THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE:
EYE WITNESSES TO A HUMAN CATASTROPHE

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ABSTRACT

On April 6, 1994, the jet carrying the Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana, was shot down as it approached Kigali airport—killing all aboard. The systematic slaughter of Rwanda’s Tutsi minority by Hutu extremist hardliners began almost immediately. By killing ten UN peacekeepers, the hardliners who seemed to have done their homework well, knew the UN would abandon the peacekeeping mission and withdraw from Rwanda—and they were correct.

For the next one hundred days using machetes and other low-tech weapons, the Hutus massacred almost one million Tutsis in a deliberate campaign to annihilate them. The systematic state-led effort to violently eliminate the Tutsi population unequivocally meets the definition of genocide adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. If signatories of the Genocide Convention are obligated to prevent and punish the crime of genocide, why did the international community become bystanders to this horror? How could the screams of one million people be ignored?

This thesis will analyze the response of both the United Nations and the United States to the Rwandan genocide. Why did the UN which already had peacekeepers on the ground, abandon Rwanda? Why did the US, the world’s most powerful nation refuse to
intervene? Could the Rwandan genocide have been prevented, or at least stopped? How could such a crime happen at the down of the twenty-first century when the world had said “never again,” following the horrors of the Holocaust?

To answer these questions, the first chapter will look at the key players in Rwanda’s politics, the Hutu and Tutsi, and the events leading to the slaughter. Chapter two focuses on Rwanda’s intertwined and complex history between the Hutu, Tutsi and, and the impact of colonial rule—by both German and Belgium. Chapter three examines why the US and UN became eye witnesses to a genocide and failed to intervene. Chapter four examines early ignored warnings of the disaster and the chances of a successful prevention. Chapter five seeks to draw lessons from the events in Rwanda that can help policymakers prevent future genocides.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: HUTU AND TUTSI

Dwarfed by neighboring Congo, Uganda and Tanzania, the tiny land locked nation of Rwanda was relatively unknown before deadly violence erupted in the spring of 1994. It came into the international spotlight when almost one million Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus were slaughtered in just one hundred days, making the Rwandan genocide the fastest, most efficient killing spree of the twentieth century. The perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide tortured, raped, and ultimately used machetes, knives, hoes and other low tech weapons to finish off their victims. Seventeen years after the genocide the country seems to be recovering, economically, socially and politically. However, to understand what led to the horrific atrocities in the spring of 1994, examining Rwanda’s complex history and the relationship between the Hutu, Tutsi and the European colonists is necessary.

History of Rwanda – Hutu and Tutsi

Having inhabited the region for centuries, the majority Hutus formed 84 per cent of the population while the Tutsis accounted for 15 per cent. The Twa, a cave-dwelling marginalized and disenfranchised pygmies group that counts for the remaining one percent of the population, were the early settlers of Rwanda before the coming of the

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This thesis will focus on the Hutu and Tutsi, who are the central players in Rwandan politics. Although the origins and order of immigrations remain in dispute, convention holds that Hutus are a Bantu group who came from the south and west while the Tutsis are Nilotes who migrated from the south and west. For centuries, the Hutus and Tutsis lived together in small chiefdoms, shared the same culture, spoke the same language, practiced the same religion and intermarried. Because of the mixing as Philip Gourevitch argues, “ethnographers and historians have lately come to agree that Hutus and Tutsis cannot properly be called distinct ethnic groups.”

The Hutu were often short, resembling populations of neighboring Uganda or Tanganyika and were mainly peasants, as opposed to the cattle-herding Tutsis who were extremely tall, thin and often displayed sharp angular facial features. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Rwanda was already a centralized, hierarchical society where clan, lineage, and family ties were significant for political interaction—the distinctions of Hutu and Tutsi were not important.

Despite being the minority, for decades the Tutsis ruled and dominated the kingdom

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3 Philip Gourevitch, We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda (New York: Holtzbrinck Publishers, 2004), 47.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.


under kings named *Mwamis*. The country had division structures based on province, district, hill and neighborhood levels with each sector ruled by appointed chiefs who were mainly Tutsi.\(^8\) The Hutu revolution of 1959 marked a critical turning point in Rwanda’s history; it saw the end of Tutsi political domination as Hutu chiefs replaced Tutsi authorities. To restore order the Belgium government that for decades had favored the Tutsi switched sides and now supported the Hutu. Rwanda gained its independence in 1962 and Gregoire Kayibanda, became its first elected Hutu president.

Social unrest in 1973 saw Kayibanda ousted from power in a military coup led by Major General Juvenal Habyarimana, who then became president. While ensuring Hutu political dominance, President Habyarimana’s two decades reign of terror was marked with political assassinations and torture. The assassination of Habyarimana on April 6, 1994, marked the beginning of the Rwanda genocide that lasted for one hundred days.

**Colonial Period**

Following the Berlin Conference of 1885, the division of the African continent by European super-powers saw Rwanda assigned to Germany but, it was not until May 1894, when the first European was received by king Rwabugiri.\(^9\) Upon arrival, as Linda Melvern observes, “The Germans found a unique and extraordinary country, an organized and structured monarchy, semi-fuedal with aristocrats and vassals, and an administrative


structure that emanated from the court.”

German rule did not last long though, after the First World War under the League of Nations mandate, Rwanda was given to Belgium. To consolidate power, the Belgian’s established the classic divide and rule policy that disrupted the old state apparatus and eroded the powers of the Mwami king. As Barnett observes, “Belgium’s sponsorship of Tutsi mastery was legitimated by its racist ideas about who was fit to rule.”

Although it was impossible to determine ethnicity by physical appearance, in 1933 the Belgium administration classified the entire population as Hutu, Tutsi or Twa and issued clearly marked ethnic identity cards. Subsequently, all Rwandans at birth would be registered as Hutu, Tutsi or Twa and adults were obliged to carry their identity cards. As Melvern concludes “The divisions in society became more pronounced with the Hutu discriminated against in all walks of life.” The divisions were further highlighted with the introduction of Christianity and education. The mission schools and seminaries were mainly for the Tutsi elite. While trained Tutsis became doctors, teachers and agronomists, the few educated Hutus took up lower administrative jobs or became shopkeepers or tradesmen.

Oppressed for decades and excluded from power, in 1957, the majority Hutu for the first time politically challenged the Tutsi oligarchy and published a manifesto

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10 Ibid., 5-6.
11 Ibid., 6.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., 11.
demanding their emancipation and majority rule—this marked the start of political struggle between the Hutu and the Tutsi.\textsuperscript{14} To appeal for Hutu solidarity and ensure a revolution, one of the key ideological ingredients was spreading the belief that Tutsis were “outsiders” and Rwanda belonged to the Hutus.\textsuperscript{15} By the time Rwanda gained its independence “[t]he time-bomb had been set and it was now only a question of when it would go off.”\textsuperscript{16}

**Path to the Genocide**

In 1988, the Tutsis who had fled the country following the Hutu revolution conflicts and settled in refugee camps in Uganda formed the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), a group of armed exiles whose agenda was to secure their repatriation and inclusion in the Rwandan government—using force if necessary.\textsuperscript{17} For years the RPF had led a series of incursions into Rwanda, which provoked reprisals on the Tutsis still living in the county by the majority Hutu controlled government.\textsuperscript{18} In October 1990, the RPF invaded Rwanda from the northwest and the ensuing conflict resulted in one million internally displaced people settling in refugee camps north of Kigali.\textsuperscript{19} These refugees

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16}Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 39.

\textsuperscript{17}Khan, *The Shallow Graves*, 5.


became totally dependent on government handouts for their survival and as David
Newbury observes “the camps were to prove prime recruiting grounds for those who
organized militias—just as refugee camps in Uganda had proved a fertile recruiting
ground earlier for the RPF.”20 As the rebels gained ground against the Hutu dominated
government forces, in 1993, with the support of Western powers and the Organization of
African Unity (OAU), neighboring Tanzania brokered power-sharing peace talks called
the Arusha Accords.

The Arusha agreement terms were to ensure the Rwandan government would be
inclusive of opposition parties and the Tutsi minority. A United Nations peacekeeping
force would be deployed to assist in demilitarization and to help provide a secure
environment so exiled Tutsis could return home.21 The international community and
moderate Hutus had hoped with the implementation of the Arusha accords, the Hutu and
Tutsi might eventually coexist in peace—but this was not to be. Having immensely
dominated the Rwandan political and economic scene for the last thirty years, the hard-
line Hutu extremists saw themselves with nothing to gain from the peace deal and set out
to terrorize the Tutsi and anybody else who supported the power-Sharing deal.22

Because the accords did not grant past killers amnesty for their past
transgressions, the Hutu extremists “were afraid that the Tutsi, who had long been

20 Ibid.

21 Power, A Problem from Hell, 336.

22 Ibid., 37.
persecuted, would respond in kind if given the chance again to govern.”

To ensure no terms of the agreement would be implemented, the Hutu dominated government strategically begun plotting to exterminate the Tutsis. In early 1992, they had purchased, stockpiled and initiated the distribution of roughly eighty-five tons of munitions as well as 581,000 machetes. The youth in Habyarimana’s party was receiving training and were transformed into a deadly militia group known as *Interahamwe*—meaning, those who stand together or attack together.

Coinciding with the RPF attacks was the long serving dictator president Juvenal Habyarimana’s popularity erosion, as a result of the late 1980s Rwanda’s economic and social crisis. With Europe experiencing its own economic woes, the aid-dependent Rwanda saw prices of heavily relied upon commodities such as coffee, drop drastically. Also Rwanda’s rapid population growth rate in the 1980s put pressure on already limited available resources. To craft solidarity and stay in power, Habyarimana and his government turned to the politics of blame, they labeled the Tutsi minority as traitors and accused them of supporting the RPF attackers who wanted to overthrow the Rwandan government—the classification of us-versus them mentality was invoked.

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23Ibid.

24Ibid.


Butselaar observes:

...as always when a crisis developed in Rwanda, when leaders contested for hegemony, the Hutu-Tutsi question was revived, an old slumbering animosity that was used to keep or to gain it. It was a beast that, as it turned out, once liberated from its chains, could not be ‘managed’ as in the 1960s and 1970s.27

Due to a high illiteracy rate in Rwanda, radio was an important medium of communication by the government to deliver messages to the masses. Because the government understood well the significance of using the state controlled radio to rally their regime, they also exploited it as a tool of propaganda to incite killings of Tutsi and moderate Hutus. As the radio persistently preached hate on the ‘enemy’ which included Tutsi civilians as well as the RPF troops, the Habyarimana government “turned to the idea of mobilizing large numbers of civilians as a ‘self-defense’ force to back up the national army.”28 Following the signing of the Arusha Accords, Radio-Television Libre des Milles Collines (RTLM), a new radio station began its broadcasts and quickly gained popularity.

