

Willful Ignorance:

Examining the UN's Effectiveness in the Rwandan Genocide

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In April, 1994 Alison De Forges and Monique Mujawamariyaw¹ were actively lobbying the US government in order to convey the seriousness of events in Rwanda. Eventually they secured a meeting with the National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake. This was the type of person they needed, someone within the Clinton administration with the power to influence policy². Upon meeting with Lake they presented the case for acting in Rwanda for over thirty minutes. After seeing Lake listen relatively emotionless for such a long time De Forges asked him what they had to do to be more effective. To this he replied "Make more noise"³ (De Forges). If a sentence can sum up the world's failure to act in Rwanda, then it is represented in those three words. In the eyes of the United States, the International Community⁴ and the United Nations, Rwanda was only worthy of quick, meaningful responses if the people asked for them first. The question that needs to be asked however, is why?

There were many failures in the UN's reaction to Rwandan Genocide. There were major logistical and resource shortages, very few nations were willing to provide serious troop commitments, both the UN bureaucracy and the bureaucracies of

major countries gave little attention to the crisis and failed to act quickly even if they did. Even more, the international community was suffering from peacekeeping fatigue and refused to even properly fund the mission let alone provide it with a sufficient mandate. While this is an impressive list of problems it is surprising that the majority could have been solved or reduced with the presence of adequate political will on the part of the international community. This essay will demonstrate that it was a lack of will that was behind the majority of the failures in Rwanda and that had the UN and the international community given Rwanda a higher priority then arguably the greatest failure in UN history could have been significantly reduced.

In attempting to understand modern social and political divisions within Rwanda, one must first examine the historical relationship between, what are today classified as the dominant ethnic groups in Rwanda, the Hutu and Tutsi. There are multiple theories explaining how Hutu and Tutsi came into being. Colonialists believed that the Tutsi had migrated into Rwanda, where the Hutu already lived. This made sense since the Hutu were shorter and squatter, while the Tutsi were tall and slender. However modern scholarship has cast doubt on this as the more protein rich diet of the elite Tutsi class would have led to greater overall population height.⁵ This idea that Tutsi is a reference to class instead of race is bolstered by research from Dominique Franche who demonstrated that the one foot average difference between Tutsi and Hutu height was the same as an aristocrat and a peasant in eighteenth century France^{6,7}.

In Rwanda there is no real consensus about how to define Hutu or Tutsi. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)⁸ used to claim that there was no difference, while the proponents of Hutu power

¹ Alison De Forges was one of the preeminent Rwanda experts of the day and Monique Mujawamariyaw was a Rwandan Human Rights worker.

² Alison de Forges, *Ghosts of Rwanda: Interview Alison de Forges*, PBS Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/desforges.html> (Oct. 1, 2003)

³ In Anthony Lake's words noise refers to "Noise means television interviews. Noise means newspaper articles. Noise can even mean peaceful demonstrations, etc." Source: Anthony Lake, *Ghosts of Rwanda: Interview Anthony Lake*, PBS Frontline,

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/lake.html> (Dec. 15, 2003)

⁴ The term 'International Community' refers to the world collection of states, in particular the major world powers.

⁵ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), 43-5.

⁶ The debate over the anthropological and biological history of Hutu and Tutsi is another branch of scholarship entirely. For a thorough examination of the topic read Mamdani.

⁷ Mamdani, 45.

⁸ The RPF was one of the belligerents in the Rwandan Civil War,

would have vehemently denied such an assertion.⁹ In the years before the genocide the Hutu comprised 84-90% of Rwanda's population, the Tutsi were roughly 9-15%, while the Twa (pigmy) were 1%. It would be incorrect to label them tribes for they speak the same language, live in the same area and have the same culture and religion¹⁰.

Regardless of anthropological arguments regarding the historical formation of these groups there is no debate about the modern implications of the Hutu, Tutsi divide. Most importantly it was under Belgian colonial rule that the racial divisions were codified. Each citizen was classified as either Tutsi, Hutu or Twa. In addition the Belgians crafted a system of government that favoured the Tutsi.¹¹ Tutsi's were favoured for jobs and education and assumed the role of colonial elite.¹² Their aim was to take the pre-existing ruling class in Rwanda and mold it into one that could manage the country effectively.¹³

The Belgian system continued until the late 1950s when rising racial violence caused the Belgians to accelerate the process towards independence¹⁴. The violence caused the Tutsi monarch and 200,000 fellow Tutsis to flee the country. Independence in 1962 brought elections and the country's first President was Gregoire Kayibanda, a Hutu¹⁵.¹⁶ Rwanda was initially stable, yet an air of ethnic distrust was still prominent and this erupted in 1963 when a group of exiled Tutsis invaded the country. They had little success, yet ethnic violence still swept the country. Throughout the next decade there would be periodic outbreaks of similar ethnic violence. The Hutu were not a unified political force however, in 1973 Defense Minister Juvenal Habyarimana, a northern Hutu, began a coup

against the Southern Hutu president.¹⁷ He was successful and one dictatorship quickly replaced another. The Habyarimana government itself was repressive. Some of their measures included forcing all citizens to carry identification cards with their racial status. Changing your status as well as moving your residence was illegal. In this society the colonial roles were reversed. The Tutsi were marginalized and discriminated against. For example, there was only one Tutsi cabinet member and only a certain portion of Tutsis were allowed to enter school and university.

