

Winter 12-5-2022

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Recommended Citation

Ratsch, Josh, "A United Failure: The Failure of the United Nations, United States, and Global Community in Preventing and Responding to the 1994 Rwandan Genocide" (2022). *Honors College Theses*. 148.
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A United Failure: The Failure of the United Nations, United States, and Global Community in Preventing and Responding to the 1994 Rwandan Genocide

The Rwandan Genocide that lasted from April 6, 1994 until mid-July of that same year represents a unique and utter failure of the global community to end genocidal violence in a nation ripping itself apart. Compared to previous genocides like the Holocaust or Armenian cases, images and information began pouring out of the nation immediately following its beginning. Pictures, letters, and other firsthand accounts illustrated a grave need that the global community needed to intervene. Moreover, the warning signs had existed in the years prior to the genocide that Rwanda was a nation ripe for an explosion of ethnic violence. Although hierarchical tensions had existed between the Hutu and Tutsi prior to German (and later Belgian) colonization, it was greatly exacerbated by colonial powers and later an extremist government that sought to alienate the Tutsi from Rwandan life. The United Nations, who had a force on the ground in Rwanda starting in 1993, failed to act, and would even reduce the number of UN peacekeepers in Rwanda as the genocide progressed. The United States, who had been so involved with the Somali Civil War seven months prior, indifferently watched the slaughter from a distance, claiming that the human (that is, American soldier) and monetary costs were too severe to justify any intervention. The global community, which had been so resolved in its commitment to “never again” sat largely inactive, watching a small African nation consume itself in destruction. This paper does not seek to pose possible means of intervention, but solely to offer a critique of the global community in their failure to save hundreds of thousands of innocent lives. The utter failure of the United Nations and larger global community to do anything about the genocide is one of the greatest humanitarian failures of the twentieth century, and maybe even human history. The issue in Rwanda was not a

lack of capacity to intervene, it was an issue of indifference. “*Peux ce que veux. Allons-y*”¹-Where there’s a will, there’s a way. Let’s go.

An important clarification to be made in any work done on genocide is what is considered genocide by the global community. Following the Holocaust, the United Nations set out to come up with a word and definition of what genocide is in order to prevent it in the future. Prior to Raphael Lemkin’s work in the 1940s, genocide was not even a word in the vocabulary of the global community. The 1948 Genocide Convention was ratified by over 40 nations prior to its implementation in 1951, including nations like the United States, France, and Belgium.² According to the UN Convention, genocide is legally defined as:

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

- a. Killing members of the group
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group³

Furthermore, the convention also acted as an obligatory contract of the signing nations. Article I of the convention states that genocide is: “...a crime under international law which they [the signing nations] undertake to prevent and punish.”⁴ This article creates an obligation and responsibility of the signing nations to intervene when they agree that genocide is occurring in any nation across the world. This convention creates an interesting scenario. Given the requirements to label something as a genocide without deeper investigation, the UN danced around labeling the

¹ Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003), 522.

² Raphael Lemkin, United Nations. *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. Paris, France: 1948.

³ Lemkin.

⁴ Lemkin.

Rwandan Genocide as a genocide. According to the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the Tutsi-led group had labeled the events as genocide as early as April 13th, with an estimated death toll of 20,000 after the first week.⁵ It is understandable that the United Nations would not want to hastily declare genocide in any case, so as to avoid interventions in what are essentially civil wars or risking bad press. However, the accounts flowing in from certifiable sources on the ground in Rwanda should have been enough to justify some sort of action. In many documents, however, the events in Rwanda are typified as “genocidal acts *may* have occurred”⁶ or that there is “evidence of *possible* acts of genocide”⁷ without calling it genocide outright. Because the UN specifically used this exact language, it deferred any legal obligation to actively intervene in Rwanda.

Effects of the Western Colonial Period of Rwanda

Any in-depth analysis of Rwanda requires a discussion of the long-term colonial causes as well. The contorted colonial history of Rwanda has had repercussions that have lasted through the generations, and the periods of colonial rule under the Germans and Belgians had deadly consequences for the Rwandan people. The nature of the Hutu-Tutsi relationship prior to German colonization in the late nineteenth century is oft-debated in the scholarly world; while some believe there was a level of “symbiosis” between the groups, others argue that the oligarchical rule of the Tutsi cattle herders was oppressive and aimed and subjecting the Hutu majority to their rule.⁸ Regardless of the nature of their relationship, the Hutu majority came in time to despise the rule

⁵ Jared Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 129.

⁶ United Nations, Economic and Social Council; Commission on Human Rights. *Report of the Commission on Human Rights on Its Third Special Session*. UN Doc E/CN.4/S-3/4.

⁷ United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Res 935 (1 July 1994) UN Doc S/RES/935.

⁸ Catherine Newbury, “Ethnicity and the Politics of History in Rwanda,” *Africa Today* 45, no. 1 (1998): 9-10, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4187200>.

of the Tutsi minority. Each of these views hold some merit, but the scholarly consensus is that the Hutu and Tutsi of Rwanda did not fit the European norm of “tribal violence” on the African continent.⁹ This disparity in power largely stems from certain genetic differences that existed between the Tutsi and Hutu, but later became exacerbated by the Germans and the Belgians. Naturally speaking, the Tutsi living within Rwanda upon German arrival (whose genetic pool was significantly “purer” as intermarriage between the two groups was somewhat uncommon) were taller, around twelve centimeters according to the earliest German studies.¹⁰ This physical advantage coupled with the status of many Tutsi as cattle herders led to a European embrace of the existing societal structures in place upon arrival. Thus, the Tutsi leaders in positions of power became natural allies of the Germans, who favored the Tutsi minority. Naturally, the Germans’ interest quickly shifted into discovering the origins of the Tutsi, as they clearly were a different group from the Hutu. Several hypotheses were developed by German scientists and other Europeans as well, but the most popular is the migration hypothesis. This hypothesis was originally based solely on the height of Rwanda’s Hutu inhabitants, but in later years it has come to be defined by more genetically-based research. Two common genetic differences provide a fairly accurate divide between the Hutu and Tutsi: the existence of the sickle cell trait and the capacity to digest lactose. Both the sickle-cell trait and inability to digest lactose is incredibly common among both the Hutu of Rwanda, but also the Hutu of neighboring countries like Burundi and the (now) Democratic Republic of the Congo.¹¹ Thus, it is observable to identify European fabrication and

⁹ Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda*, 51.

¹⁰ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2020), 44, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv8pz9s9>.

¹¹ —, 45.

agitation of Rwandan ethnic tensions all the way back in the late nineteenth century in Rwanda that would eventually manifest itself in the 1994 genocide.

Another reason for the German (and later Belgian) favor of the Tutsi stems from the Hamitic hypothesis. In the view of some of the colonizers, the Tutsi were more adjacent to European blood than the Hutu and Twa, and had been destined to rule the inferior Hutu from the start.¹² But how could the Tutsi be more adjacent to European blood than the Hutu? There is more at play in this instance than the mere difference in height. Some of the early German colonizers, in an attempt to consolidate their alliance with the Tutsi leaders and justify colonization, created the theory that the Tutsi people were actually the lost tribe of Ham from the Bible.¹³ The lost tribe of Ham is the legendary offspring of one of Noah's sons, who had gazed upon his father's nakedness and thus had Ham's descendants punished by the legendary patriarch. This Biblical hypothesis greatly skewed the German perspective of Rwanda's demographics towards the minority. According to Belgian political scientist Peter Uvin, "The distinctions between Hutu and Tutsi...are invested with notions of moral and human superiority and inferiority": the notion that the Tutsi residing in the Great Lakes region had some direct Biblical tie (and thus superiority) garnered much traction among German leaders of the time.¹⁴ This view is inherently problematic, as the Germans' view and treatment of the Hutu and Tutsi was encumbered by their own racist ideology. The entire idea of European colonization was predicated on the fact of European superiority, leading colonial Europeans to themselves construct hierarchies in the new lands they

¹² Kenneth R. White, "Scourge of Racism: Genocide in Rwanda," *Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 3 (2009): 473, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40282573>.

¹³ Robert Melson, "Modern Genocide in Rwanda: Ideology, Revolution, War and Mass Murder in an African State," in *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 327.

¹⁴ Peter Uvin. "Prejudice, Crisis and Genocide in Rwanda," *African Studies Review* 40, no. 2 (1997): 99: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/525158>.

found themselves ruling.¹⁵ The continued European preference to the Tutsi minority created a strong level of animosity among many Hutu, as they felt the treatment they were receiving was unfair. By using falsehoods to uphold existing social structures, colonial powers planted the seeds of distrust that would later be realized during the genocide.

The most marked and extreme step taken by the Belgian colonial administration (which gained control of Rwanda in 1919 thanks to the Treaty of Versailles) when it came to creating tension along the Hutu/Tutsi divide was their introduction of ID cards. In an attempt to affirm their authority as well as the existing hierarchy in Rwanda, the Belgian administration issued ID cards beginning in the 1930s to all Rwandans, dividing them among the distinct groups of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa.¹⁶ This moment in Belgian colonial rule stripped away every Rwandan of his or her unique combination of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa genetics and heritage and assigned them one, specific group. It is estimated by some authors that intermarriage of the three ethnic groups in Rwanda had been occurring for “hundreds of years”, thus blurring the genetic lines between Hutu and Tutsi (a point still debated among scholars). This practice of casting Rwandans as either Hutu *or* Tutsi, rather than some kind of combination, also outlasted the Belgians in Rwanda. The practice of a paper identifying the ethnic identity of Rwandans was common practice of the Rwandan government all the way up until the genocide, and greatly aided in the swift efficiency which marked it.¹⁷ Additionally, the Belgian attempts to consolidate complex ethnic identities into black and white impacted areas such as administration and education. Certain administrative roles were exclusively limited to those classified as Tutsi, and curriculum in Rwanda’s schools began to

¹⁵ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, 76.

¹⁶ —, 88.

¹⁷ Uvin. “Prejudice, Crisis and Genocide in Rwanda,” 100.

reflect European-created ideas of racial roots.¹⁸ This seemingly simple decision by Belgium's colonial leaders had effects that trickled down all the way to 1994.

