Media, Minority Discourses and Identity Politics in Post-Genocide Rwanda

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Summary

This article explores how media has been used to shape the contours of political debate and ethnic identities in post-genocide Rwanda. The article will argue that although the government of Paul Kagame has loosened control on media, its obsession with constructing an "exeptionalised genocide narrative", has been to a larger measure used as a weapon to gag media freedom. The poor and marginalised Rwandans or "minority discourses" find it very difficult to express their political identities outside the officially sanctioned spaces and categories. The consequence is a fundamentally flawed political narrative that the state uses to practice state sanctioned media censorship, eliminate "dissenting" voices and destroy civic society. Also, in post-genocide Rwanda, there is a worrisome tendency by the government in which citizens are categorised into two groups, described as "saints" and "sinners", although this is veiled under the policy of "Rwandanicity". This binary categorisation of society, which is also used to [re]configure state-owned media narratives, is heavily contested in this article because it discourages the emergence of alternative "voices" and "discourses" which can confront the politics of inclusion and exclusion practiced by the state based on who was a "victim" or "perpetrator" of violence during the 1994 genocide. It is also going to be unveiled how private media is often accused by the state for causing "ethnic divisionism", "negationism", and of harbouring an "ethnic ideology and genocide mentality". The degree to which media contest the manipulation of "truths", challenge the monopoly on knowledge construction, and of political correctness by the state will reflect the extent to which the government can either constrict or democratise media space for full citizen participation in post-genocide Rwanda.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel stel ondersoek in na die wyse waarop die media gebruik word om vorm te gee aan die kontoere van politieke debat en etniese identiteite in Rwanda ná die volksmoord. Die artikel voer aan dat alhoewel die regering van Paul Kagame hul greep op die media verslap het, hulle 'n obsessie het oor die skepping van 'n "uitsonderlike volksmoordnarratief", en dat dít grootliks gebruik word as wapen om die media te muilband. Arm en gemarginaliseerde Rwandese of minderheidstemme vind dit baie moeilik om uitdrukking te gee aan hulle politieke identiteite buite die amptelik bekragtigde ruimtes en kategorieë. Die gevolg hiervan is 'n politieke narratief wat fundamenteel tekortskiet en deur die staat ingespan word om media-sensuur te beoefen, andersdenkende stemme uit die weg te ruim en die burgerlike samelewing te vernietig. In Rwanda ná die volksmoord is daar ook 'n kommerwekkende

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regeringstendens om landsburgers in een van twee kategorieë te plaas: hulle is óf "heiliges" óf "sondaars". Hierdie binêre klassifisering van die samelewing, wat ook gebruik word om staatsbeheerde medianarratiewe te [her]konfigureer, word in hierdie artikel die stryd aangesê omdat dit die totstandkoming van alternatiewe "stemme" en "diskoerse" ontmoedig. Sulke stemme en diskoerse ontmoedig die politiek van in- en uitsluiting, soos beoefen deur die staat op grond daarvan of persone die slagoffers of plegers van geweld was tydens die 1994-volksmoord. Die artikel toon hoe private media dikwels deur die staat daarvan beskuldig word dat hulle "etniese verdeling" en "negering" veroorsaak, en 'n "etniese ideologie en volks-moordmentaliteit" koester. Die mate waartoe die media die manipulering van "waarhede" teenstaan en die monopolie op kennis uitdaag, en die staat se politieke korrektheid, weerspieël in watter mate die regering die mediaruimte (en alle Rwandese se deelname daarin ná die volksmoord) kan vernou of demokratiseer. 'n Kort opname toon hoe die media gebruik is om die agenda vir geweld te stel deur etniese identiteite tydens die 1994-volksmoord te manipuleer. Dié opname gee die toon aan vir die argument deur die mag van die media in Rwanda na te speur. Die media se rol in die bevordering van vrede en stabiliteit in Rwanda ná die volksmoord word ondersoek. Hierdie artikel wys hoe Kagame die media suksesvol inspan om goeie diplomatieke bande met die buiteland (veral Engelssprekende lande) te smee, maar dit wys ook daarop dat Kagame dieselfde media gebruik om "volksmoordkrediet" te kry en ondersteuning deur die Weste (wat gebuk gaan onder skuld omdat hulle nie daadwerklik opgetree het tydens die volksmoord nie) te bewerkstellig. Laastens word die minderheidsdiskoerse en die nuwe identiteitspolitiek in hierdie artikel voorafge-gaan deur mediastories oor politieke teistering, gedwonge ballingskap, staatsont-voerings en grusame moorde op staatsbevel – die risiko's wat enige kandidaat loop indien hulle dit sou waag om die politieke legitimiteit van die Rwandese Politieke Front (RPF), gelei deur Paul Kagame, in Rwanda ná die volksmoord uit te daag.