Backed by Habyarimana and the powerful Hutu extremist controlled government, the RTLM persistently and forcefully used propaganda to undermine the Tutsi. It underlined the inherent differences between the Hutu and Tutsi, stressed horrors of past Tutsi rule and “demanded the Hutu prepare to ‘defend’ themselves against the Tutsi threat.”29 The anti-Tutsi propaganda was not limited to the media and Hutu government

27 Ibid.

28 Des Forges, Call to Genocide: Radio in Rwanda, 43.

29 Ibid., 45.
hardliners, well known Rwandese intellectuals played a critical role in advocating for the ‘final solution’ to the ‘Tutsi problem’. Leon Mugesera, one of the architects of the racist ideology and a political science professor incited the masses to murder the Tutsi, in a landmark speech he stated as follows:

What about those accomplices here who are sending the children to the RPF we have to take responsibility in our own hands…the fatal mistake we made in 1959 was to let them [the Tutsi] get out…they belong in Ethiopia and we are going to find them a shortcut to get there by throwing them into the Nyabarongo River. We have to act. Wipe them all out.30

Events in Burundi

The events in the neighboring Burundi that took place on October 21, 1993 further fueled the tensions in Rwanda when the first Hutu elected president, Melchoir Ndadaye, was assassinated in a coup by a Tutsi dominated army. Just like the case in Rwanda, Burundi was traditionally ruled by the minority Tutsis until Ndadaye a moderate Hutu who incorporated Tutsis in his government was elected. The Hutu extremists in Rwanda used radio RTLM to broadcast the assassination blaming the death on progressive politics and on reconciliation with the Tutsi.31 The broadcasts took it a step further and not only accused the RPF of murdering the Burundian president, they stressed that the plot was to wipe out the Hutu “so that the Tutsi could control the entire region.”32 Froduald Karamira, a Hutu politician in a rally held in Kigali assured the masses that the RPF was only interested in reestablishing the Tutsi monarchy, he brought the crowd to its feet with

30 Melvern, A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide, new ed., 55.
31 Melvern, Conspiracy to Murder, 72.
32 Ibid.
the warning that “[T]he enemy was everywhere…[w]e cannot sit and think that what happened in Burundi will not happen here…[a]ll Hutu are one power.”

By the fall of 1993, the Hutu power militia had widely spread to the countryside and they were hidden stockpiles of new hoes, machete, and axes among other weapons in most communes. In early 1994, RTLM was not only labeling Tutsis as enemies of the state and openly advocating for their extermination, but was accusing civil society leaders and even the UN peacekeepers of favoring the RPF. Determined to shatter the peace agreement Habyarimana and the Hutu power group through persistent political maneuvering and propaganda had gravely widened already existing divisions between Hutu and Tutsi. On the other hand, the RPF knew if the implementation of the Arusha peace accords failed, the Tutsis, especially those in Rwanda who had publically supported the RPF, faced imminent danger. To be better prepared, they recruited more troops and increased the number of soldiers and weapons in Kigali.

Whether colonization by the Germans and Belgians incited the violence between the Tutsi and Hutu which culminated into the genocide remains a question of debate among critics. Alain Destexhe summarized the impact of colonial rule as follows:

Thus in short, if the categories of Hutu and Tutsi’s were not actually invented by the Colonizers, the policies practiced by the Germans and Belgians only served to exacerbate them. They played an essential role in creating an ethnic

\[\text{33Ibid.}\]

\[\text{34Ibid., 75.}\]

\[\text{35Des Forges, Call to Genocide, 46.}\]

\[\text{36Des Forges, Leave None to Tell the Story, 5.}\]
split and ensured that the important feeling of belonging to a social group was 
fuelled by ethnic, indeed racial, hatred.\(^{37}\)

**President’s Assassination—Let the Slaughter Begin**

The Rwandan genocide began on the night of April 6, 1994, after the plane 
carrying Habyarimana and the president of Burundi, Cyprien Ntaryamira was shot down. 
Although to this day responsibility of the assassination is still a matter of speculation, not 
surprisingly the Hutus publically accused the RPF of the crime. They are those who 
suspect Habyarimana was killed by the Hutu extremists. Some radical Hutus in his party 
had come to view him as a traitor, because he had signed the Arusha accords and was 
yielding to the power-sharing demands by the international community and Tutsi rebels.\(^{38}\)
The _Akazu_, meaning “little house” was the president’s own hard-line inner circle ran by 
the First Lady, Agathe Kanziga. The _Akazu_, was the driving force who were influential in 
turning the genocidal ideology into a national agenda.\(^{39}\) As Peterson observes the hard-
liners were “unwilling to negotiate any end to the war that would accommodate the 
Tutsi.”\(^{40}\)

As if the president’s assassination was the spark the Hutu extremists had been 
waiting for, they quickly moved into action. First, moderate Hutu government leaders and 
political opponents were deliberately eliminated creating a vacuum in which Colonel

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\(^{37}\text{Grunfeld and Huijboom, } The Failure to Prevent, 29.}\)

\(^{38}\text{Scott Peterson, Me Against My Brother: At War in Somalia, Sudan, and Rwanda: A Journalist Reports from the Battlefields of Africa (New York: Routledge, 2000), 268.}\)

\(^{39}\text{Ibid., 272.}\)

\(^{40}\text{Ibid., 271.}\)
Theoneste Bagosora, one of the masterminds of the genocide and his supporters could take control.\textsuperscript{41} By midnight roadblocks were being erected and the extermination of Tutsis was underway, first in the capital then spreading swiftly to other regions. Familiar with the ‘black hawk’ down debacle in Somalia, a day after the assassinations, the Hutu extremists strategically murdered ten Belgium peacekeepers knowing it would provoke an international withdrawal from their country.

Shortly, the international community begun its withdrawal from Rwanda sending a clear signal “to the extremists that the international community would not stop them from carrying out a final solution.”\textsuperscript{42} In a breath-taking speed and scale, for the next one hundred days as the rest of the world watched, nearly a million people were systematically slaughtered, making it, as Shaharyar Khan observes, “a killing rate five times more intensive than in Nazi Germany.”\textsuperscript{43} The genocide ended in early-July when the advancing RPF captured Kigali and the Hutu militia fled to the Democratic Republic of Congo and other neighboring countries—looting and destroying infrastructure on their way out. Not only had more than 10 percent of the population been slaughtered, another 30 percent had gone into exile\textsuperscript{44}—leaving behind a devastated population.

This chapter noted that the Rwandan genocide was not a result of two tribes erupting into violence and slaughtering each other and neither were the killings ignited by

\textsuperscript{41}Des Forges, \textit{Leave None to Tell the Story}, 6.


\textsuperscript{43}Khan, \textit{The Shallow Graves}, 196.

\textsuperscript{44}John Rucyahana, \textit{The Bishop of Rwanda} (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson 2007), 134.
the death of president Habyarimana. Rather, the genocide was planned in advance by a clique which included the Rwandese government, and the Hutu hardliners who wanted to hold on to power under any means necessary—including exterminating the entire Tutsi population. The next will chapter will examine Rwanda’s complicated history before and during colonial era as well as the period after the country gained independence in 1962.
CHAPTER 2
RWANDA’S COMPLEX HISTORY

The Rwandan genocide was not a result of ancient tribal hatreds between two ethnic groups, but rather a well calculated plan by the Hutu extremists that served their political and economic interests. Therefore, examining the complex history of Rwanda that culminated into the slaughter of almost one million people in the 1994 genocide is important. Due to difficulties of recreating undocumented oral history, the origins of Hutu and Tutsi and their distinctions remains an issue of debate among Rwandans as well as outside specialists on the region.

Unfortunately, as Mahmood Mamdeni observes “[t]he history of the encounter between the Tutsi and Hutu is important, not because of where their ancestors came from but because in their coming together they created certain political institutions which outlived that history and shaped a tragic future.”¹

Gerard Prunier, the great French historian and a Great Lakes specialist in his book The Rwandan Crisis, describes the Hutu and Tutsi saga as “a long story with complex roots, many contradictions, brutal twists of fate, sudden accelerations and periods of spiritual collapse.”² Some writers claim that the two are distinct races, while others argue the divisions were based on socioeconomic factors. In the Rwandese culture, “whoever acquired a sizable herd of cattle was called Tutsi and was highly considered,


farmers were Hutu.”³

Peter Uvin observes:

The cattle-rearing Tutsi had arrived in successive waves from the North during the 15th and 16th century, fleeing famine and drought. The agriculturalist Hutu they met in Rwanda had immigrated into this fertile region some centuries earlier from Central Africa. The most long-standing inhabitants of the region are the Twa, a small and marginal group (only one percent of the current population) primarily engaged in pottery and hunting.⁴

Unlike in other parts of Africa where they were clear distinctions between different ethnic groups, the Tutsi and Hutu spoke the same language, believed in the same God, intermarried and for centuries lived side by side as neighbors throughout the country. The ethnicity question has led some authors to argue that “by the 19th century hundreds of years of cohabitation and intermarriage had produced an ‘integrated’ social system wherein the categories of Hutu and Tutsi were largely occupationally defined.”⁵

Despite being about fifteen per cent of a population that was over eighty per cent Hutu, the more militarily organized cattle-herding Tutsi conquered much of Rwanda and eventually established their rule.⁶ The Tutsis after forming a centralized monarchy state, to administer the provinces the king appointed not only Tutsi chiefs but a significant


⁴Ibid.

⁵Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, 5.

number of Hutu and Twa officials.\textsuperscript{7} Despite the socio-cultural differences that existed between the Hutu and Tutsi, “many integrating factors kept them together. For example, territory was not split into distinct ethnic areas; mixed marriages could take place; and war was waged in common against neighboring kingdoms.”\textsuperscript{8} The arrival of German and later Belgium colonizers in the later part of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century dramatically altered the social landscape in Rwanda.\textsuperscript{9}

**Introduction of the Hamitic Hypothesis**

Following the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, that formalized the division of the African continent, Germany was given a protectorate that among others included Rwanda.\textsuperscript{10} Upon their arrival in Rwanda, the first European explorers, followed by German and later Belgian colonialists, immediately noted the differences between the Hutu and Tutsi in pseudo-scientific terms. The famous Nile river explorer John Hanning Speke started it all. In his book, *The Discovery of the Source of the Nile* (London, 1863), without any evidence, concluded that the Tutsis based on their looks were a superior race, and were ancestors of the Galla of Southern Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{7}Mamdeni, *When Victims Become Killers*, 69.


\textsuperscript{11}Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 7.
Other nineteenth century explores, missionaries and authors speculated the superior race Tutsis, were either from ancient Egypt, Melanesia or Asia Minor. The Hutu who were soil cultivating peasants were described as being “generally short and thick-set with a big head, a jovial expression, a wide nose and enormous lips. They are extroverts who like to laugh and lead a good life.” The cattle-herding Tutsis whom the Europeans considered superior, were viewed as follows:

The Mututsi of good race has nothing of the negro apart from his color. He is usually very tall, 1:80m. at least, often 1.9m. or more….Gifted with a vivacious intelligence, the Tutsi displays a refinement of feelings which is rare among primitive people. He is a natural-born leader capable of extreme self-control and of calculated goodwill.

**German Rule (1894-1918) and Belgian Rule (1918-1962)**

Germany established its colonial rule in Rwanda in 1894 and ruled until the end of the First World War. Impressed with the ruling Tutsi and believing they were a superior race, the Germans used the existing Tutsi king and his chiefs to administer Rwanda. Since the Europeans viewed the Tutsis not only physically different from the Hutu, but also socially superior, “the racially-obsessed nineteenth-century Europeans started building a variety of hazardous hypotheses on their ‘possible’, ‘probable’ or, as they soon became,

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12Ibid.

13Ibid., 6.

14Ibid.

‘indubitable’ origins.” By introducing and promoting the Hamitic Hypothesis, which viewed the Tutsi as a superior race, the Europeans unintentionally “set the stage for future conflict in Rwanda.” The Belgian administration, which had taken over from the German occupation after the First World War, “turned Hamitic racial supremacy from an ideology into an institutional fact by making it the bases of changes in political, social, and cultural relations.” Important institutions such as education, taxation, state administration and even the church embraced these identities. As the various scientific theories about the Hamitic origins of the Tutsi took different forms it became important in Rwanda’s history for the following reasons:

First, it conditioned deeply and durably the views and attitudes of the Europeans regarding the Rwandese social groups they were dealing with. Secondly, it became a kind of unquestioned ‘scientific canon’ which actually governed the decisions made by the German and even more so later by the Belgian colonial authorities. Thirdly, it had a massive impact on the natives themselves. The result of this heavy bombardment with highly value-laden stereotypes for some sixty years ended by inflating the Tutsi cultural ego inordinately and crushing Hutu feelings until they coalesced into an aggressively resentful inferiority complex.

Not surprisingly, the Tutsis welcomed the superiority idea while the Hutus excluded from power, as Des Forges observes, “began to experience the solidarity of the oppressed.”

In 1933, these reforms culminated in the classification of the entire Rwandan

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20Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell*, 38.
population as Tutsi, Hutu or Twa and the issuing of an identification card which proclaimed one’s identity.\textsuperscript{21} The introduction of a mandatory identity card deepened the existing social division between the Hutu and Tutsi. Since it was impossible to know for sure who belonged to which group, the colonial government determined that “[a]ny man with more than ten head of cattle was to be permanently classified as Tutsi, and any man with fewer than ten cattle was Hutu or Twa, depending on their profession.”\textsuperscript{22} The Belgian administration then mandated every adult was to carry the identity card which specified which group they belonged to. The identification system which allowed the Tutsi privileged access to the state and jobs, created an ethnic hierarchy which “would cycle through Rwandan history to the contemporary period.”\textsuperscript{23} During the 1994 genocide, the Hutu killers used ethnic markers on the identity cards introduced by the colonial masters to identify their Tutsi victims.

Because the colonialists used the Tutsis to enforce their harsh rule, the Hutus came to view the Belgian administration and the Tutsis from the same lens—as oppressors—later, the Hutus would conveniently invoke this period whenever it suited their political needs. A good example of generalization of blame was the 1994 genocide, when the Hutu-dominated government hardliners labeled all Tutsi in Rwanda as

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\textsuperscript{21}Mamdani, \textit{When Victims Become Killer}, 88.
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oppressors, foreigners, and enemies of the state and ultimately called for their extermination.

**Drastic Switch of Allegiance: Hutu over Tutsi**

At the end of the Second World War, the Belgian administration structure and the church for the first time opened doors to Hutus, giving them access to jobs and education. The result was the emergence of a modern Hutu elite class. As the desire for decolonization and independent governance intensified in the African continent in the 1950s and 1960s, in Rwanda, it took an ethnic identity. By 1957, the Hutu more than ever now believed they were the rightful natives of Rwanda, and were calling for the “Tutsi colonizers” to return to their alleged country of origin—Ethiopia.24 To generate political mobilization, educated Hutu elites “circulated manifestos calling for Hutu freedom, not only from Belgian colonization but from Tutsi overlordship.”25 The mobilization of ethnic identities led to the “Rwandan Revolution: a series of clashes, some violent, between Tutsi and Hutu elements in Rwanda over who would control decolonization and who would emerge dominant in the independent Rwanda state.”26 The period between 1959 and 1962 is significant in Rwanda’s history because there was complete reversal of political policy. For the first time, the Belgian administration and the church leadership abandoned the Tutsi and transferred allegiance and ultimately power to the growing Hutu


26 Ibid., 20.
revolution movement. By initially favoring the Tutsi over the Hutu, and later reversing course and favoring the Hutu as Rwanda neared its independence, the colonial administration “absent-mindedly set up a dangerous social bomb that exploded in the spring of 1994.”

The chaos that ensued following this dramatic shift in Rwanda’s politics saw about 20,000 Tutsis massacred in 1959 by the numerically superior Hutus, and between 140,000 and 250,000 Tutsis forced to flee to neighboring countries.

The large exodus population in neighboring Uganda and the second-generation Rwandan refugees would eventually form the nucleus of a Tutsi dominated army, the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) that three decades later would defeat the Rwandan army and eventually stop the genocide. Paul Kagame, who had fled Rwanda as a child in 1959 and sharpened his military skills while in Uganda, became the RPF leader.

**Three Decades of Hutu Domination**

When Rwanda gained independence from Belgium in 1962, power was ceded to the Hutu, Belgium, to justify for the removal of the Tutsi from their previous positions of influence cited “[t]he democratic principle of majority rule.” For the next three decades, the Hutu dominated government deliberately played the ethnic card, making the Tutsi

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27 Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, 42.


31 Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, 43.
minority the scapegoat in every political, social and economic crisis that faced Rwanda.\textsuperscript{32} The first president of Rwanda Gregoire Kayibanda (1962-1973), often portrayed Tutsis as foreigners and Hutus as the rightful citizens of Rwanda. In one of his speeches he noted, “our movement aims at the Hutu group. It has been offended, humiliated and despised by the Tutsi invader. We must illuminate the mass. We are here to return the country to its owners. It is the country of the Bahutus.”\textsuperscript{33} Under the rule of president Kayibanda, a quota system was imposed where the Tutsis were only allocated 10 per cent of available civil service jobs, and places in schools and universities.\textsuperscript{34}

A coup in 1973 ushered in a new Hutu president, Major General Juvenal Habyarimana whose policies continued to discriminate and oppress the Tutsis, politically, socially and economically for the next two decades. Throughout president Habyarimana’s reign “there was only one Tutsi officer in the whole army, there were two Tutsi members of parliament out of seventy and there was only one Tutsi minister out of a cabinet of between twenty-five and thirty members.”\textsuperscript{35} For the Tutsis living in Rwanda the unspoken understanding was very clear “[d] o not mess around with politics, this is Hutu

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 44.


\textsuperscript{34} Destexhe, \textit{Rwanda and Genocide}, 44.

\textsuperscript{35} Prunier, \textit{The Rwanda Crisis}, 75
preserve.” The regular elections due to the fear he had created, saw him often reelected with more than 98 percent of the vote. As Uvin observes, to criticize president Habyarimana, was “produced at the risk of the journalist’s life.”

By the mid-1980s, while president Habyarimana and his cronies enriched themselves with the country’s wealth and foreign aid assistance funds, Rwanda’s economy was steadily declining. The collapse of coffee prices in 1989, coupled with a high population growth rate in one of Africa’s smallest countries, and extreme government corruption led to social unrest of the Rwandese population. By the late 1980s, the Tutsi diaspora who had fled the Hutu massacres of 1959, 1962 and 1973 was estimated at 600,000. Years of marginalization living in Refugee camps in foreign countries, and a desire to return home, saw the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) army invade Rwanda from northern Uganda in October, 1990. Like it had done many times before whenever Rwanda was faced with crises, the Hutu dominated government made the RPF and by extension all Tutsi the scapegoat.

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36Ibid., 76.


38Ibid.


The Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) Invasion

Whenever faced with challenges both the Hutu and Tutsi would call on history to justify their cause, as Peterson observes:

For decades Tutsis in exile had natured the ‘injustices’ of the 1959 Hutu uprising and vowed to return. For them revenge was rooted in a never-forgotten series of ethnic transgressions. Like the perennial conflicts in the Middle East and the Balkans, they embraced the version of history that best matched their political aims. The Tutsi launched sporadic cross-border attacks, though these often resulted in massive retaliation by government forces and militias against the Tutsi in Rwanda.41

To the Hutu, the 1959 revolution was important because it marked the end of decades of Tutsi elite domination. 42 On the other hand, the Tutsis point to various waves of refugees driven from Rwanda as well as political, social and economic discrimination against the Tutsis in Rwanda ever since the country gained independence. In 1987, the Rwandese Alliance for National Unity (RANU), a Rwandan refugee organization based in Uganda changed its name to the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The RPF, while branded a Tutsi movement included Hutus and had a broad base beyond an ideological group and ethnicity.43 Nevertheless, the RPF was “an offensive political organization dedicated to the return of exiles to Rwanda, by force if necessary.”44


A civil war between the Rwandan government and the RPF started in October 1990 when an estimated 10,000 RPF forces from Uganda invaded Rwanda and captured two cities, Gabiro and Nyagatare.\textsuperscript{45} Although by the time of the invasion the Tutsis in Rwanda were just nine percent of the total population, the RPF invasion send shockwaves to the Hutu government and send them scrambling for military assistance from their allies.\textsuperscript{46} With the help of its allies the Rwandan army was able to repel the invasion however, the civil war attracted international attention and the RPF was slowly but surely establishing itself as a viable force in Rwandan politics. The civil war and mounting pressure from the international community for the first time forced president Habyarimana’s regime to address the issue of Rwandan refugee’s rights to return. This period is significant in Rwanda’s complex history because for the first time in almost four decades the Hutu dominated government permitted a Tutsi controlled opposition group to operate domestically.

On July 12 1992, president Habyarimana and the RPF signed an international brokered peace agreement, known as the Arusha Accords.\textsuperscript{47} In addition to a cease-fire,

\textsuperscript{44} Prunier, \textit{The Rwanda Crises},72.


\textsuperscript{46} Peterson, \textit{Me against My Brother}, 269.

both sides agreed to a system of power-sharing and the formation of a transitional inclusive government. Unfortunately, while the international community worked hard to help implement the Arusha Accords and bring a peaceful end to the Hutu/Tutsi crisis, the extremist Hutu dominated government had their own agenda. They had already started planning for a Tutsi “final solution”—a genocide. To the Hutu hard-liners, power sharing with the hated Tutsi was not an option and Rwanda had no room for refugees from neighboring countries who wished to return.

The genocide which started on April 6 1994, after president Habyarimana’s plane was gunned down killing him, the Burundian president Cyprien Ntaryamira, and other high ranking Rwandese government officials lasted until early July. Under the leadership of Major General Paul Kagame, the RPF eventually defeated the extremists and formed a new government. When asked how a small poorly armed RPF army was able to stop a large heavily equipped Rwandan army Paul Kagame, who became the Rwandan president replied, “the Tutsis had to end the slaughter of their fellow Tutsis. Basically every one of us was motivated. That was the main weapon of our success.”

When the RPF captured Kigali in early July, thousands of Hutus including former Rwandan army forces and militia streamed into Zaire, and created another human crisis. The mass exodus which brought the guilty and innocent Hutus to Zaire and other neighboring countries almost guaranteed that the Hutu/Tutsi crisis would continue. By early 1996 when the Refugee camps were broken up by Rwandan Tutsi forces documents

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48Peterson, Me against My Brother, 282.
found showed how the Hutus had rearmed and were training and recruiting soldiers to recapture their homeland and assassinate the new Tutsi leadership.\textsuperscript{49}

As the uncertain complex story of the Hutu and Tutsi continues to unfold, seventeen years after the genocide, the Tutsis currently control the state while those threatening the regime are Hutu extremists who fled after the genocide. Scott Peterson described the complexity and dilemma of Rwanda as follows, “[t]o be a Tutsi or a Hutu today means remembering who killed your parents 15 years ago and imaging who might kill your own child in ten years’ time.”\textsuperscript{50} The Hutu refugees who fled from Rwanda after the genocide continue to fuel conflicts in the Great Lake region to this day.

**Me against my Neighbor: Why did Ordinary People Kill?**

Beginning in early April of 1994, for a period of one hundred days ordinary people went amok; government workers, lawyers, teachers and peasants indiscriminately slaughtered innocent people simply because they were Tutsi, looked like Tutsi, or sympathized with Tutsi. What made neighbors kill their neighbors? To hold on to power president Habyarimana and his clique as they had done before, used historical anti-Tutsi propaganda to instill fear and incite the masses. Through repeated hate speeches, radio and newspaper propaganda that the Tutsis were going to take over the country and make Hutu slaves, made people believe that they had to defend themselves and defend their country. As Keane concludes, “to peasants with a long folk memory of past Tutsi misrule,

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid., 311.

\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., 247.
the warnings and increasingly hysterical propaganda had a powerful effect.”\textsuperscript{51} The Hutu extremists like the Nazis campaign against the Jews before the Second World War completely marginalized the Tutsis and created “an atmosphere in which their mass destruction would be acceptable, almost inevitable.”\textsuperscript{52} Even after Rwanda became an independent state, most Rwandans’ culture of obedience to their superiors, and attitude towards authority remained the same. Hintjens observes:

At least until the genocide, individuals continued to demonstrate quite a remarkable degree of internalized social control in relation to their superiors, and domination was considered the order of the day for subordinates. Intense family socialization, and intrusive state regulations into every sphere of daily life, reinforced this overall impression of orderliness and right social control. \textsuperscript{53}

The genocide planners exploited the obedience culture to achieve their goals. Being one of the most densely populated and poorest countries in Africa, economic incentives provided by the Hutu extremists played a critical role in inciting mass slaughter. As Rwanda’s agriculture-based economy continued to spiral downward in the late 1980s and social unrest increased, as Hintjens observes:

The Hutu authorities gave food, drinks, drugs, military uniforms, and small sums of cash to Rwanda’s hungry and jobless Hutu young people to encourage them to kill. Hutu farmers were given fields and encouraged to steal crops and animals from Tutsis while business owners and local officials were given houses, vehicles, television and computers to encourage their support and

\textsuperscript{51}Keane, \textit{Season of Blood}, 9.

\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., 10.

participation.\textsuperscript{54}

In this chapter we learned that although the origins of Hutu and Tutsi remain a matter of controversy, they spoke the same language, intermarried and shared the same culture. The Tutsis kept cows while Hutus were agriculturalists. Colonial rule altered the relationship by initially favoring one group and later switching allegiance. The genocide was not a result of tribal hatred between two ethnic groups, but as Scott Straus observes, “genocide happened because Hutu hardliners decided to foment violence against Tutsis and because the hardliners had control of the state.”\textsuperscript{55} If the genocide convention of 1948 commits signatures to intervention, why did the international community remain silent for one hundred days during the Rwanda crises? The former President of the Republic of Zambia Kenneth Kaunda observed:

The Rwandan genocide is a very sad, very sad indeed. It is unforgivable… I do not know how we could have sunken to that situation with the rest of the world watching and doing nothing about it. I think it is unforgivable. I do not know how we can ever explain that.\textsuperscript{56}

The next chapter will look at the international community’s failure to intervene.


CHAPTER 3
EYE WITNESSES TO A GENOCIDE

A world weary of catastrophic death, destruction and unparalleled human suffering following the Second World War and the horrors of the Holocaust, convened in San Francisco and signed the United Nations Charter in 1945—replacing the League of Nations (LON). The charter pledged that “we, the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought sorrow to mankind….“¹ Headquartered in New York, the United Nations comprises of six principal bodies, 191 members of the General Assembly and numerous satellite programs. The three most important principal bodies are the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretariat (its civil servants).² The United Nations top priority according to Article 1 (1) is as follows:

To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.³

To those effects, the international maintenance of peace and security falls under the Security Council, which among other things can authorize sanctions, peacekeeping


missions and military action against a member state.\textsuperscript{4}

\textbf{What is Genocide?}

The word genocide is often associated with the evil actions of Adolf Hitler and the horrors of the Holocaust. Drafted by Raphael Lemkin and adopted by the United Nations in 1948, the Genocide Convention defined genocide and declared it a war crime under international law. Article 2 and 3 of the Genocide convention outlines the specific actions that constitute genocide as follows:

\textbf{Article 2:}

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 with the group;
(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

\textbf{Article 3:}

The following acts shall be punishable:

(a) Genocide
(b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
(c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
(d) Attempt to commit genocide;
(e) Complicity in genocide.\textsuperscript{5}

Michael Barnett, a former UN employee and the author of, \textit{Eyewitness to a Genocide}

\textsuperscript{4}Lebor, \textit{Complicity with Evil}, 6.

\textsuperscript{5}Fred Grunfeld and Anke Huijboom, \textit{The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda: The Role of Bystanders} (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2007), 18-19.
describes the United Nations Security Council as follows:

Composed of five permanent, veto-wielding powers and ten non-permanent members. Those with the greatest power wield the greatest influence, and the United States has the greatest influence of all. But the council is not a simple aggregation of fifteen separate interests; it is more than the sum of its parts. The council also has a semblance of solidarity, presents itself as a representative of the international community, and contains collective norms that keep in line even the most independent-minded.\textsuperscript{6}

Therefore, the Security Council is the department that approves peace missions, and did so in both Somalia and Rwanda—the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) and later the United Nations Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR).

The Shadow of Somalia

The power vacuum in Somalia following the overthrow of its last president Siad Barre, in 1991 saw the country become a failed state as rival clan based warlords vied for power. Not surprisingly, the state of the country rapidly spun out of control creating casualties, mass displacement and widespread starvation. To provide food and medicine to the quickly deteriorating situation in Somalia, the UN in the spring of 1992 approved a resolution that established the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM). By the fall of 1992 death toll continued to rise because the warlords were hijacking the food supplies, and using the booty to purchase arms and continue funding the civil war.\textsuperscript{7}

The United States agreed to an UN-sanctioned operation that would defeat the warlords and provide relief to the starving population—the United Task Force (UNITAF).

A major player in Somalia politics, General Mohamed Aideed was opposed to the

\textsuperscript{6}\textit{Barnett, Eyewitness to a Genocide}, 11.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 35.
UN-sponsored peace process. On June 5, 1993, Aideed’s forces ambushed and killed twenty-four Pakistani peacekeepers, and in so doing, he became a wanted criminal. The Security Council with a US support quickly passed a “resolution that called for “all necessary measures” to be used to apprehend and punish those responsible for the attacks.” With increasing tension and casualties mounting on all sides, the US Congress demanded answers on the course of UNOSOM. In his reply the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, argued that the mission would fail unless more force was used and the clan warlords were disarmed. The tragic events that happened on October 3 in Mogadishu would impact future peacekeeping missions. In a bid to capture top leaders of the Somali National Alliance (SNA), American soldiers got into a deadly conflict with the warlords, Barnett describes the unfolding event as follows:

By the end of the day two American helicopters had been shot down, eighteen American soldiers had been killed and seventy-eight wounded, and somewhere between five hundred and one thousand Somalis were either dead or wounded. This day also produced the defining images of the American presence: one dead American soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu while throngs of Somalis cheered wildly and hurled insults and threats against the United States and the UN, and another soldier, visibly shaken and badly bruised, being held hostage by Aideed.

The vicious criticism to President Bill Clinton’s foreign policy, and the United Nations recklessness on American soldiers came from the US Congress, the press, and the American public. With criticism mounting, Clinton in a tactfully crafted speech on

8 Barnett, Eyewitness to a Genocide, 36.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 37.
October 7 redirected the blame towards the UN, and announced a withdrawal of all American forces by March 31, 1994.\textsuperscript{12} Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, in his response to the UN criticism further fueled the tension by saying, “If it helps the Americans solve their problems by blaming me. I’ll be a scapegoat.”\textsuperscript{13} Finally, the blame game between Clinton, the UN and the Congress “had produced a highly exchange noxious atmosphere.”\textsuperscript{14} What become dubbed as the “Shadow of Somalia” in many ways affected future peacekeeping practices of both the US and the United Nations—in these tense times for peacekeeping missions came the Rwanda crisis. The collapse of the US/UN mission in Somalia as Lebor observes, “hung like a black cloud over Rwanda.”\textsuperscript{15}

**UN Response to the Rwandan Genocide: UNIMAR withdrawal**

Eager to restore its lost credibility, the UN looked at Rwanda as an easy non risky assignment that would be completed quickly at a minimum cost—or so they thought. For the first time in years it appeared as if the Hutu and Tutsi would resolve their historical differences peacefully. The international community and Rwanda’s regional neighbors had negotiated a power sharing agreement between the Hutu and Tutsi—the Arusha Accords. In the fall of 1993, the Security Council approved the United Nations Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), to provide security and assist in the implementation of the

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 37-38.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 39.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15}Lebor, *Complicity with Evil*, 172.
Arusha Peace Accords—resolution 872. Lieutenant General Romeo Dallaire, a French Canadian, became the force commander of UNAMIR, while the Belgian military contributed the highest number of troops. Although Dallaire had requested for about 5,000 troops, the Security Council eventually only approved 2,548 peacekeepers. Not only had the number of forces been pared down, UNAMIR lacked some necessary essentials including, intelligence capacity and defensive equipment. As Melvern observes, “[t]he mission did not have essential personnel; there was no public affairs officer, no legal adviser, no humanitarian or human rights experts.”

In the watered-down mandate, “[t]here was no specific clause authorizing weapons collection, a lapse that would later have extremely serious consequences.” In early 1994, as diplomatic efforts continued to stop the increasing hostilities and implement the Arusha Accords, the more events spun out of control. On January 6, General Dallaire aware of the increasingly brewing unrest in Rwanda requested additional troops from the Security Council. His request was quickly denied and he was reminded “that continued support for UNAMIR depended on full and prompt implementation of the Accords.”

What became known as “The Genocide Fax,” was send by Dallaire to

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16Grunfeld and Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda*, 40.
17Ibid., 108.
19LeBor, *Complicity with Evil*, 166.
20Grunfeld and Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda*, 92.
General Maurice Baril, the Military Advisor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and head of the military division of the Department of Peace-Keeping Operations (DPKO) on the night of January 10-11. An informant, code-named Jean Pierre, brought attention to the UNAMIR about the Hutu extremist plans to implement the final solution. In a cable to New York, Dallaire detailed the chilling information to his superiors, the information on the fax stated as follows:

The interahamwe had trained 1,700 men in the camps of the FAR, split into groups of 40 throughout Kigali. The informant had been ordered to register all Tutsi in Kigali, which he expected to be for their extermination. He argued that his personnel were able to kill 1,000 Tutsi in 20 minutes. The informant was prepared to identify major arms caches throughout Rwanda, containing at least 135 weapons, but he wanted passports and protection for his wife and children.  

Dallaire recommended that the informant should be given protection and evacuated out of the country, in his concluding paragraph of the fax he articulated: “It is our intention to take action within the next 36 hours.” The response from New York was swift, Dallaire was instructed to discuss the arm caches information with Habyarimana, the leader of the very same government that was planning the genocide, and inform the Belgium, France and the U.S ambassadors. Further, the cable stated that the UNAMIR mandate disallowed the planned operation against the arms caches, and the UN was not going to offer protection to the informant, Jean-Pierre. Convinced raiding the caches would disrupt the genocide planners, Dallaire persistently continued to call New York to

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21Ibid., 96.

22Ibid.

23Des Forges, Leave None to Tell the Story, 152.
argue his case. Unfortunately, a chance that likely would have altered the course of events was not utilized. Instead, as Dallaire articulates in his book *Shake hands with the Devil*, a disconnect between him and New York emerged following the arms caches conversation. According to Dallaire, his superiors in New York no longer trusted his judgment and viewed him “as a loose cannon and not as an aggressive but careful force commander.”

Following the president’s death on April 6, and after learning of the death of their ten soldiers, the Belgium government communicated to the Security Council that unless UNAMIR was reinforced by non-Belgium forces and the mandate widened they would depart Rwanda. In his response the Secretary General Boutros-Ghali made it clear that “the Security Council had no stomach for intervention.” To avoid a bad public perception of being viewed like it was abandoning Rwanda, Belgium lobbied the United States to influence the Security Council to end the UNAMIR mandate—in this endeavor America was a willing participant.

The head of peacekeeping operations, Kofi Annan and Igbal Riza the Assistant Secretary-General of DPKO, after refusing Dallaire’s request to raid the arms caches, did not share the information. Lebor observes:

> They neither alerted the other departments of the Secretariat nor brought General Dallaire’s warnings to the attention of the Security Council, let alone inform the Substantial international press based at the United Nations, which could have galvanized world opinion.

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26 Lebor, *Complicity with Evil*, 170.
Even once the genocide started, Dallaire maintained constant communication with New York providing them with UNAMIR’s situation reports. Within the first five days of the genocide Dallaire characterized the violence as ethnic cleansing, “he emphasized to headquarters the magnitude and scale of the crimes and that civilians were being targeted for no reason other than ethnic identity.”

Dallaire, consistently pleaded for reinforcement and insisted that as long as the extremists knew there was a penalty for their actions, things would turn out differently. To validate his point he cited moments of temporary calmness in Kigali with the presence of foreign forces that had come to evacuate their nationals.

However, instead of talking about “ethnic cleansing” as being the situation in Rwanda, the Secretariat meetings were dominated by talks of spontaneous chaos resulting from historical tensions. Neglected in the discussion was the developing humanitarian crisis that could be controlled by re-establishing a cease-fire. On Dallaires’ plea for reinforcement the Secretariat reported “that it had not received any concrete recommendations from the field and that UNAMIR was so consumed by self-protect tasks that it was unable to develop-any.”

To protect itself the UN chose its vocabulary carefully, by saying the Tutsi and

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28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 110.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.
Hutus were killing each other, the burden of responsibility would be diverted from the UN. On the other hand, framing the slaughter as ethnic cleansing or genocide would have likely obligated the UN into action to protect civilians. In essence as the extremists in Rwanda freely murdered the Tutsis, in New York “[t]he Secretariat adopted a vocabulary that bodychecked the intervention camp.”³² By selecting its words carefully, the United Nations Secretariat drastically reduced the chances of even the most enthusiastic Rwanda interveners from making a convincing case for intervention from a divided Council. Although it is uncertain how the Council would have reacted to the “genocide fax,” and all the other information it was getting from Dallaire, the DPKO officials who subsequently admitted to their fault, had certainly failed to pass on crucial information at a critical time, and in essence given the extremists a free pass to slaughter Tutsis without any international interruption.

Despite General Dallaire’s valiant leadership and plea for support from New York to halt the genocide, to his disappointment the Security Council passed the controversial Resolution 912 on April 21, to downsize UNAMIR to 270 troops.³³ The downsizing of UNAMIR sent a clear message to the Hutu extremists; the international community would not interfere in their quest to exterminate the Tutsis. The UN, aware that the 1948 Genocide Convention obliged intervention if genocide was taking place, refused to use the word genocide. After days of deliberation, the Security Council issued a statement on

³² Ibid., 120.
³³ Lebor, Complicity with Evil, 177.
April 30, declaring as follows:

The killing of members of an ethnic group with the intention to destroying such a group in whole or in part constitutes a crime punishable under international law. But the word genocide was not included. In fact, even this statement was a compromise, issued only after Keating tabled a draft resolution threatening to force an embarrassing vote that would have revealed which countries were opposed to calling the Rwandan slaughter genocide.  

Coincidentally, at the time of the genocide Rwanda held one of the rotating Security Council seats. Rwanda’s ambassador to the UN, Jean Damascene Bizimana, appointed by the Hutu genocide planning government, had a seat at the Council’s private deliberations. As the Security Council argued for non-intervention, Bizimana probably kept the Hutu power extremists abreast of what was going on unfortunately, neither the United States nor any other UN member state called for his expulsion. In essence, the United Nations with critical information before and during the genocide essentially became eyewitnesses to a human catastrophe. The courageous peacekeeping troops under General Dallaire who stayed, were able to save some lives simply by being there.

**US Response to the Genocide: What Did They Know?**

Despite being in favor of the United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGC), it took the United States forty years to finally have it ratified. After decades of deliberations in Congress, the legally binding legislation making the US party to the United Nations Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide

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34Ibid., 178.

was signed by president Ronald Reagan in 1988. The question then becomes, what did the world’s most powerful nation know about the Rwandan genocide and how did they react?

When President Clinton took office a study was done to identify potential crises areas, both Rwanda and Burundi made the list. James Woods, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs received orders from higher authorities telling him “if something happens to Rwanda-Burundi, we don’t care, take it off the list. US national interest is not involved…just make it go away.” In January 1994, a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report showed that civilians in Rwanda were targeted, and if conflict erupted it would result in the deaths of at least half a million people.

The warning signs of a catastrophe were there however, this caused little concern to both the US and the UN. As the slaughter started following Habyarimana’s death, it became more apparent with each passing day that genocide was taking place. The US went to great lengths to avoid using the “G” word so they would not be obligated to act instead, policymakers used words like civil war, ethnic conflict and acts of “genocide might have occurred.” Challenged by a reporter as to what the difference was between “acts of genocide” and “genocide” Christine Shelly, the State Department spokesperson


37Ibid., 156.

38Ibid.

39Ibid., 74.
said the following:

Well, I think—as you know, there’s a legal definition of this….Clearly that not all of the killings that have taken place in Rwanda are killings to which you might apply that label….But as to the distinctions between the words, we’re trying to call what we have seen as far as best as we can: and based, again, on the evidence, we have every reason to believe that acts of genocide have occurred.\(^{40}\)

The reporter probed further and wanted to know how many acts of genocide make genocide. In her response, Shelly stated “that’s just not a question that I’m in a position to answer.”\(^{41}\)

Alison Des Forges, a Rwanda expert testified to the House Subcommittee on Africa about Hutu led genocide on May 4 1994.\(^{42}\) Des Forges followed this issue up with an article she wrote in the New York times entitled “Genocide: it’s a fact in Rwanda,” she criticized the US support of a UNAMIR withdrawal, and urged America and others to act even if they refused to call what was happening a genocide. After the Somali disaster and with midterm elections looming in the political horizon, the administration could not acknowledge genocide was taking place and they were not doing anything about it, this could result “in a loss of votes for the party in the November elections.”\(^{43}\)

When it became obvious neither the UN nor the US was going to intervene in Rwanda, both Dallaire the UN commander in Rwanda, and Prudence Bushnell, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African affairs advocated for the jamming of

\(^{40}\)Power, A Problem from Hell, 263.

\(^{41}\)Ibid., 264.

\(^{42}\)Ronayne, Never Again, 171.

\(^{43}\)Ibid., 172.
Radio Mille Collines (RTLM) and its slaughter broadcast instructions of the Tutsi extermination. In its response the US government said, “[w]e have looked at options to stop the broadcasts within the Pentagon, discussed them interagency and concluded jamming is an ineffective and expensive mechanism that will not accomplish the objective the NSC Advisor seeks.”

Not only was the US unwilling to intervene in Rwanda, it lobbied other nations in the UN against intervention. On April 15 the Secretary of State Warren Christopher send a cable to Madeleine Albright, the US ambassador to the UN with instructions to demand a full UN withdrawal. As Christopher stated there was no justification in retaining a UN presence in Rwanda, the message stated as follows:

The international community must give highest priority to full, orderly withdrawal of all UNAMIR personnel as soon as possible….We will oppose any effort at this time to preserve a UNAMIR presence in Rwanda….Our opposition to retaining a UNAMIR presence in Rwanda is firm. It is based on our conviction that the Security Council has an obligation to ensure that peacekeeping operations are viable, that they are capable of fulfilling their mandates, and that UN peacekeeping personnel are not placed or retained, knowingly, in an untenable situation.

Facing opposition from some African countries in the Council, as well as the US ambassador to the UN Albright Madeleine, for a full UNAMIR withdrawal, the US then lobbied for a dramatic drawdown— which left only 270 troops in Rwanda. When asked

44 Powers, A Problem from Hell, 371.
45 Ibid., 367.
46 Ibid., 367-368.
47 Ibid., 369
by an anchorman Ted Koppel about Rwanda in May, Clinton referenced the “Somalia hangover,” and stated the following:

Lessons number one is, don’t go into one of these things and say, as the U.S. said when we started in Somalia, ‘Maybe we’ll be done in a month because it’s humanitarian crisis….Because there are almost always political problems and sometimes military conflicts, which bring about the crisis.”

As the Hutu “final solution” plans continued in Rwanda uninterrupted, the Clinton administration never actively considered a military intervention or even a softer form of intervention. With a chance to rally the world behind the pledge “never again” and the subsequent human suffering, the United States, the UN and the rest of the international community became eye witnesses to a human catastrophe.

**Operation Turquoise and UNAMIR II—Too Little, Too Late**

On May 17, the Security Council approved UNAMIR II under Resolution 918 with an expanded mandate to “contribute to the security and protection of refugees and civilians at risk.” The mission would consist of 5,500 troops with authority to use deadly force in self-defense, and against anyone who threatened protected sites.

Unfortunately, for Resolution 918 as the President of the Security Council, Colin Keating observed, was a “fiction, indeed it would take up until October 1994 before the 5,500 troops of UNAMIR II could be fully employed.”

Although the UN did eventually approve UNAMIR II, it was too little, too late. The RPF

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48 Ibid., 375.

49 Grunfeld and Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide*, 216.

50 Ibid., 217.
had captured Kigali and ended the genocide three months earlier and formed a new government. The UN cannot be entirely blamed for the delay, because no nation was willing to commit its forces to a very hostile environment. Barnett observes:

Bourtos-Ghali ascribed the delay to peacekeeping fatigue, the consuming presence of seventeen other operations, and the unwillingness to jump another war—genocide or no genocide—after watching events in Bosnia and Somalia. This was a collective effort.\textsuperscript{51}

On 22 June, two weeks before the RPF stopped the genocide, the Security Council also approved Resolution 929, Operation Turquoise, a French led military operation in Rwanda that would establish neutral protection zones.\textsuperscript{52} Although the French intervention saved lives, many skeptics suspected the overriding objective was “to protect and preserve their Rwandan government of Hutu extremists.”\textsuperscript{53} Barnett observes:

The reasons had little to do with a desire to save Rwandan lives and more to do with scoring political points back home and protecting foreign policy interests in the region. The government of François Mitterrand was beginning to feel the pressure that comes from being so dismissive of a genocide being committed by its close allies, and began to worry that if the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ world did actually intervene, then France would lose some control over the situation and even more face. Also present, at least among some within the French government, was the desire to protect its retreating Rwandan allies from the victorious RPF.\textsuperscript{54}

This chapter looked at the genocide information that was available to both the UN and the US. It concluded that ignorance cannot be used as an excuse; there was enough

\textsuperscript{51} Barnett, \textit{Eyewitness to a Genocide}, 147.


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 145.

\textsuperscript{54} Barnett, \textit{Eyewitness to a Genocide}, 147-148.
evidence that a genocide was taking place in Rwanda. The “shadow of Somalia” and lack of political will among other factors, influenced the UN and the US decision on intervention. The next chapter will look at the chances of a successful intervention before and after the genocide began.
CHAPTER 4
COULD IT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED OR HALTED?

It is still shocking that the carnage of a Rwandan genocide were almost one million Tutsis were slaughtered, went on day after day, week after week, for one hundred days while the international community remained silent. Although the massacres were well coordinated and organized, the killers used primitive weapons such as machetes and clubs. Undeniably, the well calculated efforts by the Hutu extremists in the spring of 1994 to eliminate the entire Rwandese Tutsi population, meets the United Nations General Assembly definition of genocide. Were there enough early signs to signal disaster? Even after the genocide started, could the intervention of the international community have saved lives?

Understandably, the United Nations cannot realistically and effectively undertake all the peace-building tasks in the world, however, they must be prepared to confront violence and defeat evil wherever they send their forces to uphold peace. Although the United States did not consider Rwanda a country of strategic interest, once it became clear genocide was taking place, America might have taken a leading role into rallying the rest of the international community to intervene—instead, it lobbied for the withdrawal of UN forces from Rwanda—why?

On the other hand, France, having been a Rwanda ally for years, had an opportunity to influence president Habyarimana’s government into a different course of action.¹ Instead, it continued to support and militarily arm a government that killed its

opponents and abused the human rights of its citizens. One of the reasons France
continued to support a dictatorship and a corrupt regime, was because it wanted to
preserve Rwanda as a francophone country. The RPF, consisted of Tutsi refugees who
had grown up in neighboring Uganda and exclusively spoke English—given that Uganda
had been a British colony. This chapter looks at missed opportunities by the United
Nations, the United States and France that could either have prevented the genocide or at
least stopped it. The fact that president Bill Clinton of America, president Nicolas
Sarkozy of France and Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General have all apologized to
Rwanda for their inaction during the genocide, shows mistakes were made. If there was
enough political will among the United States, France and the UN, there is a chance
things might have turned out differently in Rwanda.

**United Nations: No Political Will to Intervene**

Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations on April 7, 2004, to
mark the International day of reflection on the 1994 Rwanda genocide apologized on
behalf of the UN by stating as follows:

> First, we must all acknowledge our responsibility for not having done more
to prevent or stop the genocide. Neither the United Nations Secretariat, nor the
Security Council, nor member states in general, nor the international media,
paid enough attention to the gathering signs of disaster. Still less did we take
timely action….No one can claim ignorance. All who were playing any part
in World affairs at that time should ask, what more could I have done? How
would I react next time—and what am I doing now to make it less likely
there will be a next time.  

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3 Grunfeld and Huijboom, *The Failure to Prevent Genocide in Rwanda*, 239.
Kofi Annan, who during the 1994 Rwanda genocide headed the United Nations Peacekeeping Division (UNDP), acknowledged that there were clear and early warnings to prevent or stop the genocide. Not only did he admit the UN mistakes during the genocide, but promised his organization will be better prepared to handle future conflicts.

Annan observed:

> The only fitting memorial the United Nations can offer to those whom its inaction in 1994 condemned to die, and as recommended in 1999 by the Independent Inquiry into the actions of the United Nations during the genocide in Rwanda, I wish today to launch an Action plan to prevent genocide, involving the whole United Nations system.”

One of the reasons the UN did not take a decisive action to the unfolding Rwandan crisis was the fear of another “Somalia disaster”. A UN sanctioned and US led rescue mission in Somalia that ended with dead bodies of American forces being dragged by Somalia warlords in the streets of Mogadishu. The graphic events covered by television cable networks prompted a global public outcry that changed the course of future peacekeeping operations.

**Timely intervention could have stopped It**

Jonathan Matloff, and Walter Dorn conducted a research entitled, *Preventing the Bloodbath: Could the UN have Predicted and Prevented the Rwandan Genocide?*

its conclusion was as follows:

The Rwandan genocide definitely could have been foreseen and possibly could have been prevented. At the very least, it could have been greatly mitigated by the UN. This conclusion takes into account the information and resources which were available to the UN, its mandate and its potential and previously demonstrated ability to adapt to difficult conflict situations. The UN

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4 Ibid.
peacekeeping mission could undoubtedly have expanded its activities and efforts (diplomatic, humanitarian and military) at an early stage, given the clear warnings available to it. What was absent was the political will, in the Secretariat and in the Security Council, to make bold decisions and to develop the means to create new information and prevention measures. The lesson of Rwanda is clear: we must build the international political will, as well as an enhanced UN capability, for prevention….\(^5\)

In 1998, four years after the Rwanda genocide, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, the United States Army, and the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University undertook a study to find out whether intervention by international military force would have had any effect. In their analysis the panel specifically addressed the following questions:

- What actions could a military force have taken to forestall violence?
- How large a military force would have been needed and how should such a force have been organized, trained and equipped?
- When was the most appropriate time for sending a military force, and what was the relationship between the timing of interventions and the kind of force required?\(^6\)

Based on presentations by the panel and other research, the report concluded as follows:

A modern force of 5,000 troops drawn primarily from one country and sent to Rwanda sometime between April 7 and 21 1994, would have significantly altered


the outcome of the conflict…more specifically forces appropriately trained, equipped, and commanded, and introduced in a timely manner, could have stemmed the violence in and around the capital, prevented its spread to the countryside, and created conditions conducive to the cessation of the civil war between the RPF and RGF.  

Although the intervention could have faced numerous challenges, nevertheless, it could have possibly been stopped and thousands of Tutsis and moderate Hutus would have been saved.

**Ignored Early Disaster Warnings**

As early as the spring of 1992, Johan Swinner, the Belgian Ambassador in Rwanda, warned that a powerful Hutu power group known as the *Akazu*, organized around president Habrayimananas’ wife, was “planning the extermination of the Tutsi of Rwanda to resolve once and for all, in their own way the ethnic problem….” In the fall of 1992, Professor Filip Reyntjens issued a warning in the Belgian Senate about the Hutu power death squads and named Colonel Theoneste Bagasora as the chief genocide planner. In the fall of 1993, a United Nations team that had visited Rwanda reported a disturbing human rights situation. The Special UN team leader Waly Bacre Ndiaye, in his report questioned whether the massacres taking place in Rwanda at that time could be termed as genocide.

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7 Ibid.


9 Ibid.
His report concluded as follows:

The victims of the attacks Tutsis in the overwhelming majority of cases have been targeted solely because of their membership in a certain ethnic group, and for no other objective reason….Article II, paragraph (a) and (b), might therefore be considered to apply to these cases.10

The fact that this stunning warning delivered in a different part of the United Nations bureaucracy never made it to the Security Council or to the planners of the Rwandan peacekeeping operation, shows there were serious flaws in the organization.

In early 1994, the UNAMIR commander General Romeo Dallaire send what became known as the “Genocide Fax”, to the UN Headquarters warning of the Hutu extremists plans to exterminate the Tutsis. On numerous occasions the Security Council objected to requests from the field to increase the UNAMIR forces despite numerous pleas from the General Commander, Dallaire, who cited a deteriorating security situation. Washington and Britain were opposed to any expansion in UNAMIR’s mandate or force capabilities citing “the cost of expanding UN forces and the alleged damage that such a move would have on UN peacekeeping responsibilities.”11

Although there are those who argue that the international community could not have stopped the genocide, that conclusion is not universally accepted. Alison Des Forges who has written several books and articles on Rwanda, argues that if the international forces that came to evacuate the expatriates were allowed to join UNAMIR forces,

10 Barnett, Eyewitness to a Genocide, 63.

thousands of lives would have been saved and the genocide might have been stopped.

These forces comprised of the following:

900 elite Belgian and French troops, backed up by 300 U.S. Marines at Bujumbura, half an hour away by plane (who were not called), and 80 Italians. Combined with the 440 Belgians and 200 Ghanaians in Kigali, they would have made a force of about 2,000 soldiers. Reinforcements could have been made available with 600 Ghanaians north of Kigali in the demilitarized zone, 80 Belgians on standby in Nairobi, and hundreds of U.S. marines off the East African coast.\textsuperscript{12}

The UN force commander in Rwanda, Dallaire, concurred that had UNAMIR received the modest troops he had requested, the genocide would probably have have been stopped sooner and thousands of lives saved.\textsuperscript{13}

**US Policy: Was Rwanda a Country of National Interest?**

In April 1993, during the Holocaust Museum inauguration in Washington, D.C., President Clinton spoke forcefully about one of the darkest lessons in history. Condemning the Holocaust he said, “[t]he evil was incontestable, but, as we are its witness, so we must remain its adversary in the world in which we live.”\textsuperscript{14} President Clinton especially praised “those known and those never to be known, who manned the thin line of righteousness, who risked their lives to save others, accruing no advantage to themselves.”\textsuperscript{15}


\textsuperscript{13}Dallaire and Beardsley, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, 514.

\textsuperscript{14}Peterson, *Me against My Brother*, 289.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
A year later, the United States and the international community was faced with an indisputable genocide in Rwanda after president Habyarimana’s plane was shot down. Unfortunately, as the Hutu killers massacred the Tutsi, the Clinton administration fearing “another Somalia” initially denied that a genocide was taking place, lobbied the United Nations into slashing troop numbers and used its influence to discourage other nations from intervening.\textsuperscript{16} Confronted with an opportunity to stop another Holocaust and put the words “Never Again” into action, the Clinton administration and the rest of the international community looked the other way.

Some policy makers, years after the genocide to justify their inaction, have argued that they did not understand the gravity of the killing.\textsuperscript{17} However, James Woods, the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Africa, who retired before the genocide started, offered the following perspective which negates excuses of ignorance. Woods observed:

\[\text{Failure to appreciate is an artful excuse for not wanting to appreciate the facts which, indeed, were presented to the White House and everybody else at the time. They knew. They chose not to know and they chose not to act...[W]e had a lot to apologize for, but it’s not just the United States that owes the apology, it’s the whole international community. We all failed to act and the facts were known in the capitals of Europe and in New York and in Washington.}\textsuperscript{18}\]

Clearly, as James Woods has stated, there was undeniable evidence of a genocide taking place and not only the United States, but the international community shares the burden.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 290.

\textsuperscript{17}Cohen, \textit{One-Hundred Days of Silence}, 17.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 177.
of being silent bystanders. In her book *Madam Secretary*, Madeleine Albright, the United States ambassador to the United Nations during the genocide, observed that, “[m]y deepest regret from my years in public service is the failure of the United States and the international community to act sooner to halt those crimes.”

Upon his visit to Rwanda in March 1998, Clinton, apologized for his country’s inaction in the face of the Rwanda genocide. He stated as follows:

The international community, together with nations in Africa, must bear its share of responsibility for this tragedy as well. We did not act quickly enough after the killings began. We should not have allowed the refugee camps to become safe havens for the killers. We did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide. We cannot change the past. But we can and must do everything in our power to help you build a future without fear, and full of hope.

Considering the political climate in the Congress after the Somali disaster, as Power observes, “staying out of Rwanda was an explicit U.S. policy objective.” After the U.S. forces withdrew from its failed humanitarian mission in Somalia, the Clinton administration in May 1994, released a document known as Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD 25), which reflected a new approach to peacekeeping. The aim for PDD25 was to cut cost and reduce the number of peacekeeping operations which had

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significantly grown in recent years.\textsuperscript{23} Unfortunately for Rwanda, it became the first victim of PDD25.

Instead of lobbying for member-states to withdraw their forces from UNAMIR, the U.S. might have used its influence to argue for reinforcement. By withdrawing the UN forces from Rwanda as the genocide unfolded, the message send to the Hutu extremists was that, they could continue the slaughter with impunity. Unfortunately, as Cohen argues, to the United States Rwanda was of no strategic importance and that is why senior officials in the Clinton administration during the three months of slaughter remained silent.\textsuperscript{24} Cohen observes:

Neither President Clinton nor National Security advisor Anthony Lake called a single senior-level meeting during the period of the genocide to discuss the violence and a possible response by the United States. Secretary of State Warren Christopher explained that he ‘had other responsibilities,’ and Secretary of Defense, William Perry would not get involved in Rwanda unless the president wanted to use the U.S. Military.\textsuperscript{25}

Although there were discussions about the events taking place in Rwanda by junior officials, the talks never gained traction because as Cohen observes, “senior-level attention was a necessary prerequisite to move any proposal for a response through the bureaucracy.”\textsuperscript{26} In the aftermath of the Somalia disaster, apparently the lesson learned “was that national interest alone would once again direct U.S. policy and by extension

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Des Forges, \textit{Leave None to Tell the Story}, 625.
\item Cohen, \textit{One-Hundred Days of Silence}, 179.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
support for UN peacekeeping.”\textsuperscript{27}

Although being eyewitness to genocide was a moral failure of American foreign policy, Rwanda was not a country of any significant national interest to the United States. Six years after the genocide, presidential candidate George W. Bush in a debate was asked to reflect on the US response to the Rwandan genocide. He said, Clinton did the right thing by not sending American troops to Rwanda.\textsuperscript{28} To President Bush, the lessons from the Rwandan genocide were not compelling enough to warrant policy change. President Bush made it unequivocally “clear that his foreign policy would be based on national interest alone and suggested that events in Africa, seemed to him remote from American interests.”\textsuperscript{29}

**Jamming Radio-Television Libre des Milles Collines (RTLM)**

The genocide planners exploited the country’s culture of obedience because, as Dallaire observed, “In Rwanda the radio was akin to the voice of God, and if the radio called for violence, many Rwandans would respond, believing they were being sanctioned to commit these actions.”\textsuperscript{30} Samantha Power, in her article “Bystanders to Genocide: Why the United States Let the Rwandan Genocide Happen,” claimed, “Killers in Rwanda often carried a machete in one hand and a radio transistor in the other.”\textsuperscript{31}


\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 99.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 99-100.

The implication is that the role of the hate radio broadcasts could not be underestimated.

The state controlled radio station RTLM, established by hardliners in 1993, played a central role before and during the genocide by relentlessly spreading anti-Tutsi propaganda, reinforcing historical myths and inciting violence. Coincidentally, when the new radio station began its broadcast in July 1993, suddenly the country was flooded with cheap portable radios as local authorities obtained them free of charge.\textsuperscript{32} To ensure it reached a wide audience of Rwanda’s illiterate population, the radio broadcasts were mainly in Kinyarwanda—the local native language.\textsuperscript{33} Documents found by Alison des Forges of the Human Rights Watch, in the prefect of Butare, showed the intentions of the hate radio. The author of the document, using lessons from Vladimir Lenin, a Russian revolutionist and Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s, minister of propaganda, articulated to his colleagues how to effectively use exaggeration and innuendo to sway the public.\textsuperscript{34} The relentless propaganda “warned Hutus that Tutsi-led rebels were bent on re-imposing feudalism, wiping out all the Hutus and taking all their land.”\textsuperscript{35}

Emmanuel Kamuhanda, a young Hutu who participated in the slaughter and is

\underline{http://www.jewishculture.illinois.edu/events/conferences/holocaust/Straus.pdf} (accessed March 1, 2012).

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{32} Melvern, \textit{A People Betrayed}, new ed., 81.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 264.
now in jail, when asked what prompted him to kill, blamed the militia leaders and fear. Kamuhanda stated that, “when the government radio continued to broadcast that the RPF is coming to take our land, to kill Hutus—when this was repeated over and over, I began to feel some kind of fear.”

A survivor of the genocide when asked why he listened to the hateful RTLM, answered, “because if you were mentioned over the airways, you were sure to be carted off a short time later by the Interahamwe. You knew you had to change your address at once.”

Pleas by Tony Marley, the United States military liaison to the Arusha process, and the UNAMIR commander Romeo Dallaire about jamming the radio were ignored.

Because the radio served as an important propaganda mechanism before the genocide, and was effectively used during the 100 days of slaughter to publically declare names of specific Tutsis and where they were hiding, jamming it might not have stopped the genocide. However, it may have possibly disorganized the extremists by preventing them from broadcasting murders instructions, and consequently saved lives.

**France: A Silent Accomplice?**

On February 24, 2010, President Nicolas Sarkozy became the first French president to visit Rwanda since the 1994 genocide. His visit was aimed at

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36 Ibid., 270.


reestablishing a relationship following a longstanding rift between the two nations which had soured in the wake of the genocide. President Paul Kagame, his Rwandan counterpart, “acknowledged the “difficult past” between the nations, but he said the leaders had come together “to found a new partnership.””

Sarkozy admitted that France made grave errors and had operated under “a form of blindness to not have seen the genocidal dimensions.”

Committed to keep Rwanda within the bloc of 21 francophone African nations, France unconditionally supported dictator Habyarimana’s corrupt regime. Following Belgium’s withdrawal in 1962, France took advantage of the existing linguistic roots already in place and embraced Rwanda. As Andrew Wallis notes “within ten years of independence, Rwanda had became a fully-fledged Parisian suburb.” By the 1980s the Rwandese government under president Habyarimana, relied heavily on France for both financial and military aid despite its well documented appalling human rights abuses. In 1990, the French embassy in Kigali had warned the Paris foreign office about the possible elimination of the minority Tutsi group. Unfortunately, the warnings fell on deaf ears.

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40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.


44 Ibid., 206.
Following a report detailing the massacres of Tutsi civilians in 1993, the Belgian government to protest the abuses, withdrew its ambassador Johan Swinner from Kigali for two weeks. In contrast, France even apologized for Belgium’s uncalled for behavior. Jean-Michel Marlaud, the French Ambassador said, “[t]here are violations by the Rwandan army, more because of a lack of control by the government, rather than the will of the government.” The perception of unconditional external military support, in arms supply, training and direct intervention by France acted as a catalyst in hardening the extremists. Aware of France’s loyalty to its Francophone allies, as Wallis writes “Habyarimana certainly played up the fear of an Anglophone Tutsi plot to curve out a large new central African Kingdom.” When the Tutsi led RPF invaded Rwanda from Uganda wanting to force negotiations about refugee resettlement, Habyarimana played the Anglophone card and president Mitterrand without taking any briefing about the unfolding situation intervened militarily.

Three years prior to the genocide, 1990-1993, the French president Francois Mitterrand knowingly supported a civil war characterized by rising violence against innocent Tutsis. The same forces the French government was arming and supporting, were the same forces carrying out political opponent murders and killing innocent Tutsi


46 Ibid.

47 Wallis, Silent Accomplice, 25.

48 Ibid., 207
civilians throughout Rwanda. Numerous warnings from Human rights groups, inflammatory broadcasts from radio RLTM, insightful literature from extremist newspaper, Kangura on a final solution to the Tutsi problem, did not deter the French government from unconditionally supporting Habyarimana’s regime. Rene Lemarchand, the French Rwanda expert observes:

It is difficult to believe that the French were not aware of the potential for genocide created by the systematic manipulation of ethnic identities, by the mob killings of Tutsi over a period of years, and by the incitements of violence broadcast by the Radio Mille Collines. If so, it defies Cartesian logic to comprehend how the self-styled ‘patrie des droits de l’homme could shove under the rug such massive human rights violations in the name of threats posed to its higher geopolitical interests by the Tojan horse of Anglo-Saxon imperialism. It only took a logic of calculated risks for the authors of the genocide to grasp this paradox.  

Without the French military support the RPF would have easily defeated the undisciplined Rwandese army and seized power before the Hutu extremists had enough time to effectively plan a genocide.

Wallis observes:

Mitterrand’s involvement unwittingly gave the Akazu network time to plan the genocide down to producing detailed death lists, getting local officials primed and in place, and building up arms caches around the country. The interahamwe were brought into being, armed and trained, while radio RTLM was also established to give ‘direction’ to the Hutu population and the genocidaires during the summer of 1994. During the Rwanda genocide, France was doing everything in their power to keep its extremist allies in power as long as possible including bringing in weapons from

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49 Ibid., 208.  
50 Ibid., 208-209.  
51 Ibid., 209.
Goma, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo—DRC) even as the genocide was going on. By blindly supporting an oppressive regime that openly massacred Tutsi civilians, claiming they were RPF affiliates, France subsequently helped create extremist hardliners who were reluctant to implement any form of compromise such as the Arusha accords.

Mel Mcnulty observes:

An apparently inexhaustible supply of arms and aid from an all-powerful external patron encouraged rulers to suppose that their own hegemonic ambitions were ultimately unstoppable, and that they could therefore proceed with the establishment of a monopoly state which need take no account of internal opposition or the indigenous characteristics of the societies which they governed…Ultimately, it was not the imported armaments which conferred power on the government, but the indigenous people who had to use them. When they failed, it failed.

While France worked hard to ensure Rwanda remained a francophone nation, the Hutu extremists were also working hard to implement their “final solution” to the Tutsi problem. Because the Rwandan government knew that without France supporting them military they stood no chance against the highly disciplined RPF, Mitterrand might have used this opportunity to discuss a peace agreement that would have steered Rwanda from imploding. Because the past cannot be changed, as President Clinton articulated in his visit to Rwanda, the international community can learn valuable lessons and ensure the words “Never Again” are not just an empty promise.

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52 Ibid., 211.

This chapter examined whether the genocide could have been prevented or stopped. The chapter also analyzed if Rwanda was a national interest to America’s foreign policy and the role of France in the Rwandan genocide. It concluded there were early missed opportunities that could have changed the outcome, but there was no political will to act. Unfortunately, Rwanda was not a country of US national interest and the “shadow of Somalia” helped seal its fate for non-intervention. Although France cannot be blamed for the Rwanda genocide, it bears some responsibility. In a sort of blindness, it supported, armed, trained and when needed, military intervened for a Hutu dominated extremist government that eventually planned and executed the genocide. The next chapter will examine lessons learned from the Rwanda genocide, and how they can be useful to policy makers in preventing future genocides.
CHAPTER 5
PREVENTION: LESSONS FROM THE RWANDA GENOCIDE

At the January 2004 Stockholm International forum on genocide, Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General affirmed, “[t]here can be no more important issue, and no more binding obligation, than the prevention of genocide. Indeed, this may be considered one of the original purposes of the United Nations.”

In his concluding remarks at the same genocide forum Javier Solana, the European Union (EU) high representative for the common foreign and security policy observed:

In the European Union, we...are (prepared) to assume greater responsibility for security....Second, prevention...is at the heart of our approach to security....A culture of prevention requires the imagination to see ahead to the consequences of our inaction. And it demands the political will and courage to take preventive action where this is costly, dangerous or unpopular and where the benefits may never be seen...

The remarks by both the UN and EU representatives undeniably show there is a global desire for the prevention of genocide. Is this goal achievable? A valuable lesson from the Rwandan genocide is “that effective prevention is far less costly in blood and treasure than cure—than reacting only after many lives have been lost, a lust for revenge aroused, and reconciliation made that much harder.” In other words, prevention is easier than stopping the calamity once it starts. The regional impact of the Rwandan genocide that

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2 Ibid.

happened seventeen years ago highlights this point.

**The Price of Inaction**

Unchecked genocide is not only devastating to the victims, survivors, communities, and neighboring regions, but in a globally intertwined world, its effects spread far and wide. Those who are fortunate enough to escape, face malnutrition, diseases in overcrowded refugee camps and become rape victims. Mass violence is not only catastrophic in human suffering but the financial cost is always higher than if preventive necessary steps were taken. After the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the United States between 1994 and 1996 spend over $750 million on humanitarian assistance programs.\(^4\) To put it in perspective, “this figure was almost equal to the US Agency for International Development’s (USAID) annual budget for the entire African continent.”\(^5\) This means because the funds were taken from USAID’s existing budget, other development activities were affected and had to be downsized, postponed or abandoned.\(^6\) Ultimately, the international community’s delayed reaction to the Rwandan genocide continues to be a financial burden and a security threat in the Great Lakes region.