As the 1950s began, Belgium became a much less willing administrator in Rwanda. As a result of shifting Belgian attitudes following the end of World War II and increased anti-colonial sentiment across the globe, Hutu movements calling for an end to Tutsi dominion in Rwanda gained traction. This shift paired with the increasing passivity of the colonial administration spurred on these cries.¹⁹ The Belgian government had clung so closely to the dichotomy amplified by the Germans that they were less than prepared for a rapid shift in the ethnic power dynamic of Rwanda itself. Perhaps the Belgians were growing wary of increased anti-colonial sentiment among the Tutsi elite; regardless, a weakening in Belgium's colonial grip greatly destabilized Rwandan society throughout the 1950s.²⁰ 1959 saw the beginning of the Hutu Revolution (sometimes referred to as the "Social" Revolution) and almost the complete collapse of Rwanda's society. The only Hutu subchief was attacked in November and reports that he died encouraged a frenzy of ethnic violence aimed towards Tutsi.²¹ Granted, the Revolution was not completely violent. The transition of power into the hands of a Hutu elite, (which essentially received the Belgian blessing) was peaceful to an extent, and author Mahmood Mamdani argues the rest of the aims of the Revolution could have also been accomplished more or less peacefully (at least in comparison to other periods in Rwanda's history).²² This reversal of Rwanda's social hierarchy also had a wide impact across every level of society. Another unfortunate byproduct of the

¹⁸ Helen M. Hintjens, "When Identity Becomes a Knife: Reflecting on the Genocide in Rwanda," *Ethnicities* 1, no. 1 (2001): 30, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23890376>.

¹⁹ Melson, "Modern Genocide in Rwanda: Ideology, Revolution, War and Mass Murder in an African State," 330-31.

²⁰ Hintjens, "When Identity Becomes a Knife: Reflecting on the Genocide in Rwanda," 31.

²¹ Newbury, "Ethnicity and the Politics of History in Rwanda," 13.

²² Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, 104.

Revolution saw quotas implemented that put strict limits on the number of Tutsi that would be allowed to serve in the civil government, go to school, and essentially cast the Tutsi into a position of invisibility within Rwanda.²³ By casting the Tutsi out of Rwandan life as a whole, Hutu extremists continued to ferment the seeds of anti-Tutsi rhetoric and push the divide between Hutu and Tutsi. Rwanda gained full independence after 3 years of the Revolution in 1962, with Gregoire Kayibanda taking charge of a provisional government.²⁴ By 1962, the about-face of Rwandan society was now complete. And although Rwanda would see marked improvements in terms of economic output and standard of living in the ensuing decades, the period of Hutu rule would not be peaceful.

Widespread Ethnic Violence Returns: The Rwandan Civil War, 1990-1993

While Rwanda may have been more or less at peace at certain periods following the end of the 1959 Revolution, it was again thrown into a hurricane of ethnic warfare in 1990. In October of that year, an army of Tutsi refugees forming the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) and the RPF began an invasion from neighboring Uganda.²⁵ This invasion was a complex, political movement that involved leaders from several different nations. For example, much of the RPA also served under Yoweri Museveni, who at that time was in power in Uganda following his triumph in its bloody Civil War; Museveni, as well as many of his key advisors, viewed the Tutsi living within Uganda's borders as "troublesome", and did not mind seeing them aggressively return to their homeland.²⁶ Furthermore, the recommencement of hostilities in 1990 came at a time where

²³ Uvin, "Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide," 101.

²⁴ Melson. "Modern Genocide in Rwanda," 331.

²⁵ Alan J. Kuperman, "Rwanda in Retrospect," *Foreign Affairs* 79. no. 1 (2000): 95, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20049616>.

²⁶ Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005), page number

President Juvenal Habyarimana's (who had taken power from Kayibanda in a 1970s coup) government was somewhat beginning to lose its grip on power in Rwanda. As a result of both a devastating famine and a devaluation of Rwanda's currency by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the lives of everyday Rwandans worsened and their attitude towards the Habyarimana government soured.²⁷ The invasion of an ethnic minority gave Habyarimana a pristine opportunity to consolidate his power by defeating the invaders. Rwanda's Civil War also gave the world a preview of what was to come. The Habyarimana regime used the invasion as a "pretext and a cover-up" for the murder of Tutsi in Rwanda under the auspices of defensive purposes.²⁸ As a result of the RPF invasion, the Hutu extremists in the government had a number of small-scale dry runs of exterminating the Tutsi. Not only was this a rehearsal in terms of carrying out the genocide, it was also a way to gauge the response from global powers. When their massacres during the Civil War went unmentioned during peace negotiations, extremists in the Rwandan government acknowledged this indifference and began preparing for larger killings in the future.²⁹ They no longer needed to fear of foreign intervention once their plan was put into motion: all that was needed was a spark.

The larger effects of the RPF/RPA invasion can also not be understated when it comes to studying the genocide in the coming years. By linking the Tutsi-fueled invasion to both the economic crises faced in Rwanda as well as the threat of a return to Tutsi rule, Habyarimana and his government began to push radical ideologies in the hardest hit, rural areas of Rwanda.³⁰ This

²⁷ Helen Hintjens, "Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 37, no. 2 (1999): 257, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/161847>.

²⁸ Philip Verwimp, "Development Ideology, the peasantry, and genocide: Rwanda represented in Habyarimana's speeches," *Journal of Genocide Studies* 2, no. 3 (2000): 41.

²⁹ Fred Grünfeld and Anke Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda: The Role of Bystanders* (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2007), 31.

³⁰ Ruba N. Alluri, "The Role of Tourism in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Rwanda," 2009, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11112.2>.

view would continue to be promulgated from the initial stages of the Civil War up through the genocide. Images began to circulate in both private and state-owned media organizations that depicted the Tutsi as barbarous. One example of this propaganda depicts RPF soldiers brutally murdering a baby, before offering to share the meat of the now dead child with its parents with the caption: “The RPF democracy in full function: equal shares for all.”³¹ Another view that grew in terms of support was that the Hutu were the true Rwandans and that the invading Tutsi were foreign invaders planning on destroying Rwanda.³² It was also during this period that historians agree the first substantial seeds of genocidal thought were being planted in the minds of powerful Hutu. Many Hutu chauvinists used the invasion as a pretense to begin planning to exterminate the Tutsi in 1991-92; after all, the Tutsi could now be displayed as an opposing force to the Hutu of Rwanda as they waged a bloody civil war from Uganda.³³ At this moment, we can see the evolution from a disdain for the Tutsi to a tangible hatred.

The bloody Civil War, with a few ceasefires here and there, would continue for nearly 3 years after the RPF invasion of 1990. In 1992, the RPF and Hutu Rwandan government sat down to discuss the terms of a more final end to the conflict. These negotiations would take place in Arusha, Tanzania, and granted many concessions to the Tutsi and the RPF.³⁴ The chief aim of the Arusha talks was to not only find a way to end the bloody conflict, but also to determine a path of conciliation between the Hutu and formerly displaced Tutsi. It also aimed to create a Rwandan government where Hutu and Tutsi had equitable control of the government and its day-to-day

³¹ Grünfeld and Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda: The Role of Bystanders*, 25.

³² Mann, *Dark Side of Democracy*, 439.

³³ Verwimp, “Development Ideology, the peasantry, and genocide: Rwanda represented in Habyarimana’s speeches,” 42.

³⁴ Grünfeld and Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda: The Role of Bystanders*, 35.

running. Both the Hutu-dominated *Mouvement révolutionnaire national pour le développement et la Démocratie* (MRNDD) and the RPF would have an equal number of cabinet positions, with other, smaller political groups each earning a handful.³⁵ Furthermore, the United States chose to insert itself as a broker in the peace talks, joining Tanzania and other African nations to help settle the conflict. Joining the United States, other nations (largely foreign financial supporters of Rwanda) like Belgium and France coerced Habyarimana into these peace talks with the invading RPF.³⁶ During this period of peace talks, Habyarimana faced stiff opposition from Hutu extremists within his cabinet. Throughout the effort to create peace in Rwanda, these extremists put up stiffer opposition to proposals made at Arusha, thus further radicalizing the group of people that would call for the genocide's start in April 1994.³⁷ Eventually, despite facing harsh opposition from radical Hutu, the Arusha Accords were signed. Following the signing of the accords, the world collectively breathed a sigh of relief, as they believed that Rwanda's future had been determined by internationally-mandated peace. Unfortunately, the process and signing of the peace at Arusha arguably condemned Rwanda to an even darker, deadlier explosion of inevitable ethnic violence.

A problem that emerged from the intense racialization of the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups is how it was (and to some extent still is today) reported by media and scholarly sources. As previously mentioned, Hutu and Tutsi are not actual racial classifications, but rather ethnic and based on the history of ancestors. A fairly common mistake during the 1990s was to refer to the two groups as "tribes." Following the RPF invasion in 1990, media around the world classified the

³⁵ René Lemarchand, "Consociationalism and Power Sharing in Africa: Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo," *African Affairs* 106, no. 422 (2007): 4-5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4496413>.

³⁶ Holly J. Burkhalter, "The Question of Genocide: The Clinton Administration and Rwanda," *World Policy Journal* 11, no. 3 (1994-1995): 45, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40209383>.

³⁷ International Panel of Eminent Personalities, "Report on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and Surrounding Events," 49.

renewed civil war as a tribe. Just a few days into the invasion, the New York Times referred to the invading force as: “A refugee army of more than 1,000 fighters belonging to the Tutsi tribe”.³⁸ Even the headline of that article poses problems. It labels the RPF as “invaders” of Rwanda, rather than acknowledging that the “invading” Tutsi were actual Rwandans merely displaced by ethnic persecution. On the surface, this may seem like merely a pedantic error, but this view turned out to be exceedingly important in the world’s impression of the coming genocide. First, by viewing the tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi as “tribal”, the mixing of Hutu and Tutsi through reproduction was essentially ignored. It created a dichotomy that merely allowed for Hutu or Tutsi to exist, but those with mixed histories suffered due to the removal of “intermediate” groups.³⁹ Second, it portrayed both the Hutu and Tutsi as sub-human. Historically, “other” groups have often been cast as being under (whether socially, economically, etc.) whoever classified them as such. In the Rwandan context, it created an apathy towards the historically warring tribes of Rwanda and led many to leave the genocide alone.

