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Rewinding Rwanda: What If?

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A decade ago, 800,000 individuals were mercilessly slaughtered in Rwanda. During last year's ten-year anniversary of these horrific events, there appeared to be unanimity in the scholarly community that "We should have done something." What should have been done? Or better, what could have been done differently? This article approaches this issue counterfactually by asking who could have acted to halt the bloodshed and, if they had, what would it have taken to impose order and stop the killing? The analysis suggests that it is nearly impossible to conceive of an outside intervention occurring in the Rwanda case, and that it may have taken a large occupying army with a nearly limitless mandate to stop the killing. Moreover, even robust intervention would not have provided the long-term conditions for durable peace in the Great Lakes region.

A decade ago, 800,000 individuals were mercilessly slaughtered in Rwanda. Hundreds of thousands were raped, disfigured, and expelled from their homes. During last year's ten-year anniversary of these horrific events, there appeared to be unanimity among pundits and philosophers that "We should have done something." Indeed, editorial pages and scholarly journals were replete with truisms such as "the world stood by..." "failure of the international community..." and "abdicated our responsibility."

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What should have been done? Or better, what could have been done differently? This article approaches this issue counterfactually. More specifically, the article addresses the questions: Who could have acted to halt the bloodshed and, if they had, what would it have taken to impose order and stop the killing? The conclusions are sobering but not surprising. My analysis suggests that it is nearly impossible to conceive of an outside intervention occurring in the Rwanda case, and that it may have taken a large occupying army with a nearly limitless mandate to stop the killing. The reluctance of the international community to intervene was then remains today the primary obstacle to military humanitarian intervention.

THE COUNTERFACTUAL APPROACH

The primary question is "Had the international community intervened in Rwanda, what would it have taken to stop the killing?" Asking such a question is a counterfactual, that is, the question asks for a specific outcome that is counter to the historical record of facts. We use counterfactuals in daily life on a regular basis: "I wonder what would have happened had I..." "If they had only done such and such..." "What if?"

Although counterfactuals are common in conversation, they have a more controversial record in studies of history and social science. Some purists argue that what we should be studying is what actually happened, not hypotheticals about what might have happened. Critics often refer to Blaise Pascal's famous observation, "Had Cleopatra's nose been shorter, the whole face of the world would have been different." Of course, Pascal meant that Cleopatra's incomparable beauty was directly linked to a war that shaped the destiny of Rome, and thus all of Western civilization. Detractors of counterfactual studies cite "Cleop-

patra's nose" as the best example of a genre best left to science fiction.¹

Nonetheless, over the past decade the use of counterfactual and modal arguments in history and the social sciences has increased.² Bulhof (1999, 146) defines "counterfactual conditionals" as sentences that are of the form "if p then q " where p and q are "any sentence which is either true or false.... A counterfactual conditional is one in which the antecedent (the term following the 'if') is in fact false, that is, it runs counter to the facts." Tetlock and Belkin (1996, 4) argue "counterfactual reasoning is a prerequisite for any form of learning from history." They assert that in disciplines such as history and political science, it is nearly impossible to test historical hypotheses through controlled experiments. Thus, researchers must turn to counterfactuals in order to test causal relationships among variables.

Numerous approaches to counterfactual reasoning have developed in recent years. For instance, Sylvan and Majeski (1998) propose a system of modal logic and semantics based largely on the work of Saul Kripke. Issues of modality are central to counterfactual research, because counterfactual logic is not simply about changing a few historic conditions, but also seeks to understand how those changes would have resulted in other important changes over time. Johannes Bulhoff (1999, 145) agrees

¹ See for instance Creary and Hill (1975), and Vessel (2003).