Introduction: Media and the Rwanda Genocide

As introductory note to this article, media shall be viewed within the context of how it was manipulated by Hutu extremists to construct Tutsi and moderate Hutus as "enemies" that deserved to be annihilated "symbolically and physically" (Malleus 2003: 12). There is considerable amount of literature produced so far to assess the role of media in motivating perpetrators to commit the crime of genocide in Rwanda in 1994. A 2014 paper published by David Yanagizawa-Drott in the Quarterly *Journal of Economics*, entitled "Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide," analyses the impact of Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), a key media outlet for the Hutu-led government, on violence and killings of the Tutsi minority. The above-mentioned study by David Yanagizawa-Drott scrutinises how exposure to propaganda and inflammatory messages calling for the extermination of the Tutsis fuelled violence by the Hutu population. In the same breath, Chretin's (1995) study argues that Rwanda radio and newspapers run by Hutu extremists incited and urged the mass of the Hutu people to kill, rape and main the Tutsi people. *Kangura* newspaper described Tutsis as *"inyenzi"* or "coachroches" and "traitors" bent on undermining the sovereignty of Rwanda by collaborating with Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF)

led by Paul Kagame (Human Rights Watch 1999). In the article by the title: "*Kangura*: the triumph of propaganda redefined" by Kabanda (2007) and "Rwandan private print media on the eve of genocide", by Higiro (2007) the historical origin of the *Kangura* newspaper is explored; its mode of ownership, editorial policies, and how the newspaper was transformed into a potent weapon for "mass destruction" through toxic propaganda that turned ordinary citizens into killers.

So far, the most comprehension and unitary study on how media fomented violence and caused death during the 1994 Rwanda genocide was edited by Allan Thompson (2007). Entitled *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* (2007) the book takes a multi-disciplinary approach involving critical lenses from history, identity politics, journalism and news reportage, film narratives and News magazine coverage in order to probe media's culpability in fuelling hate and violence during the Rwanda genocide. The significance of the book by Thompson (2007) is that it highlights the politics of ethnicity and racism which underpinned local and international media news reportage during the genocide. To that effect, the blurb of the book clearly explicates that, "*The news media played a crucial role in the 1994 Rwanda genocide: local media fuelled the killings, while the international media either ignored or seriously misconstrued what was happening*" (Thompson 2007). In the spirit of Hitler's propaganda that advocated for the emergence of an "aryan race" (so-called "pure" Germans), Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) campaigned for a "pure Hutu" nation that was ruled by the Hutu majority (Melvern 2004). In all cases cited above, media played a critical role in undermining minority discourses in as much as it constructed toxic identity politics that were used as a rallying point to "fish out" victims for the killing. Tutsis and moderate Hutus were targeted, and more than 800 000 were decimated.

Media and Post-Genocide Reconstruction in Rwanda

In post-genocide Rwanda, media has witnessed major reforms and trans-formation in respective of government's "new" agenda focused on nation building. Thompson (2007) writes that the public broadcaster Rwanda Broadcasting Agency − which was predominately a Hutu official mouth-piece filled with hate and propaganda, went through major reforms in post-genocide Rwanda. The reforms put premium on media freedom and impartiality so that media is viewed as the "voice of the voice-less" (King 2010: 45) with a mission to pluralise and diversify opinion offered by Rwandans of different political persuasions. In this vein, Bloun and Mukand (2018) call attention to how media is being used as a unifying force that echoes government policy aimed at, "building inter-ethnic trust and forging a new Rwandan identity" (9-10) in accordance to the provisions on peace enunciated by the National Unity

and Reconciliation Commission (NURC). The creation of a new Rwanda identity implied the "erasure of ethnicity" (ibid) which was the most contentious issue at the "heart" of Tutsi persecution during the 1994 genocide. In respective of the nation building agenda, the Rwandan media plays a critical role in emphasising,

> … the unifying aspects of Rwandan history, such as shared culture and language and de-emphasizing divisive ones in all activities in the public sphere …. Kagame's government has attempted to change inter-ethnic preferences through a package of measures including direct indoctrination through the media, the rewriting of ethnic, colonial and genocide history in school textbooks, as well as the enforced social interaction and solidarity building through programs such as *Itorero* (civic education) or *Umuganda* (building projects).
>
> (Bloun & Mukand 2018: 11)