From an Uncertain Peace to Genocide (left off with editing here-page 12)

Furthermore, what the world knew prior to the genocide should have set off alarm bells that an atrocity was brewing in the Great Lakes region. Through his efforts in negotiating the peace at Arusha, as well as a period of time of bringing Rwanda into a more modern age, President Habyarimana was viewed as a starling by many in the global community and especially in France.⁴⁰ Prior to the genocide, Habyarimana and his regime were able to alter the outside

³⁸ Clifford Krauss, “Rwanda Invaders Said to Gain Ground,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), Oct. 4, 1990, <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/10/04/world/rwanda-invaders-said-to-gain-ground.html?searchResultPosition=6>.

³⁹ Hintjens, “Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda,” 250.

⁴⁰ —, 273.

perception of what was truly going on in Rwanda; instead of seeing a ticking time bomb of ethnic violence, the world was shown the image of a yeoman-based nation fending off seemingly foreign invaders. This was made possible by many of the higher-ups in the Rwandan government owning a stake in the state radio, *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTLM), making it very easy to control the information escaping Rwanda.⁴¹ Not only did RTLM use its platform as one of the primary disseminators of radio media in the country, it also violently spoke against the Belgians. RTLM broadcasted that the Belgians had actively been involved in the assassination of Rwanda's President Juvenal Habyarimana and that Belgium ought to leave Rwanda alone completely and immediately.⁴² Ironically, the man at the helm of this operation was a Belgian, Georges Ruggiu. RTLM's campaign of hatred aimed against the Tutsi as well as the Belgians and UN fueled and accelerated the progress of the genocide.

The period between 1990 and the beginning of the genocide in April 1994 saw a high number of weapons sold by foreign nations to the Rwandan government. Some of the most willing sellers of light arms to Rwanda included post-Soviet Russia and a number of its former Warsaw Pact allies. Countries like Romania, Slovakia, and especially Russia itself began to sell weapons to Rwanda to help stabilize the ruble and bring some much-needed balance to their economies and currency.⁴³ These weapons (largely rifles such as Kalashnikovs) greatly aided in the mobility and efficiency of the fight against the Tutsi both during the Civil War as well as in the genocide. Further research and interviews also indicate that the French government also played a large role in providing arms to Rwanda. A Hutu militia leader that participated in the genocide once admitted

⁴¹ Matthew Lower and Thomas Hauschildt. "The Media as a Tool of War: Propaganda in the Rwandan Genocide," *Human Rights and Conflict Resolution* 2, no. 1 (2014), 3.

⁴² International Panel of Eminent Personalities, "Report on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and Surrounding Events".

⁴³ Stephen D. Goose and Frank Smyth, "Arming the Rwandan Genocide," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 5 (1994): 89, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20046833>.

to an interviewer that in the days following Habyarimana's assassination, France flew in weapons to Kigali that were then distributed to militia members across the country.⁴⁴ Of course, this claim is vehemently denied by the French government, but the supporting evidence for French armament of the future genocidaires is incontrovertible. Nevertheless, the fact that the French even *may* have provided weapons to unknowingly aid in the genocide is frightening. But perhaps the most surprising seller of weapons to Rwanda eventually rose through the ranks of the UN. Boutros Boutros-Ghali served as UN Secretary-General during the genocide, but prior to his time at the UN he was the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Egypt. During his tenure there, he negotiated a 1990 deal that sent "mortar bombs, rocket launchers, grenades, and ammunitions" from Cairo to Kigali that were proven to be used in the genocide in 1994.⁴⁵ This fact was not known for several years, but would eventually come to light after the genocide was over. It is unfortunately very clear that the weapons provided by these nations would be very important in the genocidal campaign yet to come.

Reports made by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) and other UN observers located in Rwanda also should have made it clear that the environment was ripe for an explosion of ethnic violence. The nature of the Civil War and agreement at Arusha caused Rwanda to be incredibly unsteady and still poised for ethnic violence. In fact, the plans for genocide were reportedly being laid while the Civil War was still raging. In a report sent by the Belgian Ambassador stationed in Rwanda, they warned that "...a secret military staff charged with the extermination of the Tutsi of Rwanda in order to solve forever...the ethnic problem in Rwanda

⁴⁴ Hazel Cameron, "The French Connection: Complicity in the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda," *African Security* 8, no. 2 (2015): 104, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48598900>.

⁴⁵ "UN chief helped Rwanda killers arm themselves," *Guardian* (London, England), Sep. 2, 2000, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/sep/03/unitednations1>.

and to destroy the domestic Hutu opposition.”⁴⁶ This report was sent in March 1992, over two years prior to the commencement of the genocide, yet little was done to prevent the violence. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was also acutely aware of the lack of finality that had been proposed and planned by the Arusha Accords but had yet to be implemented. In their meeting on February 17th, 1994, the UNSC claimed that a humanitarian crisis was nearing if the installation of a new Rwandan government was delayed further than it already had.⁴⁷ Another report made by then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in late March 1994 stated that the refusal of both parties (that being the RPF and the Habyarimana regime) to assist in the installation of a new government. Boutros-Ghali even mentioned that this hiccup in the plan of UNAMIR had led to a deterioration of security in Rwanda and acknowledged that it could lead to violence across Rwanda.⁴⁸ The refusal of both parties to cooperate in the establishment of a new government inhibited UNAMIR from fulfilling its mandate. However, the UN made little effort to resolve this conflict and install the new government.

The most credible and distressing of these warnings has come to be infamously known as the “Genocide Fax”. In January 1994, UNAMIR Force Commander Roméo Dallaire was put into contact with a high-ranking official (who used the pseudonym Jean-Pierre) of the *interahamwe* militia who provided shocking insight to both the militia as well as the Rwandese Government Forces (RGF).

Force Commander put in contact with informant by very very important government politician. Informant is a top level trainer in the cadre of interhamwe-armed militia of MRND.

Principal aim of Interhamwe in the past was to protect Kigali from RPF. Since UNAMIR mandate he has been ordered to register all Tutsi in Kigali.

⁴⁶ Belgian Senate, *Report of Rwanda Commission of Inquiry*, December 6, 1997, 439-94.

⁴⁷ UNSC, “Provisional Verbatim Record of the Three Thousand Three Hundred and Thirty-Seventh Meeting.” (17 February 1994) UN Doc S/PV.3337.

⁴⁸ —. “Second Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda.” (30 March 1994) UN Doc S/1994/360.

He suspects it is for their extermination. Example he gave us was that in 20 minutes his personnel could kill up to 1000 Tutsis. Informant states he disagrees with anti-Tutsi extermination...He also stated that he believes the President does not have full control over all elements of his old party/faction.⁴⁹

There was also more information that the informant revealed not included in this cable. According to Dallaire, the informant told him that the militia had begun training in techniques of killing, several large caches of weapons existed across Kigali and Rwanda, and part of the plan of extermination included the murder of Belgian peacekeepers to provoke their withdrawal.⁵⁰ This report was passed on to the United Nations by Dallaire almost 3 months prior to the assassination of Juvenal Habyarimana in April. Given the continued violence in the city of Kigali aimed at the Tutsi and the installation of an ethnically hybrid government, as well as the informant's high-ranking status, this cable should have been a chilling warning of what could happen in Rwanda. Instead, the UN chose to essentially ignore the very dangerous future promised by the informant. Despite Dallaire's labeling of the cable as "most immediate", it reportedly never even crossed the desk of UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.⁵¹ Who Dallaire chose to send the cable to also should have indicated the urgency of the matter and alerted important members of the UN to the cable's importance. According to UN procedure, Dallaire first should have sent the message to Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, the acting "political civil servant" in Rwanda; instead, his message was sent directly to Military Advisor Maurice Baril.⁵² Dallaire, who was well-known to this point in the UN for being a strict follower of protocol, clearly saw this as credible and viable information

⁴⁹ Roméo Dallaire, "Code Cable: Request for Protection," Fax to UN Headquarters, New York City, Jan. 11 1994, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB53/rw011194.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, 142-43.

⁵¹ Phillip Gourevitch, "The Genocide Fax," *New Yorker* (New York, NY), May 3, 1998, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1998/05/11/the-genocide-fax>.

⁵² Grünfeld and Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda: The Role of Bystanders*, 97.

for the implementation of the Arusha Accords and peace process in Rwanda. Granted, Dallaire did seem to have natural hesitancy to trust the informant. It was impossible to know if this was merely a set-up—after all, UNAMIR had certainly not been well-received by extremists in and around the Rwandan government.⁵³ At the time, the UN decided it was virtually impossible to determine the veracity of the informant's information, so little action was taken. While modern scholars have the benefit of hindsight, the lack of attentiveness paid by the UN to this warning marks a clear failure in its proclaimed duty to bring peace to Rwanda. Not only that, but the early stages of the genocide provide an eerie corroboration to Jean-Pierre's warnings. By then, however, it would be too late to act upon the informant's information.

The genocide unofficially commenced on April 6th, 1994. While returning in his airplane from Tanzania, Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira, and the rest of the crew on board were killed when the plane was attacked with surface-to-air missiles while landing in Rwanda's capital of Kigali.⁵⁴ This was not necessarily to the surprise of the international community either. On January 28th, 1994, Habyarimana's pilot (who was French) sent a letter noting his fear that the RPF had the capability to attack Habyarimana's plane during its landing at Kigali.⁵⁵ Immediately following the news of Habyarimana's assassination, Rwanda was thrown back into a cyclone of ethnic violence. Militias and members of the Presidential Guard did not hesitate to carry out the plan of genocide, as prominent Tutsi as well as Hutu who stood in opposition to the violence were ripped from their homes with their families and brutally tortured and killed.⁵⁶ While it was certainly perceived in the

⁵³ Kuperman, "Rwanda in Retrospect," 113.