² Today, the literature on counterfactuals is modest, but there are two primary volumes of counterfactual scholarship. The first, Tetlock and Belkin (1996), is a collection of political science papers that resulted from a conference sponsored by the Social Science Research Council in 1995. The volume discusses controversial points in political history such as "If the United States had not dropped atomic bombs on two Japanese cities in August 1945, the Japanese would still have surrendered roughly when they did." The second volume, Niall Ferguson's *Virtual History*, looks at a wider range of historical examples, considering how Western history might have been different in a variety of cases, from a victory for Charles I to the absence of Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s.

It has been long recognized that counterfactuals are modal in character. They describe not just a possibility (it is possible, for example, that Germany could have won the Second World War) but what follows, in some sense, from that possibility (if Germany had won the war, NATO would never have been created). If that possibility had been actual, then other facts about the world would be different as well.

Why employ counterfactuals? There are several reasons to utilize such a methodology. The first is for studies that want to consider historical cause and effect. Scholars often presuppose that x caused y , but want to speculate on the results had x been somewhat different. Because we cannot rewind history, scholars often resort to counterfactuals to examine their claims about causality. A related issue for counterfactual study is that it is used for explanation. Often historical events are linked, wittingly or unwittingly, by scholars. Counterfactual reasoning helps scholars disentangle complex events and explain specific variables within a richer canvas.³

Another value of counterfactual approaches is that they assist scholars in considering critical junctures in history. Critical junctures are those events or moments when a past system is transformed or abolished and a new system takes over.⁴ Critical junctures include events such as the American Revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Counterfactuals can help us understand the dynamics of the critical juncture and its precedents. Furthermore, Bulhoff (1999, 145) argues that counterfactuals are useful when scholars make normative

³ See Tucker (1999).

⁴ There is a diverse literature analyzing critical junctures. See for examples Cruz (2000), Henning (1998), and Collier (1993).

judgments about the “rightness” or “wrongness” of decisions by elites. We evaluate how a decision, such as Hitler’s decision to invade the Soviet Union, was wise or foolish, prudent or imprudent, based on what followed in history. Such an approach is actually counterfactual because we are assuming that history is not deterministic—Hitler could have made an alternative choice and that choice would have presumably resulted in different outcomes.

In sum, counterfactuals are tools for analyzing causality, considering relationships among variables, explaining historical events, evaluating the influence of critical junctures, and making judgments about “good” and “bad” policies and choices in history. Consequently, counterfactuals are an appropriate approach for dealing with a human catastrophe of epic proportions—the Rwanda genocide.

THE 1994 RWANDA GENOCIDE

The Treaty of Versailles (1919) transferred governance of Rwanda-Urundi from Germany to Belgium. Under colonialism, the Tutsi minority was allowed western-style education and various social and economic privileges that were designed to reinforce Belgian rule. The Hutu majority was oppressed within this system of segregation. After considerable agitation and some violence, the Hutu community experienced a breakthrough in 1960 with municipal election victories across the country. Soon thereafter, Belgium withdrew from this region.

As the Hutu majority took increasing control of the country over the next three decades, ethnic violence occurred intermittently, including massacres by both sides. In 1990, under pressure from the international community, Rwandan President Habyarimana allowed for the consideration of a multi-party democracy. However, fighting continued and it was not until 1993 that the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and Habyari-

mana's Hutu-dominated regime signed a peace accord. As part of the peace document, the Arusha Accords, about 2,500 UN troops (United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda-UNAMIR) were placed in Kigali to supervise the security of the capital and guarantee peace. All the while, Hutu paramilitaries and militias trained for an expected future confrontation.⁵

On April 6, 1994, the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, Juvenal Habyarimana and Cyprien Ntaryamaria, were killed when Habyarimana's plane was shot down. Within one hour of the plane crash, the killings began.⁶ Roadblocks were set up by the Hutu-led Rwandan military and militias (*interahamwe*), and a radical radio station called on the Hutu majority to eradicate the Tutsi minority. Tutsis were systematically killed as forces went door to door seeking their prey. Within the first day, thousands of people were slaughtered, a number that grew steadily for the next twelve weeks.

