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Special Issue on

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Editorial

WITH THE PASSING OF Pope Francis, the world has lost a spiritual leader who did not mince words in condemning the ills of our contemporary existence. No religious, political, social, or cultural figure of our time, whether Christian or not, spoke out against poverty, violence, human humiliation, and ecological issues with the same ferocity, authenticity, courage, and unwavering regularity as Pope Francis did. Pope Francis aimed to soften the Catholic Church's image, reduce the Vatican's power, and address social issues. Despite criticism from traditionalists, he was a vocal pacifist and critic of harmful actions by major nations. He believed the Church should reach people daily, regardless of location.

Pope Francis initially believed his papacy would be brief, but in his autobiography *Hope*, he revealed that he gave up his papal apartment on the third floor of the Apostolic Palace to live in the same guesthouse he had stayed in as a cardinal. This decision was seen as a sign of humility and a departure from the ostentatious trappings of the papacy. However, Pope Francis later explained that he loved being around people, and the apartment felt detached, making it difficult to welcome guests.

Pope Francis embraced a radical change in Catholicism, welcoming everyone, including divorced, homosexual, and transgender individuals. This departure from traditionalist views did not recognize divorce in canon law. Pope Francis' compassion for "imperfect Catholics" has been welcomed by progressives, but it also acknowledges that his words can impact those outside the Church. He praised transgender people as daughters of God and condemned countries that consider homosexuality a crime. Despite his belief that women should not be priests, Pope Francis encouraged parishes to find more leadership roles for women in line with Catholic teachings. Under Pope Francis, the Vatican explores the possibility of women taking on deacon roles.

Throughout his papacy, he focused on reaching out to those on

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the economic and political margins, promoting dignity for migrants, and building bridges with other Christian denominations, religions, and those of no faith. However, some Catholic traditionalists found his outreach inappropriate, such as his visit to an asylum seeker center in Rome, where he washed and kissed the feet of refugees who included Muslims, Hindus, and Coptic Christians.

Pope Francis has made a strong case for migrants and addressing climate change, emphasising how wealthy nations harm the poor ones. His opposition to war and conflict in general has been strong; he has referred to the war in Gaza as “terrorism.” Despite his efforts to address the plight of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, including children, some observers argue that he has not taken a firm stance against wrongdoing. He has also faced challenges in the Catholic Church, including corruption and child sexual abuse. Pope Francis has closed thousands of unauthorised Vatican bank accounts and introduced new rules on financial transparency. He has also addressed the issue of child sexual abuse by Catholic Church priests, stating that he feels called to take responsibility for the evil committed by certain priests. In 2020, the Catholic Church released lists of living members of clergy in the US accused of sexual abuses, including those linked to child pornography and rape.

He met with abuse victims and expressed sorrow for what happened to them. His legacy includes his selection of new cardinals, with 80% coming from South America, Africa, and Asia. His mission was to shift Catholicism’s focus from Europe to thriving places and reflect this in Church leadership. Posthumous tributes from around the world to him suggest that this shift is working. Although he was keen to visit India, it did not materialize, ostensibly due to political reasons.

Peter Gonzalves identifies twenty-five areas of affinity in the leadership style of Francis and Gandhi. Pope Francis has acknowledged his indebtedness to Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Gaffar Khan, and Desmond Tutu, besides St. Francis.

This special issue on Rwanda is guest-edited by Jos Chathukulam, K Gireesan and Manasi Joseph. I am thankful to them for bringing together scholars from different disciplinary streams to reflect on the reconciliation process in that country as well as its implications for similar settings.

JOHN S. MOOLAKKATTU
Chief Editor

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Introduction

It is Time to Say ‘Never Again’: If Not Now, When?

Jos Chathukulam

K. Gireesan

Manasi Joseph

SINCE THE DAWN of human civilization, people have engaged in violence, conflicts, and wars against one another. Meanwhile, historians have argued that organized warfare did not emerge until the Neolithic Age, and archaeological findings indicate that warfare during the Neolithic period evolved from minor skirmishes and eventually escalated into massacres and more extensive and complex forms of conflicts and violence (Greenspan 2023, Warangham and Golwacki 2012). A 2016 study by Lahr et al. found evidence regarding inter-violence among early Holocene hunter-gatherers of Nataruk, West of Lake Turkana in Kenya, roughly 10,000 years ago (Lahr et al., 2016). Of the twelve articulated skeletons discovered at Nataruk, ten exhibit signs of having met violent deaths at the lagoon’s edge. The 2016 study notes that the skeletal remains from Nataruk are as exceptional as the lagoon’s specific conditions and are preserved without any indications of intentional burial. These shreds of evidence suggest that warfare was a component of inter-group dynamics among

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prehistoric hunter-gatherers (Lahr et al., 2016).

In Germany, a brutal massacre took place 7,000 years ago, during which attackers seemingly tortured their victims by breaking their shin bones before their deaths. Similar Neolithic massacres have been found in various locations, including Austria, Croatia, Spain, and France (Warangham and Golwacki 2012). The Bronze Age (3300 BC) saw large army contingents in Mesopotamia and North African civilizations, and military campaigns were a characteristic feature of these earlier civilizations. Substantial evidence indicates violence and organized warfare in Iron Age Europe. Archaeologists have discovered various weapons, including swords, spears, and lances, to substantiate these claims (Warangham and Golwacki 2012). During the Classical Age (500 BCE to 500 CE), ancient civilizations in Greece and Rome were engaged in military operations and pitched battles. In the Medieval period (500 CE to 1500 CE), a diverse array of warfare tactics existed, such as sieges, raids, and confrontations among various kingdoms and principalities of those times, and the violence stemmed from social unrest, uprisings and other violent outbreaks. The Early Modern period (Age of Discovery, Renaissance), estimated between 1450 and 1800 CE, saw significant conflicts driven by political, economic, and religious factors. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation period saw violence, conflicts, and war across Europe in the name of religion.

The emergence of nation-states and colonization led to wars, conflicts, and revolutions, including the American and French revolutions. Global trade and competition for resources and markets also fuelled conflicts and wars between nations. Resistance and rebellions against the political and social structures also contributed to conflict during this period. The First World War (1914-1918) occurred in the early 20th Century. Contemporary history, from 1945 to the present, is also filled with the Second World War, Cold War, proxy wars, terrorism, and technology-driven violence, including cyber terrorism. The First and Second World Wars and the Cold War period between the US and the then Soviet Union reshaped the world order.

Two World Wars took place in the 20th Century. The total casualties from both World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945) are estimated to be between 70 and 85 million deaths, with World War II being the deadliest (Howard 2003, Beevor 2012). Wars and conflicts took place every year in 20th Century and some of them are Russian Civil War (1917 -1922), Third Afghan War (1919), Irish War of Independence (1919 -1921), Irish Civil War (1922 -1923), Spanish Civil War (1936 -1939), Arab Revolt in Palestine (1936-1939), Jewish Insurgency in Mandatory Palestine (1944 -1948), Partition of India

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(1947), Indo -Pakistan War (1947 -1948), Israeli – Palestinian Conflict (since 1948), Malayan Emergency (1948 -1960), Yangtze Incident (1949), Korean War (1950 -1953), Kenya Emergency (1952 -1960), Cyprus Emergency (1955-1959), Vietnam War (1955 -1975), Suez Crisis (1956), Sino- Indian War (1962), Brunei Revolt (1962 -1963), Indonesian Confrontation (1963 -1966), Aden Emergency (1963 -1967), Indo -Pak War (1965), The Troubles (1969- 1998), Indo -Pak War (1971) Falklands Conflict (1982), Gulf War (1990-1991), Sierra Leone Civil War (1991 - 2002), Bosnian War (1992-1995), Kosovo War (1998 -1999), Kargil War (1999), and, Second Chechen War (1999 -2009).

The 21st Century was no different with Afghan War (2001 -2021), Iraq War (2003 -2011), Darfur Conflict (2003 – present), the Second Lebanon War (2006), Boko Haram Insurgency (2009 – present), Libyan Crisis (2011- Present), Syrian Civil War (2011 -Present), Russian Annexation of Crimea, Yemeni Civil War (2015 -Present), Russian Invasion of Ukraine (2022) to ongoing Gaza-Israel Conflict to the recent tensions escalating between India and Pakistan. While wars and conflicts have inflicted greater losses on humanity and the economy, holocausts/genocides have shaken the foundations of human civilization and social fabric.

Between 1933 and 1945, the Holocaust (*Shoah*) unfolded across Europe, one of the most horrific atrocities in world history (Browning 2004, Cesarani 2016). Holocaust is generally defined as a systematic and state-sponsored persecution and extermination of six million Jews (men, women, and children) by the Nazi regime in Germany and its affiliates throughout Europe (Hilberg 1992, Seltzer 1998, Rothberg 2009). It has been estimated that nearly two out of every three European Jews were brutally murdered by the Nazis in Germany and German-occupied Europe. In 1933, the Nazi Party came into power. Its state-sponsored racism led to anti-Jewish legislation, economic boycotts, and the violence of the Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) pogroms. All these measures were aimed at isolating Jews systematically.

In 1939, following the German invasion of Poland, anti-Jewish policies further escalated to imprisonment and other brutalities. Polish and West European Jews were deported to Ghettos established by the Nazis, and they were forced to live in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions (Sloan 1958). In 1941, the SS (Schutzstaffel, a paramilitary organization under Adolf Hitler and Nazi Party in Germany) and the police introduced mobile gas vans, and these panelled trucks had exhaust pipes reconfigured to pump poisonous carbon monoxide gas into sealed spaces, killing those locked within. The term “*Final Solution of the Jewish Question*” was a euphemism used by the leaders of the Nazi regime. To achieve the ‘final solution,’ they resorted to deliberate

and systematic Genocide of Jews. The ‘final solution’ was the culmination of a decade of discriminatory anti-Semitism propagated by the Nazis.

The persecution and extermination of Jews became rampant during the Second World War. Concentration camps primarily served as detention and labour centres. It also functioned as sites specifically marked for the systematic extermination of specific groups of people/communities. Then there were ‘killing centres’, also known as ‘death factories’, where German SS and police murdered around 2.7 million Jews by either asphyxiation with poisonous gas in gas chambers or execution by mass shooting. Auschwitz, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka were the major killing centres. Around one million Jews from European countries perished at Auschwitz alone. Between 800,000 and 1,000,000 Jews were murdered in ghettos, labour camps, and concentration camps, and some of them were murdered through arbitrary acts of violence, brutal treatment, deliberate privation, and disease (Holocaust Encyclopaedia, 2025).

By the conclusion of the Second World War in 1945, the Nazis killed nearly two out of every European Jew (Bergen 2003). Anti-Semitism was the fundamental root cause of the Holocaust, and hatred or prejudice against Jews was a basic tenet of Nazi ideology. The Nazi propaganda intensely focused on Jews as evil, and they viewed Jews as a threat to the Germans. The Nazis believed that the Germans were racially superior and wanted to improve the genetic makeup of the population, and thus they persecuted people they found unfit (mentally and physically). While Jews were the primary victims, ethnic Poles, Soviet civilians, Soviet war prisoners, the Roma Gypsies, disabled, Jehovah’s Witnesses, political dissidents, homosexuals, and black Germans were also killed (Greene and Kumar 2000). Political opponents, primarily communists, trade unionists, and social democrats, were also targeted and exterminated (Hilberg 1963).

While the Holocaust shook the foundations of human civilization, there were little or no attempts to prevent the massive killings. International powers like USA and UK chose to remain silent on the cruelty meted out by the Nazis. The only exception is Denmark, which made an unparalleled effort to rescue its Jewish population (Straede 2023). Only fewer than 100 of Denmark’s Jews died in the Holocaust – the lowest death toll in all of Nazi-occupied Europe (Straede 2023). Denmark was the only occupied country that resisted the Nazi regime’s attempts to deport its Jewish citizens (Jensen and Jensen 2003). The rest of the world stood by and watched instead of upholding human values and making a compassionate offer like Denmark. Then there is a section of Holocaust deniers who have made

numerous attempts to portray the Holocaust as a conspiracy theory.

Despite overwhelming historical evidence to prove the Holocaust, there are assertions that the Genocide of the Jews by the Nazis is a fabrication or exaggeration by Jews to advance Jewish interests and that mass extermination of the Jews by the Nazis never happened or the number of deaths has been greatly exaggerated (Lipstadt 1994, Coady 2003). Today, holocaust denial and distortion are treated as anti-Semitism. Meanwhile, anti-Semitism still pervades European life (Kirby 2018). The conspiracy theories and accusations related to fabrications are not limited to the Holocaust alone. Denial of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda during and after the Genocide itself was collective and highly organized (Hintens and Oijjen 2020).

In the wake of the 2016 Brussel Bombings, the March 30, 2016 issue of French Satirical Magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, published a controversial image parodying Belgian Singer Stromae's song *Papaoutai* in which Stromae asks, "*Papa où t'es?*" (Where are you dad?). The image also shows severed limbs floating around Stromae, and these dismembered body parts reply "here". It caused a huge uproar as Stromae's father Pierre Rutare was murdered in the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Timsit 2019). In the same year, Alain Soral, a prominent French journalist, published a satirical cartoon on his website, "*Egalite et Reconciliation*" (Equality and Reconciliation), which depicted Charlie Chaplain's face against a Star of David (Jewish Symbol), accompanied by a shoe, a wig, a bar of soap and a lampshade, posing the question 'Shoah' (Holocaust), where are you? (Timsit 2019). This referenced the Stromae song *Papaoutai* (Dad, where are you?) while simultaneously casting doubt on the reality of the Holocaust. Robert Faurrison, an anti-Semitic propagandist whose denial of the Holocaust has earned him multiple prosecutions, was once dubbed as a 'paternal figure' for modern French proponents of holocaust denial (Nossiter 2018). Soral also seems to have emulated the pseudo-scientific claims of Faurrison (Timsit 2019).

Though the term 'genocide' did not exist as a legal term before the Holocaust, the crime of attempting to destroy a group of people based on their identity, culture and beliefs had certainly been committed before. According to the UN Genocide Convention, "at all periods of history, genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity," (Schiff and McLaughlin 2020). For example, the murder of Native Americans during the colonisation of North America, atrocities committed against Congolese people in the late 19th Century, and atrocities against Armenians by the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th Century are a few among them.

Raphael Lemkin, a Polish lawyer, coined the term genocide.

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Lemkin developed this term in response to atrocities committed against Armenians between 1915 and 1923 (Jacobs 2012). In 1933, Lemkin, driven by the inadequate recognition and understanding of the crimes in Armenia, submitted a paper concerning the ‘crime of barbarity’ to the League of Nations (Irwin-Erickson 2017). Lemkin’s paper outlined a strategy for the international community to denounce the crimes and atrocities perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire, providing a ground for the prosecution of those involved in it. This later evolved into the concept of Genocide, which was formally recognized by the United Nations in 1946. Since then, the term genocide has been used to describe state-sponsored attempts to annihilate specific groups within a population (Cooper 2008, Balakian 2013).

Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines Genocide as a *deliberate and systematic destruction of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, in whole or in part, through acts like killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction*. Genocide can be tried in Courts at the international and national levels. The International Criminal Court can prosecute Genocide as well as other serious international crimes like war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Armenian Genocide, referred to as the first Genocide of the 20th Century, took place between 1915 and 1916. The Ottoman Empire annihilated the Armenian Christians during this period. There were around 1.5 million Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire in 1915, and as many as 1.2 million were killed through systematic ill-treatment, exposure, and starvation (Charlwood 2019). The massacres of Armenians were carried out by the Ottoman government to solidify the Muslim Turkish dominance by eliminating the presence of Armenians (Akcam 2012).

In 1919, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre took place in British India. A large crowd assembled at the Jallianwala Bagh enclosure in Amritsar to protest against the Rowlatt Act, a controversial law that allowed for the detention of political prisoners without trial. Brigadier-General Dyer, without warning, ordered his troops to open fire on the unarmed crowd. The Jallianwala Bagh had a single exit. After sealing off the exit with his soldiers, Dyer ordered to shoot the crowds, and the shooting lasted for around 10 minutes (Wagner 2018). Casualty estimates range from 379 to over 1,500 individuals. However, there is no official confirmation regarding this.

Between 1975 and 1979, in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge, a radical communist political party under their leader Pol Pot, imposed extremist

programmes to reconstruct Cambodia on the Communist model of Mao's China (Chandler 2023). In 1975, the government led by the Khmer Rouge forced two million people living in the capital city of Phnom Penh to the countryside at gunpoint to work as agricultural labourers. The people were made to work as labourers in one huge federation of collective farms. People who failed to do so were ruthlessly killed. It has been estimated that between 1,500,000 and 3,000,000 Cambodians were murdered by the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979 (Kiernan 2008). It is estimated that well over 3 million people were murdered during this period, from execution, disease, exhaustion, and starvation (Kiernan 2011, De Nike et al., 2012, Haas 2020).

In the Spring of 1989, the Tiananmen Square incident unfolded as a series of protests and demonstrations in China, culminating in a government response on June 3-4 against the demonstrators, including students in Tiananmen Square, Beijing. The death toll at Tiananmen Square during the protests of 1989 is still a matter of contention, with estimates varying from a hundred to a thousand individuals. The Chinese government initially reported that around 200 to 300 people lost their lives, including security personnel. However, Western Sources and alternative assessments have indicated a considerably higher number (Kluver 2010)

In July 1995, the Srebrenica massacre, the first legally recognized Genocide in Europe since the end of the Second World War, took place in Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the backdrop of the Bosnian War (Leydesdroff 2012, Trebinčević 2014). Troops led by ethnic Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox Christians) unleashed violence on Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks). Many Bosniaks were driven into concentration camps, women and girls were gang raped and other civilians were tortured, starved, and murdered. On July 12, men and boys over the age of 12 were forcibly separated from young women and children, and they were deported on trucks and buses (Vulliamy 2008). On July 13, violence and killings culminated in the massacre of 8,372 Bosnian men and boys in and around Srebrenica, and their bodies were bulldozed into mass graves and concealed. The Genocide at Srebrenica is the largest incident of mass murder in Europe since the Second World War (Thackrah 2008).

Between April 6, 1994 and July 14, 1994, in a span of one hundred days, around 77 per cent of the Tutsi population in Rwanda, around 8,00,000 Rwandans of all ethnic backgrounds, were killed in a state-sponsored Genocide. Within Rwanda, these gruesome murders are formally known as the "1994 Genocide against the Tutsis," while in the international discourse, it is often referred to as the Rwandan

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Genocide. Rwanda's Home-Grown Solutions have played a significant role in the peace and reconciliation paradigm. Though there is plenty of literature on the Rwandan Genocide, including first-person narrations, this special issue of Gandhi Marg explores not-so-popularized and discussed topics and proposes what the world can learn from the Rwandan experience in addressing violence and conflicts.

The government of Sudan, with the support of Janjaweed militias, committed atrocities against the Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit (ethnic communities) in Darfur between 2003 and 2005. It has been reported that an estimated 200,000 people were killed during this period (Prunier 2011). In 2023, the Rapid Support Force (RSF), a paramilitary entity, started to target the Masalit community (Human Rights Watch 2023). The government and the forces executed a systematic depopulation of the territories inhabited by the Masalit community. Houses and agricultural lands were deliberately burned, and food supplies were abruptly stopped (Human Rights Watch 2025). Refugees and those displaced were subjected to further violence, including looting of humanitarian aid (Rukanga and Hashim 2025). It has been reported that the RSF and RSF-aligned militias have systematically murdered men and boys (including infants) on an ethnic basis and subjected women and girls from certain ethnic groups for rape and other forms of brutal sexual violence (Gedeon and Beaumont 2025).

While wars, conflicts, and genocides were happening on one side, the attempts to bring peace and reconciliation were taking place on the other side. The calls for "never again" have been echoing for the last 80 years or so. In this context, it is worthwhile to examine the substantial contributions made by notable personalities, including Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, Dalai Lama, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Leymah Gbowee, Oscar A Sanchez, Malala Yousufzai, and Pope Francis for their instrumental role in conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives. Gandhi stands as the tallest among the Apostles of Peace, following Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ. Gandhi's concept of peace is rooted in non-violence, spiritual strength, and forgiveness. Gandhi's *Ahimsa* (Non-Violence), *Satyagraha* (Insistence on Truth), *Tapasya* (Self-Sacrifice), and fostering empathy are used in contemporary conflict management and peace/reconciliation initiatives (Dalton 2012). Gandhi always strived for his quest for truth through peaceful methods and strategies.

Martin Luther King Jr's leadership in the American Civil Rights Movement demonstrated the power of peaceful activism in pioneering social change and vociferously advocated for equality and justice through nonviolent means. Nelson Mandela's struggle against

apartheid in South Africa showed the power of reconciliation and forgiveness in facilitating a peaceful transition towards an inclusive democratic society. The Dalai Lama, a prominent spiritual figure in Tibetan Buddhism, has consistently championed non-violence, world peace, and compassion, fostering dialogue and mutual understanding among diverse religions and cultures. Malala Yousufzai, through Malala Fund and her global advocacy, contributed to promoting peace through education. Leymah Gbowee's peaceful activism played an instrumental role in ending a brutal civil war in Liberia with the support of various women-oriented peace initiatives. Gbowee spearheaded the *Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace Initiative*, which played a crucial role in concluding the civil war in Liberia in 2003. Archbishop Desmond Tutu campaigned for a world where all leaders were accountable for their actions and advocacy for peace and justice was paramount (Berger 2021). Through his peace strategy, former Costa Rica president Oscar Arias Sanchez ended the civil wars that devastated Central America in the 1980s. During his papacy, Pope Francis championed peace, promoting dialogue and reconciliation while condemning war as a failure of humanity (Vatican News 2025). Pope Francis encouraged prayers and fasting for peace, especially in areas afflicted by conflicts such as Ukraine, Palestine, and Israel. His addresses on World Day of Peace (September 21 is observed as World Peace Day) focused on concepts such as forgiveness, disarmament, and significance of justice. Pope Francis emphasized the importance of peace, freedom and unity in his final address to the global community on Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025. Pope also called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and advocated for peace in Ukraine (Pereria 2025). These represent only a few notable leaders who have made important strides in fostering peace and justice. Their enduring legacies can serve as a blueprint to inspire individuals across the globe to strive towards a sustainable and peaceful future.

Jos Chathukulam, one of the editors of this special issue on Rwanda, visited the country in 2023 and got a chance to interact with the survivors of the Genocide, the present-day administrators, civil society groups, and youth of the country. The authors understood that the discipline of Holocaust and Genocide Studies has matured into a vital area of scholarship, transitioning from Holocaust/Genocide to Peace and Conflict Studies. This is a crucial development as far as violence, wars, conflicts, massacres, and genocides are concerned, particularly because the peace and reconciliation framework is required to address these problems. Peace and Conflict studies encompass various disciplines, examine the root causes of conflict and violence at individual and societal levels, and uncover strategies for promoting

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peace and resolving conflicts (Moolakkattu 2025). This special issue on Rwanda is also framed within a peace and conflict resolution framework. It examines scalability in addressing the ongoing conflicts and violence in various parts of the world.