⁵⁴ Hintjens, "Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda," 241.

⁵⁵ Jean Pierre, "Letter from the pilot of the presidential Falcon, January 28, 1994: Missiles threatening the security of the Falcon's flights," January 28th, 1994.

⁵⁶ Peter Uvin. "Prejudice, Crisis and Genocide in Rwanda," 262.

West as such, this was clearly not a mere moment of national unrest. The efficient nature with which these political opponents (both Tutsi and moderate Hutu alike) were silenced indicates a clear plan of action that predated Habyarimana's assassination. Some Hutu extremists (especially those within the government) even viewed Habyarimana as being too conciliatory with the Tutsi and used his death as a perfect pretext to launch their genocidal agenda.⁵⁷ There was little to no delay when it came to the commencement of the slaughter. Joyce Leader, an American official in Rwanda leading a mission investigating the nation, told author Jared Cohen that when she woke up the next morning, she woke up to the sounds of gunfire and quickly realized this was not simply a continuation of the Civil War.⁵⁸ The matter of the timing of the genocide was also worryingly direct. UNAMIR was scheduled to depart Rwanda on April 5th and the transitional government was set to come into power on April 8th.⁵⁹ Moreover, the velocity with which the genocide commenced reflects an extermination planned prior to the assassination of Habyarimana. An investigation conducted by the Organization for African Unity (OAU) in the wake of the genocide estimates that the initial killings in Kigali had killed 20,000 people by April 11th.⁶⁰ The seemingly imperfect timing of the genocide seemed to indicate two things: an existing plan to exterminate the Tutsi as well as a distinct lack of security when it came to communications leaving Rwanda.

Immediately after Habyarimana was assassinated, speculations began to arise about who may have committed the attack. Belgium's expert on Rwanda came up with four, reasonable people and groups that could have possibly committed the attack, and each for different reasons. His list includes: the inner circle of the Habyarimana regime (*akazu*), Prime Minister Agathe

⁵⁷ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, 203.

⁵⁸ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide*, 37.

⁵⁹ Hintjens, "Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda," 262.

⁶⁰ International Panel of Eminent Personalities, "Report on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and Surrounding Events," 109.

Uwilingiyimana, and the RPF (perhaps with Belgian assistance).⁶¹ The fourth theory is somewhat weak, and is that the target of the attack was actually Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira. This theory is less likely because his decision to accompany Habyarimana was made at the very last moment before the plane left Tanzania. The inner circle of Habyarimana is certainly a fascinating group of potential conspirators, but it is fairly easy to understand why they may have chosen to assassinate the President. Their goals with assassination would most likely be twofold. As previously mentioned, Habyarimana faced much opposition from these closest allies for his leniency and signing of the Arusha Accords, so his death would allow them to go back on Habyarimana's previous agreements. It would also play a vital role in mobilizing the Hutu masses against the assassinating Tutsi, and begin to carry out their long-planned extermination of them. Second, Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana certainly stood to gain the most from the death of Habyarimana. She had the most credible claim to lead the country as Prime Minister after all, and she could have used the assassination as a sort of coup against Habyarimana.⁶² This is unlikely for one very simple fact. Less than 24 hours after the plane crash, Uwilingiyimana herself was found brutally murdered with her husband by Rwandans seeking shelter at her residence. This was clearly a targeted, political attack since the compound was not searched, and her children were not discovered by her assassins either.⁶³ Finally, the RPF had a longstanding opposition to the Habyarimana regime, and could have been attempting to restart the Civil War in an attempt to take full control of the government. Samuel Totten points out that this accusation was made largely without tangible evidence, but it was widely disseminated throughout Rwanda in the initial days

⁶¹ Grünfeld and Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda: The Role of Bystanders*, 153-154.

⁶² Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda*, 97-98.

⁶³ Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, 245.

of the genocide to mobilize Hutu against the Tutsi.⁶⁴ Because the commencement of the genocide made it difficult to conduct a thorough and timely investigation, the true culprits of the assassination remain unknown to this day. A French judge concluded that Paul Kagame and the RPF were responsible for the attack, but the fallout from that decision has since caused that decision to be rescinded by the French judicial system in 2018.⁶⁵ Regardless of whomever fired on Habyarimana's plane, Rwanda had reached the point of no return and only foreign intervention would have slowed what happened in the succeeding months.

The United Nations and the Genocide: Where Bureaucracy Beget Brutality

The initial reaction from the United Nations (first starting on April 6th and lasting for the next several days) was largely confined to two events: the deaths of Habyarimana and Ntaryimara and the brutal murders of the Belgian UN peacekeepers. For the first several days of the genocide, it was very difficult to get reliable news from Rwanda detailing the deterioration of events following the night of April 6th. The lack of security on the satellite phone used by Dallaire to reach UN headquarters in New York potentially allowed RGF forces to listen in on these conversations and stay a step or two ahead of the UN forces stationed in Kigali.⁶⁶ This led to a trepidation of sorts, where UN forces in Rwanda believed communicating was an undue risk except in the most extreme cases. Because of a lack of security with the communications, it made it incredibly risky for any operational information to be shared through it. Along with the lack of security on UN communications, Rwandan media controlled by the genocidal government was

⁶⁴ Gerald Caplan, "The 1994 Genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda," in *Centuries of Genocide: Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*, ed. Samuel Totten and William S. Parsons (New York City, New York: Routledge, 1997), 457.

⁶⁵ "Rwanda genocide: Habyarimana plan shooting probe dropped," *BBC* online. December 26, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46687492>.

⁶⁶ Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, 228-29.

able to slow global response based on the information it was allowing out of Rwanda. RTLM's stranglehold on Rwandan press came in very handy for the genocidaires and allowed them to alter the image of the events unfolding in Rwanda. Because of these factors, it became very difficult to discern a clear picture of what was happening in Rwanda from the smoky haze which enveloped it.

A statement made in the immediate aftermath of April 6th's events by President of the Security Council, Colin Keating, noted the potential danger and called on all Rwandans "to desist from any further acts or threats of violence".⁶⁷ The global understanding from the outside made it seem like the early killings were largely limited to knee jerk reactions as a result of entrenched "tribal mentalities". And that viewpoint certainly is understandable given that the two sides had been warring until just a few years prior, and perhaps the entirety of Rwanda's history. An Associated Press release reported that the assassination had simply sparked more fighting between the groups, but also included accounts from Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana about the horrors gripping Kigali shortly after Habyarimana's assassination.⁶⁸ Further reports indicated a collective uncertainty about the security of Rwanda and who was truly in charge. Another newspaper report noted that it was unclear who truly had control of Kigali (if there was any control), and that UN soldiers and politicians had already been massacred.⁶⁹ It would take nearly two weeks for the Western media to piece together an even halfway accurate narrative of what was happening in Rwanda, leading to a distinct lack of public support for intervention. Further, it would

⁶⁷ UNSC, "Statement by the President of the Security Council," (7 April 1994) UN Doc S/PRST/1994/16.

⁶⁸ "Plane crash causes Rwanda chaos," *Noblesville Ledger* (Noblesville, Indiana), Apr. 7, 1994, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/23499642/fighting-breaks-out-in-rwanda-after-pres/>.

⁶⁹ "Rwanda capital falls into anarchy," *Des Moines Register* (Des Moines, Iowa), Apr. 8, 1994, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/23501855/rwandan-capital-falls-into-anarchy/>.

not be until after the genocide was over that the world would be able to learn the true extent of the genocide.

However, it is arguable that the United Nations should have known better than to think the fighting would simply die out if they called on the sides to put down their arms. During the colonial period, the Germans and Belgians attempted to display the Hutu-Tutsi divide as an ancient feud. According to the *New York Times*, the earliest known “tribal clashes” between the two groups were as early as the fifteenth century.⁷⁰ This idea, among other factors, greatly influenced the perception of the post-assassination violence that had broken out in Rwanda. The UN, whether due to a lack of information or a belief in the violence being short-term, seemed to think little of the initial killings. For instance, their meeting on April 7th was called to order at 7:40 PM, and a few statements were read by Keating; following appeals to the Rwandan people to respect order and UN forces located in their nation, the meeting promptly adjourned at 7:45 PM.⁷¹ To the UN, the genocide that had erupted in Rwanda was tensions that ought to boil over quickly, and that UNAMIR on the ground would be able to sufficiently quell the unrest. In the two week period between the UNSC’s April 7th and 21st meetings, letters flowed in from UN members located in Africa like Uganda, Cameroon, Tanzania, and a handful from Rwanda itself. While these letters did maintain that the occurrences in Rwanda were between “warring factions”, the general consensus among these members was that the UN ought to do something about what was

⁷⁰ Jerry Gray, “2 Nations Joined by Common History of Genocide,” *New York Times* (New York City, New York), Apr. 9, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/04/09/world/2-nations-joined-by-common-history-of-genocide.html>.

⁷¹ United Nations Security Council (UNSC), 49th Year, 3368th mtg., UN Doc S/PV.3368.

happening in the Great Lakes region.⁷² However, little would be done by the UN once the genocide commenced.

One of the most impactful moments early on in the genocide (predicted by Dallaire's informant Jean-Pierre) was the brutal murder of ten Belgian peacekeepers by RGF forces. The importance of this attack cannot be understated as this was very clearly a calculated decision made by the genocidaires. In the Genocide Fax, the very first point of information that Dallaire provides is the informant's warning that "Belgian troops were to be provoked and if Belgian soldiers resorted to force a number of them were to be killed and thus guarantee Belgian withdrawal from Rwanda."⁷³ The organizers of the genocide had taken great notice to the reaction of the United States following the deaths of eighteen Army Rangers in Somalia, and were willing to do the same in order to remove the Belgian presence from their own nation. On April 7th, ten Belgian peacekeepers were captured by the RGF and taken prisoner. These soldiers (along with five Ghanaians) had been charged with guarding the house of Prime Minister Uwilingiyimana, but were captured by Rwandan soldiers. The Ghanaians were separated once they arrived at the RGF camp, but the Belgians were left at the hands of a mob of soldiers.⁷⁴ Left at the hands of an angry military force who thought the Belgians were involved in the Habyarimana assassination, the ten peacekeepers were brutally lynched by forces at Camp Kigali. Late on the night of the 7th, Dallaire arrived expecting to demand the freeing of the Belgian prisoners. Instead, as he notes in his account, "At first, I saw what seemed to be sacks of potatoes to the right of the morgue door. It

⁷² UNSC, "Letter Dated 21 April 1994 From the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council, (21 April 1994) UN Doc S/1994/479.

