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ANALYSIS OF THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE AND ITS RECONCILIATION PROCESS FROM THE CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Project prior to obtaining a Bachelor´s Degree in International Studies

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To my beloved parents, Justo and Patricia, who have shown me that with dedication and effort, all dreams can come true. Thank you for being the driving force in my life.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ANALYSIS OF THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE AND ITS RECONCILIATION PROCESS FROM THE CONSTRUCTIVIST THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Abstract

This research paper analyzes the Rwandan genocide and its subsequent reconciliation process from the constructivist International Relations perspective. The study argues that the conflict originated from the discursive construction of antagonistic ethnic identities and the legitimization of violence, highlighting the crucial role of language in the creation of an "internal enemy". The research also evaluates the official narrative of reconciliation, questioning the implications of the absence of inclusive collective memories in the population. Additionally, it examines the international community's performance (or lack thereof) during the genocide, inquiring into the reasons for inaction in the face of humanitarian norms and the functioning of the hierarchical international system.

Key words

Constructivism, Genocide, Human Rights, International Relations, Reconciliation.

ANÁLISIS DEL GENOCIDIO DE RUANDA Y SU PROCESO DE RECONCILIACIÓN DESDE LA TEORÍA CONSTRUCTIVISTA DE LAS RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES

Resumen

Este trabajo de investigación analiza el genocidio de Ruanda y su posterior proceso de reconciliación desde la perspectiva constructivista de las Relaciones Internacionales. El estudio argumenta que el conflicto se originó a partir de la construcción discursiva de identidades étnicas antagónicas y la legitimación de la violencia, resaltando el papel crucial del lenguaje en la creación de un "enemigo interno". Asimismo, la investigación evalúa la narrativa oficial de la reconciliación, cuestionando las implicaciones de la ausencia de memorias colectivas inclusivas en la población. Adicionalmente, se examina la actuación (o la falta de ella) de la comunidad internacional durante el genocidio, indagando en las razones de la inacción frente a la normativa humanitaria y el funcionamiento del sistema internacional jerárquico.

Palabras clave:

Constructivismo, Derechos Humanos, Genocidio, Reconciliación, Relaciones Internacionales.

Analysis Of the Rwandan Genocide and its Reconciliation Process from the Constructivist Theory of International Relations

1. Introduction

According to historical narratives, the 20th century is considered the century of wars and genocides due to the vast number of tragedies that occurred during this period, namely, the First and Second World Wars, as well as other conflicts such as the one addressed in this research. The Rwandan genocide stands as one of the most devastating episodes in recent history; it deeply impacted not only Rwandan society but also the international community. In a span of one hundred days, approximately one million people, mostly of the Tutsi ethnic group, were exterminated in a wave of ethnic violence that calls into question the very nature of humanity and its capabilities.

The preamble to the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (1945) states: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed" (p.1). This emphasizes the importance of ideas, values, culture, and even invites us to acknowledge a human faculty that we often overlook but is essential: discernment. This analysis adopts a perspective based on the constructivist theory of international relations, which focuses on the role of ideas, norms, and identities and challenges traditional theories of international relations, which primarily emphasize material interests and strategic calculations. From this perspective, the Rwandan case cannot be understood as an inevitable ethnic collision, but rather as the result of various factors that shaped antagonistic social identities through the use of hate narratives intended to legitimize violence and justify extermination.

Likewise, in the aftermath of the genocide and support of state reconstruction, Rwanda initiated a reconciliation process. In this context, the government implemented initiatives such as community courts and reconciliation programs, raising the question of whether it is truly possible to transform a society's ideas and norms through dialogue and the promotion of a single national identity. This research aims to contribute to the deepening of knowledge regarding the mechanisms used in genocidal processes, as well as their subsequent development and outcomes. Additionally, it seeks to enhance the understanding of the theory that highlights the significance of ideas, norms, and identities in International Relations.

1.1 Objectives

Analyze the Rwandan genocide and its reconciliation program from the postulates of the constructivist theory of international relations.

1.1.1 Specific Objectives

1. Describe the background, development, and ending of the Rwandan genocide.

2. Describe the objectives and strategies of the Rwandan national plan for post-genocide reconciliation and reconstruction.

3. Identify whether the background and development of the Rwandan genocide, as well as, its reconciliation and reconstruction program align with the postulates of constructivist theory.

1.2 Theoretical Framework and State of the Art

There have been several cases of genocide in the world; among the best known are the Armenian genocide (1915-1923), the Nazi Holocaust (1938-1945), the Cambodian genocide (1975-1979), and the Rwandan genocide (1994). This term was introduced by the Polish lawyer Raphaël Lemkin. Lemkin (1944), in his book Axis Rule in Occupied Europe, describes genocide as an ancient practice manifested in a modern context, referring to the "devastation of a nation or ethnicity." He coined the term by combining the Greek word genos (meaning race or tribe) with the Latin suffix -cide (meaning to kill) (as cited in Irvin-Erickson, 2017). Lemkin (1994) not only referred to genocide as mass murder but also to the division of institutions, not necessarily political but also social, and to elements such as the loss of culture, language, religion, and feelings of belonging to a nation (as cited in Heiskanen, 2021).

The term genocide or cases of genocide was addressed in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948), formally entering into international law. It was approved on December 9 of the same year and entered into vigor on January 12, 1951, under Article XIII of the same convention. The definition is stipulated in Article II and is as follows:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

a) Killing of members of the group;

b) Serious injury to the physical or mental integrity of the members of the group;

c) Intentional subjection of the group to conditions of existence that will lead to its physical destruction, in whole or in part;

d) Measures intended to prevent births within the group;

e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (p. 1).

The issue of genocide has a direct influence on international law, since it is responsible for safeguarding universal human rights, among which are the right to life, human dignity, freedom, physical and mental integrity, cultural identity, family, property, etc. International human rights law is composed of norms whose mission is to protect rights and freedoms, which are inherent to their dignity; generally, the primary role lies in the hands of states (Fernández de Casadevante Romani & Jiménez, 2011). In this way, the principle of the right to protection enters the scene as it refers to the duty and responsibility of the state to ensure both the safety and well-being of its citizens. The fundamental conception of this principle resides in the right to humanitarian intervention, which refers to the ability of states to use coercion as a means against another state because, in this, the lives of individuals are at risk (Marcano, 2019). Genocides are extremely complex events that must be studied from various perspectives, including social, political, economic, and colonial factors.

When mentioning the colonial factor, we must understand that etymologically the word colonization has its origins in Latin; it is born from the word *colonus,* which refers to the work done on the land; therefore, it is related to the establishment or settlement of human beings in new areas or conquered lands. However, it is taken into consideration that the word does not refer to a precise space or time, but rather, that the word evolved and now encompasses different historical contexts (Sommer, 2021, as cited in Lanteri & Martirén, 2023). This means that it is not a modern phenomenon but demonstrates the gradual expansion of a society through the acquisition of new territories.

The colonial legacy emphasizes the repercussions that the dominion of the conquerors has left in what, as the name implies, were their colonies. There are many legacies of colonization, including economic, political, social, and cultural factors, some of which are considered to have contributed to the occurrence of events such as genocides. Authors such as Ade Ajayi (1929-2014) remind us that African history is not only European history with influence on Africans but goes beyond, and the so-called dark continent has a history that should be analyzed. However, it is still common to believe that colonialism and its effects on Africa can be understood by studying only the European perspectives without taking into account the history of the place itself (Ajayi & Campos Serrano, 2020).

In the case of African countries, colonization impacted the economy, as Walter Rodney (1972) says in his book "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa": it was a system of incessant exploitation of resources; Europeans benefited by unbalancing the economies of the colonies. In this way, a direct and proportional relationship was established—one group's growth occurred at the expense of the other. It also had repercussions on the ethnic division of Africans, as Mamdani (1996) explains: colonial policies reinforced social divisions, and these were later institutionalized. This dynamic also had significant repercussions on the ethnic divisions among Africans. As Mamdani (1996) explains, colonial policies deepened existing social divides, which were later institutionalized. These hierarchies were further reinforced through administrative structures. Administratively, these hierarchies were reinforced. In the political sphere, Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) posits that capitalism played a role in colonialism, causing the dependence of Africa and relegating it to the periphery in the world system (as cited in Osorio, 2015).