When the massacres began, there were 2,519 UNAMIR troops in Rwanda. However, they had modest equipment and no mandate to stop the slaughter. Ten Belgian soldiers were brutally killed attempting to protect the moderate prime minister. Three days after the plane crash, 1,000 French, Belgian, and Italian troops arrived in Kigali to evacuate their nationals (Power, 2002, 353).

Although local UNAMIR commander General Romeo Dallaire called upon the UN to reinforce his modest force, on April 21 the international community voted to reduce the number of international soldiers in Rwanda from 2,519 to 270. By this time as many as a quarter of a million people had died. Meanwhile, in

⁵ PBS, "Frontline: Rwanda Chronology," PBS online [home page on-line]; available from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/rwanda/etc/cron.html>; Internet; accessed 28 August 2004.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Western countries government officials debated whether or not the term “genocide” should be used to describe the atrocities occurring in Rwanda. Six weeks after the killings had begun, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher finally authorized his diplomats to use the term “genocide” (Power, 2001, section VII).

On May 17, the Security Council mandated an arms embargo and requested that UNAMIR expand to have 5,500 troops so that action could take place. However, it took almost a full 6 months for member states to send troops.⁷ Two months into the genocide, on June 14, France’s President Mitterand stated that France would intervene in Rwanda (Prunier, 1995, 282). On June 22, the Security Council allowed French troops (Operation Turquoise) to enter Rwanda and create a safety zone, which was largely useful in protecting Hutu militants from the vengeance of the Tutsi-RPF which had intervened and effectively stopped the genocide. The French handed off to an expanded UNIMAR force in August. In the end, an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus were killed in a period of 100 days.

INTERVENTION IN RWANDA

A counterfactual is based on two simple principles. The first is that something could have happened differently (e.g. Hitler not invading Russia). The second principle of counterfactual inquiry is modality—a “counterhistory” of events following the counterfactual would work out differently (e.g. Hitler establishes and maintains the Third Reich across Europe). In the Rwanda case the specific counterfactual is *some outside power intervening with enough force to stop the genocide and impose a minimal environment of order in Rwanda*. Thus, our investigation consid-

⁷ UN, “Rwanda-UNAMIR Background,” UN Online [home page on-line]; available from http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/co_mission/unamirS.htm; Internet; accessed 1 September 2004.

ers (1) who could have intervened and (2) upon intervention what steps would have been necessary to impose order and stop the killing.

It is well documented that ethnic tensions between the Hutus and the Tutsis span centuries, thus the outbreak of violence in 1994 was only the latest internecine conflict. Obviously, there were no institutional actors within Rwanda with either the will or the capacity to stop the massacres. Consequently, the violence would either have to die out of its own accord or be stamped out by international actors. The former is what happened with disastrous results. Thus it is to the latter we turn: If foreign military intervention to thwart or ameliorate the crisis had occurred, which international actors had the capacity to act and what would have motivated them to act?

The United States

In 1994, the United States possessed the world's most powerful and sophisticated military. American prowess was demonstrated in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, and intervention on behalf of the Kuwaiti people gave credence to then-President Bush's claim of a "new world order." The American military had, and continues to have, preeminent capability in deploying land, air, and sea power to distant regions.

The question of intervention in Rwanda however is not one of military power. Rather, it is one of political choices. Can we imagine the U.S. government deciding to intervene in Rwanda in April or May of 1994?

In January 1993, William Jefferson Clinton was sworn in as President of the United States. Clinton immediately burnt bridges to virtually the entire military establishment by moving to fulfill his campaign promise of integrating homosexuals into the armed services. The resulting controversy, combined with his reputation

as a Vietnam War protester, created an environment of tension between the White House and the Pentagon.

Moreover, although the U.S. presided over the world's most powerful military, there was a strong norm in Washington against using the armed forces for anything other than national defense. This position was articulated by then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, "The job of the U.S. military is to fight and win the nation's wars" (Daalder, 1997, 41). Hence, there was tremendous reluctance among military leaders, not to mention the White House and Congress, toward using the military instrument in cases that were not vital national interests. Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole expressed this position on April 10, "I don't think we have any national interest there" (Power, 2002, 352).