This Special Issue has six full-length articles. The first article, titled **Understanding Genocide in Rwanda and Pathways to Reconciliation: A Systematic Literature Review by Muneer Babu M and Anu K**, offers a systematic and comprehensive literature review of the Genocide of Rwanda, 1994, by employing the SPIDER framework. The literature review analysis focuses mainly on (1) The Socio-economic Consequences of Genocide on Poverty, Displacement, and Marginalization and (2) Economic, Institutional, and Political Catalysts of Genocide. The methodical review undertaken by the authors shows the intricate nature of the Rwandan Genocide, characterized by a multitude of political, economic, social, and psychological factors. The examination of the literature with the support of the SPIDER framework reveals the complex interactions among historical legacies, structural vulnerabilities, and immediate catalysts that led to the Genocide. The authors argue that elements such as colonial policies, institutional deficiencies, propaganda, and socio-economic grievances played crucial roles in fostering animosity and creating conditions conducive to mass violence. Additionally, the analysis also addresses the enduring effects of the Genocide on Rwandan society and the responses from the international community, emphasizing the necessity for a comprehensive study of such atrocities. The authors further argue that though there is considerable literature on Genocide, more work is still needed on reconciliation programs, the effectiveness of international intervention, and Rwanda's evolving socio-political environment.

The second article, titled **Echoes of Tragedy: Lessons from the Rwandan Genocide for Resolving the Ethnic Crisis in Manipur by Sheetal Hidangmayum and Varsha Gaur** explores the parallels between Rwandan Genocide and ethnic conflicts in Manipur (India) and examines how the lessons from Rwanda can help shape strategies and solutions for achieving community peace, social harmony and foster development in Manipur. The authors argue that Manipur requires robust mechanisms, institutions, and strategies to facilitate inter-community engagement, with an emphasis on addressing grievances, fostering mutual trust and reciprocity, and providing co-working spaces, and add that home-grown solutions of Rwanda can serve as a source of inspiration in this regard. The authors further argue that collaborative governance and community-driven reconciliation, two approaches that helped in Rwanda's resurrection,

are crucial in addressing the crisis in Manipur. The paper also offers actionable suggestions to promote community harmony, improve community participation in governance, and address future challenges in conflict resolution.

The third article, titled **Reclaiming Kashmiri Society: Kashmiri Pandits and Rwanda's Experience** by **Wakar Amin, Shabir Ahmad Najar, and Ashish Kumar Singh**, discusses one of the most devastating examples of cultural Genocide in India – the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. In the late 1980s, the militancy in Kashmir escalated, and the Kashmiri Hindus had to encounter systematic violence and threats. It eventually resulted in the widespread exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, and this critical issue (a human rights violation) remains neglected even today. The authors argue that the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits has undeniably impacted the cultural and socio-political landscape of Kashmir, and such a situation demands potential interventions and social restructuring. The authors further argue that the post-genocide reconciliation efforts in Rwanda offer valuable insights for reconstructing divided societies. The authors utilize a systematic review methodology in this paper to examine the experiences of the Kashmiri Pandit community through the Rwandan reconciliation and rebuilding process framework.

The fourth article, titled **Rebuilding Rwanda: The Role of Women in Rwanda's Peacebuilding and Reconstruction**, by Suja George Stanley, looks into the role and contributions of Rwandan women in reconstructing and rebuilding the post-Genocide Rwandan society. The author also reflects on the status of women in pre-genocide Rwanda. The author argues that women in the post-Genocide era Rwanda have taken up greater responsibility in decision making, are actively involved in the legislature, judiciary, various state institutions and departments, manage financial resources, and care for household chores. The author further argues that women in Rwanda have successfully challenged traditional gender roles and have been instrumental in transforming Rwandan society since the Genocide, taking on new responsibilities, embracing prominent roles, questioning conventional gender norms, and standing up for their rights. The author, with the support of empirical evidence, asserts that the participation and representation of Rwandan women are prevalent in every important aspect of Rwandan society – as decision-makers, administrators, exporters, reporters, nation-builders, project managers, philosophers, teachers, peacekeepers, relief workers, mediators, intellectuals and coordinators of non-governmental organizations.

The fifth article, titled **Crises, Capabilities and Commitment:**

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Tracing the Socio-Economic Development in Rwanda Through the Lens of Home-Grown Solutions by Jos Chathukulam, explores the impact of these home-grown solutions in fostering development in the country. This paper argues that Home Grown Solutions, rooted in the values, systems as well as socio-economic and cultural realities of Rwanda, and the spirit of de-ethnicization have played a pivotal role in strengthening the capabilities and commitments of Rwanda and its citizens. The paper offers detailed discussions on *Girinka* (One Cow Per Family), *Gacaca* (Community Courts), *Ubudehe* (Collectively Solve Problems), *Umuganada* (Community Work), *Imihigo* (Performance Contracts), *Tubarerere Mu Muryango* (Let us Raise Children in Families), *Itorero* (Civic Education), and *Ingando* (Solidarity Camp), which are among the notable home-grown solutions in Rwanda.

More than 80 years after the Holocaust, 30 years after the Rwandan Genocide, humanity still has not mustered the courage to say ‘never again’ (Gallagher et al., 2024). The call to action ‘never again’ has become a sort of myth as war after war, conflict after conflict, bloodshed after bloodshed, Genocide after Genocide continue to multiply with the most ruthless, vicious of ends – from Cambodia to Bosnia, from Rwanda to Sudan, and from Ukraine to Gaza. In this context, Peace and Conflict Studies has huge significance. This Special Issue on Rwanda aims to contribute valuable literature to the field of Holocaust/Genocide Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies.

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Understanding Genocide in Rwanda and Pathways to Reconciliation: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the 1994 Rwandan genocide using the SPIDER framework. The Genocide had severe economic, social, and political consequences, leaving a significant portion of the population vulnerable. Post-genocide measures included legal reforms, reconciliation programs, and governance restructuring. The Genocide resulted in a 50% GDP decline, livestock destruction, and industrial sector devastation. Land scarcity, economic struggles, and discrimination exacerbated ethnic tensions. Economic motives, often facilitated by state manipulation, further fueled the Genocide. Understanding these causes is crucial for preventing future violence and promoting stability.

Key words: *Bibliometric Analysis, Deprivation, Genocide, Human Rights, Reconciliation, Systematic Literature Review.*

1. The Socio-economic Consequences of Genocide on Poverty, Displacement, and Marginalization

GENOCIDE RESULTS IN mass killings and long-term economic, social, and political deprivation, leaving large sections of the population vulnerable to extreme poverty, displacement, and marginalization, as it leads to the destruction of infrastructure, loss of human capital, and low economic growth, creating scars on the economy. More specifically, during 1994, the GDP of Rwanda fell by 50 percent largely due to the Genocide. It destroyed 40 percent of the

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country's livestock and 80 percent of industry (Lopez et al. 2004). Furthermore, Genocide forced millions into refugee status, creating long-term vulnerability and a humanitarian crisis. Displaced populations face large-scale human extinction and displacement. As the Rwandan Genocide created approximately 120,000 orphans, leading to a crisis in social welfare (UNICEF 2005). During the genocide period, an estimated 250,000–500,000 women being raped, contributing to high rates of HIV/AIDS (Des Forges 1999). Life expectancy in Rwanda dropped from 54 years in 1993 to 26 years in 1994 (Human Rights Watch 1996). In the Rwandan Genocide, almost 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered. This Genocide was fuelled by land scarcity and economic struggles, poverty, and structural discrimination, which contributed significantly to exacerbating ethnic tensions. Furthermore, economically motivated by the desire to confiscate the wealth, businesses, or land of persecuted groups (Des Forges 1999, Straus 2007). In this context, we thoroughly review the Rwandan Genocide due to its legal, social, political, and economic impacts, shaping policies regarding genocide prevention and securing justice.

Genocides worldwide have severe economic and social consequences. The 2017 Rohingya genocide forced 750,000 into refugee camps with limited education and job access, leaving 45% of children malnourished and a large number of women became victims of sexual violence (Amnesty International 2020, UNICEF 2020, Human Rights Watch 2017, UNESCO 2021). The Holocaust displaced 6 million Jews, and many became stateless (Bauer 2001). The Darfur genocide (2003–present) displaced 2.5 million, worsening food insecurity (UNHCR 2023). The Armenian Genocide (1915–1917) led to mass property seizures and generational poverty (Dadrian 1995). The Cambodian Genocide (1975–1979) caused 1.7 million deaths due to starvation (Kiernan 2002). In Bosnia (1992–1995), war and Genocide reduced life expectancy by 12 years (Human Rights Watch 1996).

During the post-genocide period, Rwanda effectively implemented several measures to ensure that such atrocities never happen again. These measures can be helpful to content genocides in other countries as well. These measures include legal and judicial reforms, reconciliation programs, governance restructuring, and socio-economic development initiatives. In this attempt, the establishment of Gacaca courts played an important role, a community-based justice system designed to speed up trials for lower-level offenders (Clark 2010). These courts facilitated over 1.9 million cases between 2002 and 2012, promoting both accountability and reconciliation (Karekezi et al. 2004). Rwanda implemented National reconciliation and unity

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programmes, under which the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) was established to adopt healing measures among communities (Hintjen 2008). The new Rwandan constitution of 2003 of the government of Rwanda (2003) emphasised inclusivity, democracy, and ethnic neutrality. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) government emphasised decentralization to empower local governance and prevent concentration of power, a factor in the Genocide (Reyntjens 2006). Rwanda's Vision 2020 aimed to reduce poverty and enhance social cohesion (Ansoms 2011). In education, genocide awareness curricula were introduced to impart values of peace and coexistence (Straus and Waldorf 2011). Rwanda also engaged in peacekeeping missions, using its own experience to contain global conflict (Beswick 2010).

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: The next section reviews the economic, institutional, and political catalysts of Genocide. The data and methodology used for the study are described in Section 3. The results are discussed in Section 4, while Section 5 concludes and provides the policy recommendations.

2. Economic, Institutional, and Political Catalysts of Genocide

Genocide is often driven by a combination of economic, institutional, and political factors that create conditions for mass violence. Esteban et al. (2012) show that ethnic conflicts rise from economic inequalities and polarization, whereas De Soysa (2002) argues that an increase in the natural resource wealth has led to violence, as it provides incentives to the armed groups. Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) argue that weak institutions and economic inequality create conditions for rebellion. Economic downturns, hyperinflation, and financial collapses often lead to the scapegoating of minority groups. For instance, Nazi Germany's economic crisis after World War I contributed to the targeting of Jews as economic "enemies". Victims' properties are often being expropriated and redistributed to the dominant groups. During this period, forced labour of targeted groups also happened extensively, before their eventual extermination. Largely, authoritarian rule led to the Genocide.

South Africa's apartheid policies laid the legal frameworks that classified certain groups as outsiders or inferior, set the stage for Genocide that led to mass violence against Black South Africans. In a political context, highly centralized political regimes where a ruling elite controls state resources and security forces have facilitated Genocide. Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia (1975-1979) used absolute state control to carry out mass killings. Similarly, Genocide occurs in societies where groups compete over scarce

resources such as land, water, and minerals.

For instance, the Armenian Genocide (1915) involved the seizure of Armenian properties by the Ottoman state and local elites. States with weak rule of law, poor governance, and a lack of accountability are more prone to genocidal violence, especially in the case of the collapse of the Yugoslav state, which enabled ethnic cleansing and Genocide in Bosnia (1992-1995). Civil war and internal political instability also led to Genocide, as it continues in the Darfur genocide (2003–present) in Sudan. A learning lesson on violence and conflict is from the work of Acemoglu and Robinson (2013), who argue that violence and conflict are not random but emerge from extractive institutions that concentrate power and wealth among elites. They illustrate many cases from various countries and show how political struggles shape economic outcomes. Countries that fail to develop inclusive institutions remain vulnerable to cycles of violence, state failure, and economic decline.

3. Materials and Methods

We have used a systematic literature review (SLR), which provides a comprehensive approach to analysing existing research, enabling us to analyse and get further insights into various complex topics. The SLR systematically consolidates extensive literature, facilitating rigorous assessment of previous research (Gough et al. 2017). We examine multiple comprehensive literature sources that help us reduce bias and increase the reliability of inferences. We utilise a systematic review to examine the Rwandan Genocide, specifically focusing on its underlying causes, implementation, and consequences. The study identifies key themes based on research questions and conducts a thorough theoretical analysis of relevant literature. The findings are categorized into the primary factors contributing to the Genocide (see Tables 5 and 6). We have also attempted to identify the impact of Genocide on Rwanda, which has been analysed by Des Forges (1999). The review concludes with an analysis of key findings and offers recommendations for future research on the lasting effects of the Genocide.

3.1 Materials

We conducted this study in four stages: 1) identifying preliminary materials, 2) doing an extensive search of literature in various themes of the Genocide, 3) employing appropriate methods and tools, and 4) analysing the literature to draw inferences from key findings. Initially, preliminary materials were examined to identify key terms and refine the research scope. This stage established a foundational

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understanding of the Rwandan Genocide and ensured a systematic and structured approach to the review. Thereafter, an extensive literature search was conducted using various academic databases, which include Google Scholar, JSTOR, ResearchGate, PubMed, and SSRN. This process enabled the identification of relevant scholarly publications, historical records, analytical studies, and policy documents. Subsequently, the search strategy was refined by adjusting search terms and selection criteria to enhance relevance and comprehensiveness. In the final stage, the collected data underwent a rigorous analysis and synthesis to ensure a thorough and impartial examination of the Rwandan Genocide.

3.2 Methods and tools for data collection

We have used the SPIDER framework to identify, extract, and evaluate data for various studies. The flow chart of the SPIDER framework has been provided in Fig. 2. This framework helps us to search relevant literature, formulate precise research questions, and minimise redundancy in references (Cooke et al. 2012). The SPIDER consists of five major components, namely 1) Sample, 2) Phenomenon of Interest, 3) Design, 4) Evaluation, and 5) Research type. Various studies on the Rwandan Genocide are qualitative in nature, and SPIDER is thus more effective in capturing exploratory research that provides critical insights into the historical, social, and political dimensions of the Genocide.

Table 1. Preliminary materials used for the study

Particulars	Key Areas
Country	East-Central Africa
Target Area	Rwanda
Research area	Genocide
Review Period	1994-2024
Article Selection	Titles and Abstracts, Key Words
Data Description	Quantitative, Qualitative
Search Terms	Genocide, Rwanda
Journal Databases	Google Scholar, Taylor and Francis, Research Gate, SSRN, SCOPUS

Source: Researchers' Compilation.

3.3 Search strategy

Our study uses databases such as Google Scholar, Taylor & Francis, Research Gate, SSRN, and SCOPUS as provided in Table 1. However, there is no universal consensus on the ideal number of databases required for a comprehensive review, as database coverage varies by discipline and region (Page et al. 2021). In researching the Rwandan Genocide, several challenges emerged, including limited institutional access to key databases, restricted availability of full-text articles, and language barriers, as some crucial documents are in French or Kinyarwanda. Manual reference searches were also conducted in selected studies to mitigate these limitations to identify additional relevant literature. Furthermore, efforts were made to include grey literature, reports from international organizations, and archived documents to ensure a more exhaustive search and reduce selection bias. Table 1 above provides key details about a research study focused on the Genocide in Rwanda during 1994. The table outlines the geographical scope (East-Central Africa, specifically Rwanda) and the review period (1994-2024).

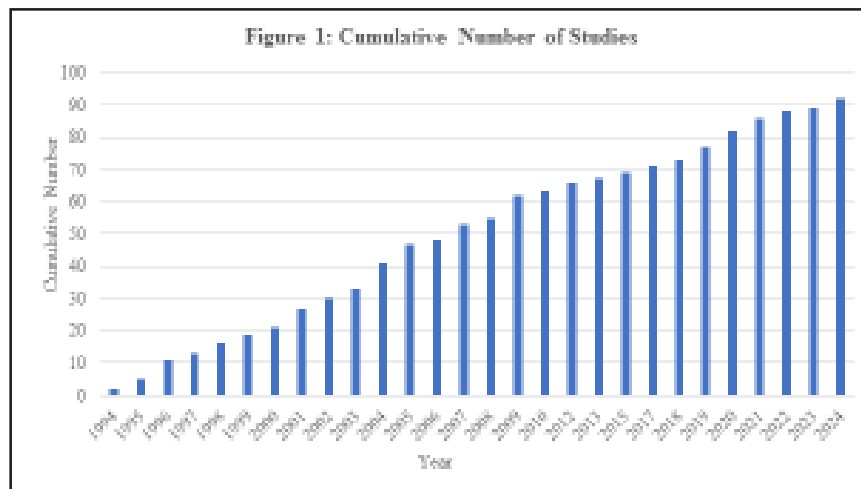
Table 2 below provides details of the criteria used for the inclusion and exclusion of various articles used for conducting this study. We have used the studies that exclusively focus on Genocide in Rwanda, whereas studies related to other Genocides, general discussions on Genocide have been excluded from this study. However, we have initially included a few articles/studies that are relevant to identifying various causes and consequences of genocides across various countries. The research identification initially involves keywords such as “Genocide” and “Rwanda” for literature searches and the SPIDER framework has been followed, as provided in Table 3.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria employed in the studies

Criteria	Details
Inclusion criteria	Studies focusing exclusively on the Genocide in Rwanda.
Exclusion criteria	Studies related to other genocides or general discussions on Genocide.

Source: Researchers’ Construction.

Figure 1 below provides information on the cumulative number of studies on genocides over time. This shows how academic focus has evolved over time on Genocide in Rwanda.



Source: Researchers' Compilation.

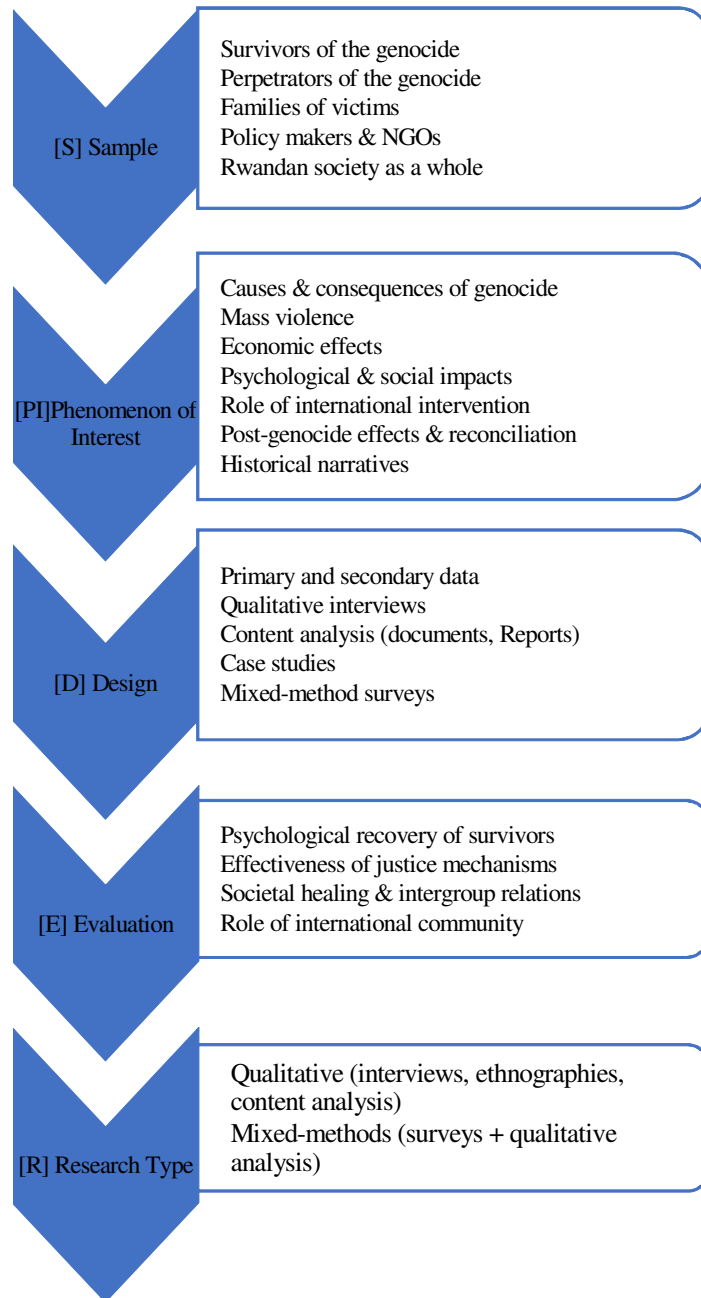
4. Analysis and Interpretation

We present a comprehensive literature review relevant to the Rwandan Genocide, 1994. This systematic review synthesizes the objectives and findings of numerous studies, offering insights into key theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and empirical evidence related to the Rwandan Genocide. By examining the literature thematically, this review identifies the significant contributions of previous research in understanding the causes, consequences, and responses to the Genocide.

The studies on the Rwandan Genocide provide a comprehensive analysis of its causes, execution, and aftermath. Many scholars highlight the role of international actors in either facilitating or failing to prevent the Genocide. Goose and Smyth (1994) discuss how arms transfers contributed to mass killings, while Burkhalter (1994) and Barnett (1997) emphasize the US and UN's deliberate avoidance of intervention. Similarly, De Heusch (1995) and Krosiak (2007) argue that France and Belgium played significant roles in fostering ethnic divisions and supporting the Hutu-led government. Kuperman (2004) contends that military intervention would have been ineffective due to the speed of the killings, whereas Stanton (2004) asserts that early intervention could have saved thousands of lives.

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Figure 2: Flow Chart Using SPIDER Framework



Source: Researchers' Formulation based on Cooke et al. (2012)

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**Table 3: Specimen of key searches- databases
as per SPIDER framework.**

Terms	Combinations Searched in Databases
[S] Rwanda; Genocide; Mass Killing; Mass violence; Hutu; Tutsi; Ethnic Conflict	"Rwanda Genocide" OR "Rwandan Genocide" OR "Hutu and Tutsi conflict" OR "ethnic cleansing in Rwanda" OR "mass killing in Rwanda" OR "mass violence" OR "Tutsi genocide" OR "Hutu extremism" AND PUBYEAR AFT 1994
[PI] War Crimes; Human Rights; Justice; Reconciliation	"War crimes in Rwanda" OR "Human rights violations in Rwanda" OR "Gacaca courts" OR "Rwanda transitional justice" OR "Reconciliation after genocide" AND PUBYEAR AFT 1994
[D] Study Design and Data Collection	"Primary data" OR "secondary data" OR "case study on Rwanda genocide" OR "historical analysis" OR "Content analysis" OR AND PUBYEAR AFT 1994
[E] Causes and Impact	"Causes of Rwanda genocide" OR "Impact of Rwanda genocide" OR "Social consequences of genocide" OR "Political consequences of genocide" OR "Economic effects of genocide" OR "Gender consequences of genocide" AND PUBYEAR AFT 1994
[R] Research Methods	"Qualitative" OR "quantitative" OR "mixed-method" OR "case study approach" OR "historical research on Rwanda genocide" AND PUBYEAR AFT 1994

Source: Researchers' Compilation.

Table 4: First-hand search result on Genocide in Rwanda

Platform	Approximate number of search result
Google Scholar	29,1000
JSTOR	15,190
ResearchGate	Not available
PubMed	281
SSRN	366

Source: Researchers' Compilation.

Several studies explore the political, economic, and ideological foundations of the Genocide. Lemarchand (1995) and Hintjens (1999) argue that the Genocide was premeditated and strategically executed, with media propaganda playing a crucial role in mobilization. Chossudovsky (1996) and Verwimp (2000) examine the impact of economic decline, particularly structural adjustment policies and state-controlled development, in exacerbating tensions. Mamdani (2001) and Newbury (1998) point to colonial legacies and politically engineered ethnic identities as central factors in the violence. The role of the church is also scrutinized, with Longman (2009) showing that some clergy actively participated in or facilitated the killings.

The studies also address the systematic nature of gender-based violence. Sharlach (1999) and de Brouwer et al. (2009) emphasize that sexual violence was a key weapon of Genocide, while Jones (2002) examines how gender roles shaped both victimization and participation. Additionally, media and propaganda played a central role in inciting and sustaining violence. Li (2004) and Thompson (2007) document how radio broadcasts mobilized perpetrators, while Schabas (2017) underscores how hate speech normalized mass killings.

Post-genocide, Rwanda has experienced significant political and economic transformations. Pottier (2002) and Hintjens (2008) argue that the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) has shaped historical narratives to consolidate power, often suppressing dissent. Almer and Hodler (2015) and Serneels and Verpoorten (2015) analyze the economic impact, showing that Rwanda's economy took nearly two decades to recover. McDoom (2021) highlights the role of social pressure in mass participation, while Staub et al. (2003) and Zorbas (2004) stress the importance of reconciliation and psychological healing. Recent studies, such as Chemouni and Mugiraneza (2020), discuss the RPF's ideological

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governance approach, while Semina and Bachir (2024) evaluate the successes and challenges of decentralization policies in improving governance.

**Table 5: Summary of Findings of
Previous Studies on Genocide in Rwanda**

Sl.	Author (Year)	Findings
1	Goose and Smyth (1994)	Arms transfers facilitated mass killings, with international complicity.
2	Burkhalter (1994)	The US administration intentionally avoided intervention.
3	Lemarchand (1995)	Genocide was pre-planned with structured execution supported by media propaganda.
4	Newbury (1995)	Ethnic identity was manipulated for political purposes, worsening economic decline.
5	De Heusch (1995)	France and Belgium played important roles in fostering ethnic divisions.
6	Reyntjens (1996)	Genocide was a political struggle for power rather than purely ethnic conflict.
7	Parkes (1996)	Propaganda, state control, and historical grievances fuelled mass violence.
8	Uvin (1996)	Aid reinforced state structures that facilitated the Genocide rather than preventing it.
9	Benet Davetian (1996)	Examines complicity, obedience, and collective guilt in mass violence
10	Chossudovsky (1996)	Structural adjustment policies worsened poverty, social unrest, and state fragility, ultimately exacerbating ethnic tensions and contributing to the Genocide.
11	Human Rights Watch (1996)	Criticize powerful countries for ignoring human rights to protect their economic interests, highlight failures in stopping violence and holding criminals accountable, and stresses the importance of people and

	groups fighting for justice.
12 Prunier (1997)	Historical manipulation of ethnic identities.
13 Uvin (1997)	Colonial legacies and economic crises intensified divisions.
14 Barnett (1997)	UN decision-makers ignored warnings and avoided intervention.
15 Newbury (1998)	Ethnic violence was politically engineered, not spontaneous.
16 Smith (1998)	Cultural beliefs and identity struggles contributed to the legitimacy crisis.
17 Gourevitch (1998)	Interviews survivors and perpetrators; critiques international inaction
18 Hintjens (1999)	Genocide was a state-orchestrated strategy using propaganda and fear to mobilize violence.
19 Sharlach (1999)	Sexual violence was systematic; some women were perpetrators.
20 Des Forges (1999)	Documents planning, execution, and international failures
21 Taylor (1999)	Symbolic violence and ritualistic dimensions shaped mass killings
22 Verwimp (2000)	State-controlled development policies marginalized Tutsi populations.
23 OAU (2000)	Argues genocide was preventable, but ignored by the whole global actors
24 Uvin (2001)	Genocide was caused by complex political, economic, and social factors in Rwanda.
25 Hintjens (2001)	Rigid identity divisions were a colonial legacy that fuelled violence.
26 Longman (2001)	Churches were involved, with some clergy supporting the Genocide.
27 Kuperman (2004)	Military intervention was unlikely to succeed due to the rapid killings.

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| 28 | Melvern (2001) | Western nations ignored early warnings and withdrew peacekeepers. |
| 29 | Scherrer (2001) | Regional conflict dynamics and international responses shaped ongoing violence. |
| 30 | Mamdani (2001) | Colonial policies created rigid ethnic identities, fueling cycles of violence. |
| 31 | Jones (2002) | Gender roles shaped both victimization and participation in the Rwandan Genocide. |
| 32 | Jefremovas (2002) | Economic struggles and resource competition ultimately trigger violence |
| 33 | Pottier (2002) | Explores how the RPF shaped political narratives to legitimize its rule. |
| 34 | Staub et al. (2003) | Community healing and psychological support are crucial for peace. |
| 35 | Verwimp (2003) | RPF killings were not comparable to the Hutu-led Genocide. |
| 36 | Dallaire (2003) | Details UN's bureaucratic inertia and international apathy |
| 37 | Reyntjens (2004) | Rwanda transitioned into authoritarian rule post-genocide. |
| 38 | Li. (2004) | Radio played a critical role in mobilizing the perpetrators. |
| 39 | Zorbas (2004) | Reconciliation efforts are politicized and suppress open discourse. |
| 40 | Stanton (2004) | Early intervention could have saved thousands of lives. |
| 41 | Straus (2004) | Providing an estimate of perpetrators and exploring factors contributing to mass violence participation. |
| 42 | Eltringham (2004) | Critiques international responses, challenges conventional genocide narratives, and explores historical memory. |
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43	Umutesi (2004)	Exposes the killings of Hutu refugees by the RPF
44	Lopez et al.(2004)	Negative influence on humans, society, and economy, and a quarter of the current poverty is linked to its impact.
45	Mukimbiri (2005)	Genocide followed a structured process of dehumanization, segregation, and extermination.
46	Govt. of Rwanda. (2005)	Promotes national unity, better resource management, and citizen participation.
47	Diamond (2005)	Land scarcity and resource stress contributed to ethnic tensions and Genocide.
48	Moghalu (2005)	ICTR faced political pressures and slow judicial processes
49	Mann (2005)	Extreme nationalism and weak institutions can lead to mass violence
50	UNICEF (2005)	It created large orphans and led to a crisis in social welfare
51	Rusesabagina (2006)	Personal account of resisting Genocide through diplomacy
52	Straus (2019)	Political elites organized the violence; many perpetrators acted under coercion.
53	Straus (2007)	Genocide was not uniform; intra-Hutu coercion and war fears drove participation.
54	Kamola (2007)	Coffee prices collapse deepened economic hardship, fueling violence.
55	Thompson (2007)	RTLM and other media spread propaganda fueling violence, and global media responded too late
56	Kroslak (2007)	France supported the Hutu-led government and facilitated escape routes for perpetrators.
57	Fujii (2007)	Explores motivations, peer pressure, and desensitization

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| 58 Hintjens (2008) | Rwanda's identity policies restrict pluralism and suppress dissent. |
| 59 Adelman (2008) | Point out the limitations of categorisation of the Rwandan Genocide into universal and cultural theories. |
| 60 Boudreaux (2009) | Land disputes worsened ethnic tensions and fueled violence. |
| 61 White (2009) | Colonial racism and economic policies fueled systematic ethnic violence. |
| 62 Martin (2009) | Propaganda minimized outrage and delayed international responses. |
| 63 Loyle (2009) | Political and social pressures shaped genocide participation. |
| 64 Clark (2009) | Dehumanising perpetrators enables violence, understanding their motives provides insight, ordinary people can commit Genocide under certain conditions, and effective reconciliation requires more than just criminal trials. |
| 65 Longman (2009) | Churches were complicit in violence; some clergy facilitated killings while others resisted |
| 66 de Brouwer et al. (2009) | Highlights systematic use of rape as a weapon of Genocide |
| 67 Moodley et al. (2010) | Environmental degradation exacerbated conflicts and post-genocide recovery. |
| 68 Barnett (2012) | UN failures were driven by bureaucracy, self-preservation, and political interests. |
| 69 Van Beurden (2012) | Mass violence was systematically planned and executed. |
| 70 Davenport and Stam (2012) | Challenging traditional genocide narratives with statistical evidence |
| 71 Govt. of Rwanda (2013) | Focuses on fiscal decentralization, citizen engagement, and local economic development. |
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72	Almer and Hodler (2015)	Rwanda's economy took 17 years to recover; agriculture rebounded fastest.
73	Serneels and Verpoorten (2015)	Genocide caused long-term economic downturns, with slow recovery in affected areas.
74	Govt. of Rwanda (2016)	Address the root causes of delinquency through preventive education, rehabilitation, and stakeholder coordination, and strengthen governance for sustainable reintegration.
75	Schabas (2017)	Genocide is not a spontaneous event but a deliberately orchestrated process, and the media plays a significant role in normalizing mass killings.
76	Cook (2017)	Highlights ideological vs. ethnic motivations behind mass killings
77	Magnarella (2018)	Analyzes challenges faced by domestic and international legal mechanisms
78	Magnarella (2018)	Explores Rwanda's domestic legal responses, including its genocide statute and special courts. A comparative analysis with the tribunal for the former Yugoslavia further enriches the discussion.
79	Rever (2018)	Argues that Kagame's forces committed revenge killings, which are ignored by mainstream narratives
80	Straus (2019)	Violence against Hutus is underrepresented in genocide narratives.
81	Hodler (2019)	The research finds that there was a reduction in GDP in 1994
82	Govt. of Rwanda (2021d)	Advocates for removing education, healthcare, and employment barriers while promoting legal protections and financial investments.
83	Chemouni and Mugiraneza (2020)	The RPF's ideology shaped its material interests and political legitimacy,

	emphasizing national unity, anti-colonial rhetoric, and disciplined governance.
84 Govt. of Rwanda (2020)	Supports income security, social care services, financial inclusion, and resilience-building measures.
85 McDoom (2021)	One in five Hutu men participated; social pressure and local politics influenced decisions.
86 Govt. of Rwanda (2021a)	Highlights political, administrative, and fiscal decentralization progress while addressing governance challenges.
87 Govt. of Rwanda (2021b)	Focuses on income security, healthcare access, social protection, and active aging.
88 Govt. of Rwanda (2021c)	Supports financial and administrative autonomy, transparency, and grassroots participation.
89 Govt. of Rwanda (2022a)	Emphasizes targeted income transfers, livelihood enhancement, financial literacy, and social protection mechanisms.
90 Govt. of Rwanda (2022b)	Focuses on direct income support, public works, and livelihood enhancement to promote sustainable poverty graduation.
91 President Paul Kagame of Rwanda (2023)	Emphasizes decentralization, governance efficiency, and community engagement in local administration.
92 Habimana et al. (2024)	Priests faced trauma, survivor's guilt, and social exclusion post-genocide.
93 Amnesty International (2024)	Concludes that Israel's actions meet the criteria for Genocide under international law.
94 Semina and Bachir (2024)	Decentralization reforms have significantly improved service delivery, governance, and citizen engagement. Resource constraints and capacity limitations still persist.

Source: Researchers' Compilation.

These findings collectively underscore that the Rwandan Genocide was not a spontaneous event but the result of long-standing structural, political, and social processes. The Genocide's orchestration, the role of international actors, and the post-genocide state-building efforts reveal the complexities of mass violence and recovery in Rwanda. Based on 94 studies in Table 5, 59 studies have been finally included to determine various domains that fall within any selected domain. We have classified these studies in Table 6 below, which summarizes research on Rwanda's Genocide into various thematic domains. Key authors and the number of articles reviewed support each domain. Using this, significant contributions to understanding Rwanda's Genocide and its broader implications have been provided as major themes in sections 4.1 to 4.14. below:

Table 6: Major domains of various studies on Genocide in Rwanda

Sl. No.	Major Domains	Authors	Number of Articles
1.	Theoretical Explanations and Lessons from Genocide	Smith (1998), Adelman (2008)Clark (2009)	3
2.	Economic Impact and Recovery	Serneels and Verpoorten (2015), Almer and Hodler (2015), Hodler (2019), Chemouni and Mugiraneza (2020)	4
3.	Post-Genocide Reconciliation Measures	Zorbas (2004), Hintjens (2008) Newbury (1998), White (2009)	4
4.	Political and Social Conditions	Newbury (1995), Hintjens (2008), McDoom (2021)	3
5.	Mechanisms and Mobilization of Mass Violence	Straus (2007), Uvin (1997) Lemarchand (1995),	4

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		Reyntjens (1996)	
6.	Role of Institutions and Media	Habimana et al. (2023), Mukimbiri (2005), Barnett (2012), Li (2004), Goose and Smyth (1994)	5
7.	Colonial Histories and Political Dynamics	De Heusch (1995), Barnett (1997), Longman (2001), Boudreaux (2009)	4
8.	Gendered Perspectives and Mass Violence	Jones (2002), De Brouwer et al. (2009), Sharlach (1999), Verwimp (1999)	4
9.	Environmental and Economic Factors	Moodley et al. (2010), Kamola (2007), Chossudovsky (1996)	3
10.	Intervention and Legal Responses	Burkhalter (1994), Magnarella (2018), Stanton (2004), Eltringham (2004), Moghalu (2005), Magnarella (2018), Melvern and Caplan (2001), Govt. of Rwanda (2022)	8
11.	Media and Genocide Narratives	Thompson (2007), Pottier (2002), Rever (2020), Kroslak (2007)	4
12.	Eyewitness and Survivor Accounts	Whitten (2003), Fujii (2007), Rusesabagina (2006), Gourevitch (1998), Umutesi (2004)	5
13.	Social Protection and Development Policies	Govt. of Rwanda (2020; 2021), AOU. (2000).	3

14	Governance Reforms and Decentralization Policies	Govt. of Rwanda (2005; 2016; 2013; 2021), Semina and Bachir (2024)	5
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Source: Researchers' Compilation.

4.1 Theoretical Explanations and Lessons from Genocide

Various studies provide theoretical explanations and various lessons from the Genocide. Smith (1998) exposes the myth of ancient tribal hatreds and frames the Genocide as a modern political event driven by socio-political factors. Adelman (2008) critiques existing explanations of the Rwandan Genocide and introduces an alternative theoretical framework, modifying James Waller's four-dimensional theory. Clark (2009) emphasizes the importance of understanding perpetrators' motivations and the necessity of combining retributive and restorative justice for post-genocide reconciliation.

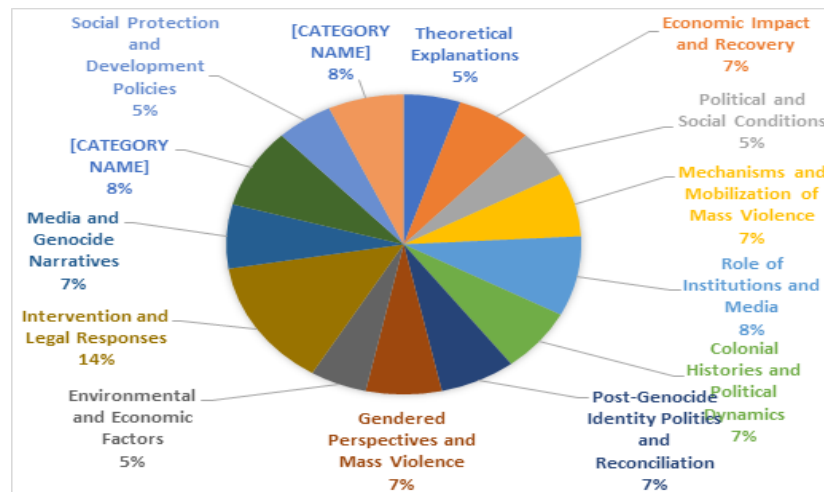
4.2 Economic Impact and Recovery

A few studies focus on the economic consequences and rebuilding efforts. Serneels and Verpoorten (2013) investigated the long-term economic effects of the Genocide on household consumption and labour markets, highlighting prolonged economic downturns, particularly in the most affected regions. Almer and Hodler (2015) assessed the economic decline and recovery post-genocide and found that Rwanda's economy took 17 years to recover, with agriculture rebounding the fastest. Hodler (2019) noted a 58% decline in GDP in 1994 and a prolonged recovery period of 17 years. The agricultural sector rebounded more quickly than the industrial and service sectors, but trade disruptions hindered economic recovery. The recovery of agriculture was driven by resilience, government initiatives, and international support (FAO, 1996). Programs provided seeds, tools, and livestock (World Bank, 1998), while the 2005 Land Law improved tenure security (Pottier, 2006). The Crop Intensification Program (CIP) boosted staple crop yields, alongside investments in irrigation and soil conservation (MINAGRI, 2004; Huggins, 2017). By the 2000s, agriculture was a key GDP contributor, though challenges like land scarcity and climate change persisted (World Bank, 1998; Huggins, 2017). Chemouni and Mugiraneza (2020) analysed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) ideological foundations and how its governance approach influenced Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction.

4.3 Post-Genocide Reconciliation Measures

A few studies focus on efforts to rebuild social cohesion for post genocide reconciliation measures, including Zorbas (2004), who examined reconciliation efforts, revealing political suppression of open discourse. Hintjens (2008) explored identity reconstruction, highlighting restrictive policies, checking pluralism, and suppressing dissent. Newbury (1998) further explored the political and socio-economic causes of Genocide, emphasizing that ethnic violence was politically engineered. White (2009) analysed racial structures and discrimination, linking colonial racism to systematic ethnic violence. The Gacaca courts facilitated justice and reconciliation, while the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) promoted curing genocide adversities (Clark, 2010; Hintjens, 2008). The 2003 Constitution emphasized inclusivity and decentralization to prevent power concentration (Reyntjens 2006). Vision 2020 focuses on poverty reduction, social unity, and education on genocide awareness (Ansoms, 2011; Straus and Waldorf, 2011). Rwanda also engaged in global peacekeeping efforts (Beswick 2010).

Figure 3: Major domains of various studies on Genocide in Rwanda



Source: Researchers' Construction

4.4 Political and Social Conditions Leading to Genocide

A few studies provide insights into the political, social, and economic

reasons for Genocide. Newbury (1995) analysed the political, social, and economic factors that contributed to Genocide, finding that ethnic identity was manipulated for political purposes, exacerbating economic decline. Hintjens (1999) argued that Genocide was a state-orchestrated strategy, mobilizing violence through propaganda and fear. McDoom (2021) examined civilian participation in state-led violence, revealing that one in five Hutu men took part, influenced by social pressure and local political dynamics.

4.5 Mechanisms and Mobilization of Mass Violence

A few studies emphasise factors that permitted mass violence mobilization, including Straus (2007), who investigated regional variations in mass violence mobilization, emphasizing intra-Hutu coercion and war-related fears as crucial motivators. Uvin (1997) explored the socio-psychological causes of ethnic prejudice, concluding that colonial legacies and economic crises intensified social divisions, leading to Genocide. Lemarchand (1995) and Reyntjens (1996) challenged the notion of spontaneous tribal conflict, arguing that the Genocide was a politically motivated and systematically executed event.

4.6 Role of Institutions and Media

This gives us an understanding of how institutions and media acted during the Genocide. Habimana et al. (2024) examined the role of priests during the Genocide, highlighting their psychological trauma, survivor's guilt, and social exclusion. Mukimbiri (2005) analysed the structured process of dehumanization and extermination. Barnett (2012) critiqued the UN's failure to intervene, attributing it to bureaucracy and political interests. Li (2004) found that radio broadcasts played a pivotal role in mobilizing perpetrators, while Goose and Smyth (1994) documented the impact of international arms transfers in enabling mass killings, showing the role of international actors in the Genocide.

4.7 Colonial Histories and Political Dynamics

This section lists the historical and political roots of the conflict. The impact of colonial histories on the Rwandan Genocide was explored by De Heusch (1995), who examined the role of colonial powers, particularly France and Belgium, in fostering ethnic divisions that later contributed to mass violence. Barnett (1997) critiqued the UN Security Council's response, concluding that early warnings were ignored, intensifying the crisis. Longman (2001) and Barnett (1997) explored the role of religious institutions, finding complicity among

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churches. Boudreaux (2009) analysed land disputes as contributing to ethnic tensions and violence.

4.8 Gendered Perspectives and Mass Violence

This section provides research on gendered experiences during the Genocide. Jones (2002) and Sharlach (1999) explored the gendered nature of Genocide, finding that sexual violence was systematic, while some women also participated as perpetrators. De Brouwer et al. (2009) documented the experiences of sexual violence survivors, use of rape as a weapon of Genocide. The study emphasises the long-term consequences. Verwimp (2000) linked development ideology to Genocide, demonstrating how state-controlled policies marginalized the Tutsi population.

4.9 Environmental and Economic Factors

Studies also explain the role of environmental and economic conditions influenced the Genocide. Moodley et al. (2010) explored environmental degradation as a conflict catalyst, while Kamola (2007) linked coffee price collapses to economic hardship and increased violence. Chossudovsky (1996) examined neoliberal policies' (structural adjustment programs) role in exacerbating poverty and unemployment, which intensified social unrest and ethnic tensions, ultimately contributing to the conditions that led to Genocide.

4.10 Intervention and Legal Responses

A few studies emphasise the nature of international interventions and justice mechanisms. Burkhalter (1994) analysed US diplomatic failures, demonstrating that the US administration actively avoided intervention and thereby failed to prevent the Genocide. Stanton (2004) investigated missed intervention opportunities, arguing that early action could have saved thousands of lives. Eltringham (2004) examined justice and reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda, critiquing international responses and memory construction. Moghalu (2005) similarly evaluated the ICTR's role and the effectiveness of global justice mechanisms. Magnarella (2018) assessed the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), discussing its achievements and challenges in prosecuting genocide perpetrators. Melvern (2001) highlighted the failure of Western nations to intervene despite early warnings, while the International Panel of Eminent Personalities (2000) underscored the lack of political will and diplomatic inertia that allowed the Genocide to occur.

4.11 Media and Genocide Narratives

Studies also provide a portrayal of the Genocide in the media. Thompson (2007) found that RTLM and other media outlets spread propaganda fuelling violence. Johan Pottier (2002) analyzed post-genocide misinformation, highlighting how the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) shaped political narratives to legitimize its rule. Rever (2018) investigated war crimes committed by the RPF, exposing overlooked revenge killings that were largely ignored by mainstream narratives. Krosiak (2007) examined France's involvement, revealing political and military support for the Hutu-led government.

4.12 Eyewitness and Survivor Accounts

Studies also provide first-hand testimonies of genocide survivors. Dallaire (2003) provided a first-hand account of UN peacekeeping failures, detailing bureaucratic inertia that allowed the Genocide to unfold. Hatzfeld (2005) interviewed perpetrators, exploring motivations and peer pressure. Rusesabagina (2006) recounted his experiences as a hotel manager who saved refugees. Gourevitch (1998) conducted an investigative journalistic study, criticizing international inaction in preventing and responding to the Genocide. Umutesi (2004) offered a perspective on post-genocide violence, exposing killings of Hutu refugees by the RPF and challenging dominant narratives that focus solely on Tutsi victimhood.

4.13 Social Protection and Development Policies

Rwanda has introduced several policies to address social vulnerabilities. The National Older Persons Policy (2021) focuses on income security and healthcare access for the elderly. The National Policy on Disability and Inclusion promotes equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. The National Social Protection Policy (2020) integrates social assistance and financial inclusion to reduce poverty. The Government of Rwanda (2022) aligns with Rwanda's economic transformation agenda by promoting direct income support and employment opportunities.

4.14 Governance Reforms and Decentralization Policies

Rwanda has implemented various governance reforms to enhance administrative efficiency and citizen participation. The Government of Rwanda (2005; 2013) have streamlined local governance structures and suggests strategies to address the root causes of delinquency through preventive education, rehabilitation, and stakeholder coordination while integrating legal, social, and economic measures

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to strengthen governance, enhance social protection, and promote restorative justice for sustainable reintegration (Govt. of Rwanda 2016). The Government of Rwanda (2021) focuses on decentralizing political, administrative, and fiscal powers to improve governance. Semina and Bachir (2024) highlight the successes of Rwanda's decentralization reforms, though they acknowledge ongoing challenges such as resource constraints and coordination issues. Rwanda faced institutional collapse and resource constraints. However, Rwanda's decentralized governance in the early 2000s empowered local authorities to drive agricultural recovery (Chemouni 2014). This enabled programs like the Crop Intensification Program (CIP) and Land Tenure Regularization Program (LTRP) to improve land access, input distribution, and productivity (Ansoms, 2010). As Huggins (2017) pointed out, decentralization expanded extension services, rebuilt infrastructure, and strengthened rural cooperatives, fostering economic growth and community participation.

5. Conclusion

Our systematic review highlights the multifaceted nature of the Rwandan Genocide, which was a complex in nature with multiple causes of political, economic, social, and psychological factors. Our literature analysis identifies the complex interplay of historical legacies, structural weaknesses, and proximate drivers that resulted in the Genocide. Factors such as colonial policies, institutional weaknesses, propaganda, and socio-economic grievances were all significant drivers of hatred and enabling conditions for mass violence. Furthermore, the analysis also touches on the long-term impacts of the Genocide on Rwandan society and the international community's responses, highlighting the need for a multidimensional study of such atrocities.

Consequently, Rwanda reacted with a sequence of measures to prevent future violence, focusing on legal reform, reconciliation, and institutional reform. The Gacaca courts played a crucial role in administering justice, dealing with over 1.9 million cases between 2002 and 2012. Healing and community rebuilding were supported by the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), and the 2003 Constitution promoted inclusiveness and decentralization. Additionally, Rwanda integrated genocide awareness into the curriculum, initiated economic development through Vision 2020, and participated in international peacekeeping missions, utilizing its conflict-resolution knowledge.

More generally, structural conditions such as economic crises, competition over scarce resources, and institutional weaknesses offer

environments where the potential for Genocide is more likely. Economic incentives, discriminatory legislation, and authoritarian states also enable mass violence through repression of dissent and the abuse of state power. Understanding these processes is essential to early intervention and prevention of Genocide. While there is considerable literature on Genocide, still more work is needed on reconciliation programs, the effectiveness of international intervention, and Rwanda's evolving socio-political environment. Expansion of the scope of inquiry in these fields may offer greater insight into long-term peacebuilding and policies for preventing future atrocities.

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Echoes of Tragedy: Lessons from the Rwandan Genocide for Resolving the Ethnic Crisis in Manipur

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ABSTRACT

The Rwanda Genocide of 1994 and the ethnic crisis in Manipur are both significant events in modern history, marked by ethnic violence and societal collapse. This article examines how these conflicts can be used to guide strategies for community peace, social harmony, and development in Manipur. It highlights Rwanda's recovery efforts, emphasizing community-driven reconciliation and Rwanda's homegrown solutions. The paper also highlights the need for robust mechanisms and institutions in Manipur to facilitate inter-community engagement, address grievances, foster mutual trust, and provide co-working spaces. The paper emphasizes the role of the ruling governments in creating an environment conducive to peace, harmony, and development. It also highlights future challenges, emphasizing the importance of collaborative governance and community-driven reconciliation. The paper provides actionable suggestions to promote community harmony, improve governance participation, and address future conflict resolution challenges.

Key words: *Ethnic conflicts, Community-participation, Governance, Rwandan Genocide, Manipur Crisis.*

Background

ONE COULD FIND a number of similarities in the large-scale humanitarian crises, as noted from the Rwandan Genocide (1994) and the ongoing ethnic strife in Manipur. While these conflicts arise from

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distinct historical, political, and socio-economic contexts, both cases underscore the catastrophic consequences of deep-seated ethnic divisions.

The ethnic tensions between the Kuki and Meitei communities in Manipur, much like the divisions in Rwanda, have led to widespread violence, displacement, and social fragmentation. However, Rwanda's post-genocide recovery offers valuable lessons in reconciliation, governance, and conflict resolution that can be adapted to the Manipur crisis. Rwanda successfully rebuilt its fractured society and established long-term peace through community-driven reconciliation strategies, inclusive governance, and inter-community engagement. By examining Rwanda's approach, Manipur can explore pathways for sustainable peacebuilding, ensuring that the crisis does not further entrench communal divisions.

This article critically analyses the current socio-political challenges in Manipur, drawing comparative insights from Rwanda's post-conflict reconstruction. It advocates for inclusive governance, economic development, and grassroots reconciliation initiatives as essential measures to restore stability and foster long-term harmony.

Rwandan Genocide

A mass genocide took place in Rwanda on 7 April 1994, marking one of the worst periods in human history. Nearly 8,00,000 people, or a tenth of Rwanda's population, were slain for 100 days, mostly members of the Tutsi minority. The shooting down of a plane carrying Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi and Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda, a Hutu, served as the immediate catalyst (McGarty 2014). Nearly 70% of the Tutsi population was wiped out because of the Hutu rebels' ruthless onslaught against them. Extreme violence, such as rape, sexual torture, mutilation, and enslavement, occurred throughout the genocide; an estimated 250,000 women were raped. A time of unspeakable terror and destruction occurred when friends and neighbours turned against one another (Gishoma et al. 2014).

Had the international community stepped in, the Rwandan Genocide might have been lessened. But before the massacre, the UN and powerful nations like the US, France, and Belgium disregarded several warnings and intelligence assessments. The absence of strategic interest in Rwanda was a major factor in the inaction. Belgium wanted to preserve its reputation, the US wanted to save money, and France put its partnership with Rwanda's homicidal government first (Prunier 1995).

International leaders did not adequately respond to the violence, even after it started. The United States and the United Kingdom ordered the UN Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR) to

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withdraw and refused to provide military or financial support. Due to racial and geopolitical biases, Rwanda was disregarded, in contrast to Bosnia, where billions were invested. Foreign countries ignored the need to evacuate their populations. Foreign governments ignored the lives of Rwandans while evacuating their citizens. The lack of natural resources or strategic value in Rwanda was confirmed by classified US records, which further reduced foreign interest in stopping the slaughter (Klein 2015).

Since no apparent national interest was at risk, the US was deterred from intervening in Rwanda by the Clinton administration's failed peacekeeping effort in Somalia. International inaction was caused by a number of things, such as misunderstandings about African conflicts, ineffective UN bureaucracy, and general weariness from peacekeeping. After ten of its soldiers were murdered on 8 April 1994, Belgium, which has colonial links to Rwanda, withdrew from its early involvement in peacekeeping. Belgium pressed for UNAMIR's full withdrawal to preserve its standing as a specialist on 'African peacekeeping' and the UN Security Council agreed.

Romeo Dallaire characterized the genocide as a human failing in his book 'Shake Hands with the Devil'. While acknowledging the problem, the international community offered justifications for not becoming involved (Dallaire 2003). One of the worst humanitarian disasters in history resulted from the UN's lack of resources and political will to take action. Post-genocide Rwanda implemented a series of reconciliation mechanisms, including community-based justice and collective development programs, to rebuild its society (Chathukulam et al. 2024).

Ethnic Conflicts in Manipur – Looking back

The history of Manipur dates to the Ningthouja dynasty, one of India's longest-ruling dynasties. The Cheitharol Kumbaba chronicles the Manipuri monarchs until 33 AD. Until the 18th century, Manipur followed Sanamahism, an indigenous religion. King Charairongba converted to Hinduism in 1704 and was the father of *Meidingu Pamheiba* (Garib Nawaz). After the Anglo-Manipur War, the British took control of Manipur as a Princely State in 1891. In 1947 it became part of India, achieved Union Territory status in 1956, and became a full-fledged state in 1972.

The conflict in Manipur is driven by historical ethnic tensions between the Meiteis and Kukis, primarily over resources, political representation, and land ownership. The Meiteis, constituting 52% of the population, dominate politics and business, residing mainly in the Imphal Valley, which accounts for just 10% of the State's land.

Meanwhile, Kukis and Nagas, who comprise about 40% of the population, live in the hill districts covering 90% of the State's area. Due to their demographic dominance, the Meiteis control 40 of 60 Assembly constituencies, while the hill districts have only 20 MLAs. A major point of contention is land ownership, as Meiteis are restricted from purchasing land in the tribal-designated Hill Areas, while tribals can buy land in the Imphal Valley. This imbalance has fuelled long-standing tensions and demands for political and social reforms (Phanjoubam 2025).

The ongoing conflict in Manipur stems from historical ethnic disputes, land ownership issues, and concerns over political representation. The Hill Areas, covering 90% of the State's land, are protected under Article 371C, restricting Meiteis from purchasing land there, while tribals can buy land in the Imphal Valley. This has led to Meitei concerns over marginalization. The 2020 delimitation process further intensified tensions as Meiteis claimed census data misrepresented their population.

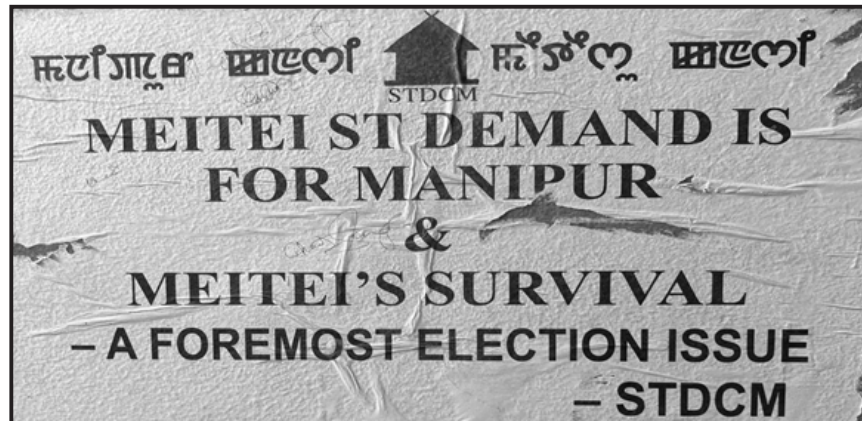
Manipur's proximity to the Golden Triangle has also made it vulnerable to drug trafficking and transnational crimes, exacerbating social instability. The refugee crisis from Myanmar has worsened the situation, with Meitei leaders linking Myanmar's migrants in Churachandpur to illegal activities like poppy farming. Ethnic groups, particularly the Nagas and Kukis, demand more political autonomy or separate administrative divisions as outlined in the Poknaptham Newspaper published in Manipur (Thangtungnung 2015).

The ethnic violence that erupted on 3 May 2023, led to over 200 deaths, 310 injuries, 1,700 homes destroyed, and 60,000 people displaced, making it one of the most prolonged and severe conflicts in Manipur's history. The conflict in Manipur has escalated due to ethnic tensions between the Meiteis and Kukis, with key issues revolving around land ownership, political representation, and demands for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Since 2012, the Scheduled Tribes Demand Committee of Manipur (STDCM) has pushed for Meiteis to be granted ST status, arguing that they were recognized as a tribe before Manipur's merger with India in 1949. The Manipur High Court's order on 20 April 2023, asking the State to consider the Meiteis' inclusion in the ST list, sparked strong opposition from the Kukis, who feared Meiteis gaining access to restricted hill areas.

Tensions further escalated when the state government evicted Kuki families from protected forest land in February 2023, leading to protests by tribal groups. The situation worsened when the Manipur government withdrew from the 2008 Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with the Kuki National Army (KNA) and Zomi

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Fig.1: Meitei ST Demand is for Manipur and Meitei survival (written in Meitei -mayek)



Source: Picture clicked by the first author at Ima Kaithel, Imphal on 28 February 2025.

Revolutionary Army (ZRA) in March 2023, citing their involvement in unrest.

Violence erupted on 3 May 2023, when Kuki mobs, allegedly supported by militants, attacked Meitei homes. This led to retaliation in the valley, worsening the ethnic divide. Meitei and Kuki leaders blame each other for the unrest, with Meiteis accusing the Kukis of aggression and the Kukis demanding a separate administration. Some Kuki factions also advocated for “Zalen’gam,” a proposed independent state covering parts of Bangladesh, Myanmar, and India (Haokip 2024).

Amidst ongoing violence, Manipur BJP MLA Paolienlal Haokip emphasized the need for peace, while retired IAS officer RK Nimai warned that the demand for separate administration could have long-term consequences. With Prime Minister Narendra Modi yet to visit the conflict-ridden State, the Union government’s lack of direct intervention has further fuelled dissatisfaction among both communities.

Observations and Reflections from the Relief Camps

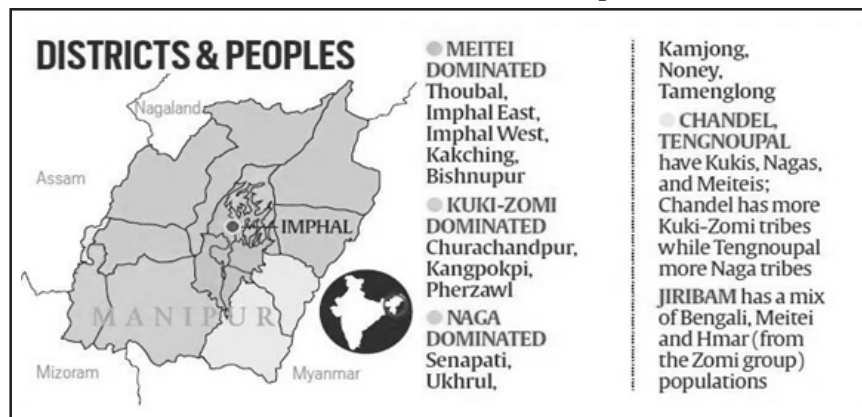
The first author was at the Relief Camp in Manipur College, located at Pishumthong-Bridge Road, Makha Leirak, Imphal West District, where she had conversations with people residing there. Firstly, there were kids, older adults, women, and men who were struggling to settle down, frustrated by slow progress in resettlement efforts. One issue they faced was they were living in temporary pre-fabricated

Fig.2: One Manipur, One Administration
(written in Meitei -mayek)



Source: Picture clicked by the first author at Ima Keithel, Imphal on 28 February 2025.

Fig.3: Representation of Meitei, Kuki & Naga dominance
in different districts of Manipur



Source: Roy, 2023

houses and how long they would live in these temporary camps, leaving their own land for such a long period.

Many of them are facing the trauma of the incident that happened, which led to screaming and venting out during early and late in the

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night. Many of them who had health issues were lamenting about how this situation has put them to more poverty, leading them to no employment, and they have problems prioritizing their medical facilities. They want things to get normalized as soon as possible so that they can go back to their own homes and live there peacefully.

During the visit to another relief camp (Akampat relief camp of Imphal East District), the first author found that the inmates were engaged in a protest, demonstrating and demanding that the Manipur government must make necessary arrangements to return to their homes. At Thongju Kendra Relief Camp set up at Ideal Girls College in Akampat of Imphal East District, some inmates from Tengnoupal and Churachanpur districts have highlighted that they do not have faith in the state government's assurance on rebuilding their homes, which have been burned down during the violence that erupted. It has been more than 21 months since they were living in the relief camps. Some victims also do not want to shift to the temporary accommodation that the government has offered, saying that they will never be able to return to their homes if they move to these new pre-fabricated dwelling units.

At Khuman Lampak relief camp, the first author interacted with inmates who had been staying there for the last few months. During the conversation, some of the inmates raised questions about their children's future since schools and colleges have become a makeshift camp for so many months. People have lost their businesses, land, and jobs, and exhausted their savings. With food, water, clothing, and medicine shortages, people had to rely on odd jobs to survive. Also, some relief camps in Imphal had to be closed down due to the lack of proper maintenance for the people, so they had to flee to bigger relief camps, where there is a bit of improvement when compared to others.

The first author also had a telephonic conversation on 15 February 2025 with Ms. Nengniekim Gangte, who is researching ethnic violence in Manipur and lives in the Churachandpur region. During the conversation, she expressed that her future looks very bleak. She said, "I must study and look after my family. Our society was in poverty for generations. We had begun coming out of it, but this violence has pushed us back at least a decade". The conflict has also forced some of them to flee to the camps set up in Mizoram, the neighbouring State. With a shortage of food, water, and medicine, people rely on any job for survival.

Fig. 4: View of a lady feeding her baby
from the Relief Camp, Churachandpur.



Source: Picture clicked by the first author on 25 February 2025.

Fig. 5: View of people resting in the
Relief Camp, Akampat region.



Source: Picture clicked by the first author on 12 February 2025.

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Fig. 6: Children wait in a queue to receive food at a relief camp in Rengkia village



Source: IN PHOTOS: Manipur, life as a refugee in your own State, 28 February 2025

Lessons from the Rwandan Genocide

Umuganada (Community Work) and Its Relevance to Manipur:

Umuganada is a national initiative where Rwandans participate in community service to foster unity and collective responsibility. A similar approach can be implemented in Manipur to encourage collaboration between different ethnic groups. Joint infrastructural projects, environmental conservation efforts, and social service programs can create shared spaces for inter-community interaction and trust-building (Ezeanya 2015).

Gacaca Courts (Community Courts) for Conflict Resolution:

The *Gacaca* system allowed Rwandans to address crimes committed during the genocide through local community hearings. This facilitated justice and reconciliation at a grassroots level. Manipur can adopt a similar community-based justice model to address grievances, promote dialogue, and foster accountability without exacerbating hostilities (Ezeanya 2015).

Ubudehe (Collaborative Problem-Solving):

Ubudehe is a participatory approach where communities collectively

identify and address local issues. Manipur can benefit from this model by engaging diverse communities in decision-making processes related to governance, land distribution, and economic development. This would ensure inclusivity and reduce perceptions of marginalization.

Ingando (Solidarity Camps) for Youth Engagement:

Ingando solidarity camps played a crucial role in rehabilitating Rwandan youth and instilling a sense of national unity. A similar initiative in Manipur can be introduced to educate young people about peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution, and cultural appreciation. Schools and universities can incorporate programs promoting inter-ethnic understanding (Ezeanya 2015).

On similar lines, Manipur requires robust mechanisms, institutions, and strategies to facilitate inter-community engagement, with an emphasis on addressing grievances, fostering mutual trust and reciprocity, and providing co-working spaces to remove the ill-wills that will lead to ushering in growth and development again in the State. With the assistance of the government and civic society, it is crucial to identify the victims and rehabilitate them as a priority.

To instill a sense of ownership and belonging, the government should encourage the region's civil society to participate in decision-making. The warring communities in the conflict-ridden State of Manipur continue to hold a vast number of weapons and ammunition.

Disarming the entire civil society must be a top priority. Discourage national and international media from reporting biased stories by revealing the spread of false information. Talk with all parties involved, including different ethnic groups, to learn about their complaints and identify areas of agreement. The 1986 Mizoram Accord between the Government of India and the Mizo National Front (MNF) exemplifies successful involvement with all stakeholders.

The government should ensure that the legal system is impartial and open to eliminate the lack of trust and stop security personnel from abusing their power and authority. It is necessary to review the current ST status requirements for everyone following committee suggestions, such as: The Lokur Committee (1965) suggested five criteria for identification: backwardness, geographical isolation, distinctive culture, primitive features, and fear of contact with the public. The government should step up surveillance along the Myanmar border to prevent infiltration. One District One Force (ODOF) will lead to improved operations and coordination to return things to normal. One security force employee will uphold law and order in a single district under the ODOF model. As a result, there will be more accountability and less chance of conflict between the

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security forces. The government should ensure that the justice system is impartial and open to stop security forces from abusing their position.

Role of Governments in Conflict Resolution and Peace Building

The role of governments in conflict resolution and peacebuilding is crucial, especially in regions marked by ethnic tensions and political instability. Rwanda's experience in post-genocide reconciliation highlights the importance of inclusive governance, impartiality, and accountability in fostering lasting peace. Strengthening the law enforcement and judicial systems can address past injustices and provide a foundation for lasting stability. Furthermore, economic and infrastructure development is pivotal in bridging the gap between communities, reducing disparities, and fostering cooperation through shared opportunities (Rutayisire & Richters 2024).

Inclusive Governance and Policy Reforms

Rwanda's leadership demonstrated that impartial governance and accountability are essential for sustainable peace. Manipur requires political reforms that ensure equal representation of ethnic communities, transparent land policies, and mechanisms to prevent political manipulation of ethnic divisions (Sommers 1998).

Strengthening Law Enforcement and Judicial Systems

A fair and robust judicial system must address past injustices and prevent future conflicts. Strengthening law enforcement, ensuring accountability, and implementing legal frameworks that recognize the grievances of all ethnic communities can promote stability in Manipur.

Economic and Infrastructure Development

Economic disparity often fuels ethnic conflict. The people in the hills had little disadvantage compared to those in the valley. Whether it is a transportation facility, there is usually a connectivity problem unless one has a private vehicle. The roads are not in good condition, and one can even see similar kinds of roads in the valley.

One must come down to the valley for better education and medical facilities. But they were provided with quotas to get upliftment in the society at large, because of which one could see those respectable government jobs held by people of the valley, which is why we could see so much economic disparity between both communities. It led to the Meitei community's demand for equal status by providing a similar quota facility. But the people in the hills, especially the Kuki tribe, do not want this to happen, leading to chaos among the different

communities.

Investing in equitable development, job creation, and skill-building programs can reduce economic competition and foster cooperation. Infrastructure projects that benefit all communities should be prioritized to create shared economic opportunities.

How did the Indian State fail Manipur? A Quick Review

No crisis of this violent nature has happened in this country on this scale that has been allowed to linger on like this. This country, as a post-colonial state, was born out of a bloodied confrontation along communal lines. Millions have lost their lives and homes. It is one of the largest colossal human tragedies that the world has seen. This country was born out of that. So, communal riots are no stranger to this region. But none have ever seen communal violence of this scale. And what is unique is the way the Indian State has allowed it to happen. There were persons in military attire, keeping sophisticated arms, displaying like military units, and moving around the villages in many parts of Manipur. This situation was happening openly, ignoring the presence of the Indian State with one of the strongest militaries in the world. While speaking on the motion of thanks on the President's address in Lok Sabha, Member of Parliament, Angomcha Bimol Akoijam, mentioned that people considered the divide between some communities like the Kukis and the Meiteis, to be misleading. The actual crisis is the way the Indian State has become a "banana republic".

When we called something a failed state, erstwhile Afghanistan, the central authority couldn't assert its power because the warlords were running the show. The Indian State's approach to Manipur also shows a lack of control. Once the Indian State recovers itself, this problem can be handled. What is absolutely required is that the Indian State must assert its writ, and its writ must work. It must reclaim its monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force. It is this character of the state power that the armed groups challenge. One cannot protect the citizens' lives and property; that is what the State is supposed to do if one looks at the fundamental rights that began with Article 12, which defines the State. So, the crisis in Manipur is a constitutional crisis where the Indian State cannot assert itself. It could be one subconscious way of looking at it; otherwise, it would have cracked down a long time back. If this kind of crisis happened in Maharashtra, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, or Uttar Pradesh, what would have been the response of the State?

This is the crisis; it is not so much about inter-community. The state will handle this once the authority is asserted. It is not like

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mediating between Hutus and Tutsis there. One group went there as UN peacekeeping troops to maintain the peace between the two communities. Suppose one started looking like this within our own country. In that case, the armed groups challenged the state's authority, resulting in law and order not being maintained and constitutional writ not being allowed to function. This is the crisis of the Indian State. This is within citizens, and all must obey the rule of law. Nobody has the right to challenge the authority of the State.

Law and Order Crisis in Manipur

Law and order are subject to the Indian Constitution, with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar emphasizing them as sovereign and plenary authority of the state government. However, the ongoing situation in Manipur raises serious constitutional and administrative concerns. The Chief Minister of Manipur, who also holds the position of Home Minister, has publicly stated that the Criminal Investigation Department, a department under his direct control, has not reported to him for the past 15 months. This raises a fundamental question: How can a state law enforcement agency function independently of the elected government? (Chaudhary 2024).

Furthermore, the Chief Minister was previously the Chairperson of the Security Coordination Committee, often referred to as the Unified Command, but was later removed from this position. He claims that his executive powers have been significantly curtailed, yet no legal justification has been provided for such a decision. This leads to a larger inquiry: Is there any provision in the Indian legal framework that allows such a dilution of a state government's authority over law enforcement (Chaudhary 2024).

A particularly alarming development is the Chief Minister's assertion that certain regions, particularly those dominated by the Kuki community, will be managed by the Union Home Minister, while the remaining areas will fall under the Chief Minister's jurisdiction. Such an arrangement contradicts the constitutional principles of federalism and raises concerns about the erosion of state sovereignty. Additionally, reports suggest that the Indian Army is preventing local police from operating in specific areas, leading to a direct conflict between different security agencies. This is not merely a communal divide between the Kuki and Meitei communities; it is a constitutional and administrative crisis involving the state government, the Union government, the Home Ministry, the police, and the military.

The ongoing turmoil has resulted in significant loss of life, yet constitutional provisions exist to address such crises effectively. If these provisions are not being implemented, it suggests an extra-

constitutional subversion of governance. The state government's involvement in this breakdown of law and order shall be scrutinized. Ignoring this issue while celebrating 75 years of the Indian Constitution seems contradictory, as the fundamental tenets of governance are being openly disregarded.

This is not a matter of merely facilitating dialogue between communities. The Indian State is not a UN Peacekeeping Mission in Manipur. The crisis must be viewed as a failure to uphold constitutional authority, rather than a communal dispute. No entity shall be allowed to challenge the sovereignty of the Indian State. The core issue is the Kuki-Meitei divide and the urgent need to restore constitutional governance and law enforcement structures in Manipur. The region can move towards long-term stability and reconciliation only when this is achieved.

The Indian State must assert its authority and take decisive political action. The ongoing crisis in Manipur is not merely a communal dispute between two communities, it is a question of governance and sovereignty. The responsibility to restore law and order lies with the State Government of Manipur, not with negotiations between conflicting ethnic groups. After re-establishing constitutional authority, should the State entertain demands for exclusive, communal identity-based political projects, such as separate administration or Union Territory status for certain ethnic groups?

The State Reorganization Commission of 1956 was cautious about linguistic reorganization, ensuring that administrative divisions were not strictly based on cultural parameters. The commission explicitly rejected the notion of "one language, one state", recognizing that India's pluralistic fabric could not sustain such rigid classifications. Unlike the logic of Partition, which was premised on religious exclusivity, the underlying principle was to maintain national unity despite diversity. If India rejected a linguistic reorganization model that could divide the nation, how can it now allow ethnic or communal separatist demands to take precedence over national integrity?

The Indian State appears neither willing nor able to assert its authority in Manipur. Instead, government officials, including the Ministers, have framed the crisis as a deep communal divide, suggesting that the Kuki and Meitei communities must resolve the issue among themselves. Such an approach normalizes the conflict, failing to recognize that this is not merely an inter-ethnic dispute but a systemic failure. Historically, communal violence in India has manifested in horrific ways, whether through the massacres of unborn children due to religious identity or people being burned alive with tires around their necks. These are not natural conflicts but

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consequences of administrative and political failures. Why, then, is the Manipur crisis being framed differently?

Some scholars argue that colonial rule essentialized Hindu-Muslim conflict, portraying it as a natural and historical enmity, when in reality it was the result of British colonial policies. Similarly, today's scholars, journalists, and politicians are perpetuating the same colonial mindset by naturalizing and essentializing the conflict in Manipur. This mirrors how Western narratives misrepresented the Rwandan crisis, portraying it as a product of ethnic hatred rather than colonial legacies.

This approach must change. The critical question is 'whether the Kukis and Meiteis can find common ground? But rather, what is the State doing to reassert its authority? Why are armed individuals in military fatigues still roaming freely? Why has the government not effectively restored state control? Is the State of Manipur becoming a banana republic, where lawlessness prevails unchecked?

Regarding political demands, the responsibility lies not with community negotiations but with the State, which must decide whether such demands align with constitutional principles. The larger question concerns Manipur and India's ethos, constitutional mechanisms, and governance framework. If the administration cannot resolve this crisis, then, as Dr. A. Bimol who raised a fundamental question in the Parliament: "Is Manipur truly being considered a part of India?"

Bridging the Meitei-Kuki Divide: Pathways to Harmony and Ground Realities

Despite the ongoing violence and deep-seated differences between the Meitei and Kuki communities, some instances foster harmony and coexistence in Manipur. One example is the Indigenous Tribe Cultural Festival, celebrated in Chadong Village, where various tribes, including the Meitei and Kuki, came together to participate in traditional dances, folk songs, and cultural activities. This festival serves as a platform for cultural exchange, potentially bridging the divide between the communities and fostering a sense of shared identity.

Another remarkable instance of unity is the marriage between the son of a sitting MLA belonging to the Meitei community and a Kuki woman. Such inter-community relationships highlight that, despite the prevailing tensions, the spirit of oneness and social integration still exists among the people of Manipur.

Additionally, Needy Home Academy, a residential school in Mapao Zingtun village, stands as a beacon of education, hope, and communal harmony. Located about 25 kilometres north of Imphal, the school accommodates 632 students and 42 teachers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. On its 30-acre campus, Meiteis and Kukis, who are

otherwise in conflict, learn, play, and grow together. With its four-story central building accented in mauve, the school remains untouched by external turmoil, demonstrating that peaceful coexistence is possible.

These examples illustrate that amidst the violence and discord, there are still efforts and spaces where the Meitei and Kuki communities come together, offering hope for reconciliation and unity in Manipur.

Challenges and Future Considerations

Despite Rwanda's success, challenges remain in applying its reconciliation model to Manipur. The unique socio-political landscape, historical narratives, and governance structures must be considered. Resistance from political and ethnic factions, lack of trust in state institutions, and external influences can hinder peace efforts (Iakovos 2022).

A holistic approach that integrates government initiatives, civil society participation, and grassroots reconciliation programs is essential to achieve lasting peace in Manipur. Continued engagement from the union and state governments and support from civil society groups can facilitate a long-term resolution to the ongoing crisis.

The State requires significant healing and reconstruction after 21 months of violence and instability. The goal should be to restore the peaceful coexistence that existed prior to May 2023. However, the current state of affairs resembles what can be described as a Hobbesian war, an environment of statelessness where lawlessness prevails. The fundamental responsibility of the government is to restore the authority of the State, a role that has been missing throughout the crisis, thereby exacerbating the situation.

The first priority must be to curb violence and dismantle armed groups operating within the State. The ambiguity surrounding the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement must be resolved, as evidence suggests that some of these groups have actively contributed to the unrest. Armed elements are present both in the valley and the hills, making it imperative for the government to take firm yet balanced action. However, law enforcement efforts must not appear biased, targeting one group while overlooking others, as this will only deepen the trust deficit among communities.

Additionally, the presence of village volunteers, locally referred to as "khunnakpa," must be addressed with sensitivity. These individuals are civilians who were forced to take up arms to defend their lives and properties amid the breakdown of law and order. The government must develop a clear policy to integrate or rehabilitate

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them, rather than criminalizing their actions outright. At the same time, politically motivated armed groups must be recognized as a distinct issue, which is not merely a law-and-order problem but also a political one that requires negotiation and resolution. However, those exploiting the conflict for personal or criminal gains, intimidating civilians, and spreading violence must be dealt with firmly and decisively. Furthermore, all illegal weapons in circulation must be systematically recovered to prevent further violence.

The second crucial step is to address Manipur's deep-rooted socio-economic issues, which include drug trafficking, illegal immigration, deforestation, and unemployment. These long-standing grievances affect multiple communities and must be tackled systematically to prevent future instability.

Lastly, urgent action is required to assist those suffering due to the violence, particularly those languishing in relief camps. A clear and structured plan for rehabilitation and resettlement must be implemented, ensuring that displaced persons return to their original homes whenever possible or are provided with viable alternatives. The government's primary focus should be on tangible, concrete actions rather than superficial dialogues. Addressing these fundamental issues will create the conditions for meaningful civil society engagement and inter-community reconciliation. Only once the State successfully reasserts its authority, addresses security concerns, and rehabilitates affected communities can dialogue and people-to-people interactions play a meaningful role in long-term peacebuilding.

Conclusion

The Rwanda Genocide and the ethnic crisis in Manipur highlight the devastating consequences of unresolved ethnic tensions. While the contexts differ, Rwanda's reconciliation strategies offer valuable insights to Manipur's peacebuilding efforts. Implementing inclusive governance, fostering inter-community engagement, and addressing socio-economic disparities can help pave the way for long-term stability. However, Manipur's unique socio-political landscape, historical grievances, and governance structures must be considered while adopting such measures.

A holistic approach is essential to restore peace, integrating government action, civil society participation, and grassroots reconciliation programs (Staub 2014). The priority is to curb violence, dismantle armed groups, carry out early recovery of illegal weapons, and ensure that law enforcement agencies perform in an unbiased and impartial manner. Additionally, village volunteers, who took up

arms in self-defence, must be rehabilitated rather than criminalized, while politically motivated armed groups require a separate strategic response.

Beyond security measures, Manipur's deep-rooted issues, such as drug trafficking, illegal immigration, deforestation, and unemployment, must be systematically addressed to prevent future instability. Equally important is the rehabilitation of those displaced by violence, ensuring their safe return or relocation with adequate support.

Restoring state authority, rebuilding trust, and addressing socio-economic challenges are critical steps toward peace. Only after these foundations are established can inter-community dialogue and reconciliation efforts take shape, ensuring a stable, united, and prosperous Manipur.

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Reclaiming Kashmiri Society: Kashmiri Pandits and Rwanda's Experience

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ABSTRACT

The Kashmiri Pandit community's forced exodus in the early 1990s by radical Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups has had significant consequences on the culture and socio-political dynamics of Kashmir. This study uses a systematic review method to analyze the experiences of the Kashmir Pandit community through the lens of Rwandan reconciliation and rebuilding. The authors suggest community-based justice models, such as the Rwandan Gacaca courts, may work in many instances, but government and international support are crucial. The study encourages the development of policy models reflecting Rwanda's experiences for the return and integration of Kashmiri Pandits while maintaining stability in Kashmir. This focus on Kashmiri society helps understand the problems in rebuilding the society and expands knowledge on conflict transformation in multi-ethnic and post-conflict societies.

Key words: *Kashmir, Kashmiri Pandits, Rwanda, Reconciliation, Conflict Resolution, Reintegration, Societal rebuilding.*

The Kashmiri Pandit Exodus: An Overview

AS A HINDU MINORITY group native to the Kashmir Valley, Kashmiri Pandits formed part of the population of the Kashmir region and its socio-economic balance for centuries. They lived along with the Muslim majority under the umbrella of Kashmiri 'Ethnicity', which infers a sense of belongingness among different communities (Kaul

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2018). However, the polity started changing drastically after the partition of British India in 1947, which gave birth to India and Pakistan. Jammu and Kashmir region, which had a Hindu king, but its residents were predominantly Muslims, became the hotbed of international affairs. The first Indo-Pakistani War (1947-1948) ended in the split of the region, erecting lasting animosity that was bound to foster for years (Bose 2003). In the late 1980s, Pakistan-sponsored insurgency started in the Kashmir Valley with voices of self-determination and at times, calls to join Pakistan. During this period, the rise of external support is evident, most notably through the cellular structures of Islamic militancy exemplified by the emergence of many terrorist organizations (Schofield 2010). More precisely, as early as 19 January 1990, threats were issued to the Kashmiri Pandits emphasizing their removal from the valley, through the announcements made over the loudspeakers of the mosques within Kashmir as well as a full-page advertisement in the local newspapers. The issuance of these death warrants often went along with the cases of targeted violence including murders, rapes, arson and the likes, all aimed at instilling terror in the region (Pandita 2013). By the mid-1990s, an estimated number of four hundred to six hundred thousand Kashmiri Pandits had left their ancestral homes due to the exodus, and were dispersed in the various cities of India, such as Jammu and Delhi, amongst others (Bamzai 1994). As a sequel to this, the socio-economic as well as cultural ramifications of this exodus were devastating for the provisions that were made for the displaced Kashmiri pandits. In context, many found themselves inhabiting refugee sub-standard conditions that were conducive to overpopulation, resulting in loss of property and culture, as well as psychological torture (Kaul 2018). The measures that have been sought for their rehabilitation have been certain but unsuccessful, primarily because it has been unable to comprehend the issues of security and politics of the region. According to the latest findings, a small number of displaced pandits have returned to the valley, in which case the percentage is significantly small (Raina 2020).

The Rwandan Genocide and the Subsequent Process of Reconciliation

The dire events of the 1994 Rwandan genocide are among the most brutal and ghastly in human history, resulting in the death of an estimated 8,00,000 individuals, consisting of Tutsis and Hutu moderates over three months (United Nations 2012). Although it has been widely claimed that President Juvénal Habyarimana's assassination triggered the violence, it is evident that the Hutu militias

had been premeditating plans to instigate violence, including mass sexual violence that left an estimated 2,50,000 women raped (United Nations 2012). The aftermath of this horrific violence witnessed Rwanda embarking on a unique experiment of inclusiveness that was aimed at the society and nation as a whole.

In a stroke of genius, Rwandans turned to Gacaca¹ courts, which were formed as a backup for the main idea of the Rwandan post-genocide strategies. The sheer number of cases involving the Rwandan genocide required this community-based solution. Specifically, these courts also worked through mechanisms of confession, repentance, and the involvement of the local population, all of which had about 1.9 million cases concluded by 2012 (United Nations 2012). These efforts included the establishment of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) in 1999, which contributed greatly to the dialogue and the quest for a common Rwandan identity (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum n.d.). As one of the progressive reforms, the government removed ethnic labels from national identification cards, eroding the enshrined ethno-centric divisions and reinforcing the idea of a multi-ethnic nation state (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs 2023).

Rwanda's peacemaking strategies included, but were not limited to, socio-economic reforms which aimed at addressing the needs of disadvantaged segments of the society and fostering sustainable development. Strategies to enhance women's capabilities and reduce poverty were indispensable in fostering trust and increasing the society's cohesion and growth (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum n.d.). These changes proved the resolve of the governments to redress the unresolved underlying problems and ethnically target as much the disintegration of the society. The challenges of post-conflict reconstruction can be better understood with reference to Rwanda's approach to reconciliation. Its combination of local methods of justice, building a sense of nation, and restructuring in a broader sense is an innovative approach to nation-building. In relation to other post-conflict situations, what seems to set Rwanda apart is the thrust placed on the eradication of ethnic differences and the fostering of self-help reconciliation, which allows for addressing the complexities of social healing and conflict management.

Objective of the study

The major objective of this paper was to evaluate the relevance of Rwanda's reconciliation approaches to the context of the reintegration of Kashmiri Pandits.

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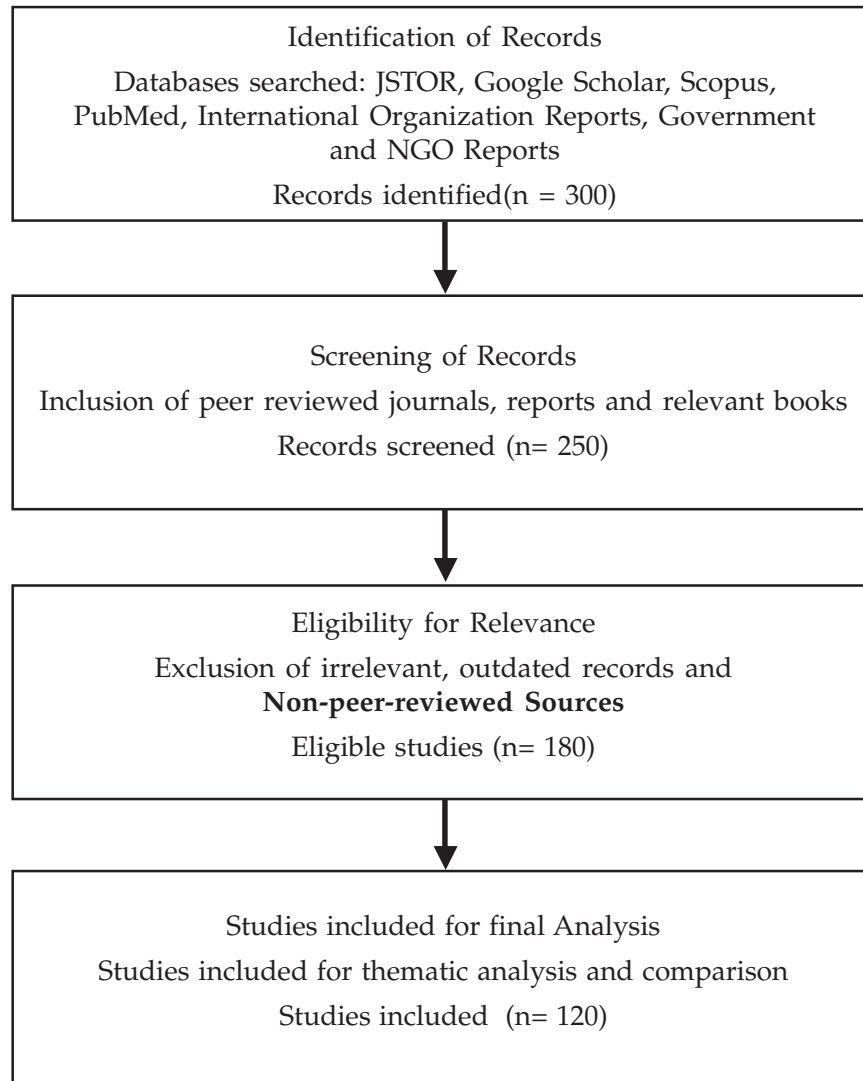
Methodology

This research used a literature review strategy to determine the perspective of the Kashmiri Pandit community in the aftermath of the genocide, as experienced through the other side i.e., the Rwandan genocide survivors. A systematic literature review is a method that provides an organized way of searching and collating literature on a topic of interest and outlines a clear understanding of methods and conclusions drawn from the data collected while also lessening the chances of biases among the synthesizers (Lame 2019).

The important sources consulted for this study comprise scholarly articles, policy papers, biographies of people or events, and social media posts concerning peace and reconciliation. Such sources emerged as appropriate to investigate the forced displacement and the efforts towards reconciliation from the social, political, cultural, and psychological angles. For example, articles in journals rated in the USA, such as the Social Science Citation Index and the government reports, along with the investigations of the Kashmiri Pandits' plight and development assistance strategy in the recovery period in Rwanda. Such literature was either published after 2010 and directly relevant to the topics within, and the literature published before was ignored. In order to present a comprehensive analysis of Kashmir and reconciliation, the study covers literature published between 2010 and 2024, as it brings the most current views concerning the two issues.

The systematic review encompasses publications from various sources, including JSTOR, Scopus, and PubMed, to facilitate the acquisition of peer-reviewed articles, archives, and articles on policy. The information provided on the reintegration difficulties is further illustrated by the reports from the UN as well as other NGOs regarding the reconciliation efforts in both cases. Thematic analysis was used for data organization and interpretation. The analysis encompasses cross-cutting themes of governance, cultural restoration, trauma, justice, and reintegration, and applies them with socio-political, cultural, and psychological imperatives that applied in both cases. This data-based approach, on the other hand, ensured that the themes arise from the literature instead of the researchers placing them, suggesting a comparative approach to the integration strategies of the Kashmiri Pandits and reconstruction of Rwanda after its genocide. Thus, by gathering these sources in an orderly manner, the research aimed to identify the relevant experiences from the Rwandan case that can be useful to the reintegration and resettlement of the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community.

Fig. 1 :The PRISMA Flowchart



The PRISMA flowchart indicated before highlights the selection of articles in the systematic review. The subjects included in this flowchart are: the steps of article identification and record screening, eligibility checking, and final inclusion into the thematic analysis. Following the above steps, the outline indicates the items.

Results

Analysis of 120 studies incorporated in the systematic review yielded

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six major themes. These themes emerged from a detailed process of thematic analysis, which involved organizing the data, coding, and classifying frequently occurring ideas into wider categories. Every theme forms an important part of the comparative framework that deals with the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits and the process of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda. A brief description of the themes and the procedure of their derivation are given below:

Theme Derivation Process

1. Data Familiarization

The papers that constituted the 120 studies were scanned thoroughly for prevailing themes, concepts, ideas, and patterns.

2. Initial Coding

Qualitative data analysis software was used to systematically code certain phrases, terms, and concepts that pertained to the research objectives.

3. Categorization of Codes

Like codes were narrowed down into primary categories, reflecting the themes, topics, or issues emerging from the literature review.

4. Thematic Refinement

Such categories were further collapsed and consolidated until key themes were demonstrated that described the data without being repetitive.

5. Conclusion of Themes

The six themes were adopted to focus on the study's social, political, cultural and psychological aspects. Each theme was accorded a name and provided with an explanation for proper understanding and connection to the research strategy. It is possible to systematically compare the practices implemented by the Kashmiri Pandits and the measures carried out for reconciliation in Rwanda in order to derive useful conclusions from the history of both community sections.

Themes

The six themes that emerged on the basis of data analysis are discussed below, each in a detailed manner.

1. Displacement and Genocide: A Psychological Perspective

The permanence of trauma, loss of identity, and the constant presence

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of imminent mental stressors are some of the examples demonstrating the psychological legacy of genocide and displacement that such communities endure. The Kashmiri Pandits were forcibly displaced from their homes in the 1990s, which dramatically decreased their mental health as it involved the loss of support structures and cultural traditions (Bhan 2013). Survivors of the Rwandan genocide in 1994 cited the mass violence as a horrific reality that included the loss of family members and collapse of government, leading to the development of immense post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression (Pham et al. 2004). Violence in these forms affects not just the immediate targets, but their posterity, instilling various levels of trauma into future generations (Miller & Rasmussen 2010). Furthermore, both communities experienced the loss of their social and cultural identity as a result of genocide. In the case of Kashmiri Pandits, displacement restricted their access to their cultural practices and community ties, leading to poorly defined identities (Bhat 2012). Rwandan genocide left most of its orphans without much hope, and they were unable to find a solid sense of belonging as most societies were already destroyed (Betancourt et al. 2011). However, both communities responded with tremendous grit. As noted from the literature, the pre-exile Kashmiri Pandit culture, religion, and mythology provided them psychological sustenance and a claim of spatiality.

In the case of Rwandan survivors, it was the other life that goes on community support programs that integrated them into society, which resulted from trauma healing activities. However, the integration is smooth and acceptable among both groups for the addition of mental health interventions. Systematic targeting of violent extremism in the UK and Europe has compounded the psychological woes of the Kashmiri Pandits, aided by an absence of specific mental health care programs (Zutshi 2021). Moving to Rwanda, trauma healing and counseling initiatives were effectively integrated, but to reverse all genocidal and long-lasting effects is not feasible nor very effective (Pham et al. 2004). These are instances suggesting the stark and harsh realities of fragmented theories of trauma healing and the precarious state of mental health care in these societies. Bridging these chasms may enable peace and help restore harmony in places ravaged by genocide and displacement.

2. Social Identity and Conservation

As evidenced by the Kashmiri Pandits and the Rwandan genocide survivors, the prototypical cases of community forcible displacement tend to put at risk the preservation of such communities' cultural

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identity. For instance, in the case of the Kashmiri Pandits, their culturally identifiable features such as the oral dialect, customary practices, and rituals, which were second nature to them, were rendered 'dormant' after they escaped from their homelands. This dislocation disrupted the connection to the sacred and historical land, and the entire dislocation made it difficult for them to practise their customs in foreign locations (Kaul 2018). Furthermore, socio-linguistic dislocation forced the younger generations into cultural and linguistic assimilation, inhibiting them from learning their heritage (Bhat 2015). In this regard, while the attempts to preserve community identity by seeking to reconstruct temples, telling stories, and organizing gatherings are good, they have largely been inadequate in reversing the great loss (Zutshi 2021).

Rwandan survivors of the 1994 genocide experienced similar disruptions in cultural continuity. The genocide within a geographical expression obliterated the family unit and the community that nurtured the culture. Many survivors, especially kids, lived without their parents and lost a lot of cultural and traditional knowledge because of the violence. But the rebuilding of Rwanda knew how to reconcile the need for preservation with wishes for justice. To enhance cultural identity and develop community cohesiveness, community-based programs such as traditional dances and storytelling initiatives were reinvigorated (Betancourt et al. 2011).

Additionally, cultural events were used to foster healing and reconciliation through common history as opposed to ethnic identity (Staub et al. 2015). Avoiding Resettlement and Lessons in Future Settlement's preservation in post-displaced and post-conflict frameworks also parallels thorns and a sense of hope. For the Kashmiri Pandits, the absence of cultural preservation by societal and state structures is an important impediment. On the other hand, the Rwandan state's purposeful efforts to relate cultural aspects to its settlement agenda show what a government can do to protect the people and their culture. With that in mind, Kashmiri Pandits could learn that comprehensive preservation and monitoring of traditions, such as recording their cultural practices, building cultural and civilization centers, and teaching their offspring, would be of good use by borrowing what is relevant from the Rwandan people's experience. Such efforts could help prevent cultural identity erosion and enhance society's socialization and reconstruction after forced dislocation.

3. Justice and Reconciliation Mechanism

Justice and reconciliation are important aspects while dealing with

post-displacement and post-conflict situations. Resistance to such processes renders conflict and violence perpetual and the society unable to recover. In the case of Rwanda, Gacaca courts, the community's assistance to justice, were effective in responding to the horrendous events of the 1994 genocide. These courts stressed serving justice in a 'restorative manner' which empowered the victims to face their abusers and also assisted in achieving some closure and peace to the survivors. From 2002 to 2012, the Gacaca courts adjudicated around 2 million cases, demonstrating their effectiveness in adjudicating justice at the grassroots level. However, accusations of bias, absence of legal protections and the stresses endured by the victims are some of the limitations of these courts (Clark 2010, Ingelaere 2016). Notwithstanding these concerns, the Gacaca courts remarkably aided in restoring confidence in the society and the reconciliation of people at a national level (Staub et al. 2005).

In contrast, the Kashmiri Pandit community has seen substantial 'justice deficit' both in terms of violence and disintegration during the period of post 90s. Structured legal remedies have proved to be largely useless in meeting the concerns of the community, with very few offenders being held responsible for the atrocities witnessed during their diaspora. This absence has further heightened the sense of injustice and disenfranchisement within the community (Kaul 2018). Furthermore, the lack of formal mechanisms of reconciliation has negatively affected relations between communities as well as impacted the resolution of issues leading to conflicts. Zutshi (2021) notes that people have attempted inter-faith communication and memory archeology efforts, but such initiatives have been weak and not backed by institutions. A relative analysis underscores the need to integrate community-driven fairness models, like Rwanda's Gacaca courts, to concentrate on the gaps in justice delivery for Kashmiri Pandits. This mechanism can be paired with accountability systems, dialogue, and reconciliation. Furthermore, establishing 'truth-telling spaces' and opportunities for memorialization would assist the community with closure and the healing process. When taken together, these approaches in justice complemented with the strong legal ones, can also be useful in delivering justice and reconciliation through addressing past grievances and enabling sound conditions for future peace to flourish.

4. Governance and Institutional Responses

Governance and institutional responses have emerged as critical touchpoints in the domain of displacement, rehabilitation, and reintegration, as apposite in the case of the Kashmiri Pandit diaspora as well as post-genocide rebuilding in Rwanda. In Rwanda, building

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the nation's agenda was accompanied by sound governance and institutional reforms. Vision 2020 and Vision 2050 policies sought the creation of a society where structural inequalities that instigated the genocide would have been addressed. The approach of restoring and promoting unity was also supported by the formation of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission NURC and the utilization of Rwandan-specific solutions like Umuganda and NdiUmunyarwanda, as noted by Clark and Kaufman (2009) and Ingelaere (2016). UN and donor agencies are international actors that contributed to these efforts and provided the necessary funding and technical support. Nonetheless, researchers such as Pottier (2011) warn that Rwanda's model of top-down governance, while ensuring its order, was sometimes not very inclusive or democratic. Policy reforms in various proxy refugees, such as the Kashmiri Pandits, have unfortunately suffered from policy frameworks and implementation gaps. Aid packages such as the Prime Ministers Reconstruction Package (2008) were designed to ease the burden of families who had been displaced, in the form of job placements, housing, and financial support. Such programs, however, have not recorded many successes as they have been hampered by bureaucratic constraints, fear of injustice, and poor reintegration programs (Kaul 2018, Zutshi 2021). Kashmiri Pandit community is now largely cut off from the international community and support, except for insubstantial symbolic actions. The absence of a law and order policy framework has made it difficult to integrate and unite Islamic and non-Islamic societies in Kashmir (Bhat 2015).

5. Socio-Economic Rehabilitation and Reintegration

Efforts for socio-economic rehabilitation and rhetoric of reintegration remain core issues in the reconstruction efforts of displaced communities. In Rwanda, the paradigms of community reconstruction and national policies were key factors helping socio-economic recovery after the 1994 genocide. Livestock provision under the Girinka scheme and poverty reduction campaign by the Vision 2020 Umurenge initiative, especially focused on extreme deprivation, helped in livelihood restoration and building social capital (Clark 2010, Ansoms and Rostagno 2012). These programs promoted the notion of self-reliance so that the Holocaust survivors could be useful members of society. However, critics like Pottier (2011) commented that this nineteenth century welfare projected a top-down model that sometimes ignored local conditions and created a culture of dependency in some regions. Equally, development projects were funded through international aid, which always had a different agenda from that of the recipients (Ingelaere 2016). Kashmiri Pandits have faced challenges

that have made their socio-economic rehabilitation difficult, including the absence of appropriate policies. For some of them, displacements severed their source of livelihood, unable to cope with other centers where they were settled, plunging many households into uncertainty regarding employment opportunities. Although measures such as the Prime Minister's Special Scholarship Scheme (PMSSS) for the students of Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh along with aid packages were introduced, they did not facilitate any long-term economic migration back into the state of Jammu and Kashmir (Kaul 2018). Displaced Kashmiri Pandits, in particular, are found to have difficulties in securing job opportunities or property ownership within the Union territory, considering the political turmoil and terror threats (Bhat 2015, Zutshi 2021). The experience of fostering the Kashmiri Pandit community has caused much criticism due to the absence of grassroots participation, as it has been considered inefficient and unsustainable when compared to that of the Rwandans. As Ansoms and Rostagno (2012) point to the fact that the Kinyarwanda's holistic approach to initiation did not leave behind the people's basic needs regarding employment, but also ensured a spirit of togetherness among them. For instance, the Girinka policy not only increased the income levels of households but also promoted community ties as people shared animals.

6. Lessons from Comparative Contexts

This theme addresses the best practices at the global level, which may assist the challenges faced in reintegrating displaced societies such as the Kashmiri Pandits. The reconciliation process in post-genocide Rwanda articulates how most structural approaches combining country and community level efforts work to bring about community healing and rebuilding. The Gacaca courts, for example, provided a forum for restorative justice, overcoming survivors' emotional scars and initiating community-based reconciliation (Clark 2010). In addition, NdiUmunyarwanda, which promoted national identity, illustrates the power of creative cultural construction in transcending divides (Ingelaere 2016). From the Rwandan context, it is evident that consistent political will, including grassroots movements, is required to reconstruct fragmented societies. It is noted that, as lessons in tackling such an issue, other areas may be explored in this context. While there is nothing new in adopting such a lens, this area and Kashmir more generally have a long experience of ethnic violence, and there is a need to understand how relations can be nurtured while providing justice to the affected communities. Zutshi (2021), in turn, advocated for policies that promote justice and enhance

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cross-community communication to decrease underlying tensions. Also, economic reintegration as done through Rwanda's Vision 2020 programs, offered a reference about how to develop restoration livelihood programs for the Kashmiri Pandits. These comprise microfinance programs and training sessions that seek to increase reliance on self-dependency (Ansoms & Rostagno 2012). Rwanda's example shows the importance of complementarity between international aid and local priorities. While Rwanda had the advantage of well-organized external assistance, the response to the plight of the Kashmiri Pandits around the world has been rather indifferent and at worst symbolic (Kaul Suvir 2018). The development of cooperative frameworks that bring together international bodies and local authority structures may increase the success rate of rehabilitation programs aimed at the Kashmiri Pandits. However, scholars like Pottier (2011) also assess the perils of overly autonomous control systems and note that outreach methods that enable displaced communities/ families to determine their direction are preferable in the long run. The final synthesis of lessons from Rwanda's democratization and reconciliation strategies constitutes a set of recommendations that can guide India in adopting a broad-based approach that combines justice, economic resources, support, and cultural rehabilitation or readjustment. Suppose the synergy of governmental support and community-based efforts is combined. In that case, a model is provided from which the successful reintegration of Kashmiri Pandits into their roots can follow, making the society stable and harmonious in the long run.

Discussion

The emergence of the six themes points out the displacement-reintegration phenomenon as a complex and multi-layered construct, and it draws some important comparisons between Kashmiri Pandits' and Rwandans' genocide trauma and recovery. The psychological repercussions caused by the violence and forced removal show that quite a lot depends on the trauma, which implies great mental health care programs and community treatment. Both communities reaffirm the need for cultural preservation to avoid losing identity in times of dislocation. At the same time, some of the proactive initiatives undertaken in Rwanda offer clear lessons to the Kashmir Pandits. Justice and reconciliation processes emerge as crucial, especially when looking at Rwanda's Gacaca courts, which helped build community peace through restorative justice, compared to the little or no justice available to the Kashmiri Pandits. Governance and institutional support also emphasize a difference, with Rwanda's well organized political

policies being addressed quickly while India continues with a piecemeal approach. Socio-economic healing remains a serious area, with Rwanda's achievement in livelihood reinstatement providing a yardstick for addressing the monetary and social vulnerabilities of Kashmiri Pandits. Lastly, looking at the case patterns from Rwanda ought to demonstrate the necessity for taking up and sustaining comprehensive interventions towards addressing multifaceted crises in Kashmir, including social injustice, loss of culture, and economic marginalization, to foster a well-knit society.

Conclusion

The analysis shows that while focusing on the Kashmiri Pandit diaspora and targeting its specificities, one must take into consideration the case of the Rwandan genocide, as the two have a lot in common in terms of trauma, loss, and resilience. Kashmiri Pandits have met with sustained multifaceted strategies for integration and rehabilitation, like that of the case study on the Rwandan model. The endorsement of a top-down, integrated method comprising justice, identity, culture, and socio-economic rebuilding will be a chronic matter, in addition to a sustained approach towards policy making on any such issue. It is also evident from the research that there is a need to work together with civil society organizations and other international bodies to bridge the gaps that are creating barriers in the programs for the reintegration of Kashmiri Pandits. The comparative analysis further emphasizes this when discussing other post-conflict and post-enclosure recovery aspects while demonstrating the significance of Rwanda's experiences to other parts of the world. In conclusion, it can be said that to provide sustained healing to the Kashmiri Pandits and thereby to the Kashmiri society, it will take much more than just policy changes, as it requires rebuilding and re-emphasis on emotions, collaboration, and cohesion at all possible levels.

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Rebuilding Rwanda: The Role of Women in Rwanda's Peace-building and Reconstruction

Suja George Stanley

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of women in rebuilding the socio-economic fabric of Rwanda after the Genocide, which resulted in the death of 600,000 to 800,000 people and the exodus of nearly 2 million others. Post-genocide, women played a key role in the reconstruction of Rwanda's society, taking on greater responsibility in decision-making, financial resource management, and household care. They became systemic parts of the new nation-state, actively involved in the legislature, judiciary, and various state institutions. Today, Rwanda has the world's largest female legislative representation, with women constituting around 63.75% in the chamber of deputies and 37.4% in the Senate. Over 30 years of sustained efforts towards women's empowerment have led to women being the leading force in parliament, judiciary, cabinet, provincial governors, district council members, and vice mayors in social affairs.

Key words: *Women, Peace building, Reconstruction, Rwanda, Representation, Women Empowerment*

Background

ISSUES CONCERNING WOMEN deserve a notable place in peace-building as they are often among the worst-hit during conflicts. However, women are gifted at fostering peace. Rwanda was a poor and conventional patriarchal society with agriculture being the main occupation. The Rwandan women had to suffer due to subordination, exploitation, and oppression both in the family and in society, as they were considered inferior. During the Genocide, women were easy targets and hundreds had to face various forms of violence, including

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rape, and a few of them even death. After the 1994 genocide, women rose up against discrimination and began engaging in various political activities. Women faced several constraints in the initial years, but kept fighting for their rights, and eventually, laws and policies were enforced that ensured quality of life and gender equality. Despite being considered inferior and subjected to regressive conditions for centuries, they proved that substantial growth of the country in various spheres is possible with equal opportunities.

Within 30 years after the Genocide, Rwanda's economy is one of the continent's fastest-growing economies and is seen as an example for adaptability and sustainable growth. According to the Global Gender Gap Report, Rwanda, an African nation, is among the top five in the world for gender equality as of 2018 (Warmer 2018). Rwanda's President Paul Kagame highlighted women's crucial role in transforming the country to what it is today. The President, during his speech in Kwigabuka 30, said: *"The Rwandan story shows how much power human beings have within them. Whatever power you do have, you might as well use it to tell the truth and do what is right."* (Speech of Paul Kagame on 07/04/2024).

Women of Rwanda in the Pre-Genocide Period

Pre-genocide Rwandan society was characterized by rituals, customs, traditions, and a patriarchal structure that limited women to domestic duties and reduced their participation in all facets of life. The pre-genocide is characterized by ambivalence towards women. The famous Rwandan proverb "A woman does not have an identity; she takes on her husband" was a major part of their thought process. Jefremovas explains that Women in Rwanda have been suppressed, oppressed, deprived, discriminated against, and restricted to social and political roles. Due to the dominance of men in Rwandan society, women were marginalized to work in salaried occupations (Jefremovas 2002). Rwandan patriarchal communities portrayed males as relishing the adventure of life outside the home. The men in a woman's household are supposed to govern and protect them. Women have been excluded from education, decision-making processes, employment, particularly paid ones, and leadership positions, and they have not inherited land and property from their parents or husbands (Anne 2007). Women in Rwandan society depended on men, whether it was their husbands, fathers, or sons. However, as in any regressive society, the women in Rwanda were often victims of humiliation, torture, and exploitation. Girls' education in pre-genocide Rwanda was centered on getting them ready for their future roles as wives and mothers (Nicole 2010).

Traumatic Experiences Faced by Women during Genocide

The trauma faced by women during the Rwandan Genocide and civil war (1994) was immense and devastating. Every Rwandan person who was alive during the Rwandan Genocide has a terrifying tale, as thousands lost their lives, while many others were injured, and a large number of them went into exile. Women in particular suffered the most horrific accounts of hunger, violence, and losing relatives and friends. According to UN estimates, between 2,50,000 and 5,00,000 women were raped during the Genocide and many of them were held captive and were used as sex slaves by soldiers and militia groups (Doan 2010). Many were forced into marriage with soldiers or militia members, often under threat of violence. Many women lost their husbands and were left to care for their children. Around 80 percent of those who were in refugee camps were children. Women in Rwandan society have been victims of humiliation, torture, exploitation, different types of crimes as rapes, domestic violence, sexual violence, sexual mutilation, forced pregnancy, rape and sexual slavery (Human Rights Watch/Africa 1996) Victims were treated with sadistic cruelty and suffered unimaginable agony (Rwanda: the Preventable Genocide 2000, E.S.38). Women were subjected to physical and emotional abuse, including beatings, torture, and psychological manipulation. Women were forced into labor, including farming and domestic work, under threat of violence (Amour d Jean 2017). Many of them were found to be experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other trauma-related conditions. There was extreme poverty, and these traumatic experiences have had a long-lasting effect on women's physical and mental health, relationships, and overall well-being.

Role of Women in Rebuilding and Restructuring Rwanda

Rwanda's socio-economic and political structures were on the verge of collapse as a result of the Genocide and subsequent ethnic warfare. Women were compelled to enter the mainstream and begin reconstructing their own lives for the first time in Rwandan history. Despite their heavy burdens and limitations, women at the time assumed increasing responsibility for domestic chores, social mending, agricultural production, and reconciliation. The President Paul Kagame said in his speech at the International Women's Day celebration in Kigali that *"Women are an important pillar of the development of our country. You referred to the gold that is hidden inside a woman. For me, it is not hidden, I have always seen it. It is not something we had to discover, it has always been visible. That is why it is easy to promote gender equality"* (speech

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of Kagame Paul on 08/03/2024).

There are three primary phases to the post-genocide era, and each has its own methods for promoting peace. From the very beginning of the renovation, the government of Rwanda, with the support of the International community, led the main initiative. The Government of National Unity (GNU) established a comprehensive framework to guarantee that women were actively included in the reconstruction and post-genocide processes. In addition to emergency programs, the Ministry of Family and Women's Affairs was founded, and creating women committees or institutions ranging from local cells to the national level was one of its top priorities (John & Jeanne 2005). The ultimate goal of these committees was to give Rwandan women a platform to voice their opinions, concerns, and interests on the country's reconstruction. In addition, women have been seen in the post-genocide era carrying out non-traditional responsibilities including managing finances, making decisions, and constructing roads and homes, even if they lack the necessary skills for these positions, and made a significant contribution to the reconstruction of the damaged social, educational, judicial, and health systems. They have taken the lead in promoting significant peace and reconstruction. The increased significance of women's involvement in Rwanda's post-genocide society has changed the way that women generally think. Today, Rwanda seems to be making history by showcasing the role of women in all areas. Their unadulterated experiences catalyze tenacity, bravery, and resolve that aid in rebuilding a country. Some of the key roles they played include the following:

(a) Role of women in rebuilding families

Rwandan women's roles, responsibilities, and objectives were altered by the Genocide, which forced them to take on tasks that men traditionally performed, and they have taken advantage of the opportunities presented by crises, redefining and taking on new responsibilities to provide for their children and themselves (Powley 2007). Demographic imbalances compelled women to assume leadership roles in the community, serve as the head of household, and give financial support for the homeless and orphans (Malakar 2018). Rwandan women have had to bear substantial workloads, as they are taking care of the surviving members of their own nuclear families in addition to feeding, clothing, and paying for their children's education. Many widows were compelled to take up farming, and several others left their homes in pursuit of employment, to support themselves and their dependents, and to reconstruct their towns; the government also made use of their expertise. In addition to fostering

orphans, many Rwandan women care for elderly or infirm relatives. In addition to being the backbone of food production, rural women are essential to the growth of cash crops, and urban educated women work outside the home in paid positions. In contrast, non-elite women have taken on various income-generating jobs. Women were banded into groups according to what they needed help with. For example, 'The Association des Femmes chef de Famille' primarily addressed the basic requirements of women in their new roles as heads of the family (Joan 2014).

(b) Role of Women in Rebuilding Communities:

Reconstructing Rwanda in general and rebuilding lives specifically was a huge task to the newly formed transitional government, which had no resources to support such families, however Rwandan women stepped out of the houses to search for work, sustain themselves and those who were under their care, and rebuild their communities (Justine 2014). For the reconstruction of Rwanda, they played the key role at the grassroots level. They visited rural areas and came together to form small organizations that would address their needs and problems. They were actively involved in the various state institutions, departments, and community courts, which traditionally had no representation of women. Women were also involved in distributing small livestock with the help of international organizations. A broad network of grassroots women's organizations, including cooperatives and associations, was essential for empowering women. The groups that were formed earlier provided a network of mutual support. In this space, women could share their experiences, offer support, and share ideas on rebuilding their communities (Newbury & Baldwin 2000). These individuals, who were both genocide victims and perpetrators, have come together and collaborated on the programs under consideration, and they started the following programs.

- 1). *Umuganda*: A mandatory community service program that is coming together for a common purpose, like road repairs and infrastructure cleaning.
- 2) *The Ndi Umunyarwanda* (I Am Rwandan) programme: As part of this programme, participants discussed history and sought atonement for their crimes against other ethnic groups.
- 3) *Umugoroba Wa Ababyeyi* (parents evening), where parents from the same village discuss a range of topics, from politics and development to family matters (Herath 2018).

Through women's organizations, Rwandan women worked for the restoration and modification of the country's institutions and social

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structure. Women's groups have been essential in Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction efforts, aiding women and children from the two opposing ethnic groups without facing discrimination.

(c) Role of Women-led Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):

NGOs are a major source of inspiration for human development in Rwanda. They fostered a culture of cooperation and gave Rwandan women access to economic opportunities for long-term, sustainable growth. NGOs in Rwanda assist not just in the areas of health, education, and women's empowerment but also in environmental sustainability, women's empowerment through civil society, work promoting peace and reconciliation, etc. Women who had been involved in national women's organizations before 1994 started to reestablish groups inside Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, an umbrella group of women's associations already existing in the capital city of Kigali. They created a 'Campaign for Peace' at the end of 1994 to address the social and economic issues that Rwanda faced in the aftermath of the Genocide. This program suggested strategies for incorporating women in initiatives to support general reconstruction and lessen societal tensions, with a specific focus on the vital needs of Rwandan women (Newbury & Baldwin 2000). Women's NGOs also sponsored programs to distribute small livestock (pigs or goats, in particular) to women and vulnerable groups and to aid grassroots organizations to improve agricultural production.

Following the Genocide in 1994, NGOs started providing brief trainings to various agents and the limited number of Assistant Social Workers. They were required to support the growing number of social groupings that were being victimized. As a consequence of consistent efforts by various women's organizations, government agencies and policies, there are visible positive changes in the status of women in Rwanda. High schools began teaching 'Social Action' as a subject, which marked the beginning of education and the profession of 'social work'. The goal was to train Assistant Social Workers (ASW) with the bare minimum of skills and knowledge. They would be employed in social development, mental health, child care, welfare, and poverty alleviation in particular.