In the specific case of the Rwandan genocide, we can mention authors who talk about Belgian colonialism and its impact on Rwandan identity and education. One key scholar, Lemarchand, explains that the colonizers' preferred tactic was the "divide and rule" strategy, which aimed to weaken collective power by fragmenting the population. This division was based primarily on socio-economic distinctions rather than biological differences between Tutsis and Hutus (Bustin & Lemarchand, 1972). Later, Des Forges (1999) mentions that African education during Belgian rule promoted these ideas of divided identities, where ideas of Tutsi superiority over Hutus were sown, reinforcing these thoughts in the young society, which has created conflicts that to this day still have not been solved.

In order to understand the Rwandan genocide from the perspective of the constructivist theory, it is essential to understand what it is all about; therefore, the constructivist theory of international relations arises in a recent context, as opposed to more traditional theories such as realism and liberalism. This appears in the

eighties as it seeks to explain events that existing theories could not solve; the denomination was given by the author Nicholas Onuf in his book "Worlds of Our Making" in the year 1989 (Onuf, 2002, as cited in Ayala, 2018).

It arose specifically in the context of the end of the Cold War, due to the lack of military confrontations that highlighted the gaps in the existing theories that spoke of warlike confrontations in the making that, in the end, did not happen. The end of the Cold War not only brought with it the fall of the Berlin Wall but also opened the door to the need to understand why the international reality was evolving and why the situations that were taking place did not entirely fit in with what had already been established. They did not take into consideration historical events to understand reality, nor did they analyze what was happening as a connected whole; rather, they saw them as isolated cases, and therefore, they tried to stretch the barriers of theories that did not completely fit (Arriola, 2013, as cited in Ayala, 2018).

According to Bravo and Sigala (2014) constructivism establishes that if the world has an influence on the actions of the agents, the agents and their interactions can generate a change in the environment in which they find themselves. Therefore, society is not immobile, but, rather, it is in constant transformation because the actors transform the environment and vice versa (as cited in Ayala, 2018). This theory argues that society can maintain a perspective of reality, however, this will not be the same as it had before since it is constantly evolving, and, likewise, when relating to other societies, they create and transform conditions that differentiate them from others (Ayala, 2018). This is how constructivism focuses on understanding both the permutation and the emergence of relationships based on the analysis of social exchanges both in situations of conflict and cooperation. Here lies the limitation of the theory, the same event can be deciphered in different ways because interpretations are subjective.

According to Price and Reus-Smit (1998), constructivist theory can be established from three ontological assumptions about societal life and its repercussions on international politics; first, we have the importance of normative and material structures, then we have interests, if we can understand these, we can understand international phenomena that have not been considered, or, that have been totally ignored. And, although structures have constituent power, these cannot exist without the educated practices of the actors, announcing that both agents and structures are reciprocally formed (as cited in Vitelli, 2014).

As time goes by, it has become more and more common for international politics to be characterized as a social construct, which has mainly accepted two premises of constructivist theory, the first of which states that linked human organizations are related because of factors such as shared ideas rather than factors such as material forces, and, that identities and interests of international actors are based on these shared ideas that are not simply given to them by nature. The first principle speaks of an idealistic and social approach, while the second refers to structure or holism. In this way, if we put them together, we obtain that constructivism could be considered a kind of structural idealism (Wendt, 1999).

The institutions in charge of enforcing international norms and rights are born in a manner that considers this budding constructivist perspective since they start with ideas such as dignity, international justice, and respect between states and towards their citizens. They came into being when the international community reached a common agreement that certain principles, such as the inviolability of life and the prohibition of torture, must be respected. It should be kept in mind that these must prevail over national interests and that their effectiveness lies in the union of state wills. The leading institutions in this process of normative compliance with human rights are the Human Rights Organization (UN), the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice, and regional entities, as in this case, the African Court of Human Rights.

Consequently, authors such as Franck (1990, 1995), in his works "The Power of Legitimacy Among Nations" and "Fairness in International Law and Institutions," respectively, defend the functioning of international human rights organizations because when a state perceives a norm as legitimate, it complies with it not only because it is legally bound but also out of a sense of political and moral commitment. Moreover, by establishing these institutions, consensus is created on international norms, which helps to ensure their application. Likewise, being socially accepted contributes to their durability. In contrast to this, some authors do not argue in favor of this position. They say that international human rights organizations can be biased and that in many circumstances decision-making is affected by the interests of influential countries, asking whether these institutions fulfill their role and are neutral or whether they only intervene in developing countries and not in powers according to power strategies (Kennedy, 2004).

The media, as well as international organizations, are key tools for documenting and reflecting human rights violations, being the prelude to intervention by international organizations. However, in cases such as the one under study, the lack of coverage resulted in inaction and also encouraged the generation of hatred and disputes between ethnic groups. Fein (1993) mentions in his book "Genocide: A Sociological Perspective" that

media manipulation can have atrocious results and that the media must be regulated because it can serve as a crucial tool, unfortunately, a tool that can generate tensions and conflicts when it incites hatred.

In Rwanda, Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) was the station in charge of transmitting these messages against the Tutsis, referring to them in derogatory ways such as "cockroaches". It also incited the population to eliminate the enemy. In "The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide", it is stipulated that the use of radio contributed to the spread of the genocide since it contributed to the coordination of the attacks, and then, thousands were killed in an impressively short space of time. This facilitated not only ideological violence but also the logistics of a crime (Prunier, 1995).

As far as global politics is concerned, the constructivist theory of international relations is established as one of the main doctrines. It focuses essentially on norms, identities, and the relevance of ideas in the international system, unlike other currents such as realism and liberalism. These currents emphasize the role of power and institutions, respectively. This is how the constructivist school of thought was born as a critique of these dominant theories mentioned above. It was consolidated between the 1980s and 1990s, with its main proponent being Alexander Wendt, who argued that the organization of the international system depends on the perception, conception, and beliefs of the actors and that these are not standardized or fixed structures.

The main influences of the Constructivist Theory of International Relations come from social sciences such as sociology and philosophy primarily, inspired by authors such as Nicholas Onuf (1989), who assigned the name "Constructivism." Likewise, some theories share ideas with constructivism, such as social theory, both of which preach that social reality is not fixed, nor is it something objective; some of the main proponents of this theory are Berger & Luckmann (1966) in their text The Social Construction of Reality. Similarly, a central aspect of the constructivist theory is based on the criticism of materialism, because it does not accept the idea that countries act only in tune with materiality and economic power but establishes that regulations and ideologies have a massive weight in state behavior.

This is so fundamental that it is instituted as one of the main postulates of the constructivist theory: beliefs and identity influence. Another of the postulates of this theory is based on the fact that state identity does not have an environment or nature that is rigid or fixed; rather, its behavior is related to the interaction generated with other entities or nations. This is because the international system does not come with a factory configuration; it establishes that it is formed as a result of both inherited practices and discourses. At the same time, the international system is not static since the norms change over time and can transform it. It is also said that international relations are subject to the sense of perception, since, if a state perceives another as a hostile entity, it will act accordingly; however, this would not necessarily be an objective reality but rather a social construct.

Although we have already mentioned transcendental authors such as Wendt, who in the application of his concepts in the Rwandan genocide mentions that the identity of both Hutu and Tutsi was not natural but artificial because it was a colonial construction, and Onuf, who spoke of the importance of words and discourse in global politics, which, in the specific case of this crime, uses Hutu propaganda as a key aspect to encourage hatred of the Tutsi, we must clarify that they are not the only authors, so it is necessary to keep in mind writers such as the next ones to be mentioned.