Elaborating on media's task of unifying Rwandan communities, Mutasa (2015) has carried out extensive studies on the effectiveness of community radio stations such as *Isangano, Ishingiro, Izuba* and *Huguka*. Based in Karongi District in the Western Province, the *Isangano* radio station was established in April 2011. Its broadcasting policy is aimed at delivering, "… quality, diverse and independent alternative ideas to mainstream information to its community; information that nurtures and encourages the community's popular participation" (Mutasa 2015: 37). What is evident from the fore-going is that the establishment of *Isangano* was meant to empower the rural community in Karongi District through "… popular participation" (37). Put in another way, *Isangano* community radio broadcasting empowers "minority discourses" and encourages the developing of alternative thinking among members of the rural community isolated from having full access to the mainstream media platforms. Thompson (2007) argues that since ninety percent (90%) of Rwandan population live on agriculture as rural peasants, having access to radio communication is very key to community development. According to International Research and Exchange Board (IREX), an American Non-Governmental organisation, the establishment of *Isangano* also serves the purpose of linking the Rwandan government to rural areas so that community-based projects can be synchronised with government objectives that focus on post-genocide reconstruction (Mutasa 2015).

The issue of post-genocide reconstruction is taken at a higher level by *Ishingiro* community radio. Based in the Northern Province − Rwanda's tea-growing region, *Ishingiro* is a proactive radio station established to effect positive change in the Northern rural communities. Its mandate is subtly summarised through its motto, "Advocacy to change, Delivering Active Change for Our Community" (Mutasa 2015: 37). Sinabubariraga, the station manager, outlines the specificity of *Ishingiro* radio station:

> … it was meant to support the most vulnerable families and individuals in the community. It works to champion the professional and creative skills needed to develop a vibrant, digitally connected and media literate society. Along with delivering popular content, Radio *Ishingiro* has set about establishing a reputation for providing high levels of expertise to a wide range of clients.
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> (38)

What is evident from above citation is that radio *Ishingiro* has a broader scope on community participation. Writing on community development, Huyse (2008) argues that participation is not something grafted onto or inserted into a developmental paradigm. Rather, participation is an open and transactive method recognising "voices" and "discourses" of ordinary people in conceiving and implementing practical solutions to issues confronting them. In this vein, *Ishingiro's* thrust of empowering the Northern Province through providing support to vulnerable families, championing professionalism and creativity, is at the "heart and soul" of community development.

Another prominent radio station that plays a significant role in fostering community development in Rwanda is radio *Izuba.* According to Mutasa (2015), Radio Izuba is Rwanda's oldest community radio station having been launched in July 2004 with a particular emphasis on the promotion of agriculture, small trade and the role of the youths and women empowerment. The station is based in Kibungo, in the country's Eastern Province with an estimated population of about two million people, most of them farmers that practice subsistence farming. *Izuba* is owned by the Association for Community Development through Communication (ADECCO) whose members are drawn from the private and public sectors and civic society. The central aim of the *Izuba* radio station is to bring together different groups regardless of class, gender, age and education background so that they can promote discussions, conversations and debates focused on good governance based on community participation.

Finally, there is radio *Huguka* owned by Association *Huguka.* Mutasa (2015) found out that the station started airing in November 2010, and that Huguka makes it possible to, "… achieve diffusion of best agricultural practices and promote community development with better access for illiterate people" (39). The radio's capacity to appeal to the illiterate people means that Huguka is an effective weapon that empowers "minority discourses" that would otherwise remain "silenced" in mainstream media discourses.

Despite government efforts to stamp out corruption as evidenced through reports compiled by Transparency International al Rwanda in 2015, the practice of "check-book journalism" (Nyakupinda, Chari & Muchena 2003) among some members of media fraternity is worrisome. Checkbook journalism is a practice whereby journalists are paid bribes by powerful members of society, companies or institutions to write favourable accounts about their business activities even if the very same activities are deemed harmful to some

members of the society. Another "cancer" which eats up at the core of media freedom is state censorship. In post-genocide Rwanda, the practice of state censorship is succinctly summarised by Blouin and Mukand (2018) as follows:

> … Any criticism of the government (especially with regard to Hutu-Tutsi relationships) has been dealt with severely, with reporters and newspapers such as *Umuseso* and *Umuco* being prosecuted under the Rwandan ethnic divisionism law … the media environment is characterized by a culture of self-censorship, with high levels of reluctance by journalists to write reports criticizing the government, its policies or their implementation.
>
> (11-12)