A crucial event occurred in 1975 when Rwanda signed a military agreement with France. This agreement provided Rwanda with military training, assistance, and entrance into the Francophone to further solidify their relationship¹⁸. The French quickly became Rwanda's main military and financial benefactor¹⁹. The government of Habyarimana would never have survived had it not been for the intervention of French forces to protect the government against the Rwandan Patriotic Front.²⁰ The Rwandan Patriotic Front was a creation of the large community of Rwandan Tutsi refugees in Uganda that had fled the violence prior to independence. They invaded Rwanda in 1990, making progress before they were beaten back by the Rwandan army along with French and African troops sent to bolster the Rwandan regime²¹. The RPF regrouped and was revitalized by new leader Paul Kagame²².²³ Crucially the RPF

⁹ Mamdani, 41.

¹⁰ Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2006) 19-20.

¹¹ Mamdani, 88-9.

¹² Norrie Macqueen, *United Nations Peacekeeping in Africa since 1960* (Great Britain: Pearson Education, 2002), 62.

¹³ Mamdani, 88-9.

¹⁴ L. R. Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000) 16.

¹⁵ President Kayibanda soon turned into a dictator.

¹⁶ Macqueen, 62.

¹⁷ Macqueen, 62-3.

¹⁸ The Francophonie is a worldwide group of countries that either have French as an official language or contain a significant population of French speakers.

¹⁹ After decolonization France created a sphere of influence in the French speaking parts of Africa and fostered close ties with new African states to maintain that influence. Rwanda was important because it was situated on the border of what was once British controlled East Africa.

Source: Melvern, 24.

²⁰ Melvern, 24-5.

²¹ It should be noted that during this conflict the Rwandan government was desperate for weapons, so they approached Egypt in hopes of procuring a deal for Egyptian weapons. The Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs who handled the negotiations of the arms deal was soon to be Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali. Source: Melvern 31.

²² Paul Kagame's family fled Rwanda in 1959, he was one of the original members of Museveni's guerillas and was later highly

had become no longer a solely Tutsi group as the extremism of the Habyarimana regime had alienated many moderate Hutu. Furthermore, due to the significant assistance provided to the RPF from Uganda the RPF became largely Anglophone²⁴. This idea of an Anglophone army invading a Francophone country was an important development for France, as it did not want to see its influence amongst French speaking nations reduced^{25, 26}. This desire to retain influence amongst the Francophone, was the primary reason for their support of Habyarimana and it further influenced their actions during the genocide.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) sent a monitoring force to the area but it made little difference. Civil war resumed and continued interventions by French forces and arms shipments were necessary for the government's survival.²⁷ In 1993 sufficient international pressure was applied to both sides that they agreed to come to the negotiating table. The Arusha Peace Negotiation took thirteen months to complete, and there were delegations from Burundi, Zaire, Senegal, Uganda and Tanzania, as well as the US, France, Belgium and Germany.²⁸ The UN even got involved by sending a mission to monitor the negotiations.²⁹ The Accords called for a broad-based transitional government (BBTG) that was to be in power for no more than twenty-two months. At the end of that period democratic elections were to be held. The BBTG consisted of the President's party, the RPF and the Hutu moderate opposition. The Presidency was to become a ceremonial position, while the Rwandan army and the RPF would

integrate. The refugees would have a right to return and as a first measure of good faith a battalion of RPF soldiers were to be moved into the Rwandan capital of Kigali. Many diplomats were ecstatic about the deal, calling it the best peace deal in Africa. It is from this hopeful point that the discussion must begin regarding how it all went wrong³⁰.

The International Community's response to the Rwandan civil war was relatively productive during the 1990-93 period. The negotiations at Arusha were undertaken partially because of repeated instances of international pressure. It was not long however before problems began to arise with the agreement. While the United Nations did send a delegation to the negotiations to encourage progress, they were only observers and had no official say over the treaty's outcome. This was important since the UN was proscribed a central role in the implementation of the Accords, yet it had no say on whether such a role was practical.³¹ To make matters worse the treaty called for the UN to deploy 4200 soldiers thirty-seven days after the Accord was signed. At the time, the average UN deployment took six months to get on the ground. Furthermore the accords called for the UN to undertake disarmament, demining, and deliver relief aid all while performing their main function of safeguarding the peace process.³² Although specific details from these negotiations are not obtainable it is difficult to believe that the parties would have proceeded with such a timetable had the UN told the negotiators that such a timetable was impossible.

At any other time this would have already put the UN in a difficult position to execute both a timely and effective deployment. The early nineties however, was a unique time in the UN's history. The UN had begun taking a renewed role in international crises following the fall of the Soviet Union, and at the time of the Arusha Accords the UN was engaged in 17 missions worldwide,

involved in the Rwandan National Resistance Army (precursor to the RPF).

Source: Melvern, 31.

²³ Melvern, 30.

²⁴ Besides the military aid the Ugandan government provided to the RPF, many RPF soldiers had fought in Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance army against the Ugandan government under Milton Obote. This provided RPF soldiers with invaluable combat experience.

Source: Macqueen, 63. And Melvern, 27-8.

²⁵ Macqueen, 64.

²⁶ Melvern, 24-5.

²⁷ Macqueen, 64.

²⁸ Melvern, 52.

²⁹ Macqueen, 64.

³⁰ Melvern, 52-3.

³¹ Macqueen, 65.

³² Macqueen, 65. and Melvern, 82.

including large scale conflicts in both Somalia and Bosnia.³³ Moreover, the deaths of US soldiers in Mogadishu were very detrimental to UN efforts to secure troop contributions from member states.³⁴ Simply put, it was not going to be easy for the United Nations to find the troop contributions for a strategically unimportant country like Rwanda within this context. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations knew this and proposed sending roughly half the requested troops with a weaker mandate than the one outlined in the Arusha Accords.³⁵ Despite this reduced force it still took five months for the UN to secure contribution for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR)³⁶. The inevitable delays on the Arusha timetable cannot fully be blamed on the UN or the International Community, since as stated above the demands placed upon them were simply too unrealistic. Yet the UN observers at the negotiations failed by not making it clear that the timetables being negotiated were incredibly naïve.

Once the creation of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) was eventually secured the preparations for deployment began. Almost immediately the Force Commander, General Romeo Dallaire learned the difficulties of the United Nations procurement system. First, the UN provided little background information to General Dallaire. Upon first flying to Rwanda his only information came from an encyclopedia article Dallaire's assistant borrowed from a public library.³⁷ UNAMIR had to fight for all of its supplies and faced consistent shortages of everything from ammunition, to rations, to vehicles, to basic support staff. They had no intelligence capability and the five permanent members of the Security Council did not provide

them with relevant intelligence, since it was simply not required.³⁸ Although logistical problems are common to many UN missions, their occurrence in this case was exceptional³⁹. The lack of proper planning, intelligence and basic logistics undoubtedly contributed to the slow start to UNAMIR and limited its effectiveness.

UNAMIR troops began arriving in December 1993 to fulfill their mandate⁴⁰. They had little initial success and the situation in Rwanda quickly began to deteriorate⁴¹. In January 1994 Dallaire was contacted by an anonymous source who claimed to be a well connected member of the Rwandan government.⁴² Belgian Commander Luc Marchal went to meet the informant code-named 'Jean-Pierre.' 'Jean-Pierre' told Commander Marchal a chilling story about the training of militia, distribution of weapons, and the registration of the Tutsi. Famously he told Marchal that the Interhamwe⁴³ could kill 1,000 Tutsis in twenty minutes (Dallaire 2). He offered to tell them the location of various weapons caches in exchange for the safety of his family and himself.

Dallaire immediately asked for permission to seize the weapons caches and for 'Jean-Pierre's' protection. He expressed in the cable to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) that he could not rule out the possibility that this was a set-up, yet that did not deter his final recommendation to move forward (Dallaire 2). However, he was denied this request by the head of the DPKO, Kofi Annan. Annan instead instructed Dallaire that he was told to warn President Habyarimana of what they knew.⁴⁴ These instructions were given despite a leading opposition

³³ Macqueen, 66.

³⁴ The full ramifications of the Battle of Mogadishu will be addressed later.

³⁵ Macqueen, 66.

³⁶ Terry M. Mays, *The Pearson Papers Paper Number 7: The 1999 United Nations and 2000 Organization of African Unity Formal Inquiries: A Retrospective Examination of Peacekeeping and the Rwandan Crisis of 1994* (Clementsport NS: The Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 2002) 17.

³⁷ Power, Samantha. "Bystanders to Genocide". *The Atlantic Monthly*. September, 2001, 2.

³⁸ Mays, 15-7.

³⁹ Mays, 16-7.

⁴⁰ Mays, 3.

⁴¹ Deterioration refers to political deadlock, trouble implementing the Arusha Accords and acts of racial and political murder. Source: Macqueen, 68-9.

⁴² Romeo Dallaire, *Code Cable: Request for Protection for Informant*, United Nations, <http://www.gvu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB53/rw011194.pdf> (Jan. 11, 1994), 1.

⁴³ The main Hutu Power militia

⁴⁴ Melvern, 94.

politician vouching for the informant's credibility and the informant himself showing UNAMIR weapons hidden in the basement of the headquarters of the National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND), Rwanda's ruling party⁴⁵, as well as hidden under bushes in the streets of Kigali.⁴⁶ In the end 'Somalia syndrome' had reared its head in Rwanda. In Somalia twenty-three Pakistani peacekeepers were killed performing an arms seizure and this eventually led to the catastrophic Battle of Mogadishu, where 19 US soldiers died⁴⁷. The public backlash after the debacle in Mogadishu was disastrous and effectively ended the UN's mission in that country. In the aftermath of that event there was the creation of what was called the 'Mogadishu Line', which essentially meant that the US would not get involved in an operation that would involve casualties like it did in Somalia⁴⁸. As well, DPKO leadership was afraid of such a disaster happening again and ignored the warnings⁴⁹.

Outside of the UN the fax did not gain much traction. Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali later dismissed the fax, saying such things are commonplace at the UN⁵⁰. Kofi Annan defended his interpretation, by saying that even if they had taken it to the Security Council they would not have acted⁵¹. According to Tony Marley, a State

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Department advisor at the time, he knew of the cable but he and many others dismissed it. This occurred because they had been receiving warnings of genocide in Rwanda since 1992, so they thought this was just another false alarm⁵². This seems to be a poor excuse, since 1992 to the beginning of 1994 is not a long time frame for planning genocide. Furthermore the crime they were being warned of was so serious that to have written it off as just more false alarms after such a short period of time is inexcusable. At the same time however, many of the bureaucrats in the US government were under the impression that those in more senior positions simply just did not want to hear about Rwanda so it just was not worth trying to raise concerns^{53 54}.

Kuperman argues that even if the international community had wanted to invade Rwanda it would have found it hard to completely stop the genocide, contrary to the beliefs of Melvern, Power, Cohen and Dallaire. He states that the poor infrastructure and lack of a seaport would have made airlift the only viable option for transporting an intervention force (Kuperman 52-3). He also believes that a 15,000 strong intervention would have been necessary to constitute an effective response (Kuperman 64). While Kuperman's analysis is almost certainly correct under the assumptions that he puts into place, the assumptions themselves may be faulty⁵⁵.

⁴⁵ Ruling Rwandan political party

⁴⁶ Melvern, 93-5.

⁴⁷ Jared Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence: American and the Rwandan Genocide* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006) 49-50.

⁴⁸ Other Western countries saw the public reaction in the US to the death of the soldiers and came to the same conclusion the Americans did, that casualties in strategically unimportant foreign nations was just not worth it politically.

⁴⁹ Melvern, 92.

⁵⁰ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Kofi Annan, *Ghosts of Rwanda: Interview Boutros Boutros-Ghali*, PBS Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/ghali.html> (Jan. 21, 2004)

⁵¹ Kofi Annan, *Ghosts of Rwanda: Interview Kofi Annan*, PBS Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/annan.html> (Feb. 17, 2004)

⁵² Tony Marley, *Triumph of Evil: Tony Marley*, PBS Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil/interviews/marley.html>

⁵³ Although the sourced interviewee was a Defense Department official, judging from the government mood described in Cohen chapter 7 and Power ("A Problem from Hell") chapter 10 it is not a stretch to apply it to the bureaucracy in general

⁵⁴ James Woods. *Triumph of Evil: James Woods*, PBS Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil/interviews/woods.html>

⁵⁵ Kuperman makes informed assumptions about a hypothetical intervention regarding the necessary force strength, logistical capability and arrival times. As well as assumptions surrounding the potential effects of the various scenarios he discusses.

To illustrate that point it is worth examining that the various operations that evacuated most expatriates from Rwanda. The US made the decision to evacuate its foreign nationals from Rwanda on April 7th, and the operation concluded April 10th.⁵⁶ In addition, several European countries responded as follows: “France deployed 450 troops in Kigali with 800 others on standby in Bangui and N’Djamena, while Belgium dispatched 1,000, half to Kigali with the balance held in reserve in Nairobi. Shortly afterwards 80 Italian paratroopers arrived”.⁵⁷ The US also had 300 soldiers on reserve in Bujumbura in case their convoy leaving Rwanda came under attack. These incredibly fast reaction times demonstrate that modern militaries can move very quickly when ordered⁵⁸. While these troops were in Rwanda they were not attacked or challenged, they showed their weapons openly without meeting resistance, and the militias essentially stood down.⁵⁹ While predicting how the militias would have reacted if these troops stayed is impossible, over the course of the genocide the perpetrators showed little willingness to commit acts of violence in front of Western observers⁶⁰. Sending in troops so fast would have created difficulties in supplies as Kuperman suggests and there would have been

great difficulty placed on the troops since they would have received next to no mission specific training⁶¹. Despite those issues, however, this situation lends significant credence to the idea that the international community could have put sizeable reinforcements for UNAMIR on the ground in a very short period of time if they so desired. Kuperman might argue that this would not have been enough to halt the genocide. Whether that is true or not is irrelevant, an intervention of the size depicted above would have arguably saved thousands of lives.

So why was an intervention not attempted? Besides a lack of political will and strategic interest, ‘Somalia syndrome’ also had a large role to play in why the US and the rest of the Western world did not want to intervene. The violence in Rwanda occurred immediately after “The Battle of Mogadishu”, and the Clinton Administration was still reeling from that disaster. Deputy Secretary of Defense William Perry said, “The voice of criticism over the Somalia debacle was so overwhelming that such a meeting [on ruling out US intervention in Rwanda on account of Somalia] would not have been necessary to determine that Rwanda, six months after Somalia, was a political non-starter.”⁶²

This feeling was codified soon after with Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 25, which was signed on May 3rd, 1994. PDD-25 did not make peacekeeping impossible, but it did make it much more difficult for the US to become involved or provide consent in the Security Council. It aimed to ensure that an approved peacekeeping mission would be effective and that they would not descend, as Somali did, into peace enforcement.⁶³ The policy stated that US forces could not serve under foreign command, missions must be attached to firm political goals, they could not be open ended and consent of the parties was very important. Those are just a few of the many other

⁵⁶ Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 351.

⁵⁷ Douglas Anglin, *The Pearson Papers Paper Number 6: Confronting Rwandan Genocide: The Military Options What Could and Should the International Community Have Done?* (Clementsport: The Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 2002), 38.

⁵⁸ It is important to note the distinction between normal UN reaction times, such as when UNAMIR first arrived and the proposed reaction times for an emergency intervention into Rwanda. The hypothetical emergency intervention into Rwanda would have to operate outside the DPKO bureaucracy and it would require that only highly trained militaries take part. It would have been risky, highly unconventional and quite different from traditional UN peacekeeping missions. UNAMIR was supposed to be a normal UN peacekeeping mission while the hypothetical intervention into the genocide was last move of desperation. The post Arusha period should not have required Western government to undertake such a quick intervention.

⁵⁹ Melvern, 142.

⁶⁰ There are exceptions to this statement. Ten Belgian peacekeepers were killed, however that was part of a plan to precipitate a UN withdrawal.

Source: Philip Gourevitch, *Triumph of Evil: Philip Gourevitch*, PBS Frontline, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil/interviews/gourevitch.html>

⁶¹ To answer question of whether the lack of mission specific training would be a major problem we would have to speculate on how the intervening force would have been received by the militias and this is an issue that is beyond the scope of this case study.

⁶² Cohen, 50.

⁶³ Cohen, 51.

conditions that would have to be met for the US to support a mission.⁶⁴ This directive made it much harder for the US to become involved in non-traditional international crises. To make matters worse the United States heavily promoted the ideas of PDD-25 within the Security Council and imposed the conditions of the directive upon the debate surrounding UNAMIR II. This meant that even if US troops were not taking part in the mission the US wanted it to abide by certain conditions of PDD-25, if the US was to vote in favour of an initiative.⁶⁵ The line of thinking was that if the US-approved a peacekeeping mission that ran into trouble, then it would be called upon to bolster the mission down the road. This rationale however, would prove a hindrance for all future efforts to intervene in Rwanda as the UN's ability to intervene was now severely restricted.

After the death of the Belgian peacekeepers on April 7th⁶⁶, UNAMIR began to decline. Belgium pulled out on April 14th, and on April 21st the Security Council decided to draw UNAMIR's forces down to 270, despite Red Cross estimations that the dead had reached the hundreds of thousands.⁶⁷ As the genocide became more apparent and public pressure for action mounted, the UN was soon forced to revisit the idea of bolstering UNAMIR. The UN's resolution to withdraw most of UNAMIR left the Secretary-General with the decision of putting further options about UNAMIR before the Council. The Secretary-General tried to push the Council to propose options for UNAMIR, yet the Security

Council⁶⁸ sent a letter back asking for the Secretary-General to come up with the proposals.⁶⁹ This delay in drafting the most basic suggestions of an expanded force lasted from April 21st to May 11th, until Boutros-Boutros Ghali put some unofficial suggestions before the Council.⁷⁰ This was bureaucracy at its worst and a clear sign that no one party had any desire to take ownership of the Rwanda issue.

The fact that the violence in Rwanda was defined as genocide became a particular problem for many states. Under the UN's Genocide Convention of 1948, an acknowledgement of genocide by a member state commits them to forceful action to "prevent and punish" it.⁷¹ This clause was especially important for the United States which has a particularly legalistic form of government. This legal tradition stipulates that treaty obligations occupy a prominent place in strategic decisions.⁷² They feared how they would look by acknowledging genocide and not acting on it. This fear of the term genocide would be present throughout the crisis, and the US did not call the Rwandan crisis Genocide until well into June 1994.⁷³

In mid- April General Dallaire submitted a proposal for a reinforced UNAMIR. He called for five thousand troops to be airlifted into Kigali as soon as possible. The success of this plan however, was dependant on massive airlift capability and the United States was one of the few countries that could provide it.⁷⁴ The US government was very much against Dallaire's plan for a variety of reasons. They questioned how UNAMIR could secure the airport, fretted about the risks to US pilots and generally questioned the plan at every turn. Instead of an airlift the US

⁶⁴ United States. *Clinton Administration Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations (PDD 25)*, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25.htm> (May 6, 1994).

⁶⁵ Power, *A Problem From Hell*", 342.

⁶⁶ Ten Belgian Peacekeepers had been sent to protect the acting prime minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana. They were soon surrounded by Presidential Guard soldiers. The Belgians were taken captive and were taken to a nearby army base and shot. Uwilingiyimana fled with her family to a nearby UN compound but was chased down and shot.

Source: Macqueen, 71.

⁶⁷ PBS Frontline, *100 Days of Slaughter: A Chronology of U.S./U.N. Actions*, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil/etc/slaughter.html> (Jan. 6, 1999)

⁶⁸ The five Permanent Members of the Security Council are the US, the UK, France, Russia and China

⁶⁹ Macqueen, 74-5.

⁷⁰ Macqueen, 74, 76..

⁷¹ United Nations General Assembly. *Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. (New York) Dec, 9. 1948. WordPerfect file.

⁷² Macqueen, 75.

⁷³ PBS Frontline.

⁷⁴ Power, *A Problem From Hell*", 378.

preferred to create safe zones at the border to protect those in danger. This would have been much less risky but its ability to protect the Tutsis was dubious, as it would force survivors in hiding to flee to the safe zones leaving them open to attack⁷⁵. Ultimately the US proposal was not a genuine attempt to take actions, but rather a stalling tactic. As a document from Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott to US Ambassador to the UN shows “We recognize that our proposal contains many unanswered questions – such as, where will the needed forces come from; how will they be transported to the Rwandan border area ... where precisely should these safe zone be created; ... what conditions would need to obtain for the operation to end successfully?” (US State Department Cable). This was not the makings of a plan that had been thoroughly thought out.

Further complicating the problems at the UN was the general atmosphere of distrust between the United States and Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali. The relationship had become strained after differences over the purpose of the operation in Somalia. With Boutros-Ghali’s public denunciations of the work of the Security Council and the United States with regard to Rwanda, the relationship was deteriorating further.⁷⁶ This distrust had a serious impact on the UN’s ability to act. For example when UNAMIR II was proposed, the US dismissed its validity, thinking that Boutros-Ghali was just trying to salvage his reputation.⁷⁷ The job of Secretary-General is by no means an easy one. Trying to convince the states of the world to act on problems they can easily ignore through moral persuasion alone is a challenging task at the best of times. However, this does not excuse the way in which Boutros-Ghali let the

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relationship between the US and himself crumble. While the actions of the US during this time were shameful, the Secretary-General should not have let his deteriorating personal relationship with the US obstruct his ability to forge a compromise.

The non-paper⁷⁸ of the Secretary-General was officially submitted on May 13th, and it contained the main elements of Dallaire’s mid-April proposal.⁷⁹ The plan called for a brigade of 5,500 well-equipped and well-trained soldiers to be air-lifted into Kigali. As with Dallaire’s plan speed was the

key and contributions were asked to be in battalion size to help ensure smooth operations once they were deployed. It would require both military and civilian police, helicopters and armoured personnel carriers (which were needed to transport a Ghanaian battalion that was in Nairobi).⁸⁰ Security Council Resolution 918 was eventually passed May 17th and it contained 5, 500 soldiers for UNAMIR and gave the operation a mandate under Chapter VII of the UN charter, which provided it with greater enforcement powers. These powers allowed the UN to undertake broad military action to solve threats to world peace. The resolution was practically ineffective however because it called for a staged deployment and a ceasefire between the parties (United Nation *Resolution 918*)⁸¹. Security Council President Colin Keating of New Zealand wrote to Auckland on May 17th that “As you will see, the US has essentially gutted the resolution ... in reality the expansion is a fiction”⁸². One

⁷⁵ Power, *A Problem From Hell*, 378-9.

⁷⁶ Melvern, 195.

⁷⁷ Melvern, 195.

⁷⁸ A non-paper means an unofficial paper or proposal.

⁷⁹ Macqueen, 77.

⁸⁰ Melvern, 195.

⁸¹ The RPF had already made it public that the time for a UN intervention was over and the chance that they would accept a ceasefire from the genocidal government was virtually nil. Source: George Moose, *Ghosts of Rwanda: Interview George Moose*, PBS Frontline,

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/moose.html> (Nov. 21, 2003)

⁸² Melvern, 198.

ambassador to the UN believed that it could take up to three months for action to be taken on UNAMIR II.⁸³

Despite the pessimism, the UN went about trying to solicit commitments for UNAMIR II. Kofi Annan approached the governments of one hundred UN member states and came up with nothing. In addition, the UN had received commitments from nineteen countries to place portions of their armies on 'stand-by' for humanitarian crises; yet all nineteen initially refused once the crisis erupted.⁸⁴ By July 10th there had been five hundred and fifty soldiers committed to UNAMIR II. Public opinion in many countries favoured intervention in Rwanda; however, the prospect of their own soldiers intervening was much less appealing.⁸⁵ UNAMIR was eventually filled out once the genocide was over and recruiting contributions became much easier.⁸⁶ There were offers of troops during the genocide from African nations yet they were usually tied to conditions such as transport, weapons and/or funding⁸⁷.

Even when offers from Western countries were made there was so little political will for Rwanda that the efforts were wasted. For example, the US offer to donate 48 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) to the Rwandan mission is a clear demonstration of bureaucratic failure. A call had been put out on May 19th to forty-four UN members with known military surpluses and the U.S was the only one to respond.⁸⁸ After the Clinton administration approved the APCs on May 31st it was passed off to the Pentagon bureaucracy.⁸⁹ The Pentagon and the UN were forced to argue over "who was going to pay for them, who was going to pay for refurbishing them, who was going to transport them, who was going

to pay for the transport, [and] who was going to pay for the training of the Ghanaians so that they could use them".⁹⁰ The Clinton administration eventually got involved in mid-June and the APCs were shipped July 19th. Even then they shipped the APCs without radios and guns. The entire debacle could have been avoided had a White House official pushed the proposal through the necessary bureaucratic regulations. Instead, it was allowed to languish in the Department of Defense while bureaucrats on both sides dithered about specifics⁹¹. This illustrates the low level of political significance attached to the Rwanda Crisis. This crisis was time-sensitive and as it will be demonstrated below, it would have been relatively easy for someone in the White House to phone the right people and say 'this is a priority, get this done'. Unfortunately this did not happen until a couple of weeks in.

Much to the relief of the United Nations, France officially stepped in mid-June and offered to lead a UN sanctioned multilateral francophone⁹² intervention into Rwanda⁹³. They proposed to create a safe zone covering one fifth of the country located in Southwest Rwanda. The official aim was to provide protection for the victims of the violence⁹⁴.⁹⁵ This came as a relief to many countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, who were relieved that someone was

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<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/moose.html>.

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<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil/interviews/woods.html>.

⁹² The vast majority of the forces in Operation Turquoise were from France. Some of France's African allies did contribute but they were small in comparison.

⁹³ In a letter to the Security Council the Secretary-General had suggested such an intervention into Rwanda back on April 29th 1994. Source: United Nation Security Council, *Letter Dated April 26th 1994 From The Secretary-General*, S/1994/518. (29 April, 1994).

⁹⁴ There are many questions about the true aim of the French forces in Rwanda considering the prior support of the government.

Krosiak claims that they initially hoped they could engage the RPF but abandoned that aim once RPF victory was assured. It is also widely known that many perpetrators of the genocide passed through the French zone with no difficulty. Source: Daniela Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2008) 230-3.

⁹⁵ Krosiak, 230.

⁸³ Melvern, 198.

⁸⁴ Mays, 11.

⁸⁵ Macqueen, 77.

⁸⁶ Macqueen, 81.

⁸⁷ Ibrahim Gambari, *Ghosts of Rwanda: Interview Ibrahim Gambari*, PBS Frontline,

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/gambari.html> (Jan. 15, 2004)

⁸⁸ Melvern, 197.

⁸⁹ (Power "Bystanders to Genocide" 9)

doing something. It was equally attractive because France would bear the costs of the operation and not the UN.⁹⁶ The resolution itself was passed and the troops began arriving in Rwanda on June 23rd.⁹⁷ The swiftness with which the French were able to begin transporting their forces into the country is astounding, and supports the argument that a 5,000 strong intervention force would have been quite possible with an adequate level of commitments.

Further evidence of the ability of a modern military to enter an area quickly is with the intervention into Goma on the Tanzanian border. The RPF victory had pushed the remnants of the Hutu government through the Operation Turquoise Protection Zone and into Zaire. The perpetrators of the genocide got mixed in with fleeing Hutu refugees and soon a large humanitarian crisis emerged in the refugee camps that had been set up across the border.⁹⁸ The media were alerted to this massive migration of two million people and the ensuing cholera epidemic that was killing five thousand people per day. Eventually there were five hundred reporters in Goma.⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰ The political will to undertake this mission was robust, President Clinton got involved and an intervention that was once only supposed to involve two hundred sanitation specialists grew to involving two thousand American soldiers¹⁰¹. Once the US president had Congressional approval and gave the executive order the wheels of bureaucracy moved impressively fast.¹⁰² The general in charge of the operation asked how much time he had (thinking he needed a week to get the initial mission together), and was told that the President wanted him to deploy the next day, this is exactly what he did, and had a small team deployed in Goma the very next day.¹⁰³ In the end the U.S

spent \$237 million on humanitarian aid in Goma, while the projected expenditure for a Rwanda mission was around \$30 million.¹⁰⁴

Throughout this case study the underlying argument is that it was a lack of political willpower that led to the slow and insufficient reactions to the crisis in Rwanda. Implicit in this argument, however, is the assumption that key governments and the UN either did know or could have known that there was genocide occurring in Rwanda. Knowledge of the genocide was not as apparent in some circles as in others, yet there is evidence to strongly suggest that the information was there for those who wished to acknowledge it.

One problem that tended to consistently appear in the bureaucracies of the UN and the major powers was the view that killing in a place such as Rwanda was just business as usual, that it had happened often enough so as to become commonplace. For example, prior to the Rwandan genocide 50,000 people were killed in Burundi and there was no major international reaction. Had the same thing occurred in the Balkans or the Middle East it is hard to imagine that it would have been ignored. According to Power, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Prudence Bushnell was told by a colleague "Look Pru, these people do this from time to time." (Power "Bystander" 4)¹⁰⁵. As for the UN, the Secretary-General himself said in an interview in reference to the 'genocide fax' that "we received hundreds of telegrams giving information -- that there will be an assassination of Mr. So-and-So, that there are arms which have been discovered. ... but we practically receive tens of telegrams of this kind every day."¹⁰⁶ While it is not hard to imagine why one becomes adjusted to a certain level of violence when you spend your life working on issues related to violent conflict, it does

⁹⁶ Krosiak, 213-6.

⁹⁷ Power, *A Problem From Hell*, 380.

⁹⁸ Power, *A Problem From Hell*, 381.

⁹⁹ There was only one reporter in Rwanda during the genocide, Mark Doyle.

¹⁰⁰ Melvern, 217-19.

¹⁰¹ Interestingly, calculations were done by the US army on the value of an American casualty to a Rwandan and it would require 85,000 Rwandan casualties to be equal to one American.

Source: Power, *A Problem From Hell*, 381.

¹⁰² Cohen, 164-7.

¹⁰³ Cohen, 166.

¹⁰⁴ Power, *A Problem From Hell*, 381.

¹⁰⁵ This statement implies a sort of deep seated racism that is very problematic in cases such as Rwanda. Unfortunately an analysis of implicit racism in government officials would be another branch of research altogether, and it would require training in Psychology beyond anything possessed by this author.

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<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviewws/ghali.html>.

not change the fact that this complacency can have negative consequences during a major crisis.