For example, Katzenstein (1996), in his text "The Culture of National Security," mentions that when making a decision, not only the power but also the identity of the country and international norms must be taken into account; therefore, Rwandan cultural norms influenced the use of violence, and, globally, the norm of non-intervention in internal conflicts led to other states not getting involved. Another author is Finnemore (1996), who, in her book "National Interests in International Society," explains that humanitarian norms can change over time, consequently modifying the reaction; in this specific case, it served to raise awareness of global action. It could be said that it emphasizes that international norms influence and may even change state interests. Likewise, Adler et al. (2024) mention that knowledge is key for global entities to decide their actions; for example, if there had been global knowledge of the situation in Rwanda, they would not have minimized the risk of genocide.

However, not all authors agree with these ways of thinking, since there are authors who criticize these postulates, such as Mearsheimer (1994), who states in his work that the constructivist theory undervalues the role of the material and that anarchy and the lust for power are what govern the international political system and not the rules. This idea is supported by Walt, who, in his work "The Origins of Alliances" (1987), asserts that constructivism is too subjective, that nations react because of what interests them, and that, in addition to being subjective, constructivism cannot be demonstrated empirically. On the other hand, authors such as Keohane (1984) oppose the positions above, arguing that ideas matter; however, as far as international cooperation is concerned, he announces that economic power is more relevant. It is possible to make a judgment and announce that constructivism is a theory that emphasizes the role of normativity, perception, and identity,

but it continues to be criticized because it lacks the precision of the method and is not capable of predicting events that will occur with certainty. While authors defend its usefulness in explaining changes in regulations, others mention that it is not enough, that it cannot explain state action due to the great dominance of competition and the power search.

Constructivist analysis has become popular since the 1990s in international relations. Wendt (1999) and other scholars have become theoretical references of constructivism. However, there is a gap in the application of this theory in cycles containing reconstructive phases, so that, under these circumstances, the case study is in a nascent stage of analysis. There are constructivist concepts applied to genocide per se; however, little has been cultivated to examine subsequent conditions. The application of this theory to these types of conditions provides an overview through which it is possible to consider the role of the state in restoring and establishing a post-genocidal social order. This allows us to elucidate how the Rwandan government operates, not only through institutionalism or normativity, but also through the imposition of concepts such as peace, justice, the historical omission of certain events, and the reproduction of nationalist identities (Checkel, 2005).

Despite the existence of empirical articles referring to the genocide, the subsequent process is still in development. Thomson (2014) and Zorbas (2004), pioneers in this research, are guided by the criterion that reconciliation is only a state prose, with a selective historical memory that benefits the existence of a single reality, the official one. There is a risk that it will be an unemotional process, and, instead, it will be carried out by obligation under authoritarian criteria, leaving aside social reality and focusing on mass discourse. This resonates with the approaches of Campbell (1998) that uphold the importance of discourse and how it constructs the politics of nations, influencing the reality that each state presents. Similarly, Onuf (1989) emphasizes the use of language and norms as principles that shape behavior and influence the international system since these are what construct meanings in common.

Continuing along these lines of thought, the role of women within the Rwandan system is also important. Rwanda's highly centralized political structure incorporates gender equality as a fundamental component of state discourse. Women occupy significant and influential roles within the country's political hierarchy However, this does not necessarily imply that the system has undergone transformations towards inclusion or political autonomy, but rather that it may have been suggested as a strategy of the regime (Berry, 2018). Similarly, it should be borne in mind that the genocide also had gender-based repercussions because sexual violence was systematically used to attack the Tutsis, a vision that has not been propagated as it is not part of the philosophy of state reconstruction (Sharlach, 1999).

Intergenerational trauma must also be taken into account, since, according to an analysis by Munyandamutsa et al. (2012), more than 25% of the young population in Rwanda has symptoms of psychological disorders, and, when the conflict happened, many of them had not even been born. These traumas occur in response to interaction and family history and to the lack of freedom to express the situation of their people through the use of different narratives. Building on the perspectives of these authors, this study posits the existence of an emotional dimension that transcends formal legal reconciliation. This emotional layer, encompassing empathy, recognition, and collective healing, is conceptually interrelated with legal mechanisms, and both are considered essential to fostering genuine forgiveness and sustainable peaceful coexistence. Constructivist theory, then, also suggests that trauma can be socially constructed, as can identity.

2. Literature Review

Rwanda has three ethnic groups: the Hutu, the Tutsi, and the Twa. In April 1994, one of the bloodiest events in African history began. Over a period of 100 days, from April 7 to July 15, approximately 800,000 people were killed by the Hutu ethnic group. This day was the result of a period of tension that had been brewing since the 19th century, when Rwanda was still a monarchy. Long before the colonization process, their identities were differentiated by their purchasing power or their socioeconomic status. The Hutus always represented the majority of the population; they were dedicated to agriculture and to working the land. While the Tutsi were wealthier because they owned cattle. It should be taken into consideration that at that time, a Hutu could become a Tutsi without any problem if he managed to become a cattle breeder; this means that at that time, social identity was not static. These distinctions were accentuated in the colonial process, since, in this way, the colonizers effectively dominated the population (Newbury, 1988).

The Europeans arrived in Rwanda at the end of the 19th century. First, it was a German colony that obtained the territory at the Berlin Conference of 1884. However, they ruled with somewhat more limited power than the Belgians, who took control after the First World War with the Treaty of Versailles of 1919. The Belgians favored the Tutsis by giving them the government, and they also promoted racism, as Mamdani (2001) explains, since they linked the Tutsi origin with the "Hamites," who are Africans of presumed Caucasian origin. The Tutsis became a race closer to Europeans, therefore with greater capacities, and were considered superior. Accordingly, in 1933, these differences were legalized by issuing identity cards according

to ethnic groups, which created resentment among the Hutus. After a couple of decades, in the 50s, the process of separation from the colony was more than evident. In 1959, the Hutus rebelled against the system because they proclaimed that they were a large part of the population and that they should not have to obey a minority, the colonizers. Seeing that the Hutus were gaining strength, the colonizers decided to support them; this process is known as the "Hutu Revolution." This revolution brought with it the migration and flight of many Tutsis to neighboring countries as they became persecuted in their own country. This laid the foundation for future massacres and was synonymous with violence and hunger for power (Chrétien, 2006). Rwanda gained independence in 1962 following the collapse of the monarchy, which led to the transfer of political power to the Hutu majority. Despite already being in control, resentment remained, and in the following years, there were several massacres of Tutsis, consolidating a policy of opposition to the enemy, to the other (Reyntjens, 2013).

In the 1980s, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was created in Uganda by Tutsis who had been exiled. The group's objective was to return to the country and be included by the government. In the 1990s, they attempted to overthrow President Juvénal Habyarimana. These developments generated growing tensions in Rwanda, culminating in an escalation of violent attacks. The government disseminated hate propaganda targeting the Tutsi population, actively encouraging the mobilization of Hutu militias. Extremist Hutu factions pursued the systematic elimination of the Tutsis. To resolve the conflict, the Arusha Peace Accords were signed in 1993. However, the extremist Hutu militias, also known as the Interahamwe, considered this a betrayal of the system, causing hysteria and social upheaval as they did not want to lose control to the minority.

Straus (2013) argues that, rather than fulfilling their intended purpose of restoring peace, the Arusha Accords exacerbated existing tensions, ultimately pushing the nation toward an irreversible path of conflict. The government did not fully comply with the Accords, so the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was implemented, led by Commander Roméo Dallaire, who is said to have received limited instructions and found no willingness to collaborate on the part of the government and that international organizations underestimated the signals (Dallaire & Beardsley, 2003).

On April 6, 1994, a missile shot down the plane in which President Habyarimana was travelling. Although no one was directly held responsible, it triggered the genocide. The radical Hutus said it was the work of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which led to the genocide not only of Tutsis but also of moderate Hutus. The Hutus began by stealing, raping, and even burning down the houses of the Tutsis, who fled and began to take refuge in schools, hospitals, and churches, among others, and it was here that the mass murders took place. The rebels themselves recognized April 29 as the day when the genocide was almost over, since it was recognized that about two-thirds of the total Tutsi victims had already been killed. According to African Rights and Human Rights Watch, most of the places where they were gathered were attacked before April 21, making it the fastest genocide in history (Kuperman, 2000). In Rwanda, there was almost no independent media, but the pro-government press was derogatory towards the Tutsi and moderate Hutu on a daily basis, defining them as a homogenous group in which everyone was considered dishonest, seeking to overthrow the Hutu, and all women were seen as prostitutes seeking to entangle the Hutu. In the media, Tutsis were called Inyenzi, or cockroaches, and in newspapers like Kangura, they said things like, "A cockroach cannot create a butterfly; a cockroach creates cockroaches, and they are all the same" (Perazzo, 2019).