Finally, U.S. attention was diverted elsewhere. Large concentrations of troops were monitoring the no-fly zones in Iraq, and by late 1993 the UN authorized the U.S. Navy to enforce an embargo against Haiti's military junta. Within the year U.S. troops entered Haiti to restore deposed President Jean Bertrand Aristide to power. Moreover, the State Department was focused on the multi-faceted bloodbath in the former Yugoslavia and the apparent resolve of the UN, EU, and OSCE to do nothing to stop it. Most importantly, President Clinton learned a lesson during his first year in office about military humanitarian intervention in Africa. In October 1993, the famous "Black Hawk Down" incident occurred just 1,000 miles away from Rwanda in Mogadishu, prompting an American withdrawal from anarchic Somalia.

In sum, it hardly seems possible that the United States, in a mid-term election year dominated by domestic issues; led by a new Commander-in-Chief; diverted by Haiti, the Middle East, and Bosnia; and reeling from the Somalia debacle, could have mustered the political will to intervene in a far off country that

few people, even in the State Department, could readily locate on a map.

Europe and the United Nations

The EU had no military force of its own in 1994, relying on NATO and individual national militaries for defense. Moreover, Western Europe's diplomatic corps was largely focused on developing positive relationships with the unstable Russian Federation in the aftermath of the Cold War.⁸ And most notably, the eyes of all European capitals as well as the UN were mesmerized by the incredibly complex and murderous conflict in the Balkans and other minor conflicts in former Soviet republics.

For simplicity of analysis I have lumped Europe together with the UN. EU countries such as France and Germany generally rely on multi-lateral diplomacy and international institutions in responding to international crises, and their decisions were inextricably linked to UN policies during this time period. This was true for both Yugoslavia and Rwanda. In the Yugoslav crisis, the European countries relied largely on European Union and United Nations diplomacy to halt the violence. In retrospect, we know that from 1992 to 1994 European powers lacked the resolve to forcefully stop the killing in Bosnia, even though UN peacekeepers from European states were deployed to protect safe havens such as Srebrenica.

With regard to Rwanda, major European and Atlantic voices (Canada, France, and Belgium) consistently appealed to the UN for decisions, and some were represented on the ground by small detachments of troops involved in UNAMIR. For instance, Belgium had 440 troops involved in UNAMIR and an additional 800 stationed in Nairobi. France had 800 troops located in central Africa (Melvern, 2000, 147). However, in his autobiographical

⁸ The Soviet Union had only ceased to exist at the end of 1991.

account of the violence, UNAMIR commander Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire (2003, 208-209) recalls that major European players were “adamant” about not being “dragged back into Rwanda”:

...the political state of mind in the Security Council regarding the future of the mission. The unequivocal position of the United States was that if there was no broad-based transitional government in the next very short while, the whole mission should be pulled. However, *both the French and the Belgians were adamant that they didn't want to be dragged back into Rwanda* because the UN had left the place in a state of potential catastrophe [emphasis added].

Some might suggest that had the United States lobbied the Security Council, action might have taken place to halt the Rwandan genocide.⁹ However, the reality is that independent of U.S. policy, European policy was hands-off toward Rwanda. European words were few, but their actions were clear: on April 10, a thousand European military personnel landed to evacuate their citizens (Power, 2002, 353). The same Europeans who were