While Central Africa was not a strategically important region there were some intelligence resources devoted to the region. As time passes more information will be released as it is declassified or discovered. It is now known that a few days after the genocide commenced around two dozen US Special Forces were inserted into Kigali for a one day reconnaissance mission. They were brought back and debriefed. They reported that there were “so many bodies on the streets that you could walk from one body to the other without touching the ground”.¹⁰⁷ As for the intelligence services, there was a U.S defense attaché in Rwanda purely by chance when the crisis began and he provided the Defense Intelligence Agency with valuable information.¹⁰⁸¹⁰⁹ Joyce Leader, 2nd in command at the US embassy in Rwanda explained to her colleagues after her evacuation that there were three kinds of killing happening in Rwanda, “casualties in war, politically motivated murder and genocide”.¹¹⁰ James Woods, the Defense Department’s Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs believed that “It was known that this was planned, premeditated, carefully planned, and was being executed according to a plan with the full connivance of the Rwandan government. This was known.”¹¹¹¹¹²

As for France, there is significant evidence to suggest that the government knew quite a bit about what was going on in Rwanda and that they were still arming the Genocidaires. Due to the seriousness of such charges however, information of the subject is much less concrete. The French Government conducted two inquiries into its involvement in the genocide although, neither had any judicial power and they are considered by many

to be whitewashes, restating only rumors^{113 114}. However, considering the close ties between the French and Rwandan governments, the history of the French military training the Rwandan army, the rumors of numerous French arms deliveries during the genocide and the known arms shipments that went into Rwanda during the genocide that can only be traced back to shell companies, suggest that they most likely knew something about what was to come^{115 116}.

While information for the inner workings of the United Nations is not nearly as well known as that of the US, there is evidence to suggest that parts of the UN were actually under-informed. There is no UN intelligence service, and major countries with sophisticated intelligence operations are under no obligation to share it with the UN.¹¹⁷ During the Rwandan crisis the difference between the informal communications in the field and the formal communications for example in between the Secretary-General and the Security Council were shockingly different.¹¹⁸ In the run-up to the Genocide General Dallaire’s communiqués to the DPKO grew ever more desperate for increased authority and supplies to counter the worsening situation. The formal communications had a much more optimistic tone and only focused on the delays in implementing the Arusha Accords¹¹⁹. Members had to turn to outside sources to gain more information. The five permanent members of the Security Council had embassies in Kigali and had intelligence networks; however the non-permanent members often did not have that

¹⁰⁷ Power, *A Problem From Hell*, 354-5.

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, 28.

¹⁰⁹ Details on this information are not available.

¹¹⁰ Power, *A Problem From Hell*, 354.

¹¹¹ For a further study of what was known before the Genocide began see Kuperman Chapter four, Cohen chapter one, Power’s article “Bystanders to a genocide” and Krosiak chapter four.

¹¹² Cohen, 170.

¹¹³ Belgium on the other hand conducted an inquiry into its involvement and it was much more thorough. While picking one quote from a 1,000 page report is hardly thorough there is one damning passage. Belgium’s ambassador to Rwanda wrote to Brussels in 1992 that “a secret command exists which is planning the total extermination of the Tutsis in order to resolve, once and for all, the ethnic problem and to destroy the Hutu opposition.” Source: Melvern, 233.

¹¹⁴ Melvern, 234.

¹¹⁵ For a brief run-down of the Mil-Tec arms deals read Melvern 182.

¹¹⁶ Melvern, 181-2 234.

¹¹⁷ Mays, 15.

¹¹⁸ Howard Adelman, Astri Suhrke, “Rwanda” in David M. Malone, ed., *The U.N. Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century* (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2004), 492-3.

¹¹⁹ Adelman, Suhrke, 492-3.

advantage and had to use different sources. For example the Nigerian Ambassador to the UN (who was on the Security Council) approached Allison de Forges to brief him and many of the other non-permanent members on what was really happening in Rwanda¹²⁰. This is not to totally excuse the Security Council, they can request information from the Secretariat, yet they frequently did not, due to Rwanda's low priority¹²¹. According to New Zealand's Representative to the Security Council at the time Colin Keating, the relationship between the Secretary-General and the Security Council was very poor. The Secretary-General disputed the level of Security Council input on decision making and disliked their micromanaging¹²². After April 6th, reports began to come in about mass murder taking place in Rwanda, yet reports coming through the Secretariat from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) placed most of the blame upon the civil war, confusing the situation. This is unfortunate because the SRSG is widely believed to have been incompetent and potentially sympathizing with the Hutu Government.¹²³ In general, there was a belief among members of the Security Council that the Secretary-General and the Secretariat were not doing their job, selectively providing information and providing no political suggestions (De Forges). According to De Forges "They talked about the disastrous events as if it were a natural catastrophe, a hurricane, or a volcano exploding." All of this suggests a United Nations that is severely lacking in intelligence

capability, and prone to bureaucratic breakdowns over responsibilities.

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The story of the U.N.'s inaction on Rwanda is a complicated one, yet when all the issues are examined together there is one reason that is at the root of this failure: lack of political will. While there were problems in logistics and information that were not related to political will, the large majority were. From troop

commitments, to mandates, to funding and to bureaucratic inertia all of these major problems could have been solved or improved had Rwanda been a higher strategic priority. Many today hide behind the reasoning that there was really nothing that could have been done to stop the Rwandan Genocide, but while containing some truth this argument is not sufficient. There have been numerous examples throughout this case study that professional armies can move very quickly when ordered. While no one should argue that this genocide would have been completely stopped by a robust UN intervention, it most definitely would have reduced the damage. Beyond saving lives it would have removed the stain on the International Community's reputation and avoided the long tortured debate over Rwanda that is still continuing fifteen years later.

¹²⁰ De Forges

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/desforges.html>.

¹²¹ Adelman, Suhrke, 492-3.

¹²² Keating, Colin. "An Insider's Account," in David M. Malone, ed., *The U.N. Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*. (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2004) 503.

¹²³ Cohen, 94.