This opened the door to the justification of genocide by the Hutus because, by demonizing the Tutsis and seeing them as a threat, they were convinced that they needed to defend their survival, generating dehumanizing behaviors. The message left by this fragment of the newspaper also shows us that age was not considered; it did not matter if they were babies or children, it did not exempt them from responsibilities, since they were all considered inyenzi, and all the evils that happened in the country were their fault. The most well-known and identifiable media in this atrocious crime were the aforementioned Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines and the Kangura newspaper, both of which broadcast strong messages of hate with the aim of destroying the enemy. Even the magazine's slogan was "The voice that tries to awaken and defend the majority of the people" (Genocide Archive of Rwanda, n.d.). As part of the escalating campaign of hatred, the publication of the 'Hutu Ten Commandments' (see Figure 1) institutionalized anti-Tutsi ideology. Radio broadcasts played a particularly insidious role in this process. While Kangura had already laid the groundwork for ethnic demonization, Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) took incitement further by explicitly naming individuals targeted for execution. In some instances, RTLM even announced license plate numbers, facilitating their identification and pursuit should they attempt to escape after hearing their names on air (Benesch, 2004).

Figure 1
The 10 Hutu commandments

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

1. All Hutus must know that they are a Hutu woman. wherever she is, ever Hutus man who forms a traitor. All jobs must be given to futus, Declare are T'ulhand only there is. Only Traitors and Hutus.

2. All Hutus must know that our children will be New Quotas, thelr husbands, their brothers. His daughters' Hutu man. Traitors who will give their daughters who oppose is daughter a traitor.

4. The Hutu woman must be alert, in particular of Hutus men. Heres a truth, they

5. All Hutus must know that Tutis are traitors their busines-ses; enemy Trade. Said to No must try that hide ol their plots by making community a good one to pass genomen

6. The Strategic politicat security, must share should be fold to Patriots or business colluded.

7. The Forces Arm must hence forth order than October 1990,

8. The Hutus must stop that Hutus stop, or contradiet their Counselors' spoils of which are.

9. Leaders try to bring to power must say, the surveillance and to mote Commandments.

10. The Law Association, 1959 of Reclamation of earlier. All the Hutus Weapons along. A road of it the armed of it

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Note. (Dayán et al., 2015). The 10 Hutu Commandments [Photograph], excerpts from the Kangura *magazine, by Kigali Memorial Center, 2011, (https://www.myt.org.mx/memoria_url/propaganda).*

The question is, what did the international community do to face off against this crime? According to Bastos (2014), a genocide is not stopped by humanitarian aid; there is a Rwanda before and a Rwanda after. The lack of an international response and aid to the refugee crisis teaches us that even this assistance can be manipulated. There were organizations present in Rwanda, such as Doctors Without Borders, which is a non-profit organization that helps by providing medical care to people in vulnerable situations, generally in places of conflict, in cases of natural disasters, etc. The media explained what was happening, and it didn't take long for it to be recognized that it was not simply a matter of poor control that unleashed violence, but that it was in fact a systematic murder.

The International Committee of the Red Cross registered tens of thousands of deaths, and the international media showed this. The first sign of action on the part of international organizations was passivity, according to Bastos (2014). As mentioned earlier in this text, the messages sent by UN commander Dallaire were ignored before the genocide took place, and in the first weeks of the UNAMIR mission, they even decided to reduce their troops. When the tragedy occurred, the UNPF office reduced the UNAMIR mission by ninety percent, from 2,500 to 270 agents, all because of the murder of Belgian soldiers. From the United States, Clinton, the president at the time, pressured the Security Council not to call what was happening genocide, since that way, they did not have to intervene. The Security Council decided to intervene when almost all the killings had already been completed, and this was two months after the genocide began; they intervened in June. France (an ally of the Rwandan government) organized Operation Turquoise to save civilians, establishing a supposed safe zone; however, this allowed the withdrawal of the Interahamwe, or extremist militias, who escaped from the Rwandan Patriotic Front, so the Rwandan Patriotic Front conquered the country, but they were also violent in forging their path to power.

On the other hand, from the theories of international relations, speakers like Totten et al. (2004) say that from the realist perspective, international organizations did not intervene due to the calculation of benefits, since it is a region without valuable resources and the cost was representative; moreover, such an operation was risky. And, from a liberalist theory, it is explained that governments and international organizations did not have the collective political will, so, as there was no clear structure, they did not take measures following the magnitude of the event, so with greater international cooperation this could have been avoided (Power, 2002).

In addition to this, we find that, when analyzing the Rwandan genocide of 1994, these are not the only authors who defend realist and liberalist theories, since, from both perspectives, an explanation is given to the conflict and its causes and to the response that was obtained from the international community. Let's remember that the transcendental characteristics of the realist theory are based on three aspects, which are anarchy, power, and national interests. Authors who agree with this ideology are Mearsheimer (2001); this reinforces the thinking of Totten et al., since having neither oil nor great military relevance, Rwanda was not of interest to nations such as France or the United States. Offensive realism, as its name suggests, expresses that only when the security or geopolitical interests of nations are affected do they decide to intervene because of their direct relationship. In this case, this explains the lack of interventionism on the part of international organizations such as the UN or certain nations, especially those of the West, because they did not face any risk to themselves.

Likewise, Luttwak (1999) defends the lack of international intervention because it considers that wars, genocides, and civil crimes should follow the course of nature, the reason being that it believes that, if the conflict is interrupted instead of being solved, it may spread. In our case study, applying this concept, the conflict could have been prolonged because neither side would have won the power struggle, and, as a result, the tension could have built up and caused a problem of greater magnitude. However, when the RPF leaders came to power, the genocide ended.

Liberalism, another of the main currents in international relations, focuses on the importance of the existence of institutions, on international law, and on international cooperation, highlighting institutions such as the UN. The aforementioned Power (2002), unlike the realists, announces that the non-intervention of countries such as the US is not due to a lack of interests but to a lack of existing political will. She states that this is why they did not call it genocide—to ignore the issue for as long as possible. Another author with a liberal ideology is Barnett (2002), who explains that the UN did not act quickly for fear of repeating what happened in Somalia in 1993. Furthermore, the excessive bureaucracy hinders streamlined international responses. He argues that international organizations fail to prevent crises due to a lack of commitment from member states. In his view, entities like the UN require greater autonomy and decision-making authority to respond more swiftly and effectively.

Rwanda had to evaluate the need to rebuild the country in a way that encourages peaceful relations. With this in mind, they carried out a program of national reconciliation with certain basic values such as the search for justice, the promotion of education, economic growth and development, and, obviously, collective memory. This was because, at the end of the genocide, the country had neither economic resources nor minimum infrastructure. Many people were displaced, including Tutsis returning to Rwanda and Hutus fleeing out of fear that the Tutsis in power would seek revenge. Furthermore, while the event itself may have ended, the underlying tensions and ideologies have not necessarily disappeared.

In 1999, the government finally created the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, intending to promote peaceful coexistence among the population. This includes campaigns focused on historical memory. From an objective point of view, this includes museums and memorials, the creation of neutral spaces, and promoting spaces for Rwandans and not for Hutus or Tutsis per se. In 1996, Rwanda made a fundamental decision to eliminate ethnic identity from identification documents, as these marked whether the bearer was Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. This served to reinforce the concept of a Rwandan identity and avoid segregation of its own population, subsequently reducing discrimination in institutions as their ethnicity was not known. Another aspect in which the country decided to invest was in educational programs that would objectively review the genocide. There are human rights training courses aimed at creating a solid historical awareness, as well as museums that exhibit the tragedy, the most recognized of which is the Kigali Genocide Memorial.