⁹ Samantha Powers' moving and angry work on Rwanda, “Bystanders to Genocide,” (*The Atlantic Monthly*, September 2001), forms the basis of her chapter on Rwanda in her later best-seller, *A Problem from Hell* (2002). Her work is well-known for its excoriating account of the U.S. not wanting to engage the Rwanda genocide in early 1994. Her account seems incredibly reluctant to likewise blame the UN or the Europeans for inaction, but she does report the many instances in which the UN and its European constituents consciously neglected the gathering storm in Rwanda. For instance, she cites Dallaire's inability to get UN headquarters to provide him with money and materiel: “When Dallaire expressed concern, he was instructed by a senior UN official to lower his expectations” (88). When Dallaire contacted the UN about Hutu intent to massacre Tutsis and that Dallaire was “poised to raid Hutu arms caches, Annan's deputy forbade him to do so” (89). She records that on April 21 the UN Security Council voted to withdraw 90% of the UN force (99), but blames this on U.S. diplomacy, not the concerted will of the Security Council. It seems unlikely that had the other Atlantic capitals, especially Ottawa, Brussels, and Paris, really pushed for action and volunteered to support it that the U.S. would have used its veto to prevent such an intervention.

unwilling to forcibly intervene just a few hundred miles from their own borders in Central Europe were even less likely to dispatch additional troops to Africa to halt an ethnic conflagration rooted in centuries of animosity.

Africa and the Organization of African Unity

Finally, it is conceivable that an individual African country or coalition could have intervened in Rwanda. Interventions by individual states are not unknown in Africa as Tanzania, South Africa, Egypt and various other states have intervened across borders in the past. Moreover, multi-lateral African interventions did occur in West Africa in the 1990s (Sierra Leone, Liberia). The obvious organ for cooperation among African governments was the Organization of African Unity (OAU). In fact, since 1991 the OAU had a 55-person multi-national mission (Neutral Military Organization Group) monitoring the northern buffer region between the RPF and the Rwandan military (Khadiagala, 2001). Nonetheless, in 1994 the OAU had neither experience in major military humanitarian intervention nor the political mandate to do so. Indeed, as Ben Kioko (2003) argued in his report about the creation of the African Union (AU) and the demise of the OAU, the former was created partly in response to the lack of response among African states in the crises of the 1990s.

Of course, it may be ludicrous to imagine that an organization representing Africa's numerous despots would really have any concern for Rwanda. Consequently, if the OAU was not to respond, were there individual African states that could have intervened? Rwanda's immediate neighbors are Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire), Tanzania, and Uganda. Tiny Burundi could not have acted: its president was killed in the same plane crash that initiated the Rwanda conflict and Burundi has its own troubled history of ethnic violence between Hutu and

Tutsi. That leaves Rwanda's three larger neighbors. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has a similar history of violence among its 200 ethnic groups, including Hutus and Tutsis. Throughout the 1990s, DRC was unstable, ultimately descending into its own civil war with the help of over a million Rwandese refugees just a few years later. Uganda was not impartial—it served as the staging area for the Tutsi-RPF, which ultimately reconquered Rwanda in June 1994. Tanzania may have been in the best position to intervene, but its forces were largely tied up trying to provide security and manage hundreds of thousands of refugees at its borders.

In the end, although countries like Nigeria and Tanzania called on the UN to act, and even volunteered troops, none of them intervened. In retrospect, no individual African state, no coalition of Rwanda's neighbors, nor even the pan-African OAU acted on behalf of individual human life in Rwanda. Indeed, it is possible that the introduction of neighboring African forces would have exacerbated tensions based on existing border, cultural, and tribal cleavages.

WHAT WOULD IT HAVE TAKEN?

During the Rwanda genocide of 1994 the international community acted only with words, resolutions, and newspaper stories to stop the killing. The political milieu and the motives of international players, including both Rwanda's neighbors and major Western powers, were complicated by numerous factors. The bottom line is that although some powers such as the U.S., European states (e.g. Belgium and France), and members of the OAU had some capacity to act, they did not.

Early Intervention

If someone had acted, what would it have taken to stop the bloodshed? Volumes have been written on this, and the testimony of eyewitnesses, as well as post hoc analyses, indicate that a substantial number of human lives might have been saved had military intervention occurred. General Dallaire has repeated on numerous occasions that an UN force of 5,000 could have halted the violence.¹⁰ Alan Kuperman (2001) acknowledges that even belated U.S. intervention in May would have saved 75,000-100,000 lives. Gregory Stanton (2002) provides no clear number of saved lives, but clearly suggests that hundreds of thousands could have been saved had the West intervened. Likewise Samantha Power (2002, 353), in her excoriating review of U.S. policy toward Rwanda, suggests that countless lives could have been saved and that early intervention was possible due to the large number of forces on the ground and in the area (including 800 Belgians in Nairobi and 300 U.S. Marines in Burundi).

So, had early intervention occurred, when would it likely have occurred and what would it have looked like? A vigorous Belgian response to the loss of its troops guarding the Prime Minister would have been justified after the third day of the genocide (April 8). It is likely that Belgian action would have brought other Atlantic powers, notably Canada and France, on board, and provided the impetus needed for UN involvement. Perhaps France, as a Security Council member, would have pushed for greater UN involvement. We know that Belgium and France had 1,000 troops on the ground by April 10 to evacuate their foreign nationals. However, the Europeans retreated and early intervention never occurred.

¹⁰ See Power (2002, chpt. 10).

Late Intervention

It is unlikely that other states would have intervened in the early weeks, as suggested in the preceding section of this essay. A neighbor provides a case in point: in October 1993, Burundi had experienced its own ethnic violence, with 50,000 dead and no international intervention. It seems that most people in the West believed, or chose to believe, that the April 1994 violence in Rwanda was cyclical in nature and best defined as an ethnic-based civil war.

Nevertheless, assume for the sake of counterfactual that four to six weeks into the genocide, outside powers decided to intervene. We do know that help could have arrived quickly. In the past, such as the Congo operation in 1960 and UNEF II in the Middle East, UN peacekeepers have begun deploying within days of a Security Council decision to act.¹¹ More recent deployments have also rapidly advanced, notably the UN effort in East Timor and NATO action in Kosovo. Most telling, we know that 1,000 European soldiers arrived within three days of the outbreak of the Rwanda crisis to escort their nationals to safety. Thus it is apparent that a rapid introduction of troops could have taken place.

What would it have taken at the six-week mark, on May 18? On May 17, the UN authorized UNAMIR II to create and protect safe havens. Had they arrived within the week, they would have found 250,000-500,000 people already dead and the killing continuing. By this time the RPF had entered the fray and genocide in parts of the country was happening as civil war was being fought elsewhere. What would it have taken to stop the violence and restore order?

¹¹ For detailed information on the Congo intervention and UNEF II, see the Department of Peacekeeping Operations website at www.un.org/Depts/dpko.

More drastic measures than a mere show of force by 5,000 blue helmets may have been called for. Instead, a strong intervention force, of as many as 10-15,000 troops would be needed.¹² Intervening forces would need to have the authority to dictate terms of security on the ground and be authorized with robust rules of engagement. "Robust" rules of engagement are a definitive mandate to intervene, perhaps based on Chapter VII of the UN Charter, in ways that restore order, disarm the populace, and protect intervening forces.¹³ A clearly articulated set of rules of engagement would include: curfews for all civilians, the disarmament of all non-combatants, search and seizure of weapons caches, detainment of suspected genocidaires (including the maintenance of prison facilities for thousands of these individuals), the ability to not only shoot in self-defense but to shoot to protect citizens in danger, a powerful border presence to divert refugee flows and provide security for refugees, and the like.¹⁴ It is entirely possible that such an intervention would have been castigated at the time as paternalistic and heavy-handed.

In the end, such an intervention probably would have only taken a week to stop the killing, but then the international work of assisting in the reestablishment of governance and civil society would begin. The latter process would take, and is taking,

¹² There is considerable debate over what number of troops would have been necessary to intervene successfully after the first weeks of fighting. For more on this debate, see Kuperman (2001), Prunier (1995) and Caplan (1998).

¹³ Chapter VI peacekeeping is designed to maintain the peace at the request of belligerents. Chapter VII peacekeeping authorizes the international community to act on behalf of international peace and security. See "UN Peace Operations: Applicable Norms and the Application of Armed Conflict," *Air Force Law Review* (Winter, 2001).

¹⁴ Similar rules of engagement were used in Haiti in 2004. See "U.S. Rules of Engagement Shift in Haiti," *The Washington Post*, 11 March 2004, p. A-01. For East Timor, see "Australia's 'Regional Sheriff' Policy" in *Asia Times*, 3 July 1999; "Australian Peacekeeping Force Comes to East Timor," in *Los Angeles Times*, 21 September 1999.

decades. Unfortunately, the international community would likely have treated Rwanda in the way it has treated other war-torn societies: some international aid, but no real solutions to the intractable issues of hatred and violence plaguing its society.

Such steps seem reasonable to many in hindsight due to the incredible loss of human life. However, at the time, interventions of this scale were almost unheard of—the last being the 1961–1964 intervention in the Congo which involved 20,000 UN personnel at its height. Moreover, in the early to mid-1990s, no intervention had such vigorous rules of engagement. Even in Europe's backyard, the former Yugoslavia, such rules of engagement were never employed. It was not until the late 1990s that robust rules of engagement were utilized in Haiti and in East Timor.

CONCLUSION

Rwanda was a bloodbath. A decade later most people seem to take for granted that someone should and could have done something to halt the violence there. This article has shown that based on the track record of the past, it is almost impossible to conceive of a rapid deployment of international forces to intervene in the conflict. Recent studies suggest that this is largely the "fault" of the U.S.; but the evidence suggests that if there is blame to be appointed, it first goes to the killers on the ground, those who armed them (e.g. France), and to those governments who could have acted quickly but retreated instead (Belgium, France, African states).

This article is not an exoneration of anyone for the killing in Rwanda; rather, it is a reality check on the current form the discussion has taken. The international community has a track record of rarely intervening in cases of civil wars and ethnic violence. What shocks us in retrospect is that governments around the world as well as the UN could have watched the

genocide without forcible intervention to preserve human life. However, Rwanda is unfortunately simply one of numerous other cases from the 1990s where bloodshed occurred (Bosnia, Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan, etc.).

Several conclusions follow. First, the most likely interveners were European and African states and they chose not to intervene. Second, had they intervened, it is likely that intervention would have occurred after the scope of the violence was truly apparent. Thus, it is unlikely that intervention would have occurred in early April, but may have taken place in mid-May, leaving as many as 500,000 already dead. Third, we like to say that "something should have been done" but rarely like to face what it should have looked like in actuality. In the mid-1990s, there was simply no mandate for a powerful, decisive intervention force in any conflict. What it would have taken is a robust military presence employing force at times—this was not to occur at Srebrenica nor was it going to occur in Kigali.

Fortunately, one lesson of the period seems to be that in some cases of ethnic and political violence, the lead may be taken by individual actors operating under decisive rules of engagement with a mandate for peacemaking and peace enforcement. This is what the U.S. did in Haiti, NATO did in Kosovo and what the Australian-led force accomplished in East Timor. However, the unfortunate reality is that it took Rwanda and Bosnia to shame the international community into rethinking its practice of peacekeeping.

Finally, almost none of the Rwanda literature, regardless of how hysterical or hyperbolic its indictment of the U.S. and the international community, discusses the conditions for a durable peace in the Great Lakes region. In the short run, a lasting "peace" in Rwanda would likely entail (1) the complete domination of one ethnic group by another, (2) perpetual peace enforcement by outside actors, or (3) forced population transfers

(e.g. make Rwanda Hutu and Burundi Tutsi). Again, these are the political realities which are simply not talked about in the current revisionist approaches to the tragedy. In the end, Rwanda was the deliberate rejection of the notion of shared humanity by its citizens. We may never come to terms with this specific case of genocide, but we can consider realistically what steps might be taken to prevent similar horrors in the future.

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