To quantify the effects of state censorship observed above by Blouin and Mukand (2018), *Reporters Without Borders,* ranks Rwanda as one of the worst countries in the world regarding freedom of the media, and the World Press Freedom Index ranks it 161st out of 179 countries. Feeling the sting of international criticism, the government of Paul Kagame issued media statements countering the criticism arguing that instead of proffering "exaggerated" assessments of media environments in Rwanda, "… there is need to have a comprehensive research trajectory that reveals the 'truth' about Rwanda's media environment not from the media lenses imposed on Africa by western powers" (Aslund, Looyenga & Sandstrom 2013). To further strengthen its position, the government argues that whereas during the genocide Radio Libre des Milles Collins (RTLM) and newspaper *Kangura* were used as state-machinery that fomented violence, in post-genocide Rwanda government reforms are targeted at transforming media so that it becomes an effective tool for fostering peace and development.

To further develop the operational field of media in Rwanda, some reforms that remarkably changed the terrain of news reporting were drafted through the laws enshrined in the Official Gazette No 10 (Media High Council 2015). The laws in the Official Gazette contain provisions which allowed for the formation of Rwanda Media Commission which is a self-regulatory body tasked with, (a) promote professionalism and sound ethical conduct among journalists, (b) defend media freedom, (c) ensure equal and free access to information, and (d) speak on behalf of media organisations. As a result of media reforms instituted by the government of Paul Kagame, Rwanda is fast becoming a modernised Africa state boasting of state-of-art information technologies. Just recently in early January 2019, Rwanda officially pronounced the government will soon launch its first telecommunications satellite which will be propelled into orbit from the international space station. According to NexTV News Africa (2019), the areas mostly emphasised, are in the fabrication of local satellites specialised on the acquisition of Data on weather and which could further be extended as Earth Observations for purposes of Agriculture. Rwanda's government aims to achieve total telecoms

autonomy with the launch of the satellite. "Among other things, it will enable it [government] to connect rural and remote areas of the country, to improve observation of the national territory, weather control and military communications", (NexTV News Africa 2019). However, despite possessing such a grand vision, the Rwandan government is often criticised for creating a dichotomy based on the paradigm of "information rich" and "information poor" (Chari & Chuma 2001: 61) societies representative of cities and rural areas. Correspondingly, the impoverished rural areas in terms of access to media information are constitutive of the "minority discourses" that find it very difficult to make inroads into the broader discursive environment engendered through national debate, and democratisation of media spaces.

Media, Minority Discourses and Identity Politics in Post-Genocide Rwanda

It is now twenty-seven (27) years since Rwanda experienced a devastating genocide in which more than 800 000 lives of Tutsi and moderate Hutus were decimated in a spate of three months. Apart from hate speech peddled by Hutu politicians, media was used by the state to construct "toxic ethnic and political identities" (Hintjens 2008: 45) of Hutu versus Tutsi predicated on hate, violence and death. Although post-genocide Rwanda has put in place measures to democratise media space by allowing media freedom and turning "… hate media to great media" (Aslund, Looyenga & Sandstrom 2013: 2) the contentious issues regarding the participation of minority discourses and identity politics remained largely unresolved. For definitional and conceptual clarity, "minority discourses" in this paper will refer to the marginalisation of knowledge, language, social practices and "voices" of the underprivileged classes (Schuberth 2012) by official media in Rwanda so that they do not make meaningful contribution towards the "rewriting of Rwandan history" (81) that is not "policed" through official propaganda and media-sanctioned discourses.

Jager (2001) tells us that, "… discourses are not interesting as mere expression of social practice but because they serve certain ends namely, to exercise power with all its effects. Discourses are institutionalized and regulated, because they are linked to action" (34). More elaborately, Boulter (2017: 99-100) contends that, "… media discourse is produced within institutional structures that are deeply infused with a number of power dynamics that regulate who can participate in the discourse, and how". The question of "… who can participate in the discourse, and how" (Boulter 2017: 100) underscores the play of power in which identity politics or the politics of identity predominate.

In post-genocide Rwanda, the construction of "predatory identity" (Bowen & Kymlicka 2019: 1) through, "… the phenomenon of historical exception-

alism" (Zegeye & Vambe 2009: 34), practiced by RFP government led by Kagame was meant to erase "other" narratives, and "other" memories that are likely to unsettled official accounts of the realities of genocide. For instance, Umutesi (2004) brings attention to the summary execution of Hutu refugees by RFP soldiers in the forests of Eastern Congo and Kibeho camp. That narrative is violently dismissed by government, and in place of it the government is keen to present an officially concocted political identity in which RFP is said to possess "untainted hands" and "unsullied" history that is beyond contestation. State-owned media is guilty of undermining minority discourses while elevating hegemonic discourses that suppress alternative ways of, narrating the nation (Bhabha 1990) of Rwanda. Media is very much actively involved in constructing political identities based on the history of the genocide where the question of ethnicity is officially downplayed, and yet it remains strikingly visible in the way the government runs its business. Reyntjens (2004) has coined the expression, "Tutsization, RPF-ization and the new Akazu" (187) in order to unmask the monopoly of the economy and political power by the Tutsi dominated military structures. Reyntjens further justifies his claim:

> … when, in the past, Hutu were a majority in public institutions, this was called "ethnic discrimination"; however, now that Tutsi were a majority, this became "meritocracy". Of course, the elimination of ethnicity is a wonderful goal, shared by many Rwandans, but the cynical manipulation of this objective as a tool for the monopolization of power in the hands of a small group is something quite different.
>
> (2004: 187)

Not only is the monopolisation of power cynical but also the monopolisation of knowledge in the reconstruction of the Rwandan genocide history. In post-genocide Rwanda, there is a tendency by the state to use media, education institutions and state sponsored forums to spread official propaganda undermines the significance of minority discourses and identity politics − all done in the name of "… collective mourning ceremonies" (Schubert 2012: 78), where, "… one part of the population is victimized while the other is criminalized" (78). Thus, the production of knowledge and the definition of "truth" is largely a preserve of the ruling RPF government. Within the context of post-genocide knowledge construction in Rwanda, the political battle is fought with the use of the discursive weapons of knowledge and power which determine the formation of a context-specific truth (Foucault 2004). The assertions made by Foucault (2004) underlie how knowledge and power are monopolised in Rwanda, and that minority versions of "truth" is not taken seriously. In fact, the tight control over political debate helps the RPF government to propagate its own version of truth predicated on, "a single vision of Rwanda's future with reference to a particular narrative drawn from its past", (Beswick 2010: 248) subtly described by Zegeye and Vambe (2009)

as "… the phenomenon of historical exceptionalism" (34). It is this historical exceptionalism that the Rwandan government uses to gloss over the unique contribution of minority discourses to the totality of Rwandan genocide history. Supporting the foregoing, Alexander and Temple have this to say:

> Some media discourses essentialize minority identities by reducing members of a minority group to a singular and undifferentiated identity, which in a sense segregates a minority community from their larger context … it is critical to resist this homogenization, as it is a misrepresentation of minority communities with all their diversity, and varying degrees and spectrums of belonging.
>
> (2007: 102)

Despite the erasure of ethnicity (Blouin & Mukand 2018) and all forms of discrimination that go with it, "… any observed improvement of inter-ethnic relationships is merely cosmetic, since the population masks its true feelings about ethnic relations and pretends to get along with those of the other ethnicity to avoid attracting government attention". (6) Apart from ethnicity being a reflector of identity politics, the discourse on "new minorities" in Rwanda is played out in media where the "voice" of the disgruntled citizens is ruthlessly suppressed. These disgruntled "voices" representative of minority identities is, "… exposed to [a] binary form of representation. In Rwanda, the minorities are represented through sharply opposed, polarized binaries", (Hall 1997: 23) that do not clearly reflect the specificity of people's historical, social, economic and political conditions. For instance, since the 1994 genocide, the official discourse created a marked division between the *genocidaires* and the *survivors* (Thomson 2011). This inflexible and "autocratic nature of identity creation" (Schuberth 2012: 88) is embedded in the privileged and hegemonic positionality of the RFP government that construct a simplified and reductive image of Hutu perpetrators and Tutsi victims. Ironically, in its bid to suppress minority discourses and destabilise the growth of alternative "voices", the RPF government has necessitated a preliminary critique of its claims to be able to present uncontested truths (Vambe 2004) about the Rwandan history founded upon identity politics and the politics of identity.

New Politics of Identity as Media's "Voice" of Dissent

Since the genocide, the Rwandan government has taken significant steps to heal the nation previously torn apart by hatred, mistrust and ethnically moti-vated violence. The media, too, has shown great enthusiasm in promoting peace and stability by advocating for equality, diversity and plurality of citizen "voices", and participation. Yet, in its bid to forge a "new" Rwandan identity devoid of "hardened ethnic identities and particularities" (Berry 2014:

4) the Rwandan government has increasingly become intolerant to direct criticism manifesting itself as media's "voice" of dissent. In fact, as Smyth (2014: 2) concurs, "… today it is hard to find any active journalists inside Rwanda, as journalists have either fled into exile or been intimidated into self-censorship. The few independent journalists such as Sixbert Musangamfura, whose "voice" is constitutive of "minority discourses", have been subjected to state harassment, and intimidation after his critical Kinyarwanda-language weekly *Isibo* managed to dig up official "dirt" attributed to the Hutu-led government and the Tutsi-led guerrillas (Smyth 2014). To further elaborate his point, Smyth (2014) traces the root of government animosity towards independent press by asserting that:

> The government began cracking down on the independent press in the late 2000s in advance of Presidential elections. The country's once-leading independent newspaper, *Umuseso*, was suspended during the electoral cam-paign while its editors faced various criminal charges. They fled into exile to launch a new independent weekly, *The Newsline*. Rwandan authorities order-ed officials to confiscate any copies found at border crossings. Rwandan courts have tried and sentenced other exiled editors, such as Jean Bosco Gasasira on the online weekly *Umuvugizi*, who was sentenced in absentia to years in jails over a column critical of Kagame.

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The above citation by Smyth (2014), apart from reflecting that freedom of expression is thwarted in Rwanda, also shows that criticism against the President is ruthlessly crushed. What seems to irk the government is that its attempt to spread a "single, simplified and essentialized interpretation of the Rwandan history" (Reyntjens 2004: 181) is seriously interrogated by the independent press, and even some RPF members disgruntled by the way Kagame approaches issues to do with governance, democracy and freedom of expression. In 1995, when the RPF declared, "One Rwanda for all Rwandans" − which became its broader national policy framework embedded in the philosophy of "Rwandanicity", some critical citizens started to raise their eye-brows. This is because, as Berry (2014) contends, the new policy enabled the government to declared herself as the custodian of Rwandan history, and quickly used its "new" found role to interpret, "… Rwandan history for the masses, romanticizing the ethnic harmony of pre-colonial times and blaming the genocide on the colonial powers and the international community" (4). Some important mechanisms of Rwandanicity put in place soon after the genocide included *ingando* solidarity or "reeducation" camps, the national education system, annual genocide commemorations, public mass graves and memorials, and the conformity of state-controlled newspapers such as the *New Times.* It can be argued that while the ostensible goal of the above-mentioned programs is to prevent future ethnic tensions and violence, scholars like Timothy Longman and Filip Reyntjens have criticised the government's

approach of limiting freedom of expression and public debate (Berry 2014). In fact, according to Reyntjens (2004) the escalation of violence against media's "dissenting voice" started in 2001 when the directors of the newspaper *Rwanda Newsline*, who used to be close to the RPF, were threatened after the publication of articles criticising the government, in particular the Rwanda Patriotic Army's involvement in Congo. The directors wrote that they were accused of being on the pay roll of "negative forces" (Reyntjens 2004: 181) which is a term loosely coined by the RPF that it uses to terrorise all its critics or force opponents into submission.

More media persecutions saw the editorial staff of *Imboni* newspaper, considered less close to the RPF, leaving Rwanda for Brussels from where they published *Imboni in Exile*. Reyntjens (2004) writes that in its first editorial, the staff of *Imboni in Exile*, "… sarcastically 'apologized' for 'having publicly expressed our imagination at the spirit of sycophancy, the deliberate process of impoverishment of society and public opinion to vassaldom' (181). Apart from persecuting media personnel that refused to conform, the Kagame regime went out of its way to create "new" identities that were politically sanctioned. Through state-controlled media, a worrisome pattern emerged in which society was categorised, not on the basis of ethnicity, but on, "… politically sanctioned, non-categories, derived from an individual's experience during the genocide" (Berry 2014: 4), and that had wider implications for media prosecution in post-genocide Rwanda.

Cases of media persecution, state censorship, intimidations and assassinations are many in post-genocide Rwanda, and among the harrowing experiences are:

- In 2001, August RPA Chief of Staff General Kayumba Nyamwasa went on "study leave" in the UK, after a violent verbal dispute with Kagame against the background of a malaise in the army around the operations in the DRC. On 12 April 2001, the editorial of *Rwanda Newsline* interpreted the "disappearance" on 4 April of retired major Alex Ruzindana as "a possible attempt to discourage new defections" (Reyntjens 2004: 182).
- Agnes Uwimana and Saiditi Mukakibbi ran the Independent, Kinyarwanda-Language bi-monthly *Umurabyo* until they were arrested in 2010. Convicted on charges including defamation and "genocide denial", they had reported critically on agricultural policies; the 2010 murder of another independent journalist, Jean-Leonard Rugambage; and President's falling out with some of his former military comrades, including an ex-spy chief was found strangled to death in South Africa (Smyth 2014: 3).
- In 2010, journalists began tweeting about possible Rwandan involvement in the ex-spy chief's murder, prompting a Twitter account impersonating the South African jurist Richard Goldstone to try and

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discredit them through personal attacks. Suddenly, during the hated exchange, the vitriolic comments were no longer coming from the Goldstone account but from Kagame's official Twitter account, as if he had hit the wrong button on his computer (Smyth 2014: 3).