Some of the notable national-level women's organizations included Association des Guides du Rwanda (AGR), Haguruka, Association de Solidarité des Femmes Rwandaises (ASOFERWA), Association des Veuves du Génocide Agahozo (AVEGA), and Association des Femmes Chefs de Familles (AFCF) (MWambari 2017). Some of their activities included training women to participate in national policies on governance, assisting returning refugees, actively participating in local

Gacaca courts, helping genocide survivors, and promoting Rwandan women's participation in the advancement of peace internationally (Newbury & Baldwin 2000). Women leaders in Rwandan NGOs exemplify resilience, creativity, and collaboration. They showcase their stories and empower more women to pursue meaningful careers in the nonprofit sector (Gratia 2023).

(d) Role of Women in Economic Empowerment:

Rwandan women were crucial to the economic growth of their nation. Two years after the Genocide, in 1996, the government of Rwanda estimated that women made up approximately 54% of the population and headed an estimated 34% of all households. With the 34% of households identified as female-headed, 60% were headed by widows (Newbury & Baldwin 2000). Paul Kagame has highlighted that developing human resources is essential to sustained development because the nation lacks minerals and has limited resources (Kagame 2012). The primary drivers of Rwanda's rehabilitation at the moment are rural women. The traditional roles of women - reproduction and production - are shifting in many locations as a result of women being compensated for their work, which allows them to compete with men for jobs. The ministry in charge of Family and Women's Affairs was established, and among its priority programmes was the birth of women committees or structures that ran from community cells to the national level. It raised the number of self-employed women entrepreneurs in the formal sector. The government backed initiatives that help Rwandan women achieve economic independence, such as 'Women for Women International Rwanda'.

Rwandan women are engaged in commercial agriculture, farming, creating cooperatives, obtaining financing from financial institutions, accumulating money, utilizing technology, entrepreneurship, small-scale industries, and cooperating with men to provide for their families and contribute to Rwanda's economic growth. In October 2008, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) released a report titled 'Voices of Women Entrepreneurs in Rwanda'. The research states that women entrepreneurs constitute a substantial portion of Rwanda's private sector, leading 42% of all firms. Rwanda has the third-highest percentage of female entrepreneurs among all African nations, and 41% of enterprises are owned and operated by women (Cutura 2008). The 2005 Land Law guarantees equal access to and ownership of land, and the land administration procedure was made easier for more people, particularly women, to obtain financial services by using their legally granted land titles.

By giving women easy access to and control over financial

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resources, the POWER initiative (Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment in Rwanda) seeks to improve their socio-economic status and decision-making ability. Rwanda Development Board's (RDB) annual report indicates an increase in female ownership of businesses from 27% in 2017 to 34% in 2022, signifying a progressive trend towards gender balance in the private sector (Niyonzima & Eyayu 2023). Jackline and Mulyungi (2019) assessed the role of women's participation in the socio-economic development of Rwanda, and women's perception shows that 100% of women participate and get involved in the activities of Vision 2020 Umurenge Program, get involved in *Girinka Munyarwanda* interventions, get involved in cooperatives and community development associations, get involved in savings and credit cooperatives, and get involved in community work known as *Umuganda*. According to the Rwanda women's economic empowerment report, out of the 56.4% economically active women, 55.8% had an occupation and 87.6% were involved in agricultural activities. Available statistics indicate that women in Rwanda are making an important contribution to the country's economy, particularly in the agricultural sector, where they account for 79 per cent of the labor force (Rwanda: Women's Economic Empowerment, Report). In 2020, the Government of Rwanda introduced the Rwandan National Development Strategy known as 'Vision 2050', by President Paul Kagame and the country's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, which aims to transform its economy and modernize the lives of all Rwandans (Republic of Rwanda Vision 2050 2020).

(e) Role of Women in Leadership and Governance:

The newly established transitional administration faced enormous challenges in reconstructing Rwanda overall and reconstructing lives in particular. Women's inclusion is a defining feature of the Rwandan Patriotic Front's (RPF) post-genocide rehabilitation and reconstruction program. It was assumed that if more women were represented in decision-making forums, such as national legislatures and municipal governments, more gender-sensitive decisions would be taken and implemented, and the rights of women would be promoted. The Government of Rwanda amended its constitution to grant women greater rights. At the national and, to a lesser extent, municipal government levels, quotas imposed by the 2003 Constitution as revised to date (reserving at least thirty percent of positions in decision-making bodies for women) have led to high levels of political representation of women (Wallace et.al 2008).

Women-led efforts to deal with the horrific consequences of

Genocide, lobbied for female-friendly legislation and important posts in the government with the strong support of the President, Paul Kagame. Through the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the Government of Rwanda has also worked to advance gender equality. Women started to take the lead and participate in a variety of political activities, taking on leadership roles in government, civil society, and community organizations, shaping policy and decision-making. A women's initiative called the 'Unity Club' (Senior Government Officials) was successful in uniting the nation's leadership, and the 'Rwanda Women Leaders Caucus', a forum for female parliamentarians, primarily encouraged women to abandon their traditional perspectives and engage in all facets of society (Murungi 2014).

(f) Role of Women in Social Cohesion:

Women facilitated community dialogues, reconciliation efforts, and trauma healing, promoting social cohesion. During the war, Rwandan women demonstrated amazing involvement and lobbying for peace. They led women in socio-economic development, worked as peacekeepers and relief assistance workers, acted as mediators, formulated policies, and taught (Emeka et.al 2019). In March 2018, speaking about the International Women's Day, President Paul Kagame rightly said, *"Women are a cornerstone of prosperity for society as a whole. Even in situations of conflict, they are in a position to make unique contributions to peace and stability"* (Speech by President Kagame 2018).

(g) Role of Women in Education:

Women contributed significantly towards rebuilding and improving the education systems. After the Genocide, it became imperative that all Rwandans have a formal education. The President of the RPF Government, Paul Kagame, took steps towards a compulsory education program in 2003. Article 20 states that the country was able to reinstate free and compulsory education in the elementary level (Rwanda's Constitution of 2003). The Government of Rwanda implemented free and mandatory basic education for nine years (YBE) in 2008; then, in 2012, it was expanded to twelve years (12YBE). This has made schooling for girls much better by making schools closer together and making enrollment spaces more accessible to more girls. The RPF was encapsulated in a strategic planning document called 'Vision 2020', which was recently replaced by 'Vision 2050'. This updated plan focuses on equitable access to education for women and girls (Williams 2022). Gender parity in the education sector has been successfully attained in terms of enrollment and literacy rates.

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Women can renew their professional skills and knowledge through special programs offered by the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policy (2008), which can help them enter the workforce, carry out income-generating activities, or advance to better positions. From an educational perspective, we can see a change in the outlook towards women in Rwanda. There is an increase in their enrollment.

(h) Role of Women in Healthcare:

The Genocide had a devastating impact on Rwanda's healthcare system, which was most needed. The country was left with a shortage of healthcare workers, a lack of infrastructure, and a high disease burden, particularly in terms of HIV and AIDS (Mariana 2024). Millions of Rwandans are likely living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and those who were sexually abused during the Genocide continue to have health issues. Sexually transmitted infections (STI), such as HIV/AIDS, are the most frequent issue seen among women who have been sexually assaulted and sought care (Cohen et.al 2009). In addition to PTSD symptoms, a substantial proportion of survivors of the Rwandan Genocide have been found to have distress symptoms, including depression and anxiety (Munyandamutsa et.al 2012). The Rwanda Service Provision Assessment (RSPA) focuses on HIV/AIDS services, tuberculosis, malaria, STI services, family planning, maternity and child health care, pre-natal, delivery, and post-natal care.

Despite facing unimaginable hardships, Rwandan women have courageously rebuilt their lives and communities. This resilience is evident in Rwanda's remarkable progress in fighting HIV, especially in preventing transmission from mothers to children (Mariana 2024). The Government of Rwanda has invested heavily in the delivery of quality health care, and physical health indicators have improved dramatically (Ng & Harerimana 2016). The country has made remarkable improvements on key health indicators, including infant and child mortality; immunization coverage; use of family planning; malaria mortality and morbidity; and HIV prevalence. "The data on gender statistics, which emphasize gender equality and development, was released in an official report on gender statistics. It showed that women make up 58.6% of government servants in Rwanda health centers (National Institute of statistics of Rwanda 2013). In what is considered noteworthy, in the world, Rwanda led the way in reducing maternal mortality, infant mortality, and increased birth attendance.

(j) Role of Women in Infrastructure Development

Rwandan women started to navigate the main obstacles effectively

and seized the chances in post-genocide society. In addition to being the head of nearly one-third of all homes, they have also occupied many previously male-only jobs, like mechanics and construction workers. The nation's infrastructure, systems, social structure, and civil services all underwent significant disruptions, and women of Rwanda participated in rebuilding homes, schools, and healthcare facilities, restoring social infrastructure. Rwandan women helped repatriate thousands of displaced people. They provided resettlement opportunities to the returnees (Issifu 2015). They contributed significantly to the rehabilitation and reconstruction processes initiated by the government by participating in the construction of houses in the newly established settlements locally known as *'imidugudu* (Mutuamba & Izabiliza 2005).

After the war, rural women in Rwanda had to take up these responsibilities in the absence of men. It is especially difficult for women in metropolitan areas to obtain resources for rent, secure housing rights, and locate jobs or other sources of income. Women did not work as day workers on construction sites before the conflict and the Genocide (Newbury & Baldwin 2000). The Government of Rwanda implemented the National Urbanization Policy 2015, promoting the participation of women and girls in urban planning, design, and management at the city and neighbourhood levels. The National Construction Industry (NCI) Policy (2009) promoted the participation of women and provided equal opportunities to both women and men to obtain gainful employment or provide services in the construction industry (Republic of Rwanda 2017). These policies created a conducive environment for women and contributed equally to the country's infrastructure development.

(k) Role of Women in Agriculture and Food Security:

The Genocide had almost completely destroyed the agricultural base of the country as a large number of men working in agriculture were either killed, fled the country, or were imprisoned. Women across the country revived numerous agricultural activities. They provided food for their families either under a food for work programme or simply producing food from their own plots (Mutuamba & Izabiliza 2005). The World Food Programme and partners, including fellow UN agencies and UN Women, have implemented an initiative in Rwanda, where nearly 70 percent of women work in agriculture. The initiative aims to empower rural women by reducing gender inequality and poverty, improving food security, and empowering women to be leaders, decision-makers, and change agents (Sesonga 2021). Women played a crucial role in agricultural development, ensuring food

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security and sustainability.

(l) Role of women in decision-making:

The Government of Rwanda has taken several steps to boost the involvement of women in decision-making such as establishing a Ministry of Gender, creating women's councils at all spheres of government, and introducing an electoral system with reserved seats for women at all levels of political leadership up to the national parliament. The establishment of the new Rwandan Constitution in 2003 marked the beginning of women's participation in decision-making, which decreed that 30 percent of parliamentary seats be reserved for women (Constitution of Rwanda 2003). Women took on leadership roles in government, civil society, and community organizations, shaping policy and decision-making. Women's political participation increased, ensuring their voices and perspectives were represented in the country's decision-making processes. In important national and international domains, women are appointed on an equal basis with males to positions such as full ministers, deputy ministers, ambassadors, provincial governors, and many more.

Human Rights practices, 2009 states that Gender equality has become ingrained in development processes as a result of women's growing involvement in leadership and decision-making, which has also changed patriarchal attitudes toward women (Rwanda: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2009). Rwanda has one of the highest percentages of female political representation globally. Women hold 63.75 % of parliamentary seats (highest in the world), 45% of cabinet positions, and 40% of local government leadership positions. Gender equality is improving at the highest levels of decision-making bodies, where women comprise more than 40% of Supreme Court judges, Ministry Permanent Secretaries, and Senators and Deputies who chair standing committees (Gender Statistics: The Public Sector in Rwanda n.d.).

(m) Role of Women in Human Rights and Advocacy:

The 1948 Declaration on Human Rights and other international accords offer women the same rights as men since they are human beings in the same sense as men. Women advocated for gender equality, human rights, and social justice, influencing policy and legal reforms. Women's rights are being implemented more frequently in Rwanda as human rights are receiving more focus and importance. Prior to the Genocide, women had no legal claim to land, and the absence of property rights has caused a lot of pain for women. Land is only accessible to women through marriage (Aparna 2014). After their spouses were killed in

the Genocide, in an attempt to provide fair inheritance rights and equal access to land for men and women, the Government of Rwanda changed the country's property laws. The Inheritance and Marital Property Law (1999) gave women and their daughters the right to inherit property from their husbands and fathers.

Article 35 of the 2003 New Constitution stated that each and every person has a right to private property, whether personal or owned in association with others. Private property, whether individually or collectively owned, is inviolable. According to Articles 15 and 16 of Rwanda's national constitution, revised in 2015, all human beings are created equal. Discrimination or violence based on religion, ethnicity, skin colour, mental impairments, or economic position is forbidden and punishable by law. According to this article, there should be no violence or prejudice towards women (Constitution of Rwanda 2003). Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) protects girls' rights and monitors and oversees how gender policies are applied in various organizations and private entities. Finally, it monitors how other existing gender equality institutions meet their goals (MIGEPROF 2021).

The Government of Rwanda reorganized the legal system to incorporate customary, indigenous practices. Women advocated for their rights, gender equality, and social justice, influencing policy and legal reforms. The GNU has encouraged women's involvement by establishing a national organization to revitalize and codify Gacaca. In every *Gacaca* court, women are represented in terms of representation. The Rwandan Constitution guarantees the right to association. It makes it possible for women to come together in cooperatives or associations to work toward a shared goal. It enables them to exchange knowledge, overcome isolation, and enhance their socio-economic circumstances.

(n) Role models and inspiration:

Women served as role models, inspiring others to work towards rebuilding and developing Rwanda. After enduring trauma and sorrow, Rwandan women created opportunities for political philosophy reform, societal restructuring, and socio-economic development. Despite tremendous obstacles, including the death of loved ones, the destruction of towns, and numerous first-hand accounts of unspeakable tragedies, Rwandan women have come to be recognized as icons of fortitude and resilience. Women came up and worked along with other residents to raise the country from the ashes of disaster (Mwambaria& Walsha 2021).

Some notable Rwandan women who have made significant

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contributions to the country's restructuring include:

(i) Jeannette Kagame: First Lady of Rwanda, advocate for women's empowerment and healthcare and she stands out because she has become a force to be reckoned with both explicitly and surreptitiously.

(ii) Agnes Kalibata: Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources, champion of agricultural development.

(iii) Lloydina Ntilimalo: Minister of Gender and Family Promotion, who advocates for gender equality and women's rights.

(iv) Louise Mushikiwabo: Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Secretary-General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie.

(v) Antoinette: Former Country Director for Women for Women International – Rwanda: She creates a calm environment for women to get together and create lasting friendships while developing their own hope, and she worked to grow a peaceful future in Rwanda, invest in women (Uwimana 2021).

(vi) Belancille Nyirajyambere: Chairperson of the National Women's Council

(vii) Nadine Umutoni: The Chief Gender Monitor

(viii) Soraya Munyana Hakuziyaremye: Deputy Governor of the National Bank of Rwanda

(ix) (Late) Inyumba Aloys: A former RPF cadre, Minister of Gender and Family affairs and senator

(x) Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Who rose from key leadership positions in Rwanda to the position of vice chairperson of the African Union.

(xi) Stella Uwineza: One of the first Rwandan women to be promoted to the rank of colonel in the country's military (Xinhua News Agency 2024).

These women and many others have played a vital role in shaping Rwanda's reconstruction and development. It is rightly said by President Paul Kagame that *"A woman is a pillar of a family and holds great responsibility at the household level and external matters. Therefore, it is comprehensible to give women their rights, with no barriers to their wellbeing and development"* (Speech by President Paul Kagame 2024).

Role of Women in Rwanda's Peace Building Process

Women played a significant role in Rwanda's peace-building process after the 1994 genocide and civil war. Although women are the least likely to start disputes, they are the ones who suffer the most when they do. Women have demonstrated a remarkable ability to contribute to the process of resolving conflicts and fostering peace. For the

sustainable development of society, women get involved in all kinds of activities. Women asserted themselves as change agents with all of their might. Rwanda's women have a higher potential for bringing peace because of their innate desire for peace and emotional fortitude to rise above hardship and suffering (Garcia 1993). Some of the roles they played include the following:

(a) Conflict Resolution:

Women played a key role in resolving conflicts and disputes within their communities, promoting reconciliation and forgiveness. The post-genocide situation has had an impact not only on the physical well-being of Rwandan women but also on their mental health. Most of the survivors of the Genocide, the majority of them women, experience serious economic deprivation (Izabiliza 2003). However, the most significant thing that women did to help end the Rwandan War was to persuade their husbands and family members to quit the fighting and go home, which killed the insurgency and accelerated the peace process. They took enormous personal risks in doing this because they were a prime target for the insurgents, whose numbers were steadily declining due to men turning themselves into government forces and going home to their families.

Women worked with government forces to arrange a peaceful surrender under the understanding that their husbands and other relatives who had surrendered would not face any consequences (Emeca et.al 2019). Women helped reintegrate former combatants into their communities, providing support and counseling. The nation's post-conflict peace-building process has not collapsed after 30 years of fighting, and there is extremely little chance that violence would break out again. The women in Rwanda stand out as active participants in resolving the conflict, reconciliation and sustainable march towards peace building (Emeca et. al 2019).

(b) Reconciliation and Healing:

The principal tasks facing the new Rwandan administration in the immediate following phase of the 1994 genocide were to uphold and restore security, law and order, and initiate national healing and reconciliation. By joining hands with men, Rwandan women actively took part in initiatives to promote national healing and reconciliation. To achieve 'sustainable peace', the programs initially brought together women who had been victims of Genocide in 1994 as well as the spouses of those who had perpetrated it. Through their 'Dialogue clubs' and 'Action for Peace Campaigns', communities - and women in particular - were given resources that helped them understand the

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necessity of departing peacefully on a local level (Murungi J 2014).

To Inculcate a 'culture of national unity and reconciliation' and developing and distributing 'ideas and initiatives aimed at promoting peace among Rwandans', the Government of Rwanda established the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) in March 1999 to coordinate the government's efforts on national unity, reconciliation, peace, and security and its primary goal was to support good government and counteract the bad thoughts which resulted from governance based on discrimination and division (Powley 2003). Women played a key role in promoting forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing, helping to rebuild a fractured society.

(c) Post Conflict Peace-building:

Women worked as peacekeepers, relief aid workers, mediators, and policy makers. Women continue to be marginalized, though to a lesser extent. They have played a substantial role in the country's renewal as peacemakers, particularly in the government, but also, in the instance of women who join rebel movements or resist reconciliation, as spoilers (Brown 2015). Women in Rwanda made significant contributions to the reconstruction of the country's post-conflict peace and reconciliation, among other things by tending to the needs of genocide survivors, housing orphans, and assisting ex-combatants in reintegrating into society (Issifu 2015). When poverty was presented as a common issue to both sides of the conflict, it was discovered that their cooperative efforts to find a successful solution provided a chance for them to come together, engage, and collaborate constructively in a way that allowed them to not only overcome division but also their prior negative and hostile, dehumanizing attitudes while fostering positive ones (Ezechiel 2009).

The Government of Rwanda, with the support of the international community, managed to resettle internally displaced persons as well as old and new caseload refugees. To assist youth and the general public in being change agents and cooperating for long-term peace-building and sustainable development, 'Never Again Rwanda' (NAR) was established in 2002 as a non-governmental organization dedicated to social justice and peace-building. NAR seeks to provide Rwandan youth and the society with avenues for thereby enabling them to become engaged citizens. Rwanda adopted a National Action Plan (2018-2022) for the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which aims to reinforce the capacity of women in peace and security processes (MIGEPROF).

(d) Traditional Conflict Resolution Courts:

The Government of Rwanda indirectly supported women's participation by establishing a national agency to resurrect and legitimize *Gacaca*. Women served as judges in the local *Gacaca* courts. Not less significant is the fact that Rwandan women, who male had previously excluded, began to take on non-traditional positions in the wake of the Genocide, such as those of judges in the *Gacaca* courts, or traditional conflict resolution courts, in their communities (Emeca et.al 2019). These courts played significant roles in adjudicating cases of genocide suspects and perpetrators and resolving conflicts among members of the communities. Every *Gacaca* court has a female representative. Currently, 41% of justices are female, including the head of the Rwandan Supreme Court. Rwanda introduced *Gacaca* to promote social harmony and involve all community members. Rwanda's *Gacaca* court symbolizes reform and development for the country's female population. Rwanda became the first nation in the world to have a majority of female lawmakers. Rwandan women have proved themselves as representatives of Rwanda, giving their lives a new meaning.

Conclusion

Women in Rwanda challenged traditional gender roles and promoted a more inclusive and equitable society. Women have been instrumental in transforming Rwandan society since the Genocide, taking on new responsibilities, embracing prominent roles, questioning conventional gender norms, and standing up for their rights. Women are now employed as decision-makers, administrators, exporters, reporters, nation-builders, project managers, philosophers, teachers, intellectuals, and coordinators of non-governmental organizations. They are prevalent in every important segment of Rwandan society and have a dominant position in a number of industries, including microfinance, coffee, exports, participating in different umbrella organizations, civil society organization, for women, children, old age people and disabled people. They are part of major reform programmes like legal rights, educational rights, reconciliation and peace, security issues, etc. Rwandan women proved as peacekeepers, relief workers, mediators, legislators, educators, and leaders of the female population in contributing towards the country's socio-economic growth. Rwandan women currently hold important government roles in the fields of justice, agriculture, the national development bank, and reconciliation. It is rightly said by Sara Hogberg that "*women inclusion in political spheres is higher in Rwanda than in any other country* (Hogberg

2019). Rwanda is the first country in the world with a female majority in parliament at 63.8%, and has gained international recognition due to a large number of women in parliament. Today, women hold 64 percent of seats in the lower house of Rwanda's national legislature, the largest share of any country, with 61.3% in the Chamber of Deputies and 37.4% in the Senate (Parliament Women representation). The Global Gender Gap Report 2024 of the World Economic Forum ranked Rwanda as the 39th country globally and the second country in Africa in bridging gender gaps and the best place to women in Africa (MIGEPROF).

Rwandan women began to see themselves differently after the Genocide, and today they make up more than half of the country's population. They successfully forged unique identities and showcased their uniqueness in all important domains. Women's efforts in restructuring and rebuilding Rwanda have been recognized globally. Rwandan women are becoming a 'role model' for women's empowerment in Africa due to its high percentage of female representation and peaceful post-genocide reconstruction. Rwandan women have proven that they are the country's vitality, which has given their lives new meaning and significance.

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Crises, Capabilities, and Commitment: Tracing the Socio- Economic Development in Rwanda Through the Lens of Homegrown Solutions

Jos Chathukulam

ABSTRACT

Rwanda is a symbol of resilience and hope in the midst of adversities and crises. The Central African nation's resurrection is also a story of capabilities and commitment especially through the lens of socio-economic development taken place in the country post-1994. This paper argues that Home Grown Solutions, rooted in Rwanda's values, systems, socio-economic and cultural realities, and the spirit of de-ethnicization, have played a pivotal role in strengthening the capabilities and commitments of Rwanda and its citizens. Girinka (One Cow Per Family), Gacaca (Community Courts), Ubudehe (Collectively Solve Problems), Umuganada (Community Work), Imihigo (Performance Contracts), Tubarerere Mu Muryango (Let us Raise Children in Families), Itorero (Civic Education), Ingando (Solidarity Camp), are among the notable homegrown solutions in Rwanda. The paper also explores the impact of these homegrown solutions on fostering development in the country.

Key words: *Homegrown Solutions, Rwanda, Conflict Resolution, Peacebuilding, Crises and Capabilities*

Introduction

RWANDA, A COUNTRY in Central Africa, has achieved remarkable socio-economic development in the last 25 years. The achievements made by Rwanda are unique as they show the determination and

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commitment of a country that was once the epicentre of ethnic conflicts, unrest, civil wars, dictatorship, and the Genocide. The Rwandan Civil War (1990 - 1994) and the Genocide (1994) not only destroyed the social and moral fabric of the country but also left its economy in tatters. Meanwhile, the Rwandan experience shows that the crises they endured have empowered the nation and its people to develop their capabilities and strengthen their capacities. Today, Rwanda is one of the successful and fastest-growing economies in the world (Chathukulam et al. 2024).

Rwanda's resurgence from the 1994 Genocide and its robust economic growth averaging 8 per cent over the past 15 years inspire developing nations worldwide (UNDP 2021). The World Bank reported that Rwanda's economy expanded by 9.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2023, following an 8.2 per cent growth in 2022 (World Bank 2023). From 1990 to 2017, Rwanda's Human Development Index (HDI) increased from 0.250 to 0.524; by 2021, it reached 0.534 (UNDP 2021).

Rwanda is also a prominent leader in healthcare in the East African region, particularly in alternative care reforms (Musali et al. 2015, Chathukulam and Gireesan 2024). The country has significantly reduced maternal mortality rates (MMR) by 42 percent, decreasing the figures from 487 to 203 per 100,000 live births. The country has successfully halved the under-five mortality rate, reducing it from 152 deaths per 1,000 live births to 76 (Binagwaho and Kubwimana 2023). Rwanda has also made considerable strides in alleviating poverty, with Multidimensional Poverty decreasing from 0.461 in 2005 to 0.266 in 2017 and further to 0.231 in 2021 (Chathukulam et al. 2024).

Rehabilitation and development initiatives in Rwanda are grounded in robust political and institutional frameworks to foster resilience. Post-Genocide Rwanda has demonstrated a strong dedication to alleviating poverty by implementing pro-poor policies and economic reforms to increase the income and productivity of disadvantaged populations. These efforts have led to a significant reduction in poverty and inequality in the country. Rwanda is also recognized as a business and investment-friendly country with effective governance, a pragmatic approach, and a strict stance against corruption, thereby creating a supportive atmosphere for successful public policies and an attractive investment climate for both local and international investors (Chathukulam et al. 2024).

Rwanda's recovery from obscurity to prosperity was pioneered by locally engineered policies known as homegrown solutions. In Rwanda, the homegrown solutions have played an instrumental role in fostering the capabilities of Rwandans and strengthening their

commitments towards nation-building. Rwanda has also shown the world that peacebuilding process can also be engineered through homegrown solutions. In fact, no country other than Rwanda has effectively made use of homegrown solutions to facilitate post-conflict resolutions and peacebuilding, along with strengthening political, social, and economic transformations. Most notable homegrown solutions from Rwanda are *Girinka* (One Cow Per Family), *Ubdudehe* (Collectively Solve Problems), *Umuganda* (Community Work), *Gacaca* (Community Courts), *Imihigo* (Performance Contracts) *Tubarerere Mu Muryango* (Let us Raise Children in Families), *Itorero* (Civic Education), *Ingando* (Solidarity Camp). These homegrown solutions are rooted in the values and traditional Rwandan society and culture systems. Home grown solutions in Rwanda can also be viewed through the lens of decolonization.

The introductory part of the paper offers a socio-economic and political profile of Rwanda prior to the 1994 Genocide and in the post-period. The first part of the paper explores Rwanda's historical and political profile. The second part of the paper looks into the role of locally-engineered homegrown solutions, their impact, and their role in strengthening and developing the capabilities of the citizens and the nation, as well as how they translate into political, social, and moral commitments. A discussion and conclusion follow it.

Part I: Historic and Political Profile of Rwanda

Twa people, who were involved in hunting and gathering, are regarded as the first inhabitants of Rwanda (Rennie 1972). From 400 to 1000 AD, the Central African migrants who possessed agricultural knowledge migrated to Rwanda, and they came to be identified as Hutus. Later, between 1400 and 1500 AD, pastoralists arrived in Rwanda, and they were the Tutsis. Rwanda was under a Tutsi monarchy since at least the 18th century, and the Hutus and Tutsis were the two major ethnic groups till the advent of colonialism. Since Tutsis were in power, many pro-Tutsi and anti-Hutu policies were adopted in the pre-colonial era. In 1899, Germany established colonial rule in Rwanda.

In 1919, Belgian occupation began in Rwanda with the support of the League of Nations. The Belgian colonizers introduced propaganda in the form of "Hamitic Myth" that favoured Tutsis. They also introduced identity cards to institutionalize the Tutsi and Hutu identities, with this colonial masters laid the groundwork for the 1994 Genocide (Phillips 2009, Eltringham 2006, Zaidi 2021). In the 1940s a Hutu counter elite started gaining prominence. From 1956 to 1961, Rwanda witnessed a period of ethnic violence between the Hutu and

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Tutsi (Rwandan Revolution). On July 1, 1962, Rwanda became an Independent state with Gregoire Kayibanda (Hutu ethnic group) as its first President. In 1973, a military coup led by General Juvenal Habyarimana (also a Hutu) seized power by toppling Kayibanda government (Verwimp 2014).

Hutus after seizing political power recontextualized the “Hamitic Myth” resulting in discrimination and killings of Tutsis by the first and second Hutu governments. Due to the violence and atrocities meted out to Tutsis, many of them fled to neighbouring countries. In December 1987, Rwandan Tutsi exiles residing in Uganda formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). In 1990, the RPF started the Rwandan Civil War. The Arusha Accords (1993) were initiated as part of reconciliation attempts. The Accords outlined the formation of a Broad-Based Transitional Government, designed to integrate the insurgent RPF and the five political parties that had constituted a professional government since 1992, in anticipation of general elections. On April 6, 1994, the aircraft carrying President Juvénal Habyarimana was downed near Kigali International Airport, resulting in the deaths of Habyarimana and Cyprian Ntaryamira, the then President of Burundi. The identity of those responsible for the assassination remains uncertain, with the speculation pointing towards either Hutu extremists or the RPF. This led to the Rwandan Genocide, which began on April 7, 1994, and one-tenth of Rwanda’s population were killed in the Genocide that lasted for 100 days.

Majority of the survivors of the Genocide were orphaned as many of them lost their entire families, extended families, and friends. The survivors, especially women had to deal with complex health issues like HIV/AIDS as well as long-term psychological problems as they were subjected to sexual violence and other tortures during the Genocide. Extreme poverty, malnutrition due to food scarcity, lack of adequate healthcare facilities, shortage of medicines and other basic necessities forced the post-Genocidal government to pursue a policy of unity and reconciliation and embrace homegrown solutions (rooted in Rwandan culture, beliefs, and values). Paul Kagame has been the real power centre in Rwanda since July 1994, as his rebel army ousted the Hutu extremist government, which orchestrated the Genocide the same year. Kagame became the President of Rwanda in 2000 and remains in power. The Kagame government has been widely credited with growing the economy and pulling millions of poverty in Rwanda (Ungoed-Thomas and Barnett 2024). While, there have been concerns regarding democratic deficit in Rwanda, the progress and development pioneered through homegrown solutions have retained the democratic spirit in the country.

Part II: Homegrown Solutions Resurrected Rwanda from the Humanitarian Crisis

Locally engineered policy innovations popularly known as “homegrown solutions” (HGS) helped in the resurrection of Rwanda. They are:

- *Girinka* programme (One Cow Per Family)
- *Umuganada* (Community Work)
- *Gacaca* (Community Courts)
- *Ubudehe* (Collectively Solve Problems)
- *Imihigo* (Performance Contracts)
- *Tubarerere Mu Muryango* (Let us Raise Children in Families)
- *Itorero* (Civic Education)
- *Ingando* (Solidarity Camp)

Girinka

Girinka (one cow per family) was launched in 2006. This approach involves providing a cow to a low -income family, which could then pass the first calf to one of their neighbouring households (Christian 2014). The calf is given free of cost. The neighbour who received the calf will take care of it and give the next calf to their other neighbour, and this cyclical process continues throughout the neighbourhood. Here, the neighbours must exchange only the first calf and keep the remaining calves in their respective households. This initiative was launched to promote unity and reconciliation among Rwandans based on the principle that if a cow is given from one person to another, it establishes trust and respect between the giver and the beneficiary (Hahirwa and Kalinganire 2017). *Girinka* also aimed to alleviate poverty in rural households, increase agricultural production, and reduce malnutrition among children younger than five years. Studies have shown that *Girinka* has helped reduce poverty and improved nutritional standards in Rwanda through increased milk consumption and better livelihoods through income-generating activities resulting from dairy farming (Bosco 2013, Christian 2014, Rugema 2014, Mugabo 2016).

It has been reported that the implementation of the *Girinka* program from 2006 to 2017 increased household maize yield by about 26% (from 1,040 kg/ha to 1,309.9kg/ha) (Kim et al. 2011, Mugabo 2016). It also led to an increase in the annual income of households by about 129 per cent, from 45,495 Rwandan Francs to 104,299 Rwandan Francs (Mugabo 2016). Meanwhile, *Girinka* program faces numerous

challenges, including a lack of training, inadequate communication, misunderstandings, and ineffective monitoring (Christian 2014). Owing to these factors, corrupt practices have been reported in which cows were allocated to wealthier individuals rather than impoverished families (Christian 2014). An assessment conducted by Rwandan Agriculture Board and Ministry of Local Governance found that around 5141 *Girinka* cows were embezzled by the officials responsible for overseeing the distribution of cows and a total of 2,437 officials were arrested for accepting bribes from farmers who were not eligible to be a beneficiary under *Girinka* (Transparency International Rwanda 2018).

Umuganda

Umuganda (Community Work) is a traditional tool used in Rwanda to foster mutual help and cooperation. The term originates from *Kinyarwanda* (Coming together for a Common Purpose). It draws inspiration from the Nguni proverb “*Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*” (a person is a person through other persons) (Nnadi 2024). In the post-genocide period, *Umuganda* was reintroduced as a homegrown solution for rebuilding the country (morally, politically and socially). *Umuganda* is a forum in which public policies are communicated and explained to the population, and community members discuss their problems and propose possible solutions (Rwanda Governance Board 2017). *Umuganda* has two objectives (1) To play a significant role in the advancement of the country by facilitating infrastructure development, protecting the environment, and maintaining cleanliness and support the government initiatives (2) To serve as a platform for exchanging information, enhancing social cohesion, and contributing to peacebuilding initiatives.

Every Rwandan citizen (18-65 years of age) must participate in *Umuganda*. The *Umuganda* takes place once a month (on the last Saturday). It takes place from 8.00 am to 11.00 pm. From cutting grass to cleaning streets to building structures (constructing and maintaining roads, houses for vulnerable people, public offices, health centres, and schools) and fixing public facilities come under the works in *Umuganda*. Active citizen participation in *Umuganda* increased from 87.8 per cent in 2013 -2014 to 91.3 per cent in 2015 -16 (Rwanda Governance Board 2017). Collective work projects of *Umuganda* have constructed 3,170 classrooms between 2006 and 2017, bringing basic education infrastructure closer to where it was most needed (Rwanda Governance Board 2017, and UNDP 2021). As part of *Umuganda*, 9-12 Basic Education program in Rwanda was implemented and it contributed around 62 per cent of the total cost of classrooms

constructed (Rwanda Governance Board 2017). The monetary value of *Umuganda* has witnessed a remarkable rise from 4 billion Rwandan Francs in 2007 to 19 billion Rwandan Francs in 2016 (Rwanda Governance Board 2017). The *Umuganda* is a powerful example of how shared values and collective action can drive progress and provide a blueprint for sustained nation-building (Nnadi 2024). However, there are criticisms regarding a lack of incentives (no remuneration for the work), mandatory participation, and enforced penalties for failing to participate in the exercise (Nnadi 2024). If someone skips *Umuganda*, they could be fined up to 5,000 Rwandan Francs (Nnadi 2024). There are also concerns regarding the flexibility and adaptability in rural and urban settings, the absence of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and efforts to ensure the sustainability of effectiveness and economic benefits of works carried out in *Umuganda* (Rwanda Governance Board 2017). Philip Verwimp in his work on pre-Genocide Rwanda, has noted that, “it is common practice for Habyarimana, as for other dictators, to use cultural arguments to justify economic exploitation” (Verwimp 2000, p.345). In that case, *Umuganda* (working for the collective good), which is rooted in Rwandan culture, can also be viewed as a cultural aspect to justify economic exploitation (Purdeková 2011).

Gacaca (Community Courts)

Gacaca (Community Court) is rooted in Rwanda’s traditional dispute-resolution mechanism. The Gacaca courts in Rwanda allowed communities to confront the past and develop a collective account of the violence that took place during the Genocide (Longman 2009). In 2001, Gacaca courts were formally established, and full-fledged operations began in 2007 (Geraghty 2020). Since its inception, over 12,000 community-based Gacaca courts have tried approximately 1.2 million cases (Human Rights Watch 2011). The Gacaca lowers the punishment if the person is repentant and seeks reconciliation with the community. There have also been instances where confessing prisoners (who are repentant about their crimes) return home without further penalty or receive community service orders. Gacaca fosters restorative justice rather than retributive justice (Longman, 2009). The Gacaca system has played a crucial role in the restoration of Rwandan society by fostering reconciliation, ensuring accountability and engaging local citizens in the judicial framework. Meanwhile, disturbing reports have also been that the government has used the Gacaca to assert its authority and consolidate political power around a single narrative of the conflict and the dominant political party (Loyle 2017).

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Ubudehe (Collectively Solve Problems) in Rwanda

Ubudehe is a social protection system that ensures intra-community cooperation based on collective action and participatory development in Rwanda (Niringiye and Ayebale 2012). It is a socio-economic stratification system in which poor Rwandans are supported with social protection schemes (Ntirenganya 2024). In 2001, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government, launched the *Ubudehe* project. The people initiate and implement the activities in *Ubudehe* in the cells/villages – decentralized administrative entities nearest to the citizens. Through *Ubudehe*, communities collectively solve problems and have also formed a social capital with trust and reciprocity (Ntirenganya 2024). In *Ubudehe*, communities (local residents) select a priority project based on their challenges and problems. Poverty alleviation is the top most priority in the majority of the communities in Rwanda. For implementing programmes via *Ubudehe*, there is a team of national master trainers and district trainers, and they instruct two individuals chosen by the communities to act as facilitators for the collective action process (Niringiye and Ayebale 2012). Communities are assisted in addressing a problem of their choice through institutions they create, and around 600,000 Rwandan Francs is allocated to support the identified *Ubudehe* collective action community project (Niringiye and Ayebale 2012). Foreign donations are also sourced to fund *Ubudehe*. There is a provision for a bank account for each community and it has facilitated thousands of community -led actions such as purchasing livestock, undertaking agricultural activities, building clean water facilities, classrooms, terraces, health centres and silos for storing produce (Alexis 2023). Data suggests that at least 1.4 million people have directly benefited from *Ubudehe* (Niringiye and Ayebale 2012). Absence of appropriate mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and audit the *Ubudehe* programme and projects implemented as part of it is a pressing issue (Ntirenganya 2024). Another major deficit is the lack of an appropriate and up-to-date database regarding activities carried out under *Ubudehe*.

Imihigo (Performance Contracts)

Imihigo is based on a pre-colonial tradition where individuals or leaders representing various communities promise to complete certain tasks. If they achieved their promised goal, the community gave their due respect, and if they failed to follow through, public humiliation was the end result (Ndahiro 2015). In 2006, Paul Kagame reintroduced the modern version of *Imihigo* to improve public service delivery and

to hold public officials accountable through performance contracting (Kamuzinski and Jules 2019). *Imihigo* is not limited to Mayors, Ministers, Director Generals, and Chief Executive Officers but also extends to the technical staff working under them. The modern-day *Imihigo* operates within the Result-Based Management (RBM) system adopted by developed countries like the United States of America, Australia, and so on (Ibrahim 2022). *Imihigo* was designed as a Rwandan approach to performance management as described in a policy note published by the MINALOC (2006): “*The Imihigo approach shares many characteristics with results-based management tools. First, each Imihigo identifies a set of clear priorities. Second, each Imihigo presents a set of specific targets backed by measurable performance indicators. Third, each Imihigo undergoes a well-defined process of performance monitoring and evaluation. Fourth, each Imihigo constitutes an efficient accountability mechanism and an incentive for local government leaders and their population to implement the decentralization policies and to meet local and national development targets,*” (MINALOC 2006, p.8).

A 2019 study by the World Bank pointed out that public officials’ performance helped Rwanda achieve impressive economic growth, rapidly improve infrastructure, and increase health and education outcomes. However, there are criticisms that *Imihigo* focuses too much on output dimension and limited data regarding the evaluation approach in the absence of an effective monitoring mechanism makes it difficult to assess the impact made by *Imihigo* in its true sense (Kilengebiel et al. 2016). While the prudent backing of *Imihigo* encourages the provision of local service delivery, this support is leveraged by the political regime to exert control over local affairs (Sabbi and Ndikubwimana 2024).

Tubarerere Mu Muryango (Let us Raise Children in Families)

In 2015, the Government of Rwanda, in collaboration with UNICEF, established *Tubarerere Mu Muryango* to ensure all children in the country can grow up in safe and protected families. The Rwandan culture places great emphasis on the family as a social institution. Following the Rwandan Genocide, many children were orphaned, and they were put up in institutional care. In 2011-12, the Rwandan Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion found 3,323 children and young adults living in government-registered facilities/institutional care. In this context, Rwanda decided to tie up with the UNICEF, and 29,674 community volunteers were recruited and trained as part of *Tubarerere Mu Muryango*. This initiative led to a reduction in the number of children admitted to institutional care/orphanages. It has been reported that close to 70 per cent of children (2,388 of 3,323) had left institutional

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care, and they were reintegrated into families or placed in foster care (Murti and Jayasurya 2020). Since care reform is a complex and lengthy process, it requires careful planning and implementation to meet children's best interests. Rwanda has limited resources to implement and monitor care reform. Thus, the success of this programme needs to be critically evaluated (National Child Development Agency 2021).

***Itorero* (Civic Education)**

In the post-Genocide period, the Rwandan government focused on eliminating ethnic and cultural divisions and placed more emphasis on civic education to emphasize national unity and patriotism. This program later came to be known as *Itorero*. It offers formal training in Rwanda's pre-colonial culture. Intercultural education is the fundamental goal of *Itorero*. The present-day Rwanda promotes the concept of "I am Rwandan", that is Rwandan nationality is given importance. The prime importance is given to de-ethnicization (*Ndi Umunyarwanda*) "I am Rwandan, not Hutu, Tutsi or Twa." The de-ethnicization framework is also an aspect of decolonization. In other words, the Hamitic Myth propounded by the Belgian colonizers was undone/decolonized by de-ethnicization (*Ndi Umunyarwanda*). Meanwhile, there is widespread criticism that *Itorero's* approach to citizenship education focuses too much on promoting a state-defined model of Rwandan citizenship, potentially stifling diverse perspectives, critical thinking, and dissenting opinion (Orjuela 2023).

***Ingando* (Solidarity Camp)**

In the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide, thousands of prisoners accused of genocidal crimes were transferred to *Ingando* (solidarity camps) for re-education and rehabilitation (Hoeksema 2016). According to the Rwandan National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC), *Ingando* originates from the old tradition of *Kugandika* (a halt to one's usual preoccupations to contemplate issues of great national concern, such as war and disaster). It serves to shape civic qualities and the sense of being Rwandan. History education and redefinition of ethnicity are the core themes associated with *Ingando*. The primary aim is to inculcate healthy, liberated minds, equip citizens to transcend pretty thinking, and raise them to a new level of competence in the best interest of Rwandans. *Ingando* can be viewed through three perspectives: political, social, and personal. In the political framework, *Ingando* contributes to a shift from genocidal regime to a democratic government which emphasizes on national unity, from a social perspective, it facilitate transition from imprisonment (life in jail) to reintegration into civil society and from

a psychological point of view, it refers to the mindset of former prisoners (Hoeksema 2016).

While *Ingando* is promoted as a platform for building unity and reconciliation among Rwandans, certain *Ingando* camps are run like military camps and comprise military training (Purdekova 2011, Hoeksema 2016). Critics point out that reconciliation efforts in Rwanda through *Ingando* are superficial or a facade of peace and stability or a showpiece to secure foreign aid (funding from UNDP to *Ingando*) and suggest that genuine national unity and integration cannot be forced upon citizens through re-education programmes like *Ingando* (Hoeksema 2016).

Discussion and Conclusion

Homegrown solutions in Rwanda have enhanced participatory and accountable governance, reduced vulnerability, fostered social cohesion, and nurtured inclusive human development. Countries across the world can learn from the experiences of the homegrown solutions in Rwanda. Policymakers and academicians should seriously discuss the significance of homegrown solutions. No other country in the world has effectively used the power of homegrown solutions than Rwanda (Chathukulam et al. 2024). Peacebuilding processes and initiatives in Rwanda were a fruitful result of homegrown solutions. In 2023, Rwanda was ranked the fourth-largest UN peacekeeping contributor (Sicolo 2024). Homegrown solutions in Rwanda is also a successful attempt in decolonization, and the de-ethnicization process in Rwanda can also be viewed as a decolonization process. Rwanda has also shown the art of reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction through homegrown solutions. Developing countries, especially countries that have borne the brunt of nature or war can learn a lot from Rwanda's recovery with the help of homegrown solutions.

Rwanda is also a role model when it comes to women's empowerment. Today, 61 percent of Rwanda's parliamentarians are women (Singh 2023). In 2003, the Rwandan government put forward a bold gender equality initiative and ensured a 30 per cent gender quota in all decision-making bodies. A Ministry of Gender was also set up in Rwanda, the first in Africa (Wallace et al. 2008). Rwanda has also introduced the Inheritance Law in favour of women. During the Genocide, millions of women lost their lives, and they were also subjected to sexual violence. Close to 70 per cent of those who survived were women, and the crisis resulting from the Genocide forced the political administration in the country to empower them by utilizing the leadership and administrative capabilities of Rwandan women and to accommodate them in powerful positions.

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Meanwhile, there are allegations regarding human rights abuse, covert surveillance, targeting journalists, disappearances of regime critics, and suppressing dissent (Sicolo 2024). While Paul Kagame, who took the leadership in Rwanda in post-Genocide period, is celebrated as one of the prominent African figures of the 21st century, Kagame has also presided over a highly authoritarian regime for more than twenty years and his political party (RPF) has been accused of maintaining an absolute political dominance and administering a well – camouflaged dictatorship (Ungoed-Thomas and Barnett 2024). The Democracy Index by Economist Intelligence Unit in its latest publication has classified Rwanda as an Authoritarian Regime (Economist Intelligence Unit 2024). There have been reports that the last election (July 2024) in which Kagame was re-elected with 99 percent of votes, took place in a climate of fear and repression (Ungoed-Thomas and Barnett 2024). However, it may not be appropriate to characterize the Kagame administration as authoritarian solely based on certain available literature. Further evidence-based and empirical research is necessary to understand and assess the functioning of democracy at the grassroots level and within democratic institutions across all levels in Rwanda. The present author intends to undertake such empirically grounded academic research within the Rwandan context.

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