Then, seeing the situation in which the nation found itself, Paul Kagame, head of the Rwandan Patriotic Front party, established this program with a focus also on accountability, changing narratives, and not only economic and social development. In this way, he proposed several alternatives to achieve the long-awaited and sought-after peace, starting with sentencing those responsible for the atrocious crime. For this, two different means were used: the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, also known as ICTR, which was created in 1994 in Arusha, Tanzania, by the United Nations, which managed to sentence sixty-two of those most

responsible, not only political leaders but also those who incited hatred. However, the process faced criticism for its lengthy duration and high costs. In response, the Gacaca Courts were established in the early 2000s as an alternative mechanism for transitional justice. It lasted a decade, from 2002 to 2012, and was inspired by a routine justice system through which more than a million defendants were prosecuted, exactly 1.9 million people. The policy was rooted in the principle of forgiveness, aiming to reintegrate individuals into society. To support this goal, those who confessed were granted reduced sentences.

With time, the memory of the genocide is still present. Authors such as Hayner (2011) indicate that the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda has been a fundamental element in strengthening the process of unity and the search for peace, with an emphasis on education and socialization programs, mentioning the good work and efforts of the government to establish a collective memory in which previous ethnic differences do not matter, but rather the resilient spirit. However, in contrast to this, we have authors who criticize the reconciliation process because they believe it is an imposition by the government and that they control the discourse, so different opinions are not allowed; they say that it is simply a government strategy to maintain control and power in the country, limiting people's opinions regarding the reconciliation process (Thomson & Jessee, 2014).

Another key implementation was the "Ingando", which were civic re-education camps for people released from prison as well as former genocidaires, military personnel and refugees returning home, all with the aim of them living peacefully with each other, learning to live with each other, highlighting the value of reconciliation, and trying to prove to society that they could be reintegrated into society. On the economic and social side, they decided to implement measures such as providing housing and access to land for refugees and displaced people. In terms of gender, Rwanda is one of the countries with the highest representation of women in parliament in the world. In addition to this, its plan to improve social stability consisted of granting microcredits for entrepreneurs, the main candidates being ex-genocidaires and the victims of genocide, to reduce poverty gaps and encourage economic growth.

In addition, a program known as Travaux d'Intérêt Général (TIG) was established as a form of symbolic reparation, aimed at addressing the harm caused by the genocide. This was a coercive measure that arose as part of a sentence, mainly before the Gacaca courts; its sanction was to carry out community work, and the purpose was to lessen the existing anger in the victims and to make the perpetrators responsible (Musengimana, 2024). An elementary factor in the task of rebuilding the country was education. With free education and the "Ingando," they modified the teachings, seeking to eradicate that ideology based on ethnicity, proliferating the creation of nationalist spaces that fostered the resurgence of the country and obedience to the state. These tools have helped to reduce violence in Rwanda; however, it should be analyzed that these implemented changes have not only worked for that but have also been used as a means through which the state establishes what should be remembered and how it should be done, formalizing the historical narrative (Thomson, 2014).

If we analyze it from the perspective of health, infrastructure, and even economic growth, Rwanda has improved radically since the 1990s. It is for this reason that the government emphasizes the existence of notable progress and presents itself as an example of state reconstruction, emphasizing the nobility of the post-genocide model implemented. Unfortunately, this is somewhat biased, as these benefits have not been distributed fairly; a large part of the population and countless rural communities live below the extreme poverty line and do not have the benefit of access to tools for participation or justice (Thomson, 2014). This is why authors such as Clark (2010) warn that if the situation in the African country is evaluated with a critical eye, it is notable to perceive that even though the policy of forgiveness was encouraged, the system was not always able to provide a safe space through which the truth could be expressed and in which there was no social pressure whatsoever. This is the frontier of restorative justice: the presence of ethics and emotion.

This is how questions arise in Rwanda, questions caused by the supervision of discourse and the indoctrination of the population from the centralized unit. The state manages the official narrative of the genocide, and it is the only one considered. In addition, if other versions are disseminated, including those that hold the elected Rwandan Patriotic Front party responsible for perpetrating crimes, they are subject to legal sanctions, as divisive or genocidal ideologies are not allowed. Rwanda has experienced ongoing tensions with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) has been accused of committing serious crimes for which no judicial proceedings have been initiated. This lack of accountability has hindered the development of mutual trust between the parties (Zorbas, 2004).

From the constructivist theory, the presence of these reconstruction processes shaped society and not only sought justice but also reconfigured the social structure in favor of their ideology, appealing to redefine the meaning of concepts such as citizenship and guilt (Checkel, 2005). The state became the only one capable of legitimizing reconciliation since it was the only way allowed. Under these circumstances, forgiveness was

not presented as a real result guided by human emotion; rather, forgiveness was presented as part of a process of fulfilling one's duty. It was not generated naturally but as part of a forced plot (Staub, 2014).

The importance of discourse in constructivism is emphasized; language affects and transmutes reality (Campbell, 1998). In Rwanda, it has served to limit opinion; the control of discourse is still present even though it was transcendental in perpetrating the initial crime against humanity. Public questioning is not allowed as it encourages "genocidal ideology," the country's history is one, and no variants are accepted; the reconciliation process must obey the state. Currently, the post-genocide period in Rwanda is one of the most complex cases. Reconciliation brought with it a reduction in violence and a focus on national unity, but it eradicated individual thought. It is a political cycle rather than an emotional one. Enforced silence and unquestioning obedience to the state do not constitute the foundation for genuine reconstruction, which must instead be guided by the acknowledgment of the emotional traumas deeply embedded within the community.
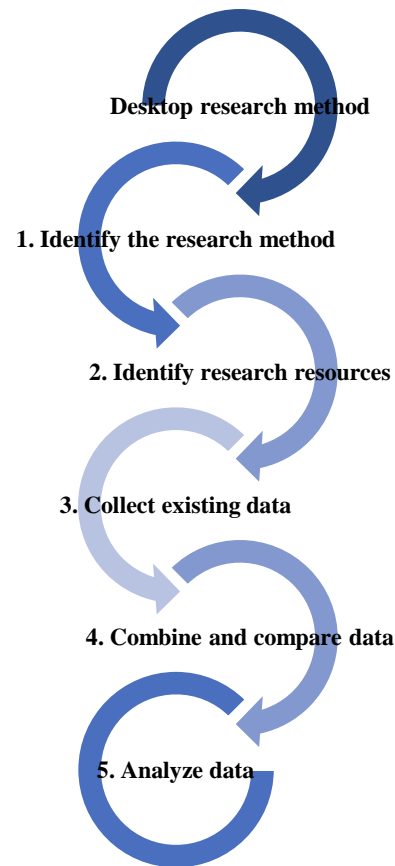
3. Methodology

The type of research used is called "desk-based research." This technique consists of analyzing existing information on a given topic. This approach was chosen because it allows us to study the complexity of the narratives, the representations, and the fabricated actions or inaction about the Rwandan genocide. The use of this technique has advantages such as the fact that it opens up research into specific areas that are generally not accessible in other ways, it is much cheaper, and it makes it possible to compare both national and foreign texts (Bassot, 2022).

The selected methodology allows the analysis and comparison of information that persists over time since it can be current or old. Furthermore, this methodology does not seek to appeal to the subjectivity of the authors but rather to criteria in different contexts. However, subjectivity is reflected in later stages, such as the selection, analysis, and display of the data collected by the synthesizing author. This also brings with it limitations, since biases can arise depending on the information selected. However, authors such as Ghauri et al. (2010) mention the relevance of methodologies such as this one, since research into secondary sources facilitates the contextualization of the case study because it is possible to identify the trends that it presents and, likewise, to recognize the gaps without having to resort to the compilation of primary data. If the credibility of the information resource is evaluated, this method would be fundamental for the expansion of knowledge.

