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# The discursive impact of transnational advocacy networks : how amnesty international and human rights watch influenced the media coverage of the Rwanda genocide

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THE DISCURSIVE IMPACT OF TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORKS:  
HOW AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH  
INFLUENCED THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE RWANDA GENOCIDE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by

Marilu Del Toro

2009

To: Dean Kenneth Furton  
College of Arts and Sciences

This thesis, written by Marilu Del Toro, and entitled *The Discursive Impact of Transnational Advocacy Networks: How Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch Influenced the Media Coverage of the Rwanda Genocide*, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

John Clark

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Clair Apodaca, Major Professor

Date of Defense: July 9, 2009

The thesis of Marilu Del Toro is approved.

Dean Kenneth Furton  
College of Arts and Sciences

Dean George Walker  
University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2009

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents and brothers, for their loving support over the past year. I also dedicate this thesis to my grandparents, who may no longer be able to share in my accomplishments but whose influence is present in everything I do.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

THE DISCURSIVE IMPACT OF TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORKS:  
HOW AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH  
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by

Marilu Del Toro

Florida International University, 2009

Miami, Florida

Professor Clair Apodaca, Major Professor

Initial representations of the Rwanda genocide in the Western media were at best inaccurate and at worst, stereotypical, citing African “tribal savagery” and “centuries-old tribal hatred” as the reason for the mass killings. Two major human rights organizations, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, had the opportunity to correct media portrayals and help shape the agenda for policymakers. The purpose of this study was to take a critical look at media portrayals and discover whether these two nongovernmental organizations played a role in influencing the coverage. An extensive media analysis of three elite Western newspapers found that NGOs were the single largest source of nuanced political explanations countering stereotypes of African “tribal warfare.” Human Rights Watch, in particular, played a pivotal role in sensitizing the media to the genocide’s character as a planned, politically motivated campaign.

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## I: INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about the media coverage of the Rwanda genocide. When the plane carrying Presidents Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda and Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi was shot down on the night of 6 April 1994, the Western media began covering the events that ensued in the small Central African country. As the days and weeks passed, however, all major news outlets consistently missed the genocide story, reporting instead about fighting between warring factions, the resumption of a three-year-old civil war, and in the worst cases, about the eruption of “tribal hatreds” that were presumably deep-seated among Rwandans and therefore taken for granted in the country’s blood-soaked political history. The U.N. Security Council deliberated behind closed doors about what to do, and its talks centered on obtaining a ceasefire and not on stopping the killing of civilians. Security Council members – the U.S., U.K., and France chief among them – persisted in treating the situation as a traditional war, ignoring the evidence that much more than a traditional war was taking place. Acknowledging the mass slaughter of civilians – the targeted killings of men, women, and children who had no direct involvement with the two warring sides – would have confronted them with the moral and legal obligation to intervene, as stated in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Presented, therefore, with the opportunity to live up to the U.N. promise of “never again,” the Security Council chose instead to sit on its hands, failing to take action during a critical period when hundreds of thousands were being killed. The absence of accurate reporting created a media atmosphere that, while not directly complicit, lent itself to the Security Council’s inaction.

How did Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the two largest international human rights nongovernmental organizations, influence this media coverage? Even though human rights international law is addressed to states, many scholars have noted that NGOs have play an increasingly important role in standard- and agenda-setting in the promotion of human rights, serving as an “international conscience” and influencing governments to honor their international law commitments. At the heart of NGO effectiveness is the strategic mobilization of information. Human rights advocacy NGOs are organized around the principle of reporting accurate information to key decision makers to elicit a response promoting or protecting human rights.

As the genocide raged in Rwanda, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch had the opportunity to use the media as a platform to reach policymakers and influence public opinion in favor of taking action to stop the summary killings. This thesis will explore whether these organizations attempted to influence the media discourse about the genocide. Conducting this analysis will help to determine whether NGOs were effective in their strategic use of information and whether engaging the media can and should be prioritized higher during a human rights crisis campaign. On a theoretical level, it is also important to focus on nongovernmental organizations because the realist perspective claims that nonstate actors are irrelevant in the international system, where the true players are states in pursuit of their rational interests. To show whether other actors are effective in the international system is to contradict a longstanding and powerful argument in political theory. It gives these actors their proper due in international relations theory and portrays the international system in an accurate light.

## Rwanda Genocide: Summary of Events

The Rwanda genocide began on the night between 6 April and 7 April 1994, after President Juvenal Habyarimana's plane was shot down in mysterious circumstances the evening of 6 April. Ethnic tensions between the majority Hutu ethnic group and the minority Tutsi ethnic group had been simmering for months prior to the shootdown, which served as the catalyst for the violence that ensued. Broadcasting company Radio Television Libres de Milles Collines accused Tutsis of targeting the President and used the incident as a pretext to begin inciting Hutus to take revenge on Tutsis.

Tutsis had emerged as an upper class in Rwanda over time, but the two groups coexisted in relative peace when German and Belgian colonizers arrived in the 19th century. The Belgians formalized the racial system in 1933, issuing identity cards that identified citizens by ethnic group or "tribe" (Shattuck, 2003, p. 28). Tutsis made up approximately 15 percent of the population. During the struggle for independence in the 1950s and 1960s, racial tensions were exacerbated by a Hutu revolutionary movement that aimed to "throw off the shackles" of colonial domination. Many Tutsis were killed or driven to leave the country (Shattuck, pp. 29-30). In 1987, Tutsi exiles formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in neighboring Uganda, and in 1990, the RPF began launching guerrilla attacks into Rwanda from their base in Uganda. Tutsi forces of the RPF continued to pose a threat to the Hutu-led government of Habyarimana. The French government backed Habyarimana's administration, selling arms to Rwanda throughout the early 1990s (Shattuck, p. 30). This was a difficult period for Tutsis in the country, who were under pressure and scrutiny from the Rwandan government. On 4 August 1993, President Habyarimana finally signed an agreement to share power with the RPF

and allow Tutsi refugees to return (Shattuck, p. 31). This “capitulation” served as a catalyst for the furor that eventually led to Habyarimana’s shutdown and the widespread killing of Rwandan Tutsis and moderate Hutus at the hands of extremist Hutus in the army, police force, and civilian population.

One former U.S. diplomat estimated the loss of human life at 800,000, which occurred mostly in a space of just 14 weeks (Shattuck, 2003, p. 31). Amnesty International estimates that as many as one million lives were lost during the Rwandan genocide and its aftermath. Not only did the killings constitute one of the worst human rights crises in human history, they were also accompanied by other horrifying cases of torture and rape (“Rwanda: Gacaca Tribunals Must Conform,” 2002). As many as two million people were forced to leave their homes and became refugees living in precarious conditions throughout the country and in bordering states.

According to John Shattuck, who was U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs at the time, the Rwandan genocide did not take the United States or the world by surprise. The ongoing conflict and extremist hatred that had been building up for years was also accompanied by occasional waves of killings. In April 1993, a U.N. special rapporteur warned that ““a mechanism for civilian populations against massacres should be immediately set up in terms of both prevention and intervention”” (Shattuck, 2003, p. 32).

Still, the U.N.’s lumbering bureaucracy had no built-in mechanism to take immediate action on this warning from the special rapporteur. Shattuck says the United States also repeatedly denied appeals to bolster the U.N. peacekeeping troops already on the ground in Rwanda for fear that there would be a repeat of the Somalia “incident” that

had occurred the year before, when U.S. troops from a peacekeeping mission had been very publicly attacked and dragged through the streets of that African country.

Commanded by General Romeo Dallaire of Canada, the U.N. peacekeeping troops had a very limited mandate and could not use force to disarm paramilitary groups (33). Soon after the onset of the genocide, Belgium withdrew its troops from the U.N. peacekeeping force because 10 Belgian soldiers attempting to protect the Rwandan prime minister were tortured and killed by Hutu extremists. On 21 April, instead of reinforcing U.N. peacekeepers, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution disbanding the force by almost 90 percent and ordering the withdrawal of all but 270 soldiers from Rwanda, although the number of peacekeepers actually deployed was never lower than 456 (Kuperman, 2001, 42). On 17 May, the U.N. Security Council finally passed a resolution authorizing a larger peacekeeping force of 5,500 troops to enter Rwanda. However, the process of mustering the troops proved time-consuming and ineffectual. On 22 June, France sought and obtained approval from the Security Council to intervene unilaterally in Rwanda in a humanitarian mission called Operation Turquoise (Kuperman, p. 44). The Rwandan Patriotic Front believed France was intervening to help its former ally and protested French intervention; but ultimately, the French presence served to protect some Tutsi civilians throughout the countryside who were still at risk of slaughter.

By 18 July 1994, the Tutsi-led RPF declared a cease-fire, having gained control of the country. Most of the killings had already been committed, and the government-led campaign was stopped. The international community had done virtually nothing to stop the genocide. The lack of response in the face of such widespread slaughter raises the question of perceptions. How was the conflict perceived? What was the prevalent

discourse about Rwanda? Were there flaws in the discourse that can help explain the inaction? The research problem consists of determining whether the media coverage was flawed and failed to convey the true nature and scale of the genocide, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch attempted to correct inaccurate media portrayals, and these organizations were effective in changing/shaping the media discourse.

## II: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Misrepresentations in the Western Media

Both scholars and reporters have examined and criticized the way the Rwanda crisis was reported throughout its most critical months, from April through July 1994. One of the first inquiries into the Rwanda genocide, *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience, Early Warning and Genocide* – published by the Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda – concluded that “the Western media's failure to report adequately on the genocide in Rwanda possibly contributed to international indifference and inaction, and hence the crime itself” (1996, para 36).

Most major Western media outlets covered the plane crash and the deaths of the two presidents. Some then covered the gunfire and killings that followed in the subsequent days, quickly turning the attention to the evacuation of foreign nationals. In *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, Anne Chaon, a reporter editing the Rwanda stories at the Paris desk of Agence France Presse at the time, writes that “newspapers generally gave the same amount of space to the evacuation as to the massacres” (Chaon, 2007, “Who Failed in Rwanda,” para 17). Indeed, many foreign reporters also evacuated the country at this time, so that for most of April, “there were no more than 10 to 15 reporters in the country at any time” (Thompson, 2007, Introduction, para 19). In late April, when news reports using the word “genocide” finally began to emerge, media attention was then distracted by the refugee camps erected at Benaco and Ngara. Later, when France sought and obtained U.N. Security Council support to intervene unilaterally in Rwanda through Operation Turquoise, the media returned in greater numbers to Rwanda, but once

again they under-reported the genocide, covering instead the military intervention, France's strategy, and the Rwandese reaction to France's presence. "The result," writes Chaon, "was that the reality of the genocide was, once again, submerged in too much information" (Thompson, 2007, Introduction, para 21). Finally, in mid-July, as the RPF worked toward its final push to take control of the country, hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees flooded into Goma, Zaire, and the media flocked to the refugee camps to cover an obvious humanitarian crisis, once again missing or submerging the genocide story. Chaon offers this explanation of the media interest in the refugee crisis:

"Everybody ran to Goma because the story there was so easy to cover. After months of genocide, the issue of good guys and bad guys disappeared completely. The enemy was cholera, but no political issue surrounded cholera in the camps. It seemed as if journalists were more comfortable covering cholera than genocide" (Chaon, 2007, "Who Failed in Rwanda," para 35).

Consistently, the subject of the genocide was sidelined by other events. Because it was carried out so quickly and in such a short time period, not reporting it accurately or enough meant that public opinion mostly missed it.

The Joint Evaluation report described the failure of the Western media to accurately portray the events occurring in April 1994:

"The initial reporting in both *The [London] Times* and *New York Times* had appallingly misleading reports: the downed plane was a result of a Tutsi attempt to destroy the Hutu leadership in Rwanda and Burundi; "mobs" or a troop rampage killed the Rwandese Premier and 10 Belgian soldiers; anarchy (not *interahamwe* with roadblocks) reigned in the streets; "rival tribal factions waged



vicious street battles". On all the critical points, these early reports were wrong. An interpretive piece in *The New York Times* on 9 April explained the events as a genocidal orgy (rather than a systematic organized genocide), a continuation of a centuries-old feud.

[...]

"US television coverage and the CNN erred on the side of vagueness, generally referring to 'unspeakable atrocities,' and 'ethnic violence,' but picked up the theme of tribal or mutual ethnic slaughter. It would not be until 7 May that ABC correspondent Ron Allen suggested that the events were not a product of spontaneous tribal violence, but were a premeditated political act intended as a final solution (Joint Evaluation, "International Reponse," 1996, para 30)."

The media's general under-reporting of the slaughter was consistently coupled with factual errors.

Scholar Alan Kuperman (2007) also analyzed multiple Western media outlets in the months following the start of the genocide and identified four major errors in the coverage. The first, writes Kuperman, was that the media believed what was occurring was primarily a civil war and not genocide. He cites editorials and reports in media as disparate as *The London Times*, Belgium's *De Standaard*, and Radio France International, all of which emphasized the cease-fire or the warring parties, eclipsing the planned aspect of the massacres. According to Kuperman, the second mistake was reporting that the violence was diminishing when it was, in fact, growing. Major media such as *The New York Times* and *Le Monde* reported a slackening in the violence in mid-April. Reports from *Le Monde* and *The Guardian* then stopped altogether after April 18,

apparently because most foreign reporters had evacuated. The silence in *Le Monde* lasted four days and for *The Guardian*, seven. Far from conveying the urgency of the situation, the report that violence was declining and then the paucity of coverage seemed to indicate a lack of news, when this was the time, we know now, that most of the killings occurred. The third mistake was the misreporting of the death count, particularly in the early weeks of the genocide. Kuperman notes that estimates were often too low, grossly misrepresenting the extent of the carnage. Only in the third week of the killing did the scope of the hundreds of thousands of victims emerge. Finally, Kuperman argues that Western news organizations made the mistake of focusing almost exclusively on the capital city of Kigali, failing to represent the national scope of the genocide. It was only on April 25, notes Kuperman, that *The New York Times* reported the methodical killing of Tutsi across the countryside.

Allan Thompson, who edited *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* (2007), one of the most comprehensive examinations up to date of the media's role in the genocide, explains that at least some of the problems with the media coverage could be owed to the logistical challenges of reporting on a country caught in a civil war. Once the President's plane was shot down, getting into Rwanda was far from straightforward. At the time of the shutdown, there were only two foreign journalists in Rwanda. Those who traveled there to cover the conflict after the plane crash had to find alternate ways of getting into the country because the airport was closed to commercial flights. Some Nairobi-based journalists managed entry into the country by traveling from Uganda with the Rwandan Patriotic Front. The BBC's Mark Doyle was able to persuade a World Food Programme aid worker to allow him to fly in with him to Kigali in a plane that was then going to be

used to evacuate foreigners. Most American reporters were ordered to leave because the situation was considered too unsafe for them (Thompson, p. 17). Mobile phones did not have the reach they do now, and news media organizations considered it too risky to send an expensive satellite uplink into the country. A satellite uplink was only provided in late May, when the RPF had gained control of the airport (Thompson, p. 17).

Compounding the problem was the West's general lack of interest in the situation. Journalist Anne Chaon has noted that the big international stories at the time were Bosnia and elections in South Africa. "The conflict in Bosnia had started in 1992 and in Yugoslavia in 1991," writes Chaon. "The genocide in Rwanda would have had to have lasted for two or three years to garner as much media attention as Bosnia" (Chaon, 2007, "Who Failed Rwanda" para 18). O.J. Simpson coverage dominated the airwaves in the United States, and in France, the death of Brazilian formula 1 driver Ayrton Senna also received much coverage. As Allan Thompson has remarked, "The Rwanda genocide, as a news event, simply did not break through" (Thompson, 2007, Introduction, para 17).

For those reporters who were covering Rwanda, there was also a great deal of confusion on the ground. In fact, Chaon has argued that the media, and not individual journalists, failed Rwanda. The journalists who were there, says Chaon, were committed to getting the story and to testifying to the killings. She offers this explanation for the inaccuracies:

"Most journalists are not experts in genocide. Many of them – myself included – arrived in Rwanda with very little knowledge of the country. So, it was tempting, especially at the beginning, to speak of the civil war, of these massacres as a perverse return of a civil war, and to link these massacres to previous massacres

since 1959. We failed to understand that the killing was something totally new, that this was not a continuity of what had happened before (Chaon, 2007, “Who Failed in Rwanda,” para 23).”

Chaon explains that, coupled with the Western media’s interest in other news stories such as O.J. Simpson and Bosnia and overly cautious editors back at the newsdesks, the media in a general sense got the story wrong, but not because individual journalists were not dedicated to reporting the truth.

One vivid illustration of this confusion on the ground among journalists is evident in an account offered by BBC reporter Mark Doyle, one of the very few foreign journalists who stayed in Rwanda during most of the genocide. Ironically, his account, which was published in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, was meant to dispute, to some degree, the claim that the media missed the genocide story. Doyle, who took considerable risks to his life to report on what was occurring, reproduces parts of the stories he filed at the time, arguing that as early as the second week, he was already making clear references to government-backed massacres of ethnic Tutsis and Hutu opponents of the Habyarimana regime. What emerges from the stories he reproduces, however, is that the news of the civil war almost always led his reports, with descriptions of the killings buried or sandwiched midway through descriptions of RPF vs. government army positions or advances. The following is one example:

“The battle for Kigali continues. Small arms, automatic weapons and grenades are being used as rebel and government forces struggle for advantage. On Tuesday (April 12), the U.N. commander in Rwanda said the rebel forces were not encountering strong resistance. However, there was heavy fighting at dawn

on Wednesday. The conflict began when the president's plane was shot down seven days ago. *The president's supporters blamed rival tribal and ethnic groups and the massacres of civilians began. Tens of thousands of people were killed and hundreds of thousands displaced by the unrest.* Now the fighting has a more military aspect with two highly trained armies attacking each other. The rebels say they are fighting to restore order....” (My emphasis) (Doyle, 2007, “Reporting the Genocide,” para 34)

Doyle clearly mentions the massacre of civilians, but only after beginning the story with the civil war and continuing with the civil war. In what goes on to be a much longer story, the massacre of “tens of thousands of people” only receives two lines. Buried as it is between the language of war, it is easy to interpret the references to the massacres as casualties of war, as opposed to a deliberate killing of civilians.

A second example shows a similar pattern:

“The fighting is fierce. Mortar and heavy-calibre automatic weapons were heard at various times throughout the night. *Tens of thousands of people have been killed in the last week in clashes, which have involved tribal militias at least as much as regular government and rebel troops.* The capital of Rwanda is anarchic. U.N. peacekeepers have failed to stop the fighting but are trying at least to organize a meeting between the two sides.” (My emphasis) (Doyle, 2007, “Reporting the Genocide,” para 40)

Once again, Doyle focuses most of his writing on the war aspect of the conflict. Even when he mentions the tens of thousands of people who have been killed, he says they were killed in “clashes,” which connotes mutual warfare or war casualties as opposed to

the systematic slaughter of civilians. As he reverts to the civil war, he loses the opportunity to elaborate on the people who have been singled out to be killed.

Perhaps wanting to convey a sense that this was more than just savage tribalism and that a deliberate political maneuver was at play, in later stories, Doyle refers to the victims as “ethnic or political opponents of the late president” (Doyle, 2007, “Reporting the Genocide,” para 54). But this terminology, used again amidst descriptions of war, fails to capture the merciless nature of the killings, which included women, children, and infants. While calling them “political opponents” offers a more nuanced reading of the situation, it also does not capture the thousands of people who had no political involvement in the government or the opposition and were targeted for killing. The genocide was very effectively covered by the civil war, even for dedicated reporters such as Doyle who were witnessing events firsthand.

Still, the inaccuracy of the reporting was not owed simply to a failure to understand the genocide as separate from the civil war. Linda Melvern has described how the international media inaccurately and stereotypically portrayed the killings in Rwanda as “tribal violence” (Melvern, 2007, “Missing the Story,” para 3). An investigative journalist herself, Melvern is perhaps one of the most vocal critics of the media’s failure to accurately capture the situation in Rwanda in the spring of 1994. She notes that the use of this cliché “dominated the early reports on the genocide” and that it lent itself to an interpretation of events as “uncontrollable tribal savagery about which nothing could be done” (Melvern, 2007, “Missing the Story,” para 3). Melvern cites a *New York Times* editorial that appeared in mid-April and describes Rwanda as a “failed central African nation-state with a centuries-old history of tribal warfare and deep distrust

of outside intervention” as well as a country in an “uncontrollable spasm of lawlessness and terror” (Thompson, 2007, “Missing the Story,” para 3).

Romeo Dallaire, the Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) on the ground during the genocide, echoes this criticism in the chapter he contributed to *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*. Comparing the coverage of Rwanda to the coverage of the conflict in Bosnia, which was occurring at the same time, he makes the following observation:

“In Yugoslavia, the problems were portrayed as long-standing divisions that educated people had debated. It was religious and ethnic conflict, something studied and analyzed. As such, we brought in new terms, like ‘ethnic cleansing’ to describe Yugoslavia. In Rwanda, it was just a bunch of tribes going at each other, like they always do. Rwanda was black. Yugoslavia was white European.”

(Dallaire, 2007, “The Media Dichotomy,” para 14)

The depiction of Rwanda as a country in the grips of yet another manifestation of ageless tribal differences was not only inaccurate and misleading, but it also furthered the agendas of the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, who did not want to intervene. As Thompson has noted, the inaccurate portrayals “served to help the cause of those foot-draggers who did not want to get involved” (Thompson, 2007, Introduction, para 19).

### Human Rights Advocacy and the Media

Given the prevalence of misinformation in the media, international human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Amnesty International and Human

Rights Watch had an opportunity to correct the facts and offer well-documented evidence that something more than just spontaneous tribal killings and civil war were underway.

Various scholars have highlighted the importance of the media in the work of advocacy NGOs. Ron, Ramos, and Rodgers, who have studied Amnesty's and Human Rights Watch's use of the media as an advocacy tool, have noted that "the tight link between news releases and the media is integral to their work" (2005, p. 572). In interviews the three authors conducted, one Human Rights Watch senior manager said that their job was to shape public debates, often "seizing moments of public attention – usually whatever is in the news – to make human rights points" (2005, p. 573). In fact, through an analysis of human rights coverage in key Western media as well as an analysis of the press releases and backgrounder reports published by Amnesty, Ron, Ramos and Rodgers found that "there is evidence of reciprocal causality between the media and Amnesty press releases" (2005, p. 573). In other words, not only does the news affect Amnesty's country reporting and advocacy efforts, but the inverse is also true: Amnesty's press releases affect the news.

In their own descriptions of what they do, both Amnesty and Human Rights Watch have mentioned the importance of the media to their work. In the "Who We Are" section of its website, Human Rights Watch notes that it is "known for its accurate fact-finding, impartial reporting, effective use of media, and targeted advocacy" ("Who We Are," para 2). The organization also states that it "publishes more than 100 reports and briefings on human rights conditions in some 80 countries, generating extensive coverage in local and international media." In Amnesty's "International Statute," which can be found on its website, the organization notes that its mission "is to undertake research and



action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of these rights” (“Amnesty’s International Statute,” para 1). In the same statute, under the “Methods” section, Amnesty states that it “seeks to expose human rights abuses accurately, quickly and persistently,” and that to do that, its “findings are publicized, and members, supporters, and staff mobilize public pressure on governments and others to stop the abuses” (“Amnesty’s International Statute,” para 2)

Scholar Morton Winston has remarked on the importance of the media in Amnesty’s work. Winston explains that Amnesty has two audiences for human rights news: elite persons of influence and a mass audience of citizens. “In order to reach the latter audience,” writes Winston, “AI, like other human rights NGOs, must rely mainly on the mass media as conveyors of their information” (Winston, 2001 p. 37). Winston also notes that both Amnesty and Human Rights Watch “still rely mainly on the print media to disseminate their information” (Winston, p. 38).

### The Discursive Impact of Transnational Advocacy Networks

Two scholars who have noted the importance among NGOs of the strategic use of information and setting international rights agendas are Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998a, 1998b). Keck and Sikkink have identified and studied the unique phenomenon of both non-state and state actors working together across national boundaries to pursue a norm-based cause. They have called the aggregate of these linkages “transnational advocacy networks,” and their findings have become the foundation of numerous investigations into the workings of transnational campaigns.

According to Keck and Sikkink, these provisional linkages of cooperation between state and non-state actors are advocacy networks because “they are organized to promote causes, principled ideas, and norms, and they often involve individuals advocating policy changes that cannot be easily linked to a rationalist understanding of ‘interests’” (1998a, pp. 8-9). Their primary function is not to promote the rationalist interests of particular states but rather norm-based interests. Actors in these networks include international and domestic nongovernmental research and advocacy organizations; local social movements; foundations; the media; churches, trade unions, consumer organizations, and intellectuals; parts of regional and international intergovernmental organizations; and parts of the executive and/or parliamentary branches of governments. Keck and Sikkink use the word “network” – and not other terms that have emerged in international relations theory such as “global civil society” or “global community” – to emphasize the horizontal, voluntary, and reciprocal way the actors involved in this type of activism relate to each other and the central role played by communication and information exchange in their interactions.

One of their key assertions is that transnational advocacy networks gain influence by “serving as alternative sources of information” (2002, p. 95). The legitimacy of these groups comes from access – from obtaining information directly from the victims of the rights violations (who might not otherwise be heard). When transnational advocacy networks have this information, they engage in “framing” and “venue shopping.” Framing is the act of providing a meaning for an event or occurrence. The authors base their concept of “framing” on the definition of “frame alignment” offered by David Snow: “By rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize

experience and guide action, whether individual or collective” (Keck & Sikkink, 2002, p. 95). Because they are often actively opposed to more powerful actors who also have the ability to interpret events and impose meaning, how transnational advocacy networks frame an issue – and whether they are successful in achieving *frame resonance*, or influencing broader understandings of an issue – will determine their success in being persuasive (Keck & Sikkink, p. 95). Through the strategic use of information, they alter the value contexts within which states make policies.

Transnational advocacy networks also strategically engage in venue shopping, which is “seeking the most favorable arenas in which to fight their battles” (Keck & Sikkink, 1997, p. 217). Unlike social movements, which tend to be grassroots, mass-oriented, and popularly based, transnational networks normally involve a small cadre of activists engaged in elite politics. “The kinds of pressure and agenda politics in which they engage rarely involve mass mobilization, except at key moments, although the people whose cause they espouse may engage in mass protest” (Keck & Sikkink, 2002, p. 95). Their purpose is to influence decision makers in key positions of power with the purpose of bringing about a change in a state’s behavior or a change in international law. While their actions might sometimes be aimed at doing both – at provoking a mass reaction as well as a policy change at the state level – their focus is always on influencing decisionmakers. “The strategic deployment of information,” write Keck and Sikkink, “may involve mobilization; more often it involves lobbying, targeting key elites and feeding useful material to well-placed insiders” (1997, p. 236). Transnational advocacy networks differ from social movements in that their “main activity ... is collecting credible information and deploying it strategically at carefully selected sites” (Keck &

Sikkink, 1997, p. 226). (In this sense, Amnesty is both a social movement and a transnational advocacy network because of its mass membership and its lobbying of elites.) Similarly, transnational advocacy networks are often activated through a process that Keck and Sikkink have called “the boomerang effect,” which is a type of venue shifting. The boomerang effect occurs when channels of participation are blocked domestically to civil society, and NGOs or social movement groups move into the international arena to seek redress. They communicate with NGOs in other states or international NGOs who then pressure their own governments or intergovernmental organizations to bring their influence down on the violating government (1998a, pp. 12-13).

For Keck and Sikkink, recognizing that information is the primary weapon of transnational advocacy networks is not enough to understand how they work. For this reason, they have developed a typology of tactics to explain how the members of transnational advocacy networks collaborate with each other in pursuit of their common advocacy goals. These tactics are 1) information politics, or the ability to quickly and credibly generate politically usable information and move it to where it will have the most impact; 2) symbolic politics, or the ability to call upon symbols, actions, or stories that make sense of a situation for an audience that is frequently far away; 3) leverage politics, or the ability to call upon powerful actors to affect a situation where weaker members of a network are unlikely to have influence; and 4) accountability politics, or the effort to hold powerful actors to their previously stated policies or principles (Keck & Sikkink, 1998a, p. 16).

In addition, Keck and Sikkink identify stages of network influence, such as: 1) issue creation and agenda setting 2) influence on discursive positions of states and international organizations 3) influence on institutional procedures 4) influence on policy changes in target actors and 5) influence on state behavior. They specifically speak of these as “stages of influence” because they believe that some of these steps precede others. For example, a discursive change (a state admitting for the first time to its obligation to respect human rights) is likely to precede a change in policy (Keck & Sikkink, 1998a, p. 25).

Another scholar who agrees on many points with Keck and Sikkink and has devoted considerable study toward explaining transnational, norm-based advocacy is Thomas Risse. Risse prefers to use the term “transnational civil society,” as opposed to “transnational advocacy networks.” Unlike Keck and Sikkink, who include state actors and intergovernmental organizations in transnational advocacy networks, Risse focuses on those groups that “tend to aim for broader goals based on their conceptions of what constitutes the public good” (Risse, 2000, p. 7). Like all civil society, these are “only groups that are not governments or profit-seeking national entities” (Risse, p. 7). Transnational civil society may take a variety of forms, from a complex coalition of various nongovernmental organizations to one international nongovernmental organization with members or chapters across several countries. Like Keck and Sikkink, Risse points to the importance of norms/values as the main purpose of transnational civil society.

Also like Keck and Sikkink, Risse maps the different stages that transnational civil society passes through as it moves to attain its goals. He bases his theory on a series

of case studies of human rights campaigns. According to Risse, Phase I is the stage of Repression and Activation of Transnational Civil Society. This occurs when a repressive act by the government drives domestic civil society within the country to seek international allies. Here Risse borrows the “boomerang effect” from Keck and Sikkink to explain this dynamic.

Phase 2 is the stage of Norms Denial. During this period, the violating government and transnational civil society are locked in a battle of meaning, with transnational civil society groups trying to create the issue and place it on the international human rights agenda. Transnational groups begin lobbying intergovernmental organizations and Western states, trying to sway the perceptions of both public opinion and governments (Risse, 2000, p. 193). The violating governments deny the charges of human rights abuses and moreover, claim that the interventions by the transnational groups are an illegal interference in the country’s internal affairs (Risse, p. 194).

Risse identifies additional stages of transnational civil society influence, but because the focus of this study is the effects of transnational advocacy on discourse, the first two phases of Risse’s theory are the most relevant here. What is important is that all three scholars – Keck, Sikkink and Risse – identify a stage during which human rights advocacy NGOs engage in a battle over meaning.

#### Importance of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch

In their investigation of transnational advocacy networks, Keck and Sikkink underline the importance of nongovernmental organizations. There may be other actors, such as

members of the media, intellectuals, and even government or intergovernmental officials in transnational advocacy networks, but nongovernmental organizations are often considered the “core” actors:

“...international and domestic nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play a central role in most advocacy networks, usually initiating actions and pressuring more powerful actors to take positions. NGOs introduce new ideas, provide information, and lobby for policy changes.” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998b, p. 92)

NGOs are the motors of transnational advocacy networks and kick-start them into action.

They are also the groups most closely identified with the victims and possibly with the greatest moral authority to speak on behalf of them.

In fact, throughout most of their book, *Activists Beyond Borders*, Keck and Sikkink (2002) emphasize the pivotal role NGOs played in the emergence of transnational advocacy networks. The precursor to today’s human rights network – which currently consists of hundreds of NGOs as well as IGOs such as the UN Council of Human Rights and the Organization of American States’ Inter-American Commission of Human Rights – were the abolition and anti-footbinding movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Keck and Sikkink offer a detailed summary of the history of these movements, acknowledging that they were propelled by civil society organizations, many of which were based on religious principle. Transnational advocacy networks began to emerge in the 1970s and 1980s, when human rights organizations began to form coalitions and strong communication networks. Links were formed with domestic organizations in countries experiencing human rights violations as well as with intergovernmental organizations, foundations, and government representatives who were interested in

espousing the human rights cause. Communications information technology such as faxes, computers, and email helped to strengthen these communication flows. The role of NGOs in this process was foundational. They continue to play a key role today. NGOs often provide IGOs with much of the information they use to take action. Former director of the UN Center for Human Rights Theo C. Van Boven, once noted that 85 percent of the information the Center used to carry out its work was derived from NGOs (2002, p. 96). Keck and Sikkink also note that in the case of Argentina in the 1970s, and Mexico in the 1980s and 1990s, NGOs were often the trailblazers in gathering information and pushing for action against human rights abuses:

“NGOs documented violations and raised global concern about them. Later, international and regional organizations produced reports building upon early NGO investigations. NGOs also provided the information that served as the basis for altered governmental policies (2002, pp. 116-117).”

Keck and Sikkink add that, in Argentina and Mexico, “foreign governments placed pressure on human rights violators only *after* nongovernmental actors had identified, documented and denounced human rights violations and had pressured foreign governments to become involved” (2002, p. 117). Indeed, in the Boomerang Pattern that Keck and Sikkink offer to explain the way in which NGOs link internationally with other organizations, the primary initiators of action are domestic NGOs, who seek redress from their international counterparts, who then pressure IGOs or other governments. The importance of nongovernmental organizations in human rights advocacy is undeniable.

For this reason, Keck and Sikkink’s findings are relevant for looking at the actions of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, which are two very



important actors in the human rights transnational advocacy network. While Keck and Sikkink's theory does not limit transnational advocacy to NGOs – and in fact, their theory goes beyond the NGOs to point to the important role played increasingly by governments, foundations, individuals and IGOs – their typology of tactics applies to Amnesty and Human Rights Watch as two key actors of the human rights network.

Moreover, Amnesty and Human Rights Watch enjoy a distinctive position within the field. Due to its budget, size, global reach and apparent impact, Amnesty International is arguably the largest human rights nongovernmental organization in the world. Various scholars have studied Amnesty's impact on intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), particularly the most important political IGO, the United Nations. One of Amnesty's longstanding strategies has been to provide the U.N. with detailed information on human rights violations. Helena Cook, for example, has studied Amnesty's contributions to the U.N. in standard-setting, strengthening U.N. mechanisms and procedures (including the establishment of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), and raising country situations at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, which has now been replaced by the U.N. Human Rights Council (Welch, 2001, p. 88). William Korey echoes Keck and Sikkink's observation about the importance of NGOs in providing information to the United Nations. According to Korey, 80 to 90 percent of the information submitted to U.N. special rapporteurs comes from NGOs, and Amnesty is by far "the principal supplier of documentation" (2001, p. 260).

As scholar Claude Welch has pointed out, Amnesty theoretically promotes a full range of human rights in close to 200 countries or territories, but its research and annual reports concentrate on the rights mentioned in its mandate (Korey, 2001, p. 92). The

mandate identified in Amnesty's statute is the 1) promotion of, and adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other internationally recognized human rights instruments 2) opposition to violation of the right to freedom of opinion, expression of these opinions, and freedom from discrimination 3) release of prisoners of conscience 4) fair and speedy trials for political prisoners and 5) an end to the death penalty, torture, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment for all prisoners (92). The nonpartisan, legally focused human rights research which has placed Amnesty at the center of its strategy is carried out at its London-based International Secretariat, which often sends fact-finding missions to the places where human rights violations are being committed. Its volunteer-based groups focus primarily on letter-writing campaigns and support for urgent action appeals.

Human Rights Watch is similarly large and influential. Welch has remarked that the U.S.-based organization has "grown in more than 20 years to extraordinary prominence among NGOs, especially in the United States" (2001, p. 14). Welch points out that both Amnesty and Human Rights Watch are "classic" organizations among the top human rights INGOs. While not the only ones, they have "records of accomplishment worthy of close attention" (13). Like Amnesty, Human Rights Watch enjoys a significant budget. In 1998, Amnesty's annual budget equaled more than \$32 million and Human Rights Watch's budget equaled more than \$14 million.

Similar to Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch focuses its work on careful research of human rights violations. It uses this documentation to lobby the U.S. government, as well as other governments and IGOs. According to Welch, even though Human Rights Watch does not have the large popular base that Amnesty has, it has

managed to be a very effective force “in large part because of its effective, focused research, its expansion into new areas, its media savvy, and its major roles in several NGO coalitions” (Welch, 2001, p.101). For example, Human Rights Watch has participated in coalitions with other NGOs to advocate for establishing tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, creating an international criminal court, and banning land mines (Welch, p. 101).

Human Rights Watch considers its mandate to watch for the protection of universal civil and political rights as embodied in international law and treaties. It has gradually turned its attention to “second-generation” rights, such as economic, social, and cultural rights, but continues to place emphasis on “first-generation” rights, which are civil and political rights.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are, therefore, a critical part of the transnational human rights advocacy network. Focusing on these two network actors will make it possible to trace their influence and discern the results they achieved.

### III: METHODOLOGY

As scholar Morton Winston has noted, for many years political realists have dismissed the influence that non-state actors could have on the behavior of states, which were thought to act only in pursuit of their own national interests. Viewed from this perspective, NGOs such as Amnesty and Human Rights Watch are at best “gadflies,” irritating states with “stinging criticisms of their human rights practices” but powerless to change state behavior or policy (Winston, 2001, p. 26).

One of the reasons why it is important to focus on the genocide’s media coverage – apart from the fact that strategically, the media is key to the work of advocacy NGOs – is because it narrows down the universe of Human Rights Watch and Amnesty output during the genocide and facilitates the discovery of a line of influence between their output and the media. This study, therefore, will focus on three elite Western newspapers – *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *The Guardian* – because of their 1) generally recognized position of distinction and influence among elite media and 2) geographical location in world centers and proximity to the opinion makers and elites in their respective countries. *The Washington Post* is important to the Washington, D.C. community, while *The New York Times* is geographically close to the headquarters of the United Nations and other world media in New York, and influential on a national scale. In the UK, *The Guardian* was chosen because it is widely considered to rank among the top five “quality broadsheets,” or quality daily newspapers in the United Kingdom, and its records from the time period were accessible. *The Guardian* dates back to 1821 and has long been an influential newspaper in the UK and Europe. Morton Winston has also noted that NGOs tend to engage print media more than other types (such as television or

radio), which is another reason for focusing on these outlets (Winston, 2001, p. 38).

Looking at the media coverage of the Rwanda genocide will enable a better understanding of whether these two NGOs were able to create an issue. Keck and Sikkink have noted that the first stage of transnational advocacy network is creating and setting the agenda for policymakers. Thomas Risse has also noted that the first stage of transnational civil society influence is debating a state's norm denial. The media coverage is significant, then, because it will indicate whether these two advocacy NGOs, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, were effective in framing the terms of the debate. Having the elite media of the world call events in Rwanda "genocide," will in some way create a discourse with which policymakers will have to contend. Thus, looking at the media coverage provides a window into issue creation and permits the tracing of NGO discourse as it evolves as well as media discourse as it evolves.

Keck and Sikkink have also argued that the second stage of network influence is when transnational advocacy networks have a discursive impact on a state or intergovernmental organization. Examining the U.S.'s evolving discourse in the media alongside the NGO discourse will provide a window onto the possible influence of Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International on what was likely one of their biggest advocacy targets. The following are the questions I propose to explore in my analysis:

Q1: How did *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* in the U.S., and *The Guardian* in the UK, report the Rwanda genocide?

H1: Even though major international media, including these three newspapers, have already been examined in various studies, taking a close look at them again will help to establish the themes and messages Human Rights Watch and Amnesty would have had to address in their media relations efforts to be effective. In keeping with many of the themes already identified in major Western media by researchers and reporters alike, I expect to find these three newspapers also confused the facts of the genocide, particularly in the month of April. Reports are likely to present the massacres as casualties of war, emphasizing the military campaigns or couching the killings in the language of an armed conflict between two sides. They are also likely to emphasize the ethnic nature of the killings in terms of “tribal warfare” or “tribal violence,” generalizing the violence to both sides instead of identifying victims and perpetrators. There will be relatively few explanations of the killings as a political maneuver or as a deliberate ethnic cleansing campaign. In addition, I expect to find frequent mentions of Rwanda’s history of violence, which was often offered in explanation of events, but served to obscure the unique nature of what was occurring and instead communicated a sense that this violence was common and even inevitable in Rwandese society.

Q2: What messages did NGOs generally, and Amnesty and Human Rights Watch in particular, communicate in the media April – July 1994? How did they affect the media discourse?

H2. Because, as Keck and Sikkink have suggested, NGOs are usually the motors of transnational advocacy networks, I expect NGOs will be the first sources in the media to

correct the misinformation. They typically work to elicit a response from and set the agenda for policymakers, so NGOs will likely be among the first sources in the media to use the word “genocide.” They will point to the killings’ political and systematic nature (to offset the belief that they were only ethnic and spontaneous in nature) and they will identify specific perpetrators. H3. Because Amnesty and Human Rights Watch have a history of reporting on Rwanda and are large, influential organizations, I expect Amnesty and Human Rights Watch will play a key role in correcting the misinformation. H4. Human rights advocacy NGOs will also have qualitatively different messages in the media than relief organizations. The intent of advocacy organizations is to persuade. Amnesty’s and Human Rights Watch’s efforts, therefore, will be aimed at identifying the perpetrators, whereas organizations such as The International Committee of the Red Cross and Medecins Sans Frontieres, which are focused on relief, will want to preserve their political neutrality in conflict zones and will be seen to report statistics or facts but not political explanations.

Q3. How did the U.S. government’s discourse on Rwanda change during this four-month period?

H5. The U.S. government was reluctant to become embroiled in what it perceived to be a distant, indigenous conflict that did not threaten any vital American interests. Many different sources, including John Shattuck, who was U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs at the time, have noted the Clinton Administration’s dread of experiencing a repeat performance of the 1993 Somalia

“fiasco.” For this reason, the government will likely want to paint the conflict as a civil war and avoid use of the term “genocide.” I expect to find, however, increasing submission to the “genocide” discourse.

Much of the genocide occurred from April 7, 1994, the day after President Habyarimana’s airplane was shot down, to July 18, 1994, when the Tutsi-led rebel forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front declared a cease-fire after winning the civil war against the interim Hutu-government. Using the archives accessible through Lexis Nexis, a content analysis of these periodicals from this time period will yield insight into two aspects of Keck and Sikkink’s typology of tactics– the organizations’ use of information politics to set agendas and influence discourse.

Articles through the end of July will be included because they will allow a month-to-month comparison and will provide a picture of the overall arch of the coverage. Not all articles mentioning Rwanda will be included. Articles mentioning Rwanda only once or those primarily dedicated to another subject and referencing Rwanda only in passing will not be included. Letters to the editor from individuals will not be included. Because the focus of this research is to determine whether there was a media bias or misrepresentation at play, readers’ comments and impressions are not relevant to the study. Letters to the editor from nongovernmental organizations, however, are relevant because in many cases they directly challenge the media discourse, and the second research question of this thesis is aimed at exploring their discursive influence over the media. Stand-alone photos will be treated and counted as articles because they are typically accompanied by text and are for all intents and purposes “news” items like articles.



Several elements will be measured to gain an understanding of the extent and quality of the coverage. News articles will either be classified as by-lined (attributed to a reporter or particular author) or not bylined (taken from news agencies or printed as a brief) as a way of determining the importance each newspaper placed on the subject. Bylined pieces are generally longer than briefs and stories pulled from the wires because they are drafted specifically for the paper by its own staff and will therefore be given more space than a wire story that could also appear in a competitor's pages. While this is not entirely an unproblematic indicator – there may be other reasons why a newspaper may choose to pull from wire agencies, such as inadequate resources to report directly from a country or the unavailability of a staff reporter on a given day – generally pieces that are not bylined are shorter than bylined pieces. A second category is the number of front-page stories vs. stories on the inside pages of the newspaper since placement will affect the exposure a news item receives as well as perceptions about its importance as it relates to other news of the moment. Headlines will also be analyzed closely to determine the themes on which the media focuses, and both specific references to killings/massacres and general allusions to death will be counted every time they appear in headlines as a way of determining how much importance these outlets place on the genocide aspect of the conflict as opposed to other angles. The number of opinion-editorials produced by the editorial board of each newspaper will also be counted because typically, an issue will receive greater commentary/coverage from the editorial staff if it is perceived to be important.

#### IV: RESULTS

##### Critical Analysis of the Media Coverage: An Overview

One of the primary goals of the critical analysis of the media coverage was to discover how these major dailies covered the genocide. With so many charges laid against them but only a small number of empirical studies carried out to analyze the coverage, it was important first to establish if there were, in fact, any visible gaps or distortions in their coverage. A total of 542 articles/photos were analyzed. The breakdown for the four-month period by newspaper is as follows: *The Guardian*, 163 articles; *The Washington Post*, 162 articles; and *The New York Times*, 217 articles.

Definite patterns in all three newspapers emerged. Most of the stories in all three papers were bylined pieces, which meant that all considered it an important enough issue to dedicate their own staff or, alternately, to accept contributed, bylined articles and commentary pieces on the issue. Because bylined stories are also generally longer, it also shows a willingness to spare precious column inches to the issue. (That these media were able to dedicate staff to report on these events is also a reflection of their caliber.) All three newspapers showed increased coverage in the second month, a dip in coverage in the third, and a sharp spike in the fourth month. All three also devoted some front-page coverage to the issue, although this varied greatly by paper, and all three wrote about the events in Rwanda in their editorial column.

	<i>April</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>
The Guardian	28	42	33	60
The Washington Post	34	37	28	64
The New York Times	43	56	41	76

Table 1. Total number of articles and stand-alone photos devoted to Rwanda in *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post* by month.

### Breakdown of Articles by Paper

In the month of April 1994, *The Guardian* published 28 stories on the conflict in Rwanda. Of these, the majority (19) were by-lined pieces written by the newspaper's own staff, two of whom were based in Africa and reporting in or near Kigali. Four stories appeared on the front page. Of all the headlines relating to Rwanda that month, 13 alluded to death and nine specifically mentioned killings/slaughter. (Some headlines used direct words such as "killings," "massacres," "slaughter" and "atrocities" and other only alluded to fatalities with more indirect words, such as "horrors," which does not connote the concept of mass slayings as clearly.) In sum, 46% of the newspaper's coverage of the issue, or almost half, showcased the killings/fatalities aspect of the issue as the leading news. Of the four stories that appeared on the front-page, two made reference to the killings in the headlines.

In May, coverage increased considerably, and *The Guardian* published 42 stories on Rwanda. Thirty of these stories were bylined and 10 were not, showing the paper once again dedicating considerable resources to the issue and only occasionally supplementing its own coverage with stories pulled from news agencies. The newspaper also published one Letter to the Editor from Amnesty International, and one opinion editorial on Rwanda from the editorial board. None of the stories were published on the front page. Most were published either in the Foreign section or the Features section. Of all 42 headlines, 12 specifically made mention of killings or massacres and an additional five alluded to death, totaling 17 headlines (39%) that privileged the fatalities of the conflict over other themes. The remaining headlines reported on issues such as the U.N.'s reactions, the rebels, the war aspect of the conflict, etc.

In June, coverage waned, as *The Guardian* published 33 stories on Rwanda. Again, most of the stories were bylined. The newspaper's editorial board also published two opinion- editorials, one titled, "Rwanda is Waiting" and the second titled, "The French in Rwanda." Presence on the front-page remained minimal. Only one story made it to the front page; it was titled, "French Foreign Legion Rolls into Rwanda." The most prevalent theme appearing in the headlines was France's decision to intervene unilaterally in Rwanda. This issue was featured in 12 headlines. Eight (24%) of the total 33 articles mentioned the killings and massacres in the headlines. Other issues in the headlines included the U.N.'s actions and the war aspect of the situation.

In July, *The Guardian* published 60 stories on Rwanda, an increase of coverage owed to the refugee crisis. (Mostly Hutu refugees fleeing the advance of the RPF gathered in the thousands in neighboring countries.) Of these, 45 were bylined and 8 were not, showing a fairly consistent proportion. There were four letters to the editor from nongovernmental organizations and two opinion-editorials from the newspaper's editorial board. Both opinion-editorials, titled "Going Wrong in Rwanda" and "Hell of Reproach that is Goma" were focused on the refugee situation in Zaire, Goma. After a near-absence on the front page, six stories were included in July on the front page, one of which was on France's role in Rwanda and the rest were on the refugee situation in Zaire. Of all 60 headlines, only six headlines (10%) were about the killings/massacres. The most prevalent issue in the headlines was the refugee situation in Zaire (which was featured in 29 headlines). The second most prevalent was France's intervention in Rwanda (which dominated nine headlines).

One of the most notable aspects of this initial analysis of *The Guardian's* coverage is that the paper so quickly and extensively narrowed in on the massacres with 46%, or almost half of its headlines in the first month, devoted to the killings. Another salient aspect, however, is that in the second month, even as the killings raged on, none of the stories appeared on the front page. Instead, they consistently appeared in the Features and Foreign pages. Similarly, the editorial team published only one op-ed in May. It would seem from this editorial decision that, while the issue merited coverage within the realm of world news, it was never considered of urgent enough interest to the British people to rival other news items that for a full month made front-page headlines instead. In June, this paucity of front-page coverage continued. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the only story that did make it to the front page of *The Guardian* during this month was a news article about the French Foreign Legion entering Rwanda. As a neighboring country, France has long been considered of geopolitical interest to the U.K. – and in this case, perhaps of closer emotional interest to the British than Rwanda.

Like with all the other media, the refugee situation in Zaire received an amazing amount of ink in July and captured as many as seven headlines in *The Guardian's* previously reticent front page. Why this was so – whether because of easier access to the story in the camps or because Goma represented a clearly more humanitarian and therefore less “complicated” situation – is unclear.

In April, *The Washington Post* published 34 articles on Rwanda. Twenty-five were by-lined articles, one was a stand-alone photo, and five were wire stories. The editorial staff published three op-eds, two of which were about how a Rwandan human rights activist had been pursued and had escaped death at the hands of the Presidential

Guard, and one which compared Rwanda and Burundi. Of all 34 headlines, 12 headlines (38%) highlighted the slayings. Seven news items in total made the front page. The table below lists the front-page headlines, with those referencing the massacres in italics. This table provides a snapshot of the media discourse:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Front-Page Headline</b>
7 April	Two African Presidents Killed
9 April	<i>Slayings Put Rwanda in Chaos; Clerics, Foreigners Among Casualties; Americans to Leave</i>
10 April	Westerners Begin Fleeing; 170 Americans Leave By Convoy
11 April	<i>Americans Out of Rwanda; Rebel Army Advances on Bloodied Capital</i>
13 April	Flight from Rwanda (photo)
14 April	<i>Rwanda's 'Sad, Sad, Sad' Self-Immolation; Free-for-All Slaughter Continues Among Tribes, Rebels, Army, and Roving Gangs</i>
22	<i>Death Toll in Rwanda is Said to Top 100,000</i>

Table 2. The front-page headlines on Rwanda in April 1994 in *The Washington Post*.

Headlines referencing the killings have been italicized. The first front-page mention of the large death toll only came on 22 April, two-and-a-half weeks after the start of the slaughter.

In May, the coverage in *The Washington Post* increased slightly to 37 news items. Three were photos, 22 were bylined pieces, and eight were briefs/wire stories. Two were op-eds by the newspaper's editorial staff, and two were Letters to the Editor from Amnesty and Human Rights Watch. Of all 37 news items, seven articles were published on the front page. Two front-page articles made mention of the killings:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Front-Page Headline</b>
2 May	Running from Rwanda (photo)
4 May	Instant City of Misery in a Lush Land
8 May	<i>Witnesses Describe Cold Campaign of Killing in Rwanda; Leaders Allegedly Sought to Wipe Out Tutsis</i>
15 May	Rebels Gain Support from Both Sides in Rwandan War
23 May	Rebels Take Key Part of Rwandan City
30 May	<i>Rwanda Leaders Flee Rebel Advance; Militant Blamed for Ethnic Bloodletting</i>

Table 3. The front-page headlines on Rwanda in May 1994 in *The Washington Post*.

Of all the headlines in the month, six made reference to the killings and an additional four alluded to bloodshed, totaling 10 headlines (27%) focused on the massacres. The other headlines were about the refugee situation of Tutsi and Hutu refugees in Tanzania and other issues, such as a possible ceasefire, the U.N.'s actions, Nelson Mandela's reaction, etc.

In June, coverage on Rwanda in *The Washington Post* decreased to its lowest number yet, when 28 articles/news items were published. Of these, 24 were bylined and two were not. The paper's editorial staff published two op-eds this month. Of all 28 articles, only three made the front page, and only two of these referenced the killings:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Front-Page Headlines</b>
9 June	<i>Rwanda's Final Killing Ground; Hemmed in by Rebels, Militiamen Press Tribal Slaughter</i>
11 June	<i>Administration Sidesteps Genocide Label in Rwanda</i>
27 June	Saved by French Troops, Rwandans Thank God; Tutsis Celebrate Mass Under Guard

Table 4. The front-page headlines on Rwanda in June 1994 in *The Washington Post*.

Seven headlines of all 28 in June made specific reference to the killings, with words such as "Genocide," "Killing Ground," "massacre," "slaughter" and others. The proportion of headlines focusing on the massacres stayed the same, as the seven stories totaled 25% of all headlines.

In July, Rwanda coverage in *The Washington Post* increased markedly. Sixty-four articles were published on the crisis, 57 of which were bylined pieces and three of which were opinion-editorials from the paper's editorial staff. Of all 64 articles, an unprecedented 23 articles (36%) were included on the front page. Of these, 20 were about the newly forming refugee crisis in Goma, Zaire, where mostly Hutu refugees in the millions were gathering. Of all 64 articles about Rwanda in July, only five (8%) focused on the massacres. The majority of the headlines were about the refugee situation.

Although *The Washington Post* published more news items than *The Guardian* on Rwanda in April, it devoted a smaller share of its headlines to the killings (38% vs. *The Guardian's* 46%). In May, the proportion of the headlines devoted to the killings actually shrank to 27%. Considering that more was known this month than in April about what was occurring, this percentage should have gone up, not down. For some unknown reason, but in keeping with the patterns of the other newspapers, in June coverage in *The Post* fell considerably, with only 28 stories published and again the same proportion, only 25% of all headlines, focused on the massacres.

In July, the number of articles shot up again to 64. Remarkably, 23 Rwanda stories made it to the front page, although only two were about the slaughters and 20 were about the refugee camps. The editorial staff was also more active than ever, publishing three opinion editorials on Rwanda – one about France's intervention, and two about the refugee situation. Clearly from this decision, the refugee situation was considered to be more newsworthy than the massacres.

Of all three newspapers, *The New York Times* had the highest coverage in the first month of the genocide. *The Times* published a total of 43 news items in April, 29 of which were bylined stories. Nine were not bylined, two were opinion-editorials, and one was a Letter to the Editor from Human Rights Watch. Of all 43 headlines in April, only nine (21%) made reference to or alluded to the mass killings – the smallest proportion of all three media in April. Interestingly, *The Times* also gave Rwanda the most front-page coverage in the first month. Twelve news items (10 stories and two photos) appeared on the front page. Of these, however, only four made reference to the slaughter. Below is a list of all 12 front-page headlines, with those alluding to the slayings in italics:



<b>Date</b>	<b>Front-Page Headline</b>
7 April	2 Africa Leaders Die, U.N. Says; Rocket May Have Downed Plane
8 April	<i>Troops Rampage in Rwanda; Dead Said to Include Premier</i>
9 April	<i>Terror Convulses Rwandan Capital as Tribes Battle</i>
10 April	Western Troops Arrive in Rwanda to Aid Foreigners
11 April	<i>Strife in Rwanda: American Evacuees Describe Horrors Faced by Rwandans</i>
12 April	Havoc in Rwanda: Victims of Tribal War (photo)
13 April	Rwanda Rebels Push into Capital
14 April	Anarchy Rules Rwanda's Capital and Drunken Soldiers Roam City
21 April	As Shells Fall in Central Africa, Outlook for Rwanda is Bleak
22 April	Security Council Votes to Cut Rwanda Peacekeeping Force
25 April	<i>Rwandan Refugees Describe Horrors After a Bloody Trek</i>
30 April	U.N. Council Urged to Weigh Action on Saving Rwanda

Table 5. The front-page headlines on Rwanda in April 1994 in *The New York Times*.

Unlike *The Guardian*, which cited the massacres in its April front-page headlines, and *The Post*, which highlighted the death toll of 100,000 in its front page, the front-page headlines of *The New York Times* never mentioned “massacres” or “killings.” They also used words and phrases such as “tribes battle” and “tribal war,” making it easy to assume that a war was underway. The front-page headlines never once mentioned the scale of the slaughter, either, or cited the death toll.

In May, the coverage increased to a total of 56 articles/news items. Of these, 27 were bylined stories and 12 were not. Two were opinion-editorials from the paper’s editorial staff, and one was a Letter to the Editor from Medecins Sans Frontieres. Front-page coverage was again high, with 11 news items featured on the front page. Again, only two of these front-page items alluded to the massacres (with references to “bodies”). The front-page headlines once again showed the paper highlighting other issues, and not the hundreds of thousands that by this time are known to have been killed. References to “fighting” continued. Considering that the death toll being cited in May was 200,000, it is surprising to see no reference to the scale of the carnage on the front-page. In fact, only seven headlines (13%) of all 56 make reference or allude to the massacres. Table 6

below lists the 11 front-page headlines, with the headlines alluding to the massacres in italics:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Front-Page Headline</b>
1 May	U.S. Examines Ways to Assist Rwanda Without Troops
2 May	Rwandans Stream into Tanzania
14 May	Security Council Agrees on Plan to Send Peace Force to Rwanda
16 May	Fighting Flares in Rwanda's Gruesome War (photo)
17 May	U.N. Backs Troops for Rwanda but Terms Bar Any Action Soon
18 May	U.S. is Showing a New Caution on U.N. Peacekeeping Missions
19 May	Thousands of Fleeing Rwandans Huddle at Remote Tanzania Site
21 May	<i>Thousands of Rwanda Dead Wash Down to Lake Victoria</i>
25 May	European Leaders Reluctant to Send Troops to Rwanda
26 May	Boutros-Ghali Angrily Condemns All Sides for Not Saving Rwanda
28 May	<i>Bodies from Rwanda Cast a Pall on Lakeside Villages in Uganda</i>

Table 6. The front-page headlines on Rwanda in May 1994 in *The New York Times*.

In June, coverage on Rwanda decreased. *The New York Times* published 41 news items on Rwanda in total. Twenty-five were bylined articles, 11 were pulled from the wires or were not bylined, two were photos, and two were opinion-editorials penned by the newspaper's editorial board. With the smallest number of front-page coverage so far, only five stories made the front page:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Front-Page Headline</b>
3 June	<i>Heart of Rwanda's Darkness: Slaughter at a Rural Church</i>
10 June	<i>Rebels in Rwanda Said to Slay 3 Bishops and 10 Other Clerics</i>
23 June	France Sending Force to Rwanda to Help Civilians
24 June	French Troops Enter Rwanda in Aid Mission
27 June	Rwandan Enemies Struggle to Define French Role

Table 7. The front-page headlines on Rwanda in June 1994 in *The New York Times*.

Of all five front-page headlines, moreover, only two reference the slaughters and neither one of these convey a sense of the massive scale. Of all 41 headlines in June, nine (22%) reference the killings. (Three of these nine alone were about the RPF's slaying of a group of bishops.) In June, then, eighty percent of *The Times'* coverage did not focus on the killings.

In July, the coverage of the massacre declined even further. While *The New York Times* published the highest number of articles on Rwanda yet (76 news items in total), only four headlines (5%) alluded to the massacres. Fifty-nine stories were bylined, four were opinion editorials and one was a Letter to the Editor from a Human Rights Watch consultant. Of all 76 articles, 22 were featured on the front page. Of these, however, only one headline focused on the killings. The majority of the front-page headlines (16) were focused on the refugee situation in Zaire, seemingly indicating that, like *The Washington Post* and *The Guardian*, the refugee crisis was considered more newsworthy than the genocide.

#### Close Reading of Articles

One of the most striking aspects of *The Guardian's* coverage is the high percentage of stories focused on the massacres in the first month. Forty-six percent of the headlines in April referred to or alluded to the massacres in Rwanda. *The Guardian* had two reporters stationed in Rwanda – one, Lindsey Hilsum, was based out of the capital of Kigali, and another, Mark Huband, was based out of Mulindi, in Northern Rwanda. To some extent, this may explain why they so quickly reported on the killings. The initial reporting, in the first couple of days right after the shutdown of the plane carrying the presidents, was detailed and fairly accurate, although not without flaws. In a story published as early as 8 April, Hilsum identifies the perpetrators of the “carnage” (as the headline calls it) as troops, Presidential Guards, and gendarmes (“Rwandan PM Killed,” 1994). She attributes the death of the prime minister to these elements (and not to “mobs” as other media reported it) and discusses the targeting of Tutsi civilians. Her reporting is not

completely accurate, given that she cites one unidentified Western diplomat explaining that “various clans are murdering others,” but many facts are correct. In an article titled, “Rebels Poised for Assault on Capital,” *Guardian* reporter Mark Huband, from northern Rwanda, cites escalating violence throughout the country and describes how the “Rwandan presidential guard ... sought out and slaughtered opposition politicians, church people and aid workers from both the Hutu and Tutsi tribes.” In other words, unlike other media that reported the violence in more general terms and attributed the deaths to “tribal violence,” Hilsum and Huband clearly reported the identities of the perpetrators, even in the first days of the genocide. In fact, as early as 9 April, *The Guardian* ran an important headline in the front page: “Thousands Massacred in Rwanda” (Hilsum, 1994). This headline would be sorely missing from both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. What is significant about the headline is that it emphasized both the large number of dead so early in the genocide and captured the slaying of civilians by using the word “massacred” (and not other, more vague terms). The article conveys several pieces of critical information, such as the fact that the killings were being carried out by the Presidential Guard and possibly also by “bands of lawless armed youths” and that the minority Tutsis were being targeted. Considering how early it was in the crisis, it is worth noting that most of this information was correct.

For this reason, it is all the more difficult to understand why the coverage got it so wrong subsequently. From approximately 10 April onwards, in article after article, *The Guardian* described the killings extensively, but hardly ever offered any explanation for them. Reports also became confusing, describing both the fighting or the civil war aspect of the conflict, alongside the slaughters, making it difficult for an outsider to comprehend

the death as separate from and not a result of the war. For example, in a story titled, “French Lead Flight from Rwanda,” about the evacuation of foreigners in the early days of the genocide, Mark Huband leads with a paragraph about the fighting between the government troops and the rebels of the RPF. “Heavy fighting raged around the Rwandan capital last night as government troops fought rebels to the west of the city and French paratroopers escorted the first foreign nationals out of the main airport,” writes Huband. He then immediately follows in the second paragraph with a description of the killings: “In the centre of Kigali, drunken soldiers and gangs of youths brandishing machetes manned roadblocks on streets where piles of mutilated corpses lay, casualties of a four-day tribal bloodbath after the assassination of the president last week.” There is no explanation offered for these piles of mutilated bodies. Instead, Huband goes on to describe the bursts of mortar, rocket and machine-gun fire preventing U.N. employees from reaching the airport to evacuate. Several paragraphs later, after describing the actions being taken by Western governments to evacuate their nationals, he returns to the issue of civilian casualties. “Burning houses sent palls of smoke across the lush hillsides around the city as the fighting intensified.” By using the word “fighting,” as opposed to words such as “killings” or “slayings,” Huband confuses the already confusing situation with the implication that the civilian casualties were being caused in a two-way form of war. He also discusses how one relief organization had to pull out its staff because of the “tribal fighting.” Still, unlike other media who downplayed the civilian deaths by focusing on the civil war aspect of the conflict, Huband describes the killings, making at least eight references in this article to civilian casualties. He does not, however, provide an explanation for why the killings are occurring, apart from calling it “tribal fighting”

and “tribal slaughter.” Couched, therefore, in this confusing language of war, the cause of the massacres is not clear. The same can be seen in an article published on 12 April. Titled, “U.N. Troops Stand By and Watch Carnage,” Huband makes one reference to the targeting of Tutsis in the third paragraph. The foreign troops who have come into Kigali to evacuate the Westerners, he writes, “are no more than spectators to the savagery which aid workers say has seen the massacre of 15,000 people – mainly from the traditionally dominant Tutsi minority.” He continues to explain that the killing started after the President’s plane was downed, and then describes subsequent events: “His presidential guard and the Hutu-dominated army unleashed a campaign of terror. Opposing them is the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front, dominated by Tutsis.” While this coverage gets certain facts right that were not present in the article before, such as the targeting of Tutsis, by so quickly following the mention of the massacre with the statement that the Rwandan Patriotic Front is opposing the perpetrators of the killings, the story once again turns to the military or “fighting” aspect of the conflict, obscuring the killing campaign. Huband then describes how “the splintering of the city between the RPF and different sections of the armed forces has perpetuated the anarchy” and paints a picture of chaos and banditry instead of planned, premeditated killing.

Throughout the month, little explanation is offered for the killings, or they are repeatedly described within the context of fighting. In a different story by a *Guardian* reporter named John Palmer, the misrepresentation is clearer. Palmer mentions the “ethnic carnage” and the “slaughter” but then goes on to mention that the “overall death toll as a result of the inter-tribal fighting runs into the tens of thousands” (“Guilty Brussels,” 1994). He also notes that much of the “fighting” in the city appears to have

been caused by Hutu factions that are opposed to establishing a multi-party democracy with Tutsis. His use of the term “fighting,” while correct for the conflict between the RPF and the army, confuses the civil war with the massacres, especially when he attributes the death toll to “inter-tribal fighting.” In yet another article titled “New Government Flees Kigali,” published on 13 April, Mark Huband opens with a sentence describing the military warfare. “Heavy fighting erupted yesterday in the centre of the Rwandan capital as government troops fought advancing rebels, firing cannons and mortars from positions in a valley below the city’s deserted embassy district.” He then makes reference to the continued “tribal slaughter” and notes that “beside every checkpoint bodies lay as evidence of the continuing violence.” Huband mentions that the Red Cross had estimated 15,000 people dead, but gives no other explanation for their death. Instead, the article focuses on other issues, such as the refugees fleeing the city.

Lindsey Hilsum of *The Guardian* reports with similar vagueness initially. In an article published on 16 April and titled, “Rwandan Blood Flows as Foreign Forces Depart,” Hilsum opens the story with a description of the civil war, describing the artillery and mortars exchanged by the government and the rebels. She then mentions the “thousands of people who have died in an orgy of ethnic violence between the majority Hutu and minority Tutsi” but does not elaborate further on the motivations for the killings. She also does not identify the perpetrators, apart from referring to them as “thugs and soldiers armed with machete and knives” and does not describe the campaign of targeting Tutsi. In fact, like others, Hilsum describes the crisis as an “anarchic situation” and goes no further in explaining the massacres. This pattern continues even in stories not penned by the newspaper, but picked up from the wire agencies. A Reuters

story from 20 April reports on the shelling of a stadium in Kigali where refugees were sheltering, but never offers an explanation as to why they were targeted, or that the refugees were Tutsi (“Rwandan Troops Shell Refugees,” 1994). Even in a story titled, “Killings Soar in Rwanda Anarchy,” where the massacres are described in detail, little explanation is given (Luce, 1994). The Red Cross is quoted describing how a Red Cross van had been stopped in Kigali and soldiers had killed its patients on the spot. Instead of offering the motivation for these and other killings, the article simply attributes the violence to “tribal anarchy.” “Hundreds of thousands have probably lost their lives in the orgy of slaughter which has swept Rwanda over the past fortnight,” says the opening line of the article, which is then followed by the affirmation that “the death rate looks certain to rise as tribal anarchy intensifies.” There is no political explanation or background, and the article simply closes with a statement that Rwanda’s government and the rebels had agreed to talk about a ceasefire, again placing the unexplained within the context of a military situation.

Interestingly, the first evidence of a more nuanced reading emerges in a 23 April story that cites several nongovernmental organizations, including a human rights activist from Rwanda (Brittain and Luce, “Aid Agencies Condemn,” 1994). While factual errors are still present, including an intervention by the Red Cross that focuses on the “fighting” aspect of the conflict, Rwandan human rights activist Monique Mujawamariya emphasizes the planned and systematic aspect of the killing. “The vast majority of the slaughter in Rwanda,” she is quoted as saying, “was perpetrated by small bands of young men who’d been systematically transformed by the regime into killing machines, and then unleashed upon the population.” Monique Mujawamariya is the first to make



this assertion in *The Guardian*. The *interahamwe*, the trained militias, had never been named or even identified as an organized group in any of the coverage before now. They make an appearance again, several days later, in a story written by Lindsey Hilsum about Burundi. Finally, a detailed and accurate explanation is offered for the events in Rwanda. “The testimony of refugees [entering Burundi] and the last few foreigners to flee Rwanda reveal the pattern of the killing,” writes Hilsum (“Captains Held,” 1994). She then goes on to describe in detail that government-appointed local officials had been working in conjunction with the police and military to organize the killings and were directing extremist militias known as *interahamwe* to kill. Initially, continues Hilsum, both Hutu and Tutsi were targeted along political lines, but now the massacres had become purely ethnic and were aimed against the Tutsis. This information finally emerges two and a half weeks after the slaughter has started. Although Hilsum does not cite an NGO as the source of her information, she and Monique Mujawamariya are among the first to offer a different view.

Other stories start to paint a clearer picture toward the end of April. On 27 April, *The Guardian* runs a small brief in the paper quoting a statement from Amnesty International that claims government and security forces are the ones ordering the killing in Rwanda and correcting the characterization that portrays the massacres as ethnic infighting (“News in Brief: ‘Non-Ethnic Killings,’ 1994). “Genocide” is mentioned for the first time a few days later, in a story published on 29 April that attributes the use of the word to an unidentified U.N. official and British nongovernmental organization Oxfam. The U.N. official is quoted saying the mass butchering of Tutsis “constitutes a

systematic attempt to eliminate them” (Smerdon, “It’s Genocide, Says U.N.,” 1994).

Oxfam also is quoted saying it fears the Tutsis have been the victims of genocide.

Despite this declaration, misrepresentations continue throughout the month of May and June. For example, a story published on 13 May, titled, “U.N.’s Rwanda Crisis: ‘Both Parties... Will Fight to the End,’” repeats some of the same previous patterns (Huband, 1994). Reporter Mark Huband again opens the article with a description of the military campaign: “Rocket fire shattered several hours of relative calm in the Rwandan capital last night as rebel forces launched missiles and heavy mortars at government troops who were pinned down on three sides of the city.” He then goes on to describe how small groups of civilians who had survived “a month of slaughter” wandered through the heavily patrolled streets and how there were few injured in the hospitals because most people were dead. But Huband never attempts an explanation for the killings, perhaps assuming at this point that previous reports had already explained the massacres. Instead, as he closes his article, he quotes a Red Cross official who says, “‘Both parties are so desperate that they will fight to the end,’” once again placing the situation within the context of mutual warfare. Similarly, in a brief from Reuters published on 14 May, a death toll of 500,000 is given for the first time in *The Guardian*, but the deaths are attributed to “Rwanda’s conflict” and to “fighting” while the Red Cross’s hospital in Kigali is said to house the sick and “war wounded” (“Up to 500,000,” 1994). Also, even as it cites a statement issued by Oxfam on May 3 comparing the carnage of Rwanda to the “killing fields of Cambodia,” the editorial board issues an article debating whether the U.N. should let “the factions fight it out alone” (“The Orphan of Africa,” 1994). The op-ed argues that “glum pragmatism dictates that there is precious

little the international community can do to stem the fighting in Rwanda at this stage.” It mentions that Rwanda and Burundi have been “in a simmering state of civil war since 1962,” presumably to explain that this most recent conflict is an extension of that war, and it warns about the danger of the “fighting in Rwanda” spreading to the northwestern region of the country. Once again, the language of war confuses the issue.

Nevertheless, mentions of “genocide” increasingly begin to filter through in May and June. For example, in a 5 May story about the Hutu and Tutsi refugees sheltering in Burundi, Lindsey Hilsum uses “genocide” for the first time in her coverage (“Refugees from Terror,” 1994). “Now the Burundian Tutsis have been joined by Rwandan Tutsis, fleeing genocide in their country.” On May 18, Human Rights Watch is quoted in a story about the U.N.’s decision to use a phased approach to sending an intervention force to Rwanda. ““We need prompt action in the face of genocide in Rwanda,”” HRW Rwanda expert Alison DesForges is quoted as saying (Elliott, “Fury Greets U.S.,” 1994).

Other articles also begin appearing offering a more nuanced explanation of the violence, focusing on its planned nature. One article titled “Rwanda: Blurred Roots of Conflict,” argues that the slaughter was politically and not ethnically motivated and that the interim government was implicated in the massacres (Bright, 1994). The human rights NGO, African Rights, is quoted in the article saying that tribal representations of the situation in Rwanda were misleading because Tutsi and Hutu were not originally tribes, but socioeconomic classes. African Rights also asserts that the war was being used to justify the massacre of unarmed civilians. Similarly, a story published on 3 May titled, “Blood Brothers,” explains that the killings were political in nature and were meant to wipe out political opposition (Huband, Lorch and Richburg, 1994). (Interestingly, the

article attributes this claim to “human rights groups,” although it does not identify which ones.) A Letter to the Editor from Amnesty International published on 6 May challenges *The Guardian*’s representation of the situation as inter-ethnic fighting in its 4 May opinion-editorial, and instead describes it as an “orchestrated campaign to deprive the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and all political parties opposed to the government, of any supporters or sympathizers” (“Action to End Rwanda Killing,” 1994). Likewise, in a story from 30 May, Mark Huband interviews *interahamwe* members and reports that their admissions confirmed “widespread claims that the bloodshed was planned before the president’s death” (“I Killed My Brother,” 1994).

Perhaps the most striking turnaround in *The Guardian*’s official discourse occurs when the editorial staff publishes another opinion-editorial in June, and this time explicitly uses the word “genocide,” marking a complete shift from its previous vague use of the word “fighting.” Unlike its first hesitation to get involved, the article calls strongly for U.N. intervention, and, citing Human Rights Watch, unequivocally identifies the situation: “Genocide, as Human Rights Watch/Africa says in its latest report, must be called by its rightful name” (“Rwanda is Waiting,” 1994). Also in May and June, the word “genocide” begins to appear in other contexts, as other sources in the press begin using it. For example, the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, is cited twice using the word “genocide.” The first time, in an article published 6 May titled, “Ugandan Leader Urges Foreign Intervention; Genocide Not Part of Internal Affairs,” Museveni becomes the first African president to call the killings “genocide” and explains that it is being used as an instrument to eliminate the opposition (Huband, 1994). He is also cited a second time on 10 June calling it a genocide (“Troops to Go to Rwanda,” 1994).

Similarly, Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe is cited in a 4 June article condemning the genocide. On June 22, *The Guardian* also publishes an article titled, “Militiaman Claims France Trained Rwanda’s Killers: It Was Genocide he was Ordered to Carry Out” (Huband, 1994). The table below outlines the arguments offered in *The Guardian’s* coverage for the violence and killing. Compiling these explanations is helpful in understanding who introduced them and how they evolved.

Date	Argument	Source Cited
13 April	Much of the fighting appears to have been among Hutu factions which are either for or against... democracy with the Tutsi opposition.	No source is cited. Explanation offered by reporter John Palmer.
23 April	“The vast majority of the slaughter was perpetrated by small bands of young men who had been systematically turned into killing machines by the regime and then unleashed upon the population.”	Monique Mujamawariya, Rwanda human rights activist who worked in conjunction with HRW
26 April	Local government officials were working in conjunction with the police and the military to carry out the slaughter.	“Testimony of refugees and foreigners”
27 April	Government and security forces are ordering the killings; they are political and not just ethnic in nature.	Amnesty International
29 April	A genocide of the Tutsis is taking place.	Unidentified U.N. Official and Oxfam
3 May	Hutu hardliners in military and militias carried out revenge killings of Tutsis and killed moderates in the government.	“human rights groups”
5 May	It is “genocide.”	RPF Commander Paul Kagame
5 May	“Now the Burundian Tutsis have been joined by the Rwandan Tutsis, fleeing genocide in their country.”	Reporter Lindsey Hilsum uses the word without attribution in her story.
6 May	Killings are not ethnic in-fighting. They are part of an orchestrated campaign to deprive the opposition of its supporters.	Amnesty International (Letter to the Editor)
6 May	This is a “genocide to eliminate the opposition.”	President Museveni of Uganda
7 May	“killing fields of Rwanda are like the killing fields of Cambodia”	Oxfam (quoted in news story)
7 May	“Killing fields of Rwanda”	Oxfam (cited in an opinion-editorial by <i>The Guardian</i> )
8 May	Tribal representations of the situation in Rwanda are misleading because Tutsi and Hutu were not originally tribes, but socioeconomic classes. The war is being used to justify the massacre of unarmed civilians.	African Rights
18 May	“We need prompt action in the face of genocide.”	Human Rights Watch
31 May	“The genocide that occurred – I can’t explain it.”	Western Nun in Rwanda

Table 8. Alternative explanations for the violence (countering stereotypical representations of “tribal savagery” and “tribal warfare”) offered in *The Guardian* in April and May 1994

Table 8 traces explanations offered to explain the violence in Rwanda in April and May. These were explanations different from the vague “tribal conflict” or “centuries-old feud” that were used by way of explanation but did not really identify perpetrators and victims or offer a more thorough account of the reasons for the killings. The table shows the progression of the arguments, which first began claiming that it was an orchestrated or systematic approach. (It is worth noting that the first “political” explanation, which was offered by reporter John Palmer claiming that Hutu factions were fighting with each other over issues of democracy, was only mentioned in passing as one possible explanation and not expanded further.) The word “genocide” was then introduced for the first time in a 29 April article and attributed to an unidentified U.N. official and to British NGO, Oxfam, both of whom are quoted calling the mass killings “genocide.” Of all 16 interventions listed in the table, nine were attributed in the media to human rights organizations or activists. In June and July, these explanations became widely cited and reproduced (they were too numerous to include in the table). The word “genocide” also appeared much more frequently. In June, “genocide” was used in 12 articles. In July, “genocide” appeared in 20 articles. In sum, more factually accurate and detailed explanations proliferated in April and May, from six offered in April, to ten offered in May, to numerous and widespread appearances in June and July. The word “genocide” also gradually gained currency. In April, it appeared only in one article. In May, it appeared in five articles. In June, “genocide” was used in 12 articles, and in July, it was used in 20 articles.

Human rights groups seemed to have played an important role in introducing this discourse, given that nine of the sixteen interventions cited in the table were attributed to

human rights activists. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International also appear to play a role, given that the first mention of the killings' systematic nature was attributed to Monique Mujawamariya, a Rwandan activist who was working with HRW at the time, and Amnesty was quoted on 23 April discussing the political motivation for the killings. In total, Amnesty was cited on three occasions in the four-month period; Human Rights Watch was cited on two occasions. In Amnesty's interventions, the organization emphasized the killings' political nature, and in HRW's interventions, the organization emphasized its nature as genocide. Although these interventions were few compared to other NGOs, such as Oxfam, which appeared in 15 articles throughout the four-month period, it is likely that they were influential, because their intervention preceded the proliferation of the "genocide" explanation. *The Guardian's* editorial board, for example, cites HRW in one of its editorial pieces on 10 June when it states that "genocide, as Human Rights Watch/Africa Watch says, must be called by its rightful name."

Themes similar to those that appeared in *The Guardian* were also present in *The New York Times*, although the initial coverage of Rwanda in *The Times* was less accurate. The conflict's characterization as "fighting" was more pronounced in *The Times* than in *The Guardian*. While *The Guardian* reported in confusing terms and initially offered few explanations for the violence, *The New York Times* often attributed the deaths specifically to "fighting" and not to the deliberate slaying of civilians.

Similar to *The Guardian*, in the first couple of days, coverage was fairly detailed and not entirely inaccurate. Even though the first couple of articles also described the scene in terms of anarchy and chaos (as *The Guardian* had done), the perpetrators were at least identified, even if incompletely. "...Disparate army and police forces went on a

rampage,” opens on 8 April article (Schmidt, “Troops Rampage,” 1994). It goes on to describe young men with machetes roaming the street, and attributes the bulk of the violence to the Presidential Guard. While we know now that the militias were not just roaming in anarchic lawlessness, there is throughout the article at least a sense that certain groups or individuals are being victimized. This becomes less apparent in the coverage during the rest of the month. In a story published 9 April titled, “Terror Convulses Rwandan Capital as Tribes Battle,” the violence is portrayed as mutual:

“Rival tribal factions waged vicious street battles Friday for control of the city, reports from Rwanda said. The death toll of civilians, Government ministers, and soldiers – including at least 10 United Nations peacekeeping troops – was estimated to be in the thousands” (Schmidt, 1994).

The article uses the word “fighting” to describe the violence three more times, and uses “warring factions” in another instance. The headline also describes tribes “battling.” Even in articles where the prominent role of the Presidential Guard in the killings is mentioned, the conflict is still portrayed as one of mutual warfare. For example, in an article titled “Two Presidents Die: Peace Talks a Casualty of Tribal War in Rwandan Capital,” the leading sentence notes the presidents’ plane crash “touched off bloody clashes between tribal factions” and immediately follows this sentence with an estimated death toll “in the thousands” (Lewis, 1994). It describes the “brutal street fighting” and notes that Burundi suffered from similar “warfare between Tutsi and Hutu factions.” The leading sentence of another story, one published 10 April, shows a similar pattern: “Red Cross officials in Kigali said the death toll from the fighting ... has risen steadily and dramatically since Wednesday” (McFadden, “Western Troops,” 1994). The word



“fighting” is repeated four more times throughout to refer to the violence. “The United Nations force,” reports the article, “has been confined to barracks since 10 Belgians were killed early in the *fighting* trying to protect the Prime Minister, who was also slain” (my emphasis). This representation appears consistently throughout the first two weeks. “There were major developments yesterday as fighting continued in Rwanda,” reports one 10 April article (“Rwanda Update,” 1994). Another article published on 11 April, titled, “Strife in Rwanda: Deaths in Rwanda Fighting Said to be 20,000 or More,” appears to attribute the thousands dead to mutual warfare: “As fighting between rival tribal factions in neighboring Rwanda appeared to slacken today, relief workers in Kigali, the capital, estimated the death toll from four days of ethnic warfare and reprisal killings at more than 20,000” (Schmidt, 1994). This first sentence makes a rare mention of “reprisal killings,” but subsequent paragraphs describe “the carnage the Rwandans have inflicted upon one another” and the “warring Hutu and Tutsi tribal factions.” (Only in the 18<sup>th</sup> paragraph is there one mention of soldiers and guards who had supported the downed president taking to the streets and “killing Tutsis and their supporters and fighting with Tutsi-backed rebels.” In a very long story, and buried in the middle, this one distinction between the two types of violence, is too short and too quickly abandoned.) This prevalent (mis)representation is perhaps most clearly seen in the writings of the paper’s editorial board itself. A 10 April opinion-editorial acknowledges the “full-scale massacre” and the “orgy of slaughter,” but it also describes the situation as “a civil war between the majority Hutu and the minority Tutsi tribes” and asks whether the world should not “stand aside if belligerents cannot agree” (“Double Tragedy in Africa,” 1994).

A distinction between the mass killings and warfare begins to emerge in an article on 15 April titled, “U.N. in Rwanda Says It is Powerless to Halt the Violence” (Lorch, 1994). While the article mentions “fighting” eight times, and does not attribute it specifically to the warfare between the RPF and the government army, it also notes that “reports of mass killings” have filtered out to the public, and describes the massacres four times. The article still offers no explanation for the massacre of civilians and interchanges discussion of the fighting with descriptions of the killings, making it difficult for the reader to comprehend the two as separate events. It also only seems to attempt an explanation in the following paragraph: “[Habyarimana’s] death set off a centuries-old tribal hatred between the minority Tutsi ethnic group and the majority Hutus. Since then, tens of thousands of Rwandans have been killed, most of them in massacres.” In other words, civilians were being targeted for ethnic reasons, and in addition to that, there was “fighting” between two armies. While this was true, the “centuries-old” rationale serves to obscure the planned nature of the genocide by portraying it as the spontaneous eruption of tribal violence.

Another article, published 15 April, also cites the “centuries-old feud” between the two tribes (Sciolino, “For West,” 1994). In this instance, the massacres are clearly described, but there is no explanation of the specific targeting of Tutsis. Instead, the article explains that “tens of thousands of people are estimated to have died in a week of fighting rooted in the centuries-old feud between Rwanda’s majority Hutu and minority Tutsi ethnic groups.” Only in the 15<sup>th</sup> paragraph of this 18-paragraph story is there mention of a massacre of Tutsis, and even then, this mention is not accompanied by an explanation.

A clearer representation of the targeting of Tutsis appears in a 17 April article by reporter William Schmidt (“Once Chosen,” 1994). “Uncounted thousands of Tutsis were slaughtered by Hutu gangs and soldiers,” writes Schmidt in the second paragraph. Human Rights Watch Rwanda expert, Alison DesForges, is quoted in the article, although she is described as “an African historian.” Titled “Once Chosen, Tribal Elites Now Suffer Consequences,” the article delves into the colonial past to look for the roots of the violence. It describes how the Belgian colonizers had preferred the Tutsis as the administrative, ruling class of Rwanda. DesForges is cited explaining that the Belgians had instituted identity cards, which had exacerbated tribal differences. Schmidt explains that tribal grievances and resentments had been manipulated by local politicians for their own gain. He argues that Habyarimana had “stoked the fires of ethnic hatred, providing weapons and direction for tribal gangs” in previous years. DesForges is also cited explaining that the tribal tensions had been manipulated by ambitious people to their own advantage. While the article does not make an explicit connection between this political manipulation and the genocide, it circles around this, coming closer than any previous attempt at a reason for the killings.

Human Rights Watch appears again in the pages of *The New York Times* only three days later, in a letter to the editor published on 20 April (“Don’t Write Off,” 1994). Jerri Laber, the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch-Helsinki, counters the argument that the crisis in Rwanda is the result of age-old tribal hatreds. She points out that ethnic massacres are “usually the result of political manipulation by governments seeking to consolidate their power or increase their territory” and calls on the U.N. to bring the carnage to an end. She also explains that “the initial violence following the

plane crash in which President Juvenal Habyarimana was killed was politically, not ethnically based: hard-line members of the government took the opportunity to eliminate progressive critics, both Hutu and Tutsi.”

An opinion-editorial by the editorial board on 23 April shows a shift in discourse. The opening line acknowledges that “what looks very much like genocide has been taking place in Rwanda” (“Cold Choices,” 1994). Whereas the first op-ed had placed the presumptive blame for the plane shootdown on the Tutsis, this piece explains that “the credible suspicion is that they [the presidents] were killed by Hutu hardliners in Rwanda who oppose reconciliation with the Tutsi people.” The article still fails to separate the massacres from the war, and notes the U.N. force was sent to Rwanda to keep the peace and not “take sides in a civil war.” But at the very least, a political explanation has been brought into the discourse – something other than just a cultural explanation that fails to identify those truly responsible and something other than the mutual responsibility of “civil war.”

This awakening to the fact that more is transpiring in Rwanda than just “fighting” becomes increasingly apparent in the coverage in May, although there are still recurrences of the previous representations. A 24 April story picked up from Reuters reports that “100,000 people have been killed in fighting” (“Rebel Officials,” 1994), but a 25 April story by *New York Times* reporter Donatella Lorch describes the survivors of “the massacres that have killed tens of thousands in Rwanda since the country’s President was killed” (“Rwandan Refugees Describe,” 1994). The mass deaths are, therefore, finally attributed to massacres and not just war, although other flaws in the reporting continue to a lesser extent.

To understand how alternative explanations of the violence enter portrayals in *The New York Times*, it is important to trace when reasons other than “tribal passions” or “ethnic hatred” begin appearing to explain the killings, which is done in Table 9 below.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Argument</b>	<b>Source</b>
11 April	The killings are “ethnic cleansing.”	U.N. Secretary General’s Special Representative in Rwanda Jacques-Rogers Booh Booh
17 April	The situation in Rwanda is a manipulation of tribal tensions for political ambitions (i.e., it is planned and not spontaneous among the population).	Human Rights Watch
20 April	The crisis in Rwanda is not the result of age-old tribal hatreds. It is a political manipulation. The initial violence was aimed at political opponents.	Human Rights Watch (Letter to the editor)
23 April	“what looks like genocide” has been taking place in Rwanda	<i>New York Times</i> opinion-editorial
27 April	Massacres are primarily being carried out by soldiers of the Rwandan army [...] It is “political and ethnic-related violence by Hutu hardliners, aimed first at political moderates and then at all Tutsis.”	“human rights groups, Western diplomats, and refugees fleeing Rwanda”
30 April	“campaign of ethnic cleansing”	U.N. High Commissioner of Human Rights
4 May	“genocide”	U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali
4 May	Children were “selected on an ethnic basis to be killed.”	International Committee of the Red Cross
5 May	It was a planned campaign.	David Rawson, U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda.
5 May	Habyarimana’s party was responsible for violence in recent years; he had armed his supporters.	Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International
5 May	It is “not a tribal conflict, but a coldblooded, ruthless cynical plot.”	Human Rights Watch
17 May	“The delay of the U.S. in confronting genocide is appalling.”	Human Rights Watch
18 May	The military “has systematically massacred not only thousands from the minority Tutsi tribe but also moderate Hutu associated with the Habyarimana government.”	No source is cited. ( <i>New York Times</i> reporter Donatella Lorch no longer attributes argument to any particular group to make the claim, but rather states political argument as fact.)
23 May	Medecins Sans Frontieres exhorts the Security Council to end “the genocide being perpetrated against the Tutsi people.” MSF also argues that “ethnic tensions within Rwanda are being exacerbated to pursue political goals.”	Medecins Sans Frontieres (Letter to the Editor)

Table 9. Alternative explanations for the violence (countering stereotypical representations of “tribal savagery” and “tribal warfare”) offered in *The New York Times* in April and May 1994.

Of all 14 instances in April and May where other explanations, besides the prevalent argument of “tribal slaughter,” “centuries-old hatred,” or “anarchy” were given, NGOs were responsible for at least eight interventions. Table 9 shows that in the initial coverage, these “alternative” explanations were attributed to their source, but in later coverage, such as in the 18 May story by a *New York Times* reporter, the claims of systematic slaughter were no longer attributed but rather reported as accepted fact. Between 11 April, then, when the first mention of “ethnic cleansing” is made and 18 May, when the reporter writes about it without claiming a source, a definite shift has taken place in the media perception of events. (It is worth noting that the initial mention of “ethnic cleansing” was attributed in quotes to UN Special Representative for Rwanda Jacques Roger Booh-Booh and was only mentioned in passing. It was not explained further.)

When one examines mentions of the word “genocide,” a clear change in discourse also becomes apparent, as the word becomes more widely adopted. In April, the only mention of the word “genocide” appears in an opinion-editorial by *The New York Times*, where it both acknowledges that genocide is taking place, but wonders whether the world should intervene “when belligerents cannot agree.” In May, there are four mentions of the word “genocide” – two are attributed to U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, one to Human Rights Watch and one to Medecins Sans Frontieres. In June, there are seven instances of the word “genocide.” Four are mentioned in relation to the Clinton Administration’s reluctance to use the term; one is used by a reporter to describe the conflict; one is attributed only to “human rights monitors”; and one is attributed to Boutros-Ghali and the French government. As with Table 9, there is a shift from when

the word is initially used – mostly attributed to the U.N. and to NGOs – to when it is used as an accepted fact among the media, to the extent that reporters no longer feel they have to attribute the claim to anyone and in fact opinion-editorials challenge the U.S. government for its avoidance of the term. (In the month of July, the word “genocide” appears four times in *The New York Times* coverage, diminishing, perhaps, as the focus turned to the refugee situation.)

Of all the interventions of NGOs in *The New York Times*, Human Rights Watch / Africa Watch appears as the most widely cited human rights advocacy organization in coverage of the period. The most widely cited NGOs were the International Committee of the Red Cross and Medecins Sans Frontieres, two relief organizations that maintained a presence in Rwanda throughout the genocide and were frequently quoted describing the number, state, and condition of the victims. By contrast, Human Rights Watch appeared in 12 articles throughout the four-month period. While this may seem a small number compared to the dense volume of coverage, it was the highest number of any single human rights advocacy organization. The quality of their interventions was also important, considering that as early as 20 April, Human Rights Watch was pointing to the political nature of the killings and suggesting it was a political ploy and not simply a spontaneous eruption of hatred or mutual warfare. In all 12 appearances, Human Rights Watch was presented as an expert in the politics of Rwanda, which is the single most distinguishing factor of its interventions versus those of other organizations, especially ICRC and Medecins Sans Frontieres. Consistently, Human Rights Watch not only appeared in its capacity as advocate but also as country expert. This emphasis on the political facts was precisely the counterbalance needed to change the discourse from one

that offered a cultural explanation (hatred long held between two tribes) to one that identified the political motivations and instigators behind the genocide. Amnesty International's presence was much smaller, appearing only once in an article in which it argued that President Habyarimana had borne special responsibility for the violence in Rwanda leading up to the genocide, as his party had been known to arm supporters and to kill known rebel sympathizers. This was an important intervention because it highlighted a pattern of planned killing, but it was unfortunately, only one intervention.

*The Washington Post* repeats some of the same themes and flaws as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* initially, but the distinction between the killings and the massacres are much more quickly made. One 11 April article titled, "Rwandan Capital Awash in Chaos and Corpses" explains only that Rwanda is a country "where the majority Hutus and minority Tutsis have repeatedly clashed" (Smerdon, 1994). Early in the coverage, however, a political explanation is offered for the killings, and in the reports of at least one reporter, Jennifer Parmalee, a distinction quickly emerges between the killings and the warfare. In an 11 April article, Parmalee reports that the Rwandan government blamed the Tutsis for firing the rocket that brought down the President's plane and then "Hutu troops of the Presidential Guard and bands of Hutu youths went on killing rampages against Tutsis" ("Americans Are Out," 1994). Whereas other stories might have reverted to references to "fighting" and mutual warfare, Parmalee goes on to describe how "Rwandans, mostly Tutsi or Hutu sympathizers with the Tutsis, have been dragged from their homes and offices and shot or hacked to death." In a 10 April story, she offers a political explanation for the conflict, citing Rwandan opposition parties, who had released a statement claiming Hutu hardliners in the government and military were



using Habyarimana's death "as a pretext to hunt down all opponents – especially Tutsis" ("Rebels Advance in Rwanda," 1994). (*The Post* was, in fact, the only paper of the three analyzed that cited this statement from Rwandan opposition parties.) In this same article, Parmalee quotes Alison DesForges of Human Rights Watch, who says, "At the heart of this, it was a coup d'etat." DesForges explains that the top political leaders executed in the first days of the killing had been those who favored a compromise with the opposition.

Human Rights Watch makes a very early appearance in the pages of *The Post* when the editorial board excerpts an internal memo on 8 April from DesForges to her colleagues describing how she feared human rights activist Monique Mujawamariya had been killed in her home by soldiers targeting those who were said to have "ruined Habyarimana's reputation" ("Take Care of My Children," 1994). An examination of the various explanations offered by sources quoted in *The Post's* articles (shown in Table 10) reveals a similar pattern to that which can be seen in *The New York Times*. Ten of the 20 explanations offered in April and May come from human rights advocacy organizations. The other half are offered by U.N. personnel, writers for the paper, or the RPF. Human Rights Watch is responsible for eight of these NGO interventions. It becomes clear that NGOs are the single largest source of explanations for the violence, and in *The Washington Post*, the interventions of Human Rights Watch are particularly prevalent, especially in the first two months, which are so critical for shaping the discourse. Also, as in *The Guardian*, the prevalence of the word "genocide" increases over time. In April it appears in five articles, in May it appears in five articles, in June it appears in eight articles, and in July it appears in 13 articles. Table 10 is included below.

Date	Argument	Source
8 April	Soldiers were targeting those “said to have ruined Habyarimana’s reputation.”	Human Rights Watch
10 April	Habyarimana’s death served as a pretext for the Presidential Guard to eliminate the Tutsi minority and liquidate politicians not in the presidential movement.	Rwanda Opposition Parties
12 April	This was a coup d’etat by government hardliners.	Human Rights Watch
17 April	The killings were organized. The plane crash was the pretext and not the reason for the slaughter. Extremists within the government were using the death of the President as an excuse to eliminate all political opponents, both Hutu and Tutsi.	Human Rights Watch (Letter to the Editor)
17 April	This is one of many “parish pump genocides” in the third world that are brought about by a failed democratic process. Democracies (according to this writer) are doomed to fail in societies with low literacy and unemployment rates.	Robert Kaplan (guest writer to <i>The Post</i> )
19 April	Human rights workers were being targeted by extremist President supporters.	Human Rights Watch
22 April	This is “absolutely a case of genocide in which a small group of Hutu extremists are trying to hold on to power by declaring war on the Tutsi minority.”	Human Rights Watch
24 April	“Since December... the hard-core of the army started training civilians and militia” [...] “We put the word ‘genocide’ on the table... there is clearly the intention to eliminate the Tutsi as a people... this is not fighting, it’s slaughter.”	Human Rights Watch and Rwandan activist Monique Mujawamariya
26 April	“It is pure genocide. They are killing family after family after family.”	Kigeli V (former King of Rwanda, exiled in the U.S.)
26 April	“It is systematic, like a genocide.”	ICRC
27 April	The militias have been operating in connivance with the military.	RPF
30 April	Extremists Hutus, many associated with the government, have slaughtered thousands of unarmed civilians in a genocide campaign.	“Human rights groups”
5 May	“Hutus – in rampaging gangs of youths as well as organized bands of paramilitary men – launched a bloody campaign of ‘ethnic cleansing.’”	Keith Richburg ( <i>Post</i> reporter)
8 May	“What is happening in Rwanda I think on any definition amounts to genocide.”	Acting Legal Counsel of U.N. Security Council
8 May	The February slaying of 40 Tutsis preceding the genocide was “a test balloon to see if the U.N. was going to react.”	Human Rights Watch
26 May	“It is genocide which has been committed. More than 200,000 people have been killed.”	U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali
27 May	“the one unequivocal case of genocide occurring in the world today”	Charles Krauthammer (guest writer)
28 May	“With good reason Boutros-Ghali calls it genocide”	Washington Post Editorial Board
30 May	(Human Rights Watch identifies four members of the government and military who were the instigators and organizers of the slaughters.)	Human Rights Watch
31 May	“The scale of the killings – and the methodical way they were carried out – suggest nothing less than genocide.”	Richard Cohen (guest writer)

Table 10. Alternative explanations for the violence (countering stereotypical representations of “tribal savagery” and “tribal warfare”) offered in *The Washington Post* in April and May 1994.

A closer examination of the interventions of Human Rights Watch shows that they were cited in 13 articles in *The Washington Post*. Again, after the ICRC and Medecins Sans Frontieres/Doctors Without Borders, they are the single most cited NGO. They are the most often cited human rights advocacy organization. (Amnesty International appears only once in the four-month period, in a letter to the editor decrying the United States' lack of leadership in Rwanda.) In *The Washington Post*, Human Rights Watch appears six times in April, and seven times in May. Their first intervention is as early as 8 April. On 17 April, only ten days after the start of the killings, Human Rights Watch Rwanda expert, Alison DesForges, publishes a contributed article in *The Post* titled, "The Method in Rwanda's Madness: Politics, Not Tribalism, Is at the Root of the Bloodletting." This article argues that the plane crash was the pretext, and not the cause, for the slaughter. It also points to the organized nature of the killings and explains that extremists within the government were systematically wiping out opponents, including Hutu leaders of the opposition. Another key intervention is a 24 April article written by the editorial board after an interview with DesForges of Human Rights Watch and Monique Mujawamariya ("So that the World," 1994). In this article, DesForges and Mujawamariya argue that the genocide was planned well in advance, Tutsis were being targeted, and the killings amounted to "genocide" (Richburg, "Rwandan Leaders Flee," 1994). Later, in May, Human Rights Watch actually provides the names of four officials within the Rwandan government and army who they believe are the primary instigators of the genocide. No other entity cited in the coverage ever supplies this kind of inside information or makes this claim. Other important interventions include several discussions about France's arming of Rwanda prior to the genocide, and one article titled,

“Witnesses Describe Cold Campaign of Killing in Rwanda” that appeared on 8 May in the front page (Richburg, 1994). In this article, Human Rights Watch once again emphasizes the Rwandan government’s premeditation and planning of the killings. In sum, four interventions by Human Rights Watch in *The Washington Post* highlight the planned nature of the killings, and two additional interventions refer to the killings as “genocide.” These interventions are especially visible, given the important piece from the editorial board, the contributed article by DesForges discussing the genocide’s planned character, and the front-page story on the “cold campaign of killing.”

## V: DISCUSSION

This study took as its premise the idea that communicating with the media is an integral part of the work of human rights advocacy NGOs. The organizations themselves have acknowledged their use of the media to frame issues and set agendas, as Ron, Ramos, and Rodgers reported in their study, and as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International explain on their websites. Advocacy NGOs use the media as a platform to reach decision makers and to influence the public into accepting their interpretation of events and subsequently pressure policymakers. For this reason, the media coverage of an event can serve as a tool to discover whether transnational advocacy networks are engaged in issue creation and have discursive influence.

The systematic, critical analysis of the coverage of the Rwanda genocide in these three elite newspapers confirmed my hypothesis (H1) that the media misrepresented the conflict, especially in its beginning stages. Most of the misrepresentations appeared in the months of April and May. Because much of the killing occurred in these two months, the charge that the media might have been partially responsible for the inaction seems to be founded, although the flaws were more pronounced in some media than others. All three newspapers emphasized the mutual warfare and civil war aspect of the conflict, at the expense of revealing a sustained and orchestrated killing campaign against civilians. *The New York Times*, in particular, made references to the “fighting” in Rwanda more frequently in April and May than the other two newspapers, missing the opportunity to convey the scale of what was clearly the slaughter of civilians. All three also offered general, misleading explanations for the violence, blaming it only on “tribal hatreds” and “centuries-old hatreds.” *The Guardian* dedicated the largest proportion of headlines from

all three newspapers on the massacres in April, but then relegated the coverage of Rwanda to its inside pages in May, also missing the opportunity to convey the scale of events by not giving it a sense of urgency for British citizens and Europeans. *The Washington Post* was the quickest of all three publications to make the distinction between the warfare and the massacres, and as early as 9 April described the targeting of Tutsi civilians in its news stories. Also early in the reporting (beginning 17 April), *The Washington Post* began running stories making a political argument for the killings.

Confirming hypothesis two (H2), in all three newspapers, NGOs played an important role in introducing arguments that countered stereotypical representations of Africans engaging in “tribal warfare” and highlighted the political motivations underpinning the genocide. In the case of *The Guardian*, the intervention of Monique Mujamawariya – an activist who was collaborating with Human Rights Watch – was the first source pointing to the killings’ premeditated and systematic character. Amnesty International also made an important intervention in April, releasing a statement that emphasized the government’s and military’s role in the killings. British NGO Oxfam also seems to have played an important role in influencing the discourse of *The Guardian*, appearing in the same article that mentioned “genocide” for the first time and arguing that Tutsis were being targeted as part of genocide. Oxfam was also cited in an important commentary piece by the editorial board where it finally acknowledged that genocide was occurring in Rwanda. Oxfam appeared 15 times in *The Guardian* – the most of any NGO after relief organizations International Committee of the Red Cross and Medecins Sans Frontieres. Five times Oxfam appeared in April and May, decrying the massacres. It also appeared two more times in May – once in connection with the water

supply for Rwandan refugees and once to decry the UN's resolution reducing the UNAMIR force. In June, it was cited twice, once welcoming the news of France's deployment to Rwanda and a second time described as shying away from working with the French in Rwanda. In July, it was mentioned six times in connection with the refugee situation.

One surprising finding from the study was that Amnesty International's presence in all three publications was much smaller than could have been expected given this organization's size and importance in the human rights field. This finding partially contradicts hypothesis three (H3), which argued that Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International would play a key role in establishing a new discourse. Amnesty was cited only once in *The New York Times* in a news story by a staff reporter, and only once in *The Washington Post*, with a letter to the editor from the head of the USA Chapter criticizing the United States' lack of leadership in the Rwanda crisis. In *The Guardian*, Amnesty was referenced three times in direct relation with the Rwanda crisis and once in relation to Burundi. While the organization's interventions might have been influential given its reputation, the low number of its interventions makes it likely that its media influence was not as great as that of other NGOs who were cited repeatedly in the media, such as Human Rights Watch, although one also has to wonder whether the number of interventions is a sufficient criterion to determine influence, when fewer interventions by an organization with Amnesty's reputation could also be decisive. This lack of media presence suggests a missed opportunity for Amnesty, which could have done more with its media relations efforts to raise awareness about the genocide, especially in the early months when the discourse was in great need of being corrected.

Granted, the published coverage of an organization may not completely reflect its media efforts, given that not all of its press releases and public statements may receive attention/coverage. However, an organization with the reputation and standing of Amnesty International can have access to the media if it truly concentrates its efforts on doing so (as Human Rights Watch appears to have done). An investigation into the press releases and statements that Amnesty released during this time reveals that, in fact, the organization only appears to have issued five press releases/public statements in the four-month period studied here. (Documents were provided by the Documents Library of Amnesty's International Secretariat, although they were accompanied by a caveat that the batch was possibly only partial.)

Human Rights Watch appeared in 12 articles in *The New York Times*, and in 13 articles in *The Washington Post*. In both cases, Human Rights Watch was the most widely cited human rights advocacy organization. By being the first source to offer a political explanation for the killings, Human Rights Watch blazed a trail in the media discourse. In *The Washington Post*, Human Rights Watch made the first statement – apart from Rwandese opposition parties, whose interventions may not have been perceived as objective – that events in Rwanda constituted a coup d'état by government hardliners. In *The New York Times*, Human Rights Watch also made the first argument that the killings in Rwanda were political, and not just ethnic in nature. This intervention occurred in a letter to the editor that was published on 20 April. In *The Washington Post*, Human Rights Watch also broke ground by being the first source cited in news articles that called it “genocide.” (In *The New York Times*, the word “genocide” first appeared in a 23 April opinion editorial by the paper's editorial board.) Throughout its interventions



in all three newspapers, Human Rights Watch emphasized the planning of the killings, and this argument was gradually accepted and reported as fact by the media. It also emphasized the genocide's political character, which was important to counter the representation of the genocide as a spontaneous, atavistic manifestation of tribal savagery.

Reporters' own anecdotes about what influenced their reporting while the genocide was occurring in the spring and summer of 1994 sheds some light about the role of NGOs. "Looking back through my reports," writes Mark Doyle of the BBC, "it appears I didn't use the word 'genocide' until 29 April, in a report filed from Nairobi that noted that the British aid agency Oxfam had described the killing in Rwanda as 'genocide'" (Doyle, 2007, "Reporting the Genocide," para 41). Doyle goes on to explain that he had been reporting on massacres for some time, but after Oxfam's release, "it became clear to me what was happening" (Doyle, 2007, "Reporting the Genocide," para 42). Similarly, Anne Chaon, who was working for Agence France Presse at the time, gives credit to the NGOs for helping to report on events. "Thanks to Human Rights Watch, Oxfam, Medecins Sans Frontieres and others, the reality of the genocide finally made its way into the media" (Chaon, 2007, "Who Failed in Rwanda," para 25). In fact, highlighting the importance of NGOs, Chaon notes that "AFP's [first] use of the term 'genocide' was in the context of a report quoting Human Rights Watch, which had warned the United Nations (UN) against reducing the extent of its mission in Rwanda" (Chaon, 2007, "Who Failed in Rwanda," para 24). She adds that "as journalists, we probably avoided many errors because of these nongovernmental organizations" (Chaon, 2007, "Who Failed in Rwanda," para 26). Reporter Lindsey Hilsum of *The Guardian*

offers a different account that also points to NGOs' influence. Hilsum recounts Czech UN Ambassador Karel Kovanda's explanation that he decided to push the U.N. Security Council for intervention after reading an opinion-editorial published by Human Rights Watch in *The New York Times*. According to Hilsum, Kovanda said, "That article was an eye-opener, a key to understanding Rwanda" (Hilsum, 2007, "Reporting Rwanda," para 45). He contacted Alison DesForges, and she provided him with additional information.

Another surprