meanings; purposefulness, rationality and the pursuit of maximum benefit [48].

However, there is no widely tested rational choice framework, and it is difficult for countries to test the rationality of their policies before they are implemented in the development and construction process, which can be influenced by emotional behaviour leading to irrational policy makers [49]. Nevertheless, efforts to make sound choices based on the effects of path dependence should remain one of the most important concerns for national policy makers. Forming the right ideology to guide national development through rational decision-making is the conclusion and recommendation from the evolution of ethnic relations in Rwanda.

4 Conclusion

This paper analyses the history of Rwanda since the beginning of the unified kingdom before the genocide, using the perspective of the mass communication to analyse step by step how the Hutus and Tutsis developed into a genocidal situation. The evolution of ethnic relations in Rwanda before the genocide can be traced back to the 19th century when the Rwandan kingdom was founded by the Tutsi ruling class, and the feudal monarchy was accompanied by discrimination and exploitation of foreigners, as is evident in the feudal history of most countries in the world. The colonial period of non-direct rule was also a common tactic used by European colonialists in Africa, deliberately stirring up ethnic strife and destroying relations between peoples, which led to many African countries facing challenges to their ethnic relations after independence. What led to the Rwandan genocide was the tilting of ethnic policies, the involvement of the media and the polarisation of groups in the thirty years since independence.

Through a discussion of path dependency, ideological evolution and rational choice, the analysis of the Rwandan case suggests that the ideology that emerges from a rational

choice of development path will have an irreversible impact on the country's long-term development. In future work, attention should be given to the study of rational choices in nation-building and development. Although there are no uniform answers in the social sciences, especially in nation-building, it is hoped that a general rational framework can be derived, thus providing an additional lens through which to analyse the reasons for the success or failure of development in other countries around the world.

As an analysis of ethnic relations and mass communication interventions in the run-up to the Rwandan genocide, this article adds to the literature examining the genocide by repeating the orienting role of mass communication in national ideology and highlighting the need to focus on the ideological makeup behind it. At the same time, the paper has shortcomings, one of which is the discussion of the generalisation of the paper's results. The analysis of ethnic relations in Rwanda is based on the idea that it is the expansion of class differences into ethnic identities, but in reality, ethnic relations in many countries or regions do not start out as class-based socio-economic differences, but may be geopolitical [50], or local separatist factors [51], etc. Therefore, for future work attention should also be paid to analysing the causes of ethnic relations through different historical paths, looking for the most important historical points to go to, and thus trying to find ways of breaking path dependency.

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