When the RPF captured Kigali in July 1994 and ended the genocide, almost instantly another problem was created in the neighboring Zaire—now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A staggering 2.1 million people fled to neighboring countries


\(^5\) Ibid.

\(^6\) Ibid.
with most of the refugees settling in DRC. In the midst of these refugees, were between 30,000 and 40,000 of the Hutu extremist ex-Rwandese army forces who brought with them their heavy and light weapons which they had been using to exterminate the Tutsi. As Prunier observes, “from the beginning these camps were an uneasy compromise between genuine refugee and settlements and war machines built for the reconquest of Rwanda.” Though the Rwandese genocide cannot be blamed entirely for the long ongoing conflict in the DRC, it did nevertheless, act as a catalyst on the ongoing crises in the Great Lakes region and its periphery.

It did not take long for the Hutu extremists hiding in the refugee camps to start launching attacks against the newly formed Rwandan government. To stop these attacks, the Tutsi-led government forces invaded the refugee camps in DRC in a bloody conflict that saw over 400,000 people killed. An alliance of rebel groups led by Laurent Kabila and backed by Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda ousted president Mobutu Sese seko—who had ruled Zaire for thirty two. After Kabila was installed as president, his coalition quickly fell apart when he tried to oust the foreign patrons who had backed him up. As


8 Ibid., 25.

9 Ibid., 25

10 Ibid., xxxi.


12 Ibid.
Dephive Schrank observes: “DRC in 1998 descended a new into a bloody anarchy that eventually sucked in armies and mercenaries from nine countries fighting with, against, or among homegrown militias.”\(^\text{13}\) Between 1998 and 2007, a total of 5.4 million people had died in the DRC ongoing conflicts.\(^\text{14}\) The United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), a ceasefire peacekeeping mission was established by the UNSC in 1999. By 2009 MONUC had the highest peacekeeping budget in the world—exceeding $1.4 billion.\(^\text{15}\) To this day, the DRC crises have not shown any signs of slowing down.

**Mobilizing Political Will**

The prevention of genocide by policy makers requires political will. Gareth Evans describes political will as follows:

> It is a matter of key officials in key governments, and those who can influence them directly, making the effort to persuade and mobilize their peers in the international community to make the necessary action in the UN Security Council and everywhere else that matters. It is also a matter of bottom-up mobilization: making the voices of ordinary concerned citizens heard in the corridors of power, using all the resources and physical and moral energy of civil society organizations all round the world to force the attention of policymakers what needs to be done, by whom, and when.\(^\text{16}\)

In the case of Rwanda, as literature by historians has revealed, top level decision

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\(^\text{13}\) Ibid.


\(^\text{15}\) Frank Robert Chalk et al., *Mobilizing the Will to Intervene*, 19.

makers in the United Nations and senior government officials in the Clinton administration had a clear sense of the unfolding catastrophe. The fact that not much was done to alter the outcome as Evans observes:

was a function of there going missing one or more of the other elements that make up political will—insufficient concern, insufficient belief that eternal action would make a difference, poor institutional process in shaping deliverable options and acting on them, or simply failed leadership.\(^{17}\)

To mobilize the political will and leadership necessary for the world to effectively respond to future genocides and crimes against humanity as Evans observes:

…it is going to require continuing determined action from all those passionately committed to making it happen—not just from national and international leaders but from everyone, ordinary citizens in every country across every corner of the globe included, who are capable of influencing them.\(^{18}\)

In the case of Rwanda, the early signs of a looming genocide were ignored. The UNAMIR commander Dallaire’s “genocide fax,” detailing the extremist plans was ignored and so were his numerous pleas to get extra forces to halt the slaughter. Clearly policy makers policy did not act in a timely fashion because there was no political will. If the slogan “never again” is to be fulfilled then the political will is a necessary ingredient.

**U.S. Leadership: Shared Responsibility**

Being a superpower America has the ability to influence other states and international organizations to take positive steps towards the prevention of future genocides. In a world more interconnected than ever before, reducing violent conflict that have deadly consequences has to be a top priority and a shared responsibility. Despite

\(^{17}\)Ibid., 225.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., 241.
their occasional failures, international organizations like the United Nations are beneficial in the promotion of global peace and security. Since the effectiveness in the prevention of genocide should be a global shared responsibility, the use of international organizations is critical because of the following:19

- They offer an institutional platform for formalizing, extending, and at times enforcing international rules, norms, and regimes that regulate state behavior and make the international environment more orderly and predictable. For the most part, the United States has been able to shape and promote international rules and norms that embody American values and goals.

- International organizations’ endorsements provide an important source of legitimacy to diplomatic efforts initiated or supported by the United States. This backing is especially useful when such efforts involve breaching the otherwise sacrosanct principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of another state. Securing a multilateral organization’s imprimatur helps unlock assistance from the organization’s member states and can be critical for sustaining domestic support.

- International organizations have significant operational benefits, such as information on and operational access to parts of the world, that may be hard for the United States to obtain independently. To the extent that the success of conflict prevention initiatives rests on either extending or withholding certain goods and services to influence the behavior of recalcitrant states, the active involvement of international organizations is often indispensible. Even when it is not, using an international organization’s resources is often more cost-effective for the United States than unilateral action.

In this joint venture, because America has the best intelligence collection and analysis system in the world, sharing the information in a timely fashion with the UN and other regional institutions about potential armed conflicts is crucial. Although US funds

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22 percent of the United Nations annual budget, increasing this amount can significantly improve the underfunded UNs capacity in handling crisis.\textsuperscript{20}

**Standing Military Forces**

Historically, the UN has not been militarily adequately equipped to respond quickly to crisis. To be more effective and credible in fostering global peace, having a standby well trained force can increase the United Nations ability for speedy deployment. The ability to respond quickly with a clear mandate to use force if necessary is critical, because it can protect groups at high risks and separate opposing adversaries while negotiation efforts are underway.\textsuperscript{21} Although a UN standing army will require a few million dollars to maintain, as Roberta Cohan, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute observes, “that might be a bargain compared with the cost [in lives and money] of a conflict later.”\textsuperscript{22} In the case of the Rwandan genocide the UN commander General Dallaire argued:

If UNAMIR had received the modest increase of troops and capabilities we requested in the first week, could we have stopped the killing? Yes, absolutely. Would we have risked more UN casualties? Yes, but surely soldiers and peacekeeping nations should be prepared to pay the price of safeguarding human life and human rights. If UNAMIR 2 had been deployed on time and as requested, would we have reduced the prolonged period of killing? Yes, we would have stopped it much sooner.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{23} Romeo Dallaire and Brent Beardsley. *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004), 514.
The Hutu extremists who planned the genocide had done their homework and knew if they killed a few UN peacekeepers; the UNIMAR mission would collapse and eventually withdraw. Instead of withdrawing the UN forces already in Rwanda, if the UN had quickly reinforced UNIMAR the results might have been different and possibly thousands of lives would have been saved.

Although military intervention should rarely be used, it is an important tool once all other alternatives have failed. Waxman argues:

Military measures can help stop ongoing atrocities by, for example, interposing forces between conflict factions or degrading a state’s capabilities for repression. And intervention or the threat of it may be needed to back up other tools, such as international criminal law, diplomatic efforts, or economic sanctions.24

Though the use of diplomacy is preferred in solving crisis, the use of deadly force should still be an option when it comes to stopping human rights violations.

**Critical Points for Genocide Prevention**

Although there are no easy answers to why genocides happen the brutality they cause is undeniable. Though each genocide is unique in its own way, some important recent studies outlined the following guidelines that can help diminish the chances of genocides from happening:

- Get the facts straight, directly from multiple credible sources, and be sure to include in their evaluation the history of the particular latent or emerging conflict and the culture of the parties involved.

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• Do not be lulled by wishful thinking: recognize dangers early.

• Pool strengths, share burdens, and divide labor among national and multilateral entities according to their capacity, salience, and motivation to assist in achieving peaceful relations and meeting basic human needs.

• Offer mediation early; a fair-minded and trusted third party can facilitate problem solving before adversaries harden their attitudes and positions.

• Use economic leverage—both carrots and sticks—to indicate what can be gained by peaceful settlement and lost violence. Propose incentives for conflict resolution that can be used to heal serious wounds.

• Upgrade training for preventive diplomacy in relevant entities—for example, national governments, the UN, regional organizations—notably the EU. Establish dedicated units for preventive diplomacy that maintain knowledge and skill in early conflict resolution and knowledge of the particular region. Provide specific instructions for staff, updated in light of ongoing worldwide experience. Keep a roster of experts on call for leadership organizations such as the UN and democratic government.

• Foster widespread public understanding of conflict resolution and violence prevention. This gives a basis for hope of a just settlement.

• Support moderate, pragmatic local leaders, whether established or emerging, in particular democratic reformers. Bolster their precarious position and integrate them like-minded international networks.

• Formulate and promote superordinate goals—that is, goals desirable to both opposing groups, which they can obtain only in cooperation.25

In this chapter, we discussed lessons from the Rwanda genocide that can be applicable in

the prevention of future genocides. Ultimately the prevention of future genocides requires a collective effort by the international community.
CONCLUSION

Though the Hutu and Tutsi shared the same culture, religion and spoke the same language, their ethnic differences were heightened during decades of colonial rule. Initially colonial rule supported Tutsi minority political power before drastically reversing allegiance and supporting Hutus just before Rwanda gained independence in 1962. The Rwanda genocide was not a result of two tribes fighting each other but rather, a well-planned, calculated and executed plot by a Hutu dominated Rwandan government willing to cling on to power under any means necessary—including the extermination of the entire Tutsi population.

The fact that the genocide happened with UN peacekeeping troops on the ground and went on for one hundred days with the rest of the international community ignoring it, is still a mind boggling affair. Despite pleas for reinforcement by the ground commander to stop the slaughter, the UN chose to abandon the mission and leave only minimal forces on the ground. The United States for weeks refused to use the “G” word so it could not be obligated to intervene. America not only refused to intervene, but lobbied other nations against any form of involvement. Though Rwanda was not a country of US national interest, the “shadow of Somalia” influenced America’s non-intervention decision. As Jared Cohen observes, “The Rwanda genocide was one of humanity’s greatest failures, with the U.S. government leading the charge for no-intervention.”

France on the other hand, for years trained and armed the Rwandan government that was perpetrating the genocide. It had numerous opportunities to use personal contacts

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26 Cohen, One Hundred Days of Silence, 2.
and caution the leaders of the genocide—but did not. The international community cannot claim ignorance because there were early clear and reliable explicit warning signs of a looming disaster that should have triggered action. The many apologies by states and international organizations shows mistakes were made.

It is undeniable that a timely international intervention to reinforce the UN peacekeeping forces on the ground could have stopped the massacres and saved lives. Although the genocide took place in Rwanda, its effects continue to be felt seventeen years later, in the entire Great Lakes region—more so in the DRC.

Power observes:

"Citizens victimized by genocide or abandoned by the international community do not make good neighbors, as their thirst for vengeance, their irredentism, and their acceptance of violence as a means of generating change can turn them into future threats."

Becoming eye witnesses to a genocide and doing nothing carries a risk, in a world intertwined than ever before the crisis in Rwanda might seem remote, but its consequences reverberate far and wide. From the Rwandan genocide experience it is clear a strong strategic coordination within the peace process is necessary. The prevention of similar future atrocities has to be a universal effort, with global power players like the US leading the way. The UN because of its legitimacy as a universal organization can take the lead in some situations. However, if the slogan “never again” is to become a reality, unified global commitments, and most critically, a strong political will, are absolutely necessary.

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27 Power, A Problem from Hell, 513.
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