- In 2012, Epaprodite Habarugira, a presenter at *Radio Huguka*, a community radio station in Rwanda's second-largest city, Gitarama, was detained for three months for minimising the genocide and spreading genocide ideology when he apparently mixed up the terms for "victims" and "survivors" while reading an announcement about genocide commemoration events. A court later acquitted him of the charges. (Smyth 2014: 11).

- Idriss Gasana Byiringiro, a political reporter at the privately-owned weekly *Chronicles*, was arrested on suspicion of providing false information. In the preceding weeks, he had received intimidation text messages and a threatening unsigned letter … (Smyth 2014: 11).

- Cassien Ntamuhanga, the director of the faith-based radio station *Amazing Grace*, which focuses on religion and social issues, disappeared on April 7 and, according to police, was arrested on April 14. He was charged in court, along with three others, for endangering state security, complicity in terrorism, and treason. They were accused of working with the opposition party, Rwanda National Congress, and FDLR, a rebel group in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to plot the overthrow of government. (Smyth 2014: 11)

The few examples proffered above demonstrate the degree to which media freedom is gagged by the Kagame regime in post-genocide Rwanda.

The Politics of Memory [Re]production in Post-Genocide Rwanda

In post-genocide, those who criticise the government's obsession for creating the "State of exception and the manufacturing of fear" (Schuberth 2012: 84) are also concerned about how the government manipulates the process of [re]producing historical memory on genocide. As Cohen (2001: 241) puts it, "[m]emory is a social product, reflecting the agenda and social location of those who invoke it". Drawing on Primo Levi, Lemarchand (2008: 67) reminds us that the "memory of the offence", no matter how inaccurate or constructed, "is always selective" and hence fundamental for the creation of a "convenient reality". Rwandan critics, especially from the independent media fraternity, argue that construction of collective memory, for instance through annual memorial days and media campaigns, allows the RPF regime to gain so-called "genocide credit" (Reyntjens 2004: 23) which refers to the exploitation of genocide memory in order to avoid criticism about its human

rights abuses or what Silva-Leander (2008: 1610) calls the, "gradual Tutsification of the state by the RPF". The most contentious issue revolves around the construction of a genocide narrative that labels a section of society as *genocidaires* (Hutu) while others are constructed as *victims* (Tutsi). Those that are labelled negatively forfeit the right to have their narratives occupy "real and imaginary" spaces within Rwanda's historiography.

The Rwanda Patriotic Front is accused of instrumentalising memories of violence and using genocide experiences as a political tool to gain legitimacy both at home and abroad. King (2010) argues that while there is space in Rwanda for stories that recognise the positive role of some Rwandans, particularly Hutu rescuers during the genocide, this already narrow space is further narrowing. For example, there has been great controversy surrounding the actions and statements of Paul Rusesabagina, the Hutu temporary manager of the *Hotel des Mille Collines,* credited with saving up to thousands of lives during the genocide (and best known as the basis for the main character of the movie *Hotel Rwanda).* The Rwandan government and newspapers have charged him with having, "… a self-promotion agenda while distorting Rwanda's history and spreading negative propaganda against the current government through outrageous assertions and dirty campaigns" (King 2010: 299). What is apparent from Rusesabagina is that the government is very uncomfortable if the history of genocide is narrated from an angle that it has not "policed", particularly if that angle that happen to emerge from a group of people that were labelled as *genocidaires* (Hutu). Without a shred of doubt, Rusesabagina's "voice" constitute "minority discourses" of Hutu rescuers that have contributed in a significant way during the genocide but are denied audience simply because they belong to the Hutus that are stereotypically viewed as perpetrators of violence during the genocide. This "collective punishment" (Schuberth 2012: 81) has helped to construct a myth in which Rwanda is viewed as a nation of, "… brutal, sadistic merciless killers" (Hutus) versus "innocent victims" (Tutsis) (p. 81). Another bone of contention in post-genocide Rwanda concerns the "Unrecognized Hutu Memories" (King 2010: 299) that are crying out to heard but are squashed by official memories that refuse to acknowledge the reality that there are alternative ways of narrating the nation of Rwanda. For instance, there is no media or public space in Rwanda for Hutu memories of violence perpetrated by the RPF (Umutesi 2004). Indeed, saying that there are "unpunishable RPF crimes" is equated with the negation of genocide, and may be placed within the category of punishable offenses classified under the ambit of law on what is described as the crime of spreading "genocide ideology". Yet, according to King (2010),

> … reports indicate that RPF committed widespread killings during the civil war (1990-1993) and during the genocide. Since 1994, the RPF has engaged in killing and other violations of human rights in two wars in the Congo (1996-

1997), (1998-2003), as well as in ongoing operations, and in massacres in Rwanda, such as at the Kibeho camp for the internally displaced in April 1995.