The process that was followed is shown in Figure 2, which has five execution steps. The five steps applied to the subject are as follows: 1. The research topic was defined as 2. The sources of information were identified, in this case consisting of academic research on Rwanda, scientific articles in the field of international relations, and human rights treaties. 3. Once the sources of information had been identified, they were compiled in a pertinent manner to meet the established objectives. 4. Data was incorporated from the perspective under study, that is, from the constructivist theory of the process of reconciliation and reconstruction in Rwanda. 5. And finally, an analysis of the collated information was carried out using the deductive approach: it was applied to understand how constructivist theory explains the development of ethnic identities in Rwanda.

This event has been analyzed previously from the perspective of other international relations theories; however, the constructivist point of view asserts that these factors are socially constructed and are not simply given, which is why it was important to explore this perspective in greater depth. As far as obtaining data is concerned, it came from secondary sources, such as bibliographic reviews, academic articles, books, media reports, and reports from international organizations; taking into account international treaties and media discourses perpetuated before, during, and after the genocide, this was also to evaluate the post-conflict reconciliation processes.

Figure 2

Desk-based research methodological process

Desktop research method

1. Identify the research method

2. Identify research resources

3. Collect existing data

4. Combine and compare data

5. Analyze data

Note: Adapted from B*usiness Innovations in the New Mobility Market during the COVID-19 with the Possibility of Open Business Model Innovation*, Turón & Kubik, 2021, Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity, 7(3).

4. Results

Four essential principles of the Constructivist theory of International Relations have been identified and are reflected in Figure 3, shown below. By observing documentary sources, results were obtained that support the claim that these theoretical elements presented themselves as a prelude to the Rwandan genocide. These principles are transcendental components in the arrangement of the general panorama for the analysis of the case study.

Figure 3
Constructivism in International Relations
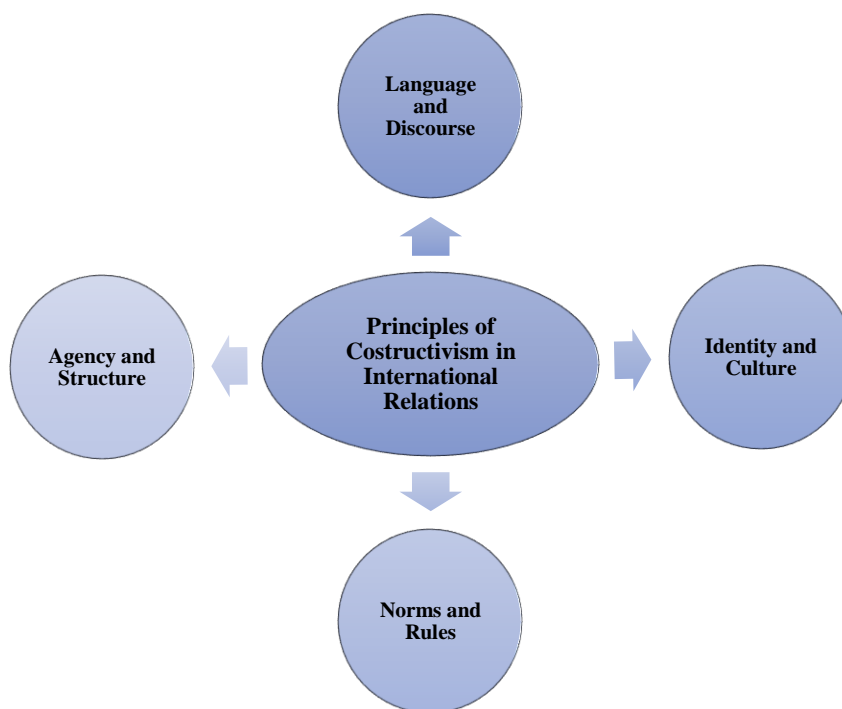
4.1 Language and Discourse

In the case of Rwanda, as in many other cases, the role of language is extremely important in the formation of the social reality that presents itself. According to Onuf (1989) and Campbell (1998), from the point of view of constructivism, discourse not only reflects the situation in which they find themselves, but also how this reality is created and transformed. Figure 4 below shows the identified discursive strategies that were applied in this particular case.

Figure 4
Discursive Strategies
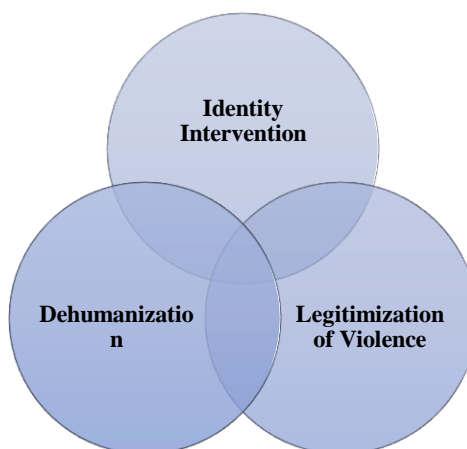
The results obtained show that before the Rwandan genocide there was a discursive campaign aimed at dehumanizing the Tutsis, transforming the minds of the majority of the Rwandan population, and the collective imagination of the Hutus, turning the Tutsis into dangerous people. Likewise, the importance of the media in this specific situation should be emphasized. The Kangura newspaper and Radio Télévision Libre des Mille

Collines (RTLM), as they served as a means of spreading hatred and disseminating messages against part of the population, followed a particular narrative in which they initially established the ideology that the Tutsis are enemies of the people, and then they planted the seed of doubt, facilitating extermination under the concept that it was a solution required to preserve the well-being of the majority of the population.

Certain patterns have prevailed in historical discourse, not only reflected in the Rwandan genocide but also in cases such as the famous Nazi Holocaust, in which a certain part of the population was demonized through language. Let's remember that they started calling the Tutsis "inyenzi," which translates into English as "cockroaches." This is not only derogatory, but the language was used as a prelude to physical destruction since the perception was that the Tutsis were a plague and should be destroyed. By reinforcing the idea that the Tutsis were foreigners and did not belong in Rwanda, they resorted to using national identity to categorize the Hutus as the true citizens and the Tutsi minority as the plunderers. Authors such as Prunier (1995) and Fein (1993) state that the genocide was fully consented to, as this manipulative discourse justified the violence, and the reason why this was the case is that it was considered a legitimate method of self-defense.

In this way, the thesis expounded by Wendt (1999) is confirmed, which establishes that international politics is nothing more than a social construct governed by criteria that coincide in the minds of human beings, since, if there is considered to be some exponential danger, there will be a corresponding reaction, regardless of whether this involves leaving moderation aside and generating conflicts, and even committing crimes against humanity, legitimizing violence.

4.2 Agency and Structure

According to constructivist theory, to understand how the international system is configured, it is important to conceive of the influence of the relationship between agency and structure. Wendt (1992) argued that actors are not only limited or at the mercy of the international structure, but that their actions have the power to change and transform it. Then, this analysis demonstrates that the correlation between actors, both locally and globally, was decisive in the configuration of the Rwandan genocide. Figure 5 below presents the fundamental levels of analysis in this constructivist principle.

Figure 5
Levels of analysis: Agency and Structure
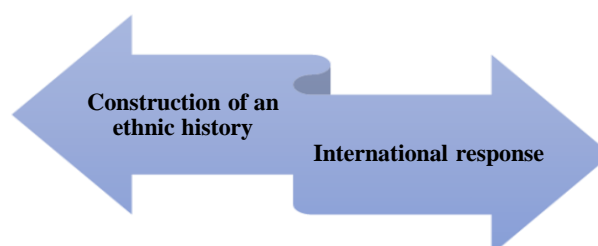
If we analyze the information obtained, we can confirm that social identity in this African country did not always present such a marked ethnic segmentation. Before the colonization of Africa by the Europeans, the Hutus and Tutsis were distinguished by their socioeconomic status. However, since the arrival of the Belgians, these distinctions were legalized employing policies such as the use of identity cards (Newbury, 1988). These ethnic differentiations did not occur naturally but were a social construct promoted by the colonizers. It is a mechanism that is not static but a process resulting from evolution and time, involving history and politics. The conquest categorically affected Rwanda, transforming the flexible identity of Hutu and Tutsi into a racial issue, conflicting the population and causing ethnic tensions, guided by European education, politics, and beliefs employed in a rigid manner (Mamdani, 1996). Likewise, after the independence process, the identity narrative had a crucial influence on the country, since the Hutu revolution led to the exile of the Tutsis and the consolidation of the mentality that they represented a danger.