⁷³ Roméo Dallaire, "Code Cable: Request for Protection," Fax to UN Headquarters, New York City, Jan. 11 1994, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB53/rw011194.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Grünfeld and Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda: The Role of Bystanders*, 162.

slowly resolved in my vision into a heap of mangled and bloodied white flesh in tattered Belgian para-commando uniforms.”⁷⁵ The fallout was immediate. Global confidence in the peacekeeping mission in Rwanda had been rocked by the news of the massacre. It was shaken even more when Belgium announced its plan to withdraw its troop contribution to UNAMIR on April 14th, reducing the manpower of the mission immensely.⁷⁶ The brutality in which the soldiers were killed made many in the West wary about intervening even more, or even made them question what foreign soldiers could even do to prevent the violence. Most of the media in the West was largely concerned with calling for the safe removal of its citizens from Rwanda, but largely ignored the need for a stronger force to prevent the genocide from unfolding further.⁷⁷ The goal of the massacre was achieved, as the murder of the Belgian peacekeepers had further weakened an already eroded public confidence in the mission of UNAMIR.

But at the same time, instructions provided to UNAMIR upon the initial phases of the genocide greatly handcuffed their ability to intervene in the slaughter. Upon initial contact with UN brass in New York City following the assassinations, Assistant (Deputy) Secretary-General Iqbal Riza ordered Dallaire to not militarily intervene unless they were attacked first.⁷⁸ UNAMIR was only in Rwanda as a Chapter VI intervention force, so Riza’s instructions make sense given the relatively minimal, credible information escaping Rwanda at that time. This distinction of Chapter VI mandate is especially important when considering Rwanda. A Chapter VI mandate is more focused on maintaining peace, whereas the more aggressive Chapter VII allows for militarily

⁷⁵ Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, 255.

⁷⁶ Kuperman, “Rwanda in Retrospect,” 104.

⁷⁷ Dean J. White, *The Ignorant Bystander: Britain and the Rwandan Genocide*, (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2015), 56.

⁷⁸ Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, 229.

enforcing it.⁷⁹ This meant that while UNAMIR was on the ground in Rwanda, it was only there to enforce the Arusha peace and implement the new government. They had no actual power to militarily intervene in the killings, a fact that led to much criticism from the global community. In the minds of Riza and many other UN members, Rwanda was a powder keg, and any UNAMIR military intervention would send the wrong signal and undermine its power. Riza's thinking fell in line with what the UN was trying to do in Rwanda. From January on, UN headquarters had been tightening the focus of UNAMIR's rules of engagement to focus on peacekeeping, even though the mandate technically gave clearance to protect those in danger.⁸⁰ The desire of UN headquarters to keep UNAMIR out of any ethnic conflict restricted UNAMIR's soldiers on the ground witnessing the carnage to be limited to bystanders. A story published in *The Guardian* a few days after the beginning of the genocide tells of a UN soldier simply commenting, "It's not our mandate" as he watched a Rwandan woman dragged by a man wielding a machete.⁸¹ UNAMIR simply did not have the clearance to intervene in the way that they wanted to, nor did they have the manpower necessary to accomplish much. Dallaire stated in an April 7th interview that because of their status as a peacekeeping force, "...we did not take on a mandate of unilaterally conducting security operations or taking on a security responsibility that is still legally in the hands of governmental agencies."⁸² The strict confines of a UN Chapter VI mandate and commitment to the UN's bureaucracy meant intervention at an early stage was not an option for the UN forces on the ground in Rwanda.

⁷⁹ Lisa Morjé Howard, "Peacekeeping, Peace Enforcement, and UN Reform," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2015): 10, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43773690>.

⁸⁰ "Ignoring Genocide," *Human Rights Watch* online, edited February 28, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/Geno15-8-01.htm>.

⁸¹ Mark Huband, "UN troops stand by and watch carnage," *Guardian* (London), Apr. 12, 1994, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/rwanda/Geno15-8-01.htm>.

⁸² Roméo Dallaire, "CBC Roméo Dallaire Interview," unknown interviewer, *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, April 7, 1994.

The shortage in numbers for the UN peacekeeping force on the ground also proved to be a decisive factor in UNAMIR's inaction. Per the mandate of UNAMIR, the force would consist of 2,500 men on the ground, but that simply would not be enough to substantially intervene, especially given the narrow rules of engagement.⁸³ Even with the mandate of 2,500 in the force, the UN had a significant issue in keeping that number fulfilled. To Belgium's credit, the peacekeepers on the ground were aware of growing tensions in the early months of 1994. Belgian representatives protested the UNSC for more troops, more supplies, and more assistance, but the costs of reinforcing the mission caused the United States and United Kingdom to prevent this measure from even being voted on.⁸⁴ Thus, UNAMIR approached the spring of 1994 being dangerously underequipped and lacking manpower. In March 1994, the UN had 2,206 men stationed in Rwanda; that number is tripled by the 6,754 peacekeepers deployed in Mozambique and dwarfed by the 22,289 stationed in the still devastated Somalia.⁸⁵ On top of a numerically small force, UNAMIR was full of inexperienced peacekeepers, and at times they would even be unwilling to fulfill their duties. Dallaire recounts his frustration with the poorly equipped Bangladeshi soldiers, who would refuse to follow Dallaire's orders to intervene unless they received similar orders from the Bangladeshi government.⁸⁶ Most of the other nations making up UNAMIR were sent from other militarily underdeveloped countries. This meant that the UN had to pick up the bill and take the effort to provide desperately needed supplies to its peacekeepers, something it failed to do throughout the genocide citing the cost of providing those rations. The lack of supplies provided to UNAMIR's peacekeepers meant that the peacekeepers had little means

⁸³ UNSC, Res 872 (5 October 1993) UN Doc S/RES/872.

⁸⁴ Kuperman, "Rwanda in Retrospect," 116.

⁸⁵ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide*, 60.

⁸⁶ Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, 269-70.

to offer assistance to desperate Rwandans hiding in UN protected zones like Amahoro Stadium.⁸⁷ This often led to problems like disease and starvation running rampant in these protected areas, threatening the lives of both the peacekeepers and the desperate Rwandans seeking shelter too.

What is arguably the most damning decision made by the UN in terms of its response to Rwanda was its decision to reduce UNAMIR's force rather than reinforce the mission. On April 21st, the Security Council voted to shift the mandate of UNAMIR. Under normal circumstances, this language would inspire confidence that the UN was finally taking tangible steps to prevent the senseless slaughter of Rwanda's fathers, mothers, and children. Instead, Resolution 912 does the opposite of reinforcing UNAMIR or taking steps to prevent the slaughter. While declaring that the UN is "appalled at the ensuing ethnic violence", and "condemns the ongoing violence in Rwanda" and "demands an immediate cessation of hostilities", the UNSC called for a reduction in the force allocated for UNAMIR.⁸⁸ After the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Rwandans at that point, the UNSC was instead choosing to reduce its force on the ground in order to try and save face. The departure of much of UNAMIR was also the departure of the outside world from the Rwandan perspective.⁸⁹ The forces that could have arguably done the most and were on a mission to provide peace and security to Rwanda were being ordered to leave instead of fulfilling its humanitarian obligations. That is not to say that the decision to withdraw is completely incomprehensible when given the context.

The United States and the Genocide: When Somalia Sparked a Stupor

⁸⁷—, 291.

⁸⁸ UNSC, Res 912 (21 April 1994) UN Doc S/RES/912.

⁸⁹ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide*, 5.

An important consideration to make when considering the American position is its involvement in Somalia in years immediately prior to the genocide. The lack of intervention from the United States specifically is not *entirely* out of a place of callousness. On October 3rd, 1993 (just two days before the UN Resolution that created UNAMIR), two American helicopters were shot down over the Somali capital of Mogadishu. Many Americans had seen images of starving Somali children, and the Somali Civil War had left the African nation shattered beyond belief, and these images and reports pressured the American populace to clamor for an American intervention.⁹⁰ While American (later cooperatively working with the UN) intervention in Somalia was humanitarian in nature upon initial contact in December 1992, a strong military force was in place in Somalia. Throughout the intervention of the outside world, a cycle emerged where the Civil War led to famine which led to further intervention, before coming back to more of the Civil War.⁹¹ During an American mission to capture aides for Mohammed Farah Aideed, an infamous Somali warlord, two American helicopters were shot down, and an ensuing rescue mission left nearly seventy wounded and eighteen American soldiers dead.⁹² Americans had not been involved in such fierce resistance since the Vietnam War, and the images and reports of the failed mission shocked many Americans to the core. While support for the American mission in Somalia had mostly maintained some level of bipartisan support, soon after the Mogadishu firefight many Republicans in Congress criticized President Bill Clinton for the cost of the mission. The question on the minds of many Americans was “Why should we intervene in a country that doesn’t want our help?” and many in Congress agreed that the human and monetary costs exceeded any benefit

⁹⁰ Louis J. Klarveas, “Trends: The United States Peace Operation in Somalia,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (2000): 524-25, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3078741>.

⁹¹ Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda*, 34.

⁹² Cori E. Dauber, “The Shots Seen ‘Round the World: The Impact of the Images of Mogadishu on American Military Operations,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 4, no. 4 (2001): 665, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41940265>.

to intervening in Somalia.⁹³ Once the US facade was cracked by the deaths of American soldiers, there was little benefit to continuing on with the mission. Because the operation in Somalia was jointly run between the US military and the UN, it provided those within the American government a perfect scapegoat for the whole disaster. Between politicians in the government itself as well as members of the mass media, they portrayed America's participation in Somalia as a coercion of the United Nations; this point becomes blatantly misleading when the truth emerged that the operation that led to the death of eighteen American soldiers was carried out solely by American soldiers that had no contact with the UN.⁹⁴ The debacle in Somalia was the unfortunate catalyst of the American public's disfavor in peacekeeping and dissatisfaction with the United Nations. As a result of Somalia, anti-UN thought, and inaccurate information escaping Rwanda, public favor of intervention in Rwanda was relatively low.