(299)

What is evident from the above citation by King (2010) is that there is a conscious attempt by RPF to hide the atrocities that they perpetrated on innocent citizens in both Rwanda and Congo. Indeed, these alternative Hutu memories are sacrificed on the altar of "collective mourning" (Schuberth 2012: 84) and official propaganda churned out through state-controlled media. King (2010) has strongly argued that instead of viewing it as a symbol of democracy and progress the Rwanda of today is, "… much closer to authoritarianism and dictatorship than to democracy, and there is increasing concentration of power around a small group of former Tutsi exiles from Uganda. Many Rwandans experience state censorship as well as self-censorship, and fear being charged with the vague offenses of "division-ism" and "genocide ideology", which increasingly seems to simply mean disagreeing with the government" (300-301). As Thomson (2011) contends, the wording of laws prohibiting "divisionism" and "genocide ideology" is vague enough to give the government of Paul Kagame a *carte-blanche* to use them against any critical voice. There is a sense of entitlement overtly demonstrated by the government in terms of memory [re] construction in post-genocide Rwanda. However, Vambe (2004) reminds us that the politics of memory and remembering implicates acts of writing narrative as arbitrary because memory is, "… always in flux to the extent that there is not only potentially one memory but also multiple memories constantly battling for attention" (7) within the cultural and historical spaces of Rwanda. These contesting memories can compel one to go along with the contentions made by King (2010) who argues that,

> … while Hutu and Tutsi received joint recognition as victims of the genocide at the first annual commemoration, subsequent commemorations have illustrated that Tutsi hold a "monopoly on suffering" in Rwanda. From early references to the "Rwanda genocide", the government has moved since about 2008 to calling the events of 1994 the "Tutsi genocide".

(301)

Evidently, all other groups such as the Hutu moderates that suffered during the genocide and should also hold a "monopoly of suffering" (ibid) are not included within the master narrative on genocide promoted by the govern-ment. Thus, the silence of Hutu moderates is constitutive of a "minority discourse" that should have had an outlet in post-genocide Rwanda but cannot because of the domineering discourses issued out by the RPF government through media and collective commemorations. This epistemological colonisation practiced by the RPF, and which amounts to the colonisation of the mind and imagination of Rwandans (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2007) affect modes

"… knowing, of producing knowledge, of producing perspectives, images, modes of signification and objectivized expression" (Quijano 2007: 169). Consequently, the Rwandan society can be said to be suffering from the condition of "epistemic vulnerability" (Snyman 2011: 270) in which the histories and memories of ordinary people are controlled and shaped only by the ruling elite class.

Conclusion

This article explored how media is used to shape "minority discourses" and political identities in post-genocide Rwanda. These minority discourses and political identities operate within the broader discursive context[s] controlled by the RPF government led by Paul Kagame. Minority discourses and political identities have their origins in the 1994 genocide during which media played an active role in fomenting violence which resulted into the death of more than 800 000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Then, Tutsis were labelled as *"inyenzi"* or "coachroches" that deserve to die. Hutu Powa radio station RTLM and newspaper *Kangura* spread toxic propaganda that turned ordinary citizens into killers. During the genocide minority discourses that opted to act as "voices of reason" were silenced through violence and death. When Rwanda was rescued from the genocide by the Rwanda Patriotic Front led by Paul Kagame, a new era of hope was brought into being. What the government of Kagame quickly was to spread the "gospel" of Rwandanicity which discourages ethnicity at all cost. The new policy was geared towards unifying ethnic groups previously torn-apart by the genocide. Community radio stations were established to give "voice" to the marginalised communities constitutive of "minority discourses" in terms of access to media, even though the communities remain in the majority in terms of numbers. The minority discourses that attempt to bring about alternative ways of interpreting the history of Rwanda are/were often accused for spreading "genocide ideology", cause "divisionism" or harbouring an "ethnic ideology and genocide mentality". Those accused, particularly journalists that belong to the independent press, are/were subjected to harassment, state-censorship, detention, and that has made some of them to escape to other countries in search of freedom of expression.

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