Similarly, the principle of agency and structure explains the reason behind international inaction in the case of the Rwandan genocide. Despite the existence of international regulations that seek not only to punish but also to prevent crimes against humanity, such as genocide, international organizations and states were reluctant to intervene. According to realist theory, the cost-benefit strategy was considered, and since Rwanda was not an area of interest, it was not a strategic point for the West. Likewise, it is not a power, so they calculated that it was not essential to intervene (Totten et al., 2004).

As it was an actor from the periphery, interest was drastically minimized, and the political will disappeared (Hopf, 2002). On the other hand, from the constructivist theory, the situation presented by the African country is affected by the vision that the international environment has within the system itself. States

recognize international law when they consider it legitimate and their interests to be aligned with these processes (Franck, 1990). The best example is provided by countries that are powers, such as the United States, which avoid using the word "genocide" so as not to classify the situation and thus avoid getting involved (Power, 2002). Furthermore, the international community did not decide for organizational reasons, the UN became bureaucratized, and no solutions were proposed in the Security Council, as a result of which effectiveness was displaced, and they did not react in time (Barnett, 2002). As a result, international humanitarian law is limited in its application if it is not aligned with certain interests.

4.3 Identity and Culture

A fundamental aspect of constructivist theory is the perception of identity; nothing is static, everything is constructed, and history has a social influence. Wendt (1999) establishes that the behavior of the international community is affected by the identity factor, not only by the search for political and economic power but rather by the adaptation of social interactions generated from processes of past, historical processes. Figure 6, which highlights findings about this social construction in Rwanda, is presented below.

Figure 6
Identity and Cultural Results
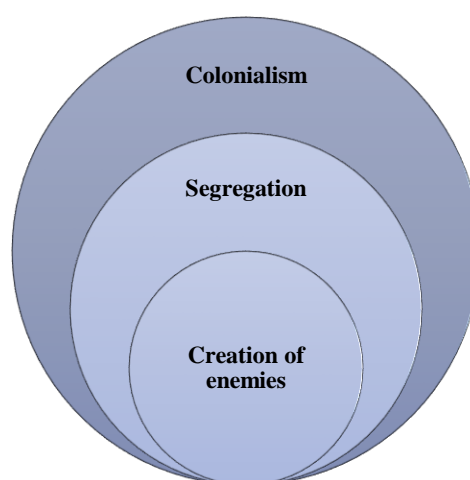
This analysis helps us to elucidate the impact that colonialism had on the Rwandan genocide as part of the construction of identity. According to Bustin & Lemarchand (1972), European power established a separatist policy; the ideal of unity in the colony was not possible, since with the argument of "divide and conquer," they created internal tensions, and, in this way, the Rwandans focused on what was happening in their village and not against their village. European domination separated them ethnically, and that was when the problems began, as they ceased to be a whole Rwandan and were racially categorized as Hutus, Tutsis, and Twa from birth.

One tool used as a key means of segregation was education. The system implemented was firm and inflexible, and reinforced the ideology of Tutsi superiority over the Hutu, who were nothing more than subordinates in the political practice of the time. This ethnic hierarchy, in which the Tutsi minority was privileged, was the reason behind the genocide, and this ideology was instilled especially in Hutu children and young adults, as this part of the population is more susceptible and even manipulable. At the beginning of the 20th century, the colonizers established that the Tutsis could have access to administer politics as representatives of the empire and that they could have access to higher education, highlighting the advantages they had over the Hutus (Des Forges, 1999).

As explained, Tutsi identity did not arise naturally in Rwanda but through a colonial strategy imposed and reappropriated by the majority of the population, the Hutus. It was then that the Hutu leaders took advantage of this narrative to perpetuate the ideology of the Tutsis as the internal enemy, and this facilitated the expansion of violence since, according to this way of thinking, they were threatening the national welfare and represented a danger to the community, facilitating their persecution and subsequent extermination. Authors such as Reyntjens (2013) consider that the perception of this internal enemy facilitated the systematic extermination of the Rwandan people.

4.4 Norms and Rules

Following the postulates of constructivist theory, international law is a socially constructed phenomenon; its acceptance and application depend entirely on international actors. It is not because the

regulations are written down that they will be applied or function correctly. Rather, it is up to the international community to legitimize and execute them once they have been accepted. Figure 7 shows the reasons why the international community did not act in the case study.

Figure 7
Inefficiency of the regulations
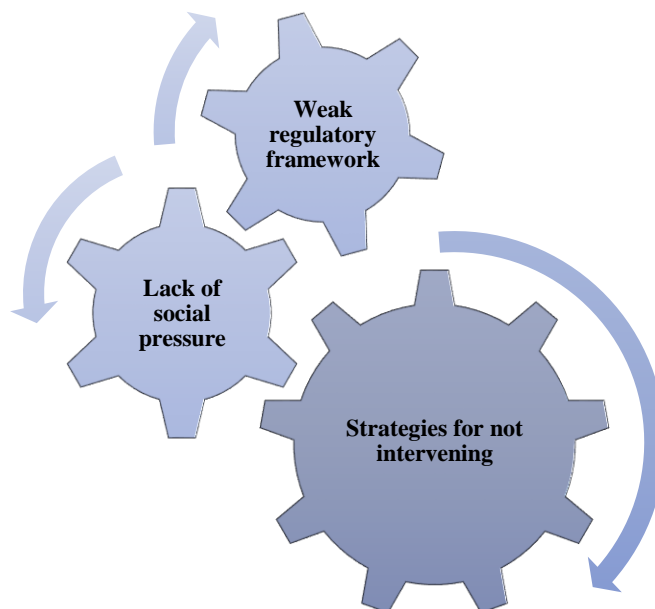
Finnemore (1996) speaks of the existence of a life cycle of international legal norms: first, the norm is promoted; second, the process of dissemination and adoption, which can even occur through social pressure; and finally, internalization, through which the norm is accepted as legitimate and binding. The results of this analysis demonstrate that, in the Rwandan genocide, this normative cycle was not fully complied with.

Despite the existence of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) at an international level, the states decided not to intervene promptly. Contributions from Checkel (2005) state that, from constructivism, international norms must be socialized and internalized since they do not have intrinsic coercive power; in this case, the norms against genocide had not been fully internalized.

The lack of will and clear structure affected the application of these norms by the international community (Power, 2002). Likewise, in Rwanda, there was no social pressure to generate an immediate response, as happened in other conflicts, the Balkans being a clear example of this; there was intervention as a result of the international commotion generated (Hurell, 2007).

Similarly, when the interests of powerful states interfere, the application of humanitarian law is favored, therefore calling into question its true use. In the particular case under study, leaders of powerful countries avoided using words such as "genocide" so as not to intervene and have no moral burden (Thakur, 2006). In line with this line of thought, Kennedy (2004) announces that international organizations are also influenced by the convenience of these influential countries, which in Rwanda was reflected in the late intervention of the UN.

5. Discussion

Following the 1994 genocide, Rwanda directed its efforts toward the reconstruction of the nation, establishing itself as a country whose primary objective was the promotion of national unity through reconciliation. It represents a pragmatic case: despite facing devastating circumstances, the government chose to adapt, embracing a mindset that sought to abandon customs and beliefs that had proven destructive in favor of practical measures aimed at transformative change. From a constructivist perspective, this process did not emerge organically; rather, it was shaped by a series of mechanisms such as state control, official discourse, and identity redefinition, what Wendt (1999) describes as socially constructed narratives and norms.

The central method of national reconciliation was led by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which emphasized the elimination of ethnic classifications. Legally, individuals were no longer identified as Hutu or

Tutsi but rather as a single category: "Rwandan." This aligns with Wendt's (1999) notion that identities are not fixed but can be transformed. However, Thomson (2014) critiques this approach, arguing that the imposition of a singular identity that leaves no space for historical differences fosters resentment among civilians. Similarly, Campbell (1998) contends that such identity construction reshapes discourse, turning it into a tool of power that operates along the thin line between legitimacy and coercion. Zorbas (2004) supports this view, asserting that the Rwandan reconciliation process has not emerged spontaneously but as a deliberately constructed ideology wherein unity is mandated rather than idealized. This raises concerns that the government has implemented a normative framework grounded in civil obedience, where discussions of ethnicity have become contentious and largely suppressed.