The United States had a very active role in Rwanda during the period immediately prior to the genocide. Since the United States military was simultaneously deployed in Somalia and other nations across the continent, the American government took a keen interest in the Arusha negotiations. Sensing the opportunity to broker the peace and solidify their superpower status in a new, post-Soviet world, the United States pushed itself into the negotiations in Tanzania.⁹⁵ Here, they took an active role in pushing the sides into signing some kind of agreement regardless of how much they agreed upon the terms or whether the implementation of the peace was reasonable. During the Arusha process, it seemed like the United States had at least some level of understanding of potential violence between the two groups. One centerpiece of the Arusha

⁹³ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide*, 50-51.

⁹⁴ International Panel of Eminent Personalities, "Report on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and Surrounding Events," 84.

⁹⁵ Joyce E. Leader, *From Hope to Horror: Diplomacy and the Making of the Rwandan Genocide* (Sterling, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2020): 195, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvw1d65n>.

agreement and process was focused upon upholding and protecting human rights for all Rwandans, not just those in the ethnic majority.⁹⁶ The United States also conducted a series of covert missions to Rwanda in order to assess the danger before and after the warring sides sat down in Tanzania. In a report dated less than a month before the genocide, the CIA warned a recommencement of hostilities between the Hutu and Tutsi could lead to the deaths of up to half a million Rwandans.⁹⁷ However, the United States showed little interest in intervening once the genocide started despite this grave estimate. It is patently clear that the United States was not ignorant by any stretch when it came to the possibility for another explosion of violence between the sides.

While the United States eventually voted to support the creation of UNAMIR, that support was largely considered conditional by American officials. Prior to the proposal of UNAMIR before the UN, President Bill Clinton indicated that American support for the creation of UNAMIR was dependent upon both the mandate of it as well as the cost of the forthcoming mission.⁹⁸ This frugal attitude towards the funding of a mission necessary for the implementation of the Arusha Accords is one of the largest faults of the American government in regard to the genocide. Cost estimates from January 1994 indicate that UNAMIR's first phase (lasting from October 5th 1993 until April 4th, 1994) would need roughly 47 million dollars in contributions.⁹⁹ The fact that Clinton and the rest of the American government found the cost to be concerning is frankly laughable, but is certainly reflective of the impact of events in Somalia. For reference, the proposed 1994 Department of Defense (DoD) budget included 78 million dollars for "radiation exposure" and a

⁹⁶ Christopher Clapham, "Rwanda: The Perils of Peacemaking," *Journal of Peace Research* 35, no. 2 (1998): 194, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/425520>.

⁹⁷ Dylan Lee Lehrke, "The Banality of Interagency: U.S. Inaction in the Rwandan Genocide," *Project on National Security Reform* (2012): 468, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep11953.12>.

⁹⁸ Susan Rice and Nick Rasmussen, "Deputies Committee Meeting on African Peacekeeping Issues," (20 September 1993).

⁹⁹ United Nations, General Assembly, *Financing of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda*, (3 January 1994), UN Doc A/48/837.

grand total of over 308 billion dollars.¹⁰⁰ Hypothetically, **1 percent** of the 1994 DoD budget could have funded the initial phase of UNAMIR over 60 times. Rwanda also saw a reaffirmation of the common idea that it is cheaper to fund peacekeeping than recovery from genocide. Following the genocide, various nations gave over 600 million dollars to aid in the reconstruction of Rwanda.¹⁰¹ The money pledged in just one meeting in 1996 was over thirteen times the initial funding cost of UNAMIR in 1993. While America's frugality can certainly be viewed in the context of the aftermath in Somalia, the events that unfolded in Rwanda during the genocide largely overshadow this point.

The initial steps taken by the United States (as well as most other countries with citizens living in Rwanda) were mainly focused upon withdrawing their citizens from Rwanda. After hearing reports of the violence breaking out in Kigali and associating it with another outbreak of the Civil War, the chief concern of the United States in the opening days of the genocide was to simply evacuate all Americans from Rwanda.¹⁰² As noted, evacuating from Kigali Airport was going to be a herculean task due to its nature as both the site of an assassination investigation as well as the lack of safety in getting to the airport and in the air. Thus, a very detailed plan was drawn up to rapidly transport American nationals in military vehicles across Rwanda's southern border into Burundi, where they would be met by American air power and safely transported home.¹⁰³ Those in the American government touted the mission as a success when no American casualties were taken by the convoy, but there were lives lost. Most of the Rwandan Foreign Service Nationals (FSN) were not rescued in the aforementioned convoy; what's more, 1 out of

¹⁰⁰ National Defense Budget Estimates for 1994.

¹⁰¹ "UNAMIR," *UN*, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/past/unamirS.htm>.

¹⁰² Lehrke, "The Banality of Interagency: U.S. Inaction in the Rwandan Genocide," 462.

¹⁰³ From private Clinton administration memos.

every 3 FSNs were murdered during the genocide.¹⁰⁴ These were not Hutu and Tutsi strangers left behind by the Americans. These were friends and colleagues that were left to fend for themselves in a whirlwind of violence. This decision was not unique to merely the United States, but it goes to show that there was a clear, American awareness of the violence's ferocity very early on in the genocide.

Furthermore, information circulated in the high circles of Washington demonstrate an innate understanding of the danger faced by Rwanda in the wake of Habyarimana's death. It indicates, however, a viewpoint more concerned about a renewal of the Civil War than a genocidal campaign against the Tutsi. A document produced early on April 7th by the CIA claimed that the assassination meant it was likely that the two groups would again take up arms against each other, and that neighboring Burundi may even fall victim to the chaos as well.¹⁰⁵ One of the initial concerns of the US government was a chaotic outbreak of violence across the Great Lakes region, but seemed indifferent if the violence largely constrained itself within Rwanda's borders. Another declassified document shows that President Clinton was advised that the government was not willing to involve itself in Rwanda until peace had been fully restored. This statement is further reinforced by a later prediction that a continuation of violence could lead to "a massive (hundreds of thousands of deaths) bloodbath" that could also impact Burundi.¹⁰⁶ Despite these and previous warnings, the Clinton administration showed little interest in providing an intervening American force in the chaos. Citing both a lack of domestic support for intervention in Africa as well as Clinton (and many of his top advisors) having little knowledge on Rwanda to begin with, it became

¹⁰⁴ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide*, 76-77.

¹⁰⁵ Grünfeld and Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda: The Role of Bystanders*, 168.

¹⁰⁶ "Talking Points on Rwanda/Burundi," (11 April 1994), https://genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/index.php?title=Talking_Points_On_Rwanda_Burundi_April_11_1994&p=video1&b=NaN/index.php?title=.

apparent a direct American intervention in Rwanda was not to be expected.¹⁰⁷ In terms of Washington, there are clear indications that the danger Rwanda faced was clearly apparent yet ignored by an administration still scarred by Somalia.

While Somalia certainly caused the US to not intervene in Rwanda, Rwanda's economic and geographic positions (relative to the US) certainly did it no favors either. Throughout American history, the American government had shown a greater interest in its neighbors' affairs than those elsewhere. Much of the twentieth century bore witness to the United States intervening in places across the Western hemisphere, but Somalia changed even that. Following the collapse of the Duvalier regime in Haiti, the United States helped set up a more democratic government, but pulled out after an insurgency was launched against it. A White House official told Jared Cohen that the "freshness" of Somalia shook American confidence to continue to involve itself in Haiti, and the US pulled out shortly after.¹⁰⁸ If the United States would not even involve itself in the affairs of Haiti, a nation with close proximity to the United States, why would it care about a small nation thousands of miles away? Rwanda was so far off of the radar of the United States that Secretary of State Warren Christopher supposedly had to use an atlas to find information about Rwanda.¹⁰⁹ This sentiment of non-interventionism as a result of proximity was widely held throughout the Clinton administration as the genocide went on. It also highlights a point that runs throughout American foreign policy of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Should humanitarian concerns for instances of ethnic violence outweigh the (dis)interest of the United States? A report detailing the feasibility of an international intervention states: "...the fact that Rwanda is not a direct security concern make it unlikely any significant personnel commitments

¹⁰⁷ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide*, 96.

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide*, 63.

¹⁰⁹ —, 75.

will be made by other European nations.”¹¹⁰ That report is dated to June 1994, and indicates American interest in the success or failure of the soon deployed Operation Turquoise.

The Ill-Fated and Controversial French Response: Opération Turquoise

The most extensive and incredibly controversial response to the genocide made by the global community was France’s proposal to fund a humanitarian mission to Rwanda. As the genocide raged on throughout the end of fall and beginning of winter in Rwanda, it became clear that *something* had to be done regarding the killing. Thus, the French proposed a French-led mission to the UNSC, and their proposal was approved on June 22nd by the council.¹¹¹ On the surface, Turquoise was a humanitarian mission that aimed to bring an end to the killing. Unfortunately, it was frankly quite clear that French motivations for Turquoise were unclear, complex and quite possibly malicious. During his first meeting regarding Turquoise, Dallaire remembered his anger when a French government official told him of their plan to set up a “safe haven” and be under a Chapter 7 mandate.¹¹² In the mind of Dallaire as well as many historians, Turquoise was problematic for a number of reasons. First of all, Turquoise pretty easily achieved a Chapter 7 mandate, whereas Dallaire’s lobbying for an expansion in UNAMIR’s mandate was done in vain. Questions were also raised regarding the role of the French prior to the genocide and whether or not their humanitarian mission could be completely without bias. Any involvement by the French military could be construed as aiding the genocidaires, as the French had previously been actively involved in aiding the Hutu government prior to the genocide’s outbreak.¹¹³ The supposed “safe havens” created by the French certainly paint a problematic picture of France’s

¹¹⁰ Taken from Clinton Administration memos.

¹¹¹ Cameron, “The French Connection,” 105.

¹¹² Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, 422.

¹¹³ Daniela Krosiak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide* (London, England: C. Hurst & Co., 2007), 227-229.

role as well. It became all too common that participants in the genocide would seek shelter in these safe havens, and other Hutu flocked to these camps to show support for the French intervention they thought was aimed to push back the RPF.¹¹⁴ The combination of the perceived lack of objectivity and butting heads with UNAMIR would end up leading to Turquoise miserable failure to achieve its objectives.

One of the key components of Turquoise's failure is the relationship of the French government with Rwanda prior to the genocide. French support of the Habyarimana regime had been central to the planning of the genocide itself by Hutu extremists inside the Rwandan government. Furthermore, Rwandan leaders felt a sort of loyalty to the French, as France had been one of the key donors to Rwanda to aid in the process of democratization.¹¹⁵ This was not a new French attitude towards Rwanda or the African continent as a whole, even throughout the preceding decades. Even after the period of African decolonization, France's connection with leaders across Africa helped maintain France's world status while also checking British influence abroad.¹¹⁶ Here it is observable that the concept of colonialism impacted Rwanda far beyond independence, as the pseudo-colonialism of the French galvanized extremists into anti-Tutsi sentiment. French leaders had forged a solid, working relationship with the leaders of Rwanda, and especially found a solid partnership with the Habyarimana regime. In fact, the OAU report in the aftermath of the genocide argued that "...Rwanda in the past decade...cannot be understood

¹¹⁴ Jonathan C., "Hailed By Hutus, French Visit Camp in Rwanda," *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), June 26, 1994, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1994/06/26/hailed-by-hutus-french-visit-camp-in-rwanda/d792d1b4-ff4a-47c4-8366-bcedada710a4/>.

¹¹⁵ Krosiak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide*, 37.

¹¹⁶ Andrew Wallis, *Silent Accomplice: The Untold Story of France's Role in the Rwandan Genocide* (London, England: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2007), 11.

without France.”¹¹⁷ Thus, the French were able to continuously involve themselves in African politics without a direct paper trail. The early days of the genocide also indicated France’s complete disinterest in intervening in Rwanda. It seemed that France did anything to convince themselves that genocide was happening in Rwanda. France, not unlike many European nations but perhaps more than most, certainly bought into the portrayal of the genocide as more of the Civil War and continued to lobby this position to other nations as well.¹¹⁸ France’s very public support of the Habyarimana regime and opposition to the RPF in the years prior to the genocide decreased Turquoise’s chance of succeeding exponentially.

Furthermore, French military relations with Rwanda were apparent before, during, and after the genocide. Given their close relations with the Habyarimana regime, French military forces were not an uncommon sight in Rwanda before the genocide. In fact, these French forces would play a role in both arming and training some of the militias who would carry out the genocide.¹¹⁹ This training was also carried out in the midst of the Civil War and aimed to benefit the Hutu defenders in their defense against the “invading” Tutsi. A note presented to French President François Mitterrand from General Christian Quesnot requested clearance to aid defensive forces in training and preparation against the RPF in mid-1992.¹²⁰ Unfortunately (although perhaps naturally), the French began to sympathize with the Hutu defenders they were training with on the ground. Whether or not French forces bought into the idea of the RPF as a foreign force is unclear, but their loyalty to their de facto comrades was understandable. During a meeting of several

¹¹⁷ International Panel of Eminent Personalities, “Report on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and Surrounding Events.”

¹¹⁸ Hintjens, “Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda,” 273.

¹¹⁹ Adekeye Adebajo, “UN Peacekeeping and the Quest for a Pax Africana,” *Current History* 113, no. 763 (2014): 178, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45388193>.

¹²⁰ Christian Quesnot, “Note to the attention of the President of the Republic (care of the Secretary General),” July 1st, 1992.

ministers in April 1993, Minister of Defense François Léotard claimed that French forces were “...facing many thousands from the north” and called for a reinforcement to the French forces in Rwanda.¹²¹ France’s complicity in the arming of the genocide would essentially continue until the genocide began. Even though it was portrayed as military aid for an ally, it became quite clear during the genocide that the use of weapons sold by the French was widespread. This provision of weapons combined with a very supportive French government led those in Rwanda to readily accept seemingly excessive military supplies.¹²² There were also several secret communications between military advisors in Paris and officials in the genocidal government in Kigali after the genocide had begun. After shipping a number of radio sets to Rwanda, those in Paris were able to enjoy secret conversations with those in Kigali.¹²³ Even into the 21st century, France sheepishly ignored the role it played in arming the Habyarimana regime. Along with several other nations (including Secretary-General Ghali’s Egypt), France has refused to disclose specific details about weapons transfers to Rwanda.¹²⁴ This secrecy can certainly be viewed as an admission of guilt of sorts; regardless, France’s military aid provided under the guise of slowing the RPF invasion has left an indelible and bloody stain on France’s role in Rwanda.

It can be viewed that the creation of Turquoise undermined what UNAMIR was already working to achieve on the ground in Rwanda. By the time French troops were on the ground in Rwanda, UNAMIR had been deployed in Rwanda for around 8 months. After all, UNAMIR’s mandate had the chief aim to implement a new government and bring peace (or at least as much as they could) to Rwanda. By deploying a second, separate mission to Rwanda rather than

¹²¹ Hubert Vedrine, “Restricted Council of Ministers on Rwanda, April 2, 1993,” April 2, 1993.

¹²² Caplan, “The 1994 Genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda,” 452.

¹²³ Wallis, *Silent Accomplice: The Untold Story of France’s Role in the Rwandan Genocide*, 112-113.

¹²⁴ Goose and Smyth, “Arming Genocide in Rwanda,” 91.

reinforcing the existing one, the UN essentially stripped UNAMIR of any authority or ability to bring order to Rwanda. One of the most infuriating reasons why Turquoise was so controversial was the relative ease with which supplies were provided. UNAMIR had struggled mightily to garner supplies from international donors, even as basic as rations or functioning vehicles to conduct their patrols.¹²⁵ Had UNAMIR received similar levels of assistance before or even early into the genocide, they certainly would have been in a better position to save lives. The lack of aid provided to UNAMIR also provided a slight lift to Turquoise's public support. Since UNAMIR seemingly could not do anything to prevent the killing, *any* international intervention to supposedly save lives was accepted as a positive step.¹²⁶ Because of UNAMIR's existence and work prior to the arrival of Turquoise, it made it almost impossible for them to coexist.

France's motivations for proposing a mission to Rwanda have faced well-deserved scrutiny. The extremely close relations which the countries (and specifically the regime heading the genocide) made the optics of a "humanitarian" mission poor. Before and throughout the genocide, the French government ardently opposed the RPF, which made the mission look more like a military intervention against the RPF rather than a mission aimed at saving lives.¹²⁷ Turquoise also seemingly furthered the diplomatic ties between France and Rwanda. It was even welcomed by the genocidal, interim government as reinforcements, rather than a humanitarian mission aimed at ending the killing.¹²⁸ Turquoise's leaders on the ground even took its "neutrality" from a seeming alliance with the interim government to a declaration of assistance. A French

¹²⁵ Cameron, "The French Connection," 105.

¹²⁶ Dominick Donald, "Neutral is Not Impartial: The Confusing Legacy of Traditional Peace Operations Thinking," *Armed Forces & Society* 29, no. 3 (2003): 431, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45347184>.

¹²⁷ Caplan, "The 1994 Genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda," 459.

¹²⁸ Alex J. Bellamy, "The Changing Face of Humanitarian Intervention," *St Antony's International Review* 11, no. 1 (2015): 31, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/26229132>.

colonel deployed with Turquoise announced that they were not there to disarm the RGF, but would push the RPF back if they entered the Humanitarian Protection Zone (HPZ).¹²⁹ France's actions and words prior and throughout Turquoise's existence showed the world that its neutrality was questionable at best and nonexistent at worst.

France's complicated history and relations with those in the Rwandan government have left them open to much criticism. A picture created by political cartoonist Carlos Latuff demonstrates this point delicately. The bottom of the figure displays a sea of skulls labeled "Rwanda", while an arm bearing the French tricolor flag draws a machete inserted into the skulls.¹³⁰ The portrayal of France's role in the genocide can range anywhere from ignorant to complicit to conspiratorial. For nearly thirty years since the genocide, the French government had maintained overall silence when it came to the genocide. That is until 2021. French President Emmanuel Macron visited Kigali and gave a speech detailing France's failures throughout the genocide, a move that was applauded by Rwandan President Paul Kagame for its candor.¹³¹ This is a large step when it comes to France coming to terms with its role and position in the genocide. However, there are more details that must come to light for France's position to be fully understood in relation to Rwanda and its genocide.

Is it fair to critique the world's response to the genocide?

¹²⁹ Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, 459.

¹³⁰ Carlos Latuff, "Charge do Latuff: O envolvimento da França no genocídio de Ruanda," April 9, 2014, <https://operamundi.uol.com.br/opiniaio/34747/charge-do-latuff-o-envolvimento-da-franca-no-genocidio-de-ruanda>.

¹³¹ Ignatius Ssuuna and John Leicester, "France's Macron admits some guilt for Rwanda's genocide," *AP News*, May 27, 2021. <https://apnews.com/article/africa-rwanda-europe-france-4a085eaa8f771913ac75758ca288762f>.

One of the driving reasons behind the lack of intervention is correlated with the “double genocide” theory. The “double genocide” angle being pushed by the Rwandan media aimed to portray the conflict as genocide occurring in both directions (Hutu against Tutsi AND Tutsi against Hutu), and it was gobbled up by the global community.¹³² This angle was not necessarily difficult for the Hutu-controlled media to push; after all, Rwanda had just experienced its bloody Civil War where the Tutsi could be perceived as an invading force. Most scholars acknowledge that the RPF engaged in some form of massacres against the Hutu before and throughout the more well-known genocide against the Tutsi.¹³³ Although the death toll pales in comparison, the evidence does exist. This viewpoint was also not new to the twenty-first century, trials of the *genocidaires*, or even a month into the genocide. As Gerald Caplan points out, violent massacres by the RPF had occurred prior to 1994 during the Civil War, and became part of the basis of the plan to exterminate the Tutsi. This thought process was peddled throughout the genocide by RTLM and other propaganda agencies as a call to arms of the Hutu majority.¹³⁴ As with much of the data needed to answer many of the still unanswered questions related to the genocide, empirical research and data is unfortunately lacking during the early 1990s.¹³⁵ Regardless of the accuracy of the double-genocide hypothesis, the mere rumor that it even *could* be caused the genocide to sometimes be viewed as a continuation of the Civil War.

However, there is a question among some historians about to what extent foreign intervention could have helped save lives. Realistically, what could foreign powers have done to

¹³² Lower and Hauschildt, “The Media as a Tool of War: Propaganda in the Rwandan Genocide,” 5.

¹³³ Philip Verwimp, “Testing the Double-Genocide Thesis for Central and Southern Rwanda,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47, no. 4 (2003): 429, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/3176203>.

¹³⁴ Gerald Caplan, “Rethinking the Rwandan Narrative for the 25th Anniversary,” *Genocide Studies International* 12, no. 2 (2018): 181, <https://utpjournals.press/doi/pdf/10.3138/gsi.12.2.03>.

¹³⁵ Verwimp, “Testing the Double-Genocide Thesis for Central and Southern Rwanda,” 423.

intervene once the genocide kicked off? It would have taken several weeks to gather forces and get them to Rwanda. Even then, flying these forces into Rwanda would be next to impossible given that Kigali Airport was non-operative throughout much of the genocide. By the time reinforcements (whether they be UN, American, or any sort of conglomerate) arrived on the ground in Rwanda, the worst of the killing would largely have been over. Given the ferocity with which the genocide commenced, how much of a chance did the outside world realistically stand when it came to intervening in Rwanda? According to estimates, the velocity with which the genocide was occurring peaked on or around April 21st, which was just a day after the UN began weighing UNAMIR's future in Security Council meetings.¹³⁶ With the security of Kigali Airport quite literally up in the air, fears rose that attempting to fly in reinforcements might cause a repeat of what happened in Mogadishu.

The genocide would largely end in mid-July when RPF forces led by Paul Kagame recaptured Kigali from the genocidal Hutu government. Some small pockets of genocide continued in the countryside, but the killings had largely concluded. A precise death toll has not been estimated, nor will it likely ever be. The largely-accepted estimation is 800,000-1,000,000 dead, composed mostly of Tutsi but with some Hutu as well. This breaks down to roughly to a rate of 8,000 deaths per day, 333 deaths per hour, and around 5.5 deaths per minute.¹³⁷ This rate was certainly not a constant throughout the entire period of the genocide, but the efficiency of a genocide carried out in a decentralized manner with a combination of small arms as well as farming tools is frightening. The end of hostilities in Rwanda brought about a greater ability to understand what had just happened across the nation. As the information began to piece together into an image far darker than the world could have imagined, guilt began to arise around the globe. During his

¹³⁶ Verwimp, "Testing the Double-Genocide Thesis for Central and Southern Rwanda," 421

¹³⁷ "Statistics," *Survivors Fund*, <https://survivors-fund.org.uk/learn/statistics/>.

great apology tour to Kigali Airport in 1998, President Bill Clinton gave a speech regarding the genocide and the failure of the global community to stop the genocide. While arguing it was partially the result of “tribal violence”, Clinton also acknowledged the global community ought to bear some of the responsibility as well.¹³⁸ Clinton’s visit would not venture beyond the airport into the airport, and his words seemed stale in the ears of Rwandans who had lost many of their family and friends in the genocide.

Alan Kuperman is a professor of political science at the University of Texas, and one of his specialties is concerned with humanitarian intervention in ethnic conflict. His book *The Limits of Humanitarian Aid: Genocide in Rwanda* comes to the same conclusion mentioned in the previous paragraph that it would have been next to impossible for foreign intervention in the genocide to be successful for several reasons. First, Kuperman argues that the expediency of the genocide meant the international community had almost no time to effectively respond to the killing. The height of the killing was only two weeks after the assassination of Habyarimana, which means a humanitarian mission would have arrived too late to save most of the victims. He concludes that a full-fledged response at the earliest possible time would have at most saved 200,000 of the genocide’s victims.¹³⁹ This argument is buoyed by Kuperman demonstrating that the United States did not know a genocide was underway for a couple of weeks. According to him, the information the United States was receiving was extremely similar to that received by the UN and the French and the Belgians, and that the earliest genocide could have been confirmed aligned

¹³⁸ Bill Clinton, “Speech to Survivors of the Rwandan Genocide,” transcript of speech delivered at Kigali Airport, Rwanda, 1998, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/text-of-clintons-rwanda-speech/>.

¹³⁹ Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda*, 3.

with the peak of the killing.¹⁴⁰ Kuperman argues in this regard that most of the victims would have already died by the time the soonest intervention could have been gathered and deployed.

Kuperman's conclusions raise a number of questions that still cannot be answered today. First, what drove the United States to intervene in other ethnic conflicts in the 1990s but leave Rwanda to its destruction? Somalia certainly altered the American view on peacekeeping, but were there factors beyond that that drove non-interventionism in Rwanda and interventionism elsewhere? Five years after the genocide in Rwanda, a civil war in Kosovo prompted a massive humanitarian response from the international community that quickly attempted to restrain the violence.¹⁴¹ While it would absolutely be a stretch to argue that Kosovo was a carbon copy of Rwanda, the response to Kosovo compared to Rwanda is striking. NATO's initial intervention in Kosovo was hotly controversial, as the legality of its actions was a gray area and many people considered its intervention illegal.¹⁴² Meanwhile in Rwanda, the UN and international community not only had the ability (perhaps even the obligation) to act, but also the legality to intervene and chose not to. This is certainly not to cheapen the violence in Kosovo, but instead point to a large issue of what drives humanitarian intervention. The period of the Cold War saw a large increase in the interventions of international powers in conflicts around the world, although the 1990s was certainly fraught with ethnic conflict.¹⁴³ Secondly, how many deaths would have to be prevented in order to justify humanitarian intervention? Half? 75 percent? All of them? Again, Somalia reshaped how Americans viewed intervention and the price they were willing to pay, but the track

¹⁴⁰ —, 24-25.

¹⁴¹ Louis Henkin, "Kosovo and the Law of 'Humanitarian Intervention'" *The American Journal of International Law* 93, no. 4 (1999): 825, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2555346>.

¹⁴² Jonathan I. Charney, "Anticipatory Humanitarian Intervention in Kosovo," *The American Journal of International Law* 93, no. 4 (1999): 834, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2555348>.

¹⁴³ Thomas G. Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention: War and Conflict in the Modern World* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 2007), 4.

record of the American government in this respect is spotty at best. The Cold War is full of American intervention around the world with unconvincing justifications. Most famously, the Vietnam War cost the lives of nearly 60,000 American soldiers (many of whom were drafted against their will) which is infamous for its controversy among the American people.¹⁴⁴ In Rwanda, tens of thousands of people were dying every week and the United States seemingly stood by and watched it happen. The threat of communism spreading through Vietnam prompted a massive response, but supposed “acts of genocide” warranted little to no action from the international community.

Conclusions

Never again. The pledge to prevent future genocide was intertwined with the horrors of the Holocaust. Yet this message was seemingly forgotten for 100 days as Rwandans killed their neighbors. Regardless of whether or not the international community could have feasibly intervened in Rwanda, the hesitation and inaction of the world allowed for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent Rwandans. It is hard and perhaps unfair to group the response of different nations and entities into one collective critique, so let’s examine a few more groups one more time and try to make sense of it. UNAMIR was set up to fail in every sense when it came to the Rwandan Genocide. UNAMIR’s mandate and subsequent withdrawal prevented Dallaire and his troops from intervening in Kigali’s chaos following Habyarimana’s death. The bumbling and bureaucratic nature of the UN as an entity prevented it from making an efficient decision aimed at saving lives and putting an end to the killing. Moreover, the influence wielded by powerful nations like the United States and France over the UN made it impossible to make progress without the approval

¹⁴⁴ Congressional Research Service, *American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics*, last updated Jul. 29, 2020, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/RL32492.pdf>.

of those nations. In the case of the United States, the disaster in Somalia and general indifference to Rwanda as a nation effected almost no response from one of the nations most well-equipped to intervene in the slaughter. France's problematic Operation Turquoise seemed to have little effect on the killing, but was certainly successful at undermining UNAMIR and failing in its role as a humanitarian mission.

While it is not possible to prevent every case of genocide before it begins, warning signs certainly existed in Rwanda prior to it. A recent (and to some degree ancient) history of ethnic violence and a rapid rise in anti-Tutsi rhetoric should have served as a warning that widespread ethnic violence was certainly possible with the right spark. This historical knowledge combined with the state of anarchy that took over Kigali and spread to the countryside of Rwanda following Habyarimana's assassination should have prompted a stronger reaction from the global community. It certainly would have been difficult to save a large percentage of the victims, but a worthwhile attempt at preventing the loss of lives. The Rwandan Genocide is fraught with oversights and failures, but there are lessons to be learned and extrapolated from it. For one, it showed how quickly genocide can happen even with foreign entities present. It also increased the awareness of the global community for ethnic conflict in often overlooked regions of the world. For the UN specifically, it showed that inaction can be costly and a loyalty to procedure can sometimes lead to outright failure and the loss of lives. For the US, it perhaps provided the shock to accept that humanitarian missions are often associated with great risk. For the global community, it gave an example of how quickly a seemingly peaceful country can turn on itself and begin its own destruction. All in all, the failure in Rwanda brought into question the commitment of the UN, US, and larger global community when it comes to preventing cases of genocide when their tangible benefits in doing so are not visibly apparent.

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