One critical element in the implementation of these strategies is the role of state policy. For instance, Rwanda introduced educational policies aimed at promoting a singular national narrative and fostering a homogeneous national culture. However, the creation of a single discourse can affect the collective memory of the population, limiting the coexistence of multiple narratives. It presents a major constraint for authentic reconciliation, as it hinders the acknowledgment of plural historical experiences. The Rwandan genocide must be understood as a direct legacy of colonialism, which racialized the population (Mamdani, 2001). Even after gaining independence, the colonial constructions of privileged Tutsis and exploited Hutus persisted. This prompts the question of whether Rwanda's current progressive policies may, in effect, be reproducing colonial logic. Whereas colonizers once imposed rigid identity divisions, the current leadership now seeks to erase them, as though these historical fractures never existed. In this context, Straus (2013) notes that such a strategy prevents the nation from openly addressing the roots of division, allowing ethnic resentment to persist beneath the surface.

Likewise, Reyntjens (2013) explains that the new policies established by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) link any form of questioning to genocidal ideology. The Rwandan genocide ended physically in 1994; however, ideologically, the notion of internal enemies persists within the population. Self-censorship restricts dialogue, and, as a result, the reconstruction process is not entirely genuine. This case clearly illustrates what Finnemore (1996) stated: the existence of international norms does not guarantee their enforcement, which is why such norms must be internalized by each state; only then can they be considered legitimized practices. On the other hand, from an international standpoint, Western powers were slow to act when the genocide occurred; thus, international inaction reveals the gap between geopolitical interests and the legal commitments of states. Kennedy (2004) argues that political indifference is often safeguarded by mechanisms such as humanitarian language, which morally masks situations and justifies international passivity. It explains why, from the perspective of global powers, Rwanda did not represent a zone of strategic interest (Prunier, 1995).

Additionally, from a constructivist perspective, the reconstruction process has not been able to effectively apply the norms of international justice. Although the UN created the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda as a means of resolution, justice was not legitimized internally. Furthermore, its proceedings were not considered transparent, and since this normative framework was not internalized, the needs of the Rwandan state were not treated as an immediate priority and were instead relegated. It is also essential to ask how the genocide affected the youth, given that although they did not live through the episode, the suppression of narratives by the state has persisted for decades, affecting Rwandan society as a whole.

Trauma is socialized through historical and family narratives and even through silence. Authors such as Munyandamutsa et al. (2012) state that post-genocide trauma is deeply rooted within the Rwandan people. Young people suffer from mental health disorders, especially post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the children of survivors, who display high levels of PTSD, are reluctant to believe in the reconciliation process. This demonstrates that the plan proposed by the state has not been able to approach the emotional dimension, and in this sense, can be considered superficial. The lack of an environment that provides freedom and safety for mourning and collective memory perpetuates the damage caused by the genocide, and therefore, a genuine reconciliation process must be accompanied by more than state-led transformations.

Through Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction process, female representation in parliament increased significantly, which was praised by the international community. However, criticisms also arise in this regard, particularly when analyzed from the standpoint that the state controls the political timeline, thus limiting women's roles. Berry (2018) supports this perspective, arguing that women's roles are restricted by state authoritarianism and patriarchy and that female representation functions merely as a symbol that legitimizes state-led reconciliation. Likewise, Sharlach (1999) considers the sexual violence that occurred during the genocide, stating that although the abuse was systematic, its recognition in the reconstruction processes has been minimal. From the constructivist perspective, the existence of a discourse that highlights the role of women as symbols of reconciliation and harmony does not entail a true commitment to social change. Although Rwandan women have become protagonists in the reconstruction process, the violence they experienced was structurally silenced, thus diminishing their importance as victims.

Reconciliation in Rwanda, from a constructivist perspective, is not merely an achievement in political or legal terms; rather, it is understood as a process embedded in complex structures such as the production of identities and normative frameworks. Objectively, it must be acknowledged that the country has achieved stability; however, the scope of the reconstruction process has been questioned due to its limited capacity to address emotional dimensions, the state's discursive control, and its reluctance to openly address the past. Thomson (2014) shares this view, arguing that the reconciliation process has functioned less as a means of pursuing social justice and more as a mechanism of governance.

The Rwandan genocide and its aftermath cannot be fully understood through the lens of a single international relations theory. While constructivism focuses on identity formation, the role of discourse, and the influence of norms, realism explains the behavior of international actors based on strategic interests and their indifference toward peripheral regions. By integrating constructivist and realist approaches, a broader understanding of the genocide becomes possible, one that captures the event's full complexity.

Constructivism highlights the social and discursive conditions that triggered the spread of hatred, which ultimately led to genocide. Wendt (1999) reminds that not only actors but the entire international system is socially constructed. Even anarchy is a state-based construct, and therefore, states are free to interpret or manipulate it according to their interests. From this standpoint, the constructivist approach considers Hutu and Tutsi identities as colonial social constructs. Mamdani (2001) argues that the genocide was a legacy of the colonial state, in which Rwandan citizenship was entirely racialized. The hatred that fueled the extermination was institutionalized discourse that portrayed Tutsis as 'internal enemies' (Straus, 2013). Realism, on the other hand, explains that states' strategic interests outweigh their moral obligations as part of the international community. As a result, there was no economic or political will to defend universal principles, and the international response was consequently delayed. Thus, the Rwandan genocide occurred both as a result of the internal generation of hatred and violence and due to the external logic of inaction (Kuperman, 2000).

6. Conclusion

Analyzing the Rwandan genocide and its subsequent reconstruction and reconciliation processes through the lens of constructivist international relations theory is essential to understanding that norms, identities, and discourses are socially constructed elements that shape and influence the perceptions of actors. These are not inherent realities granted by the international system but rather contexts shaped by historical and institutional factors. The findings of this research reinforce this perspective by demonstrating that the genocide did not result from natural ethnic tensions but rather from processes that altered identity, created an internal enemy, and subsequently legitimized extermination through discourse. Furthermore, language served as a mechanism to justify violence, shaping Rwandan society before, during, and even after the conflict. In the aftermath, the reconciliation process gave rise to a single, socially accepted narrative—one imposed by those in power, leaving no room for alternative viewpoints or collective memories. Constructivism enables a deep understanding of reconciliation by revealing who imposes it, how it is established, and how it affects the Rwandan population. The research also reveals that international politics is not a static social construct but one in constant evolution and that norms, identity, and discourse structure behavior rather than merely regulate it.

The constructivist perspective suggests that the inaction of the international community was partly due to a poor internalization of international norms and a lack of political will. Moreover, by emphasizing that the functionality of the global system depends on the legitimization granted by powerful states, the case of international inaction exposes the analytical limits of constructivism. For this reason, it is necessary to complement constructivist analysis with other theoretical approaches, such as realism, which holds that states act based on their interests rather than humanitarian considerations. This analysis, therefore, underscores the importance of critically reexamining existing theories from a contemporary standpoint that takes into account the challenges of the modern world. Likewise, it suggests that constructivism must expand its scope to include previously overlooked dimensions such as intergenerational memory, emotional trauma, and the impact of new media on discourse.

Ultimately, this research seeks not only to serve as an academic exposition but also as a preventive call to action against genocide. It highlights the ethical and social imperative of promoting education that emphasizes the importance of history and the universality of human rights. Understanding past events is essential to grasping the direction in which we are collectively heading. It is also crucial to internalize how language, identity construction, and social norms can be instrumentalized as insidious mechanisms of division, systematic exclusion, and, in their most extreme form, annihilation. From a constructivist and critical perspective, which opens contributions from various disciplines, the development of innovative tools and proactive strategies becomes more plausible. These are not only necessary to promote peace in the present but must also serve as sustainable pillars for a future in which atrocities like the Rwandan genocide are never repeated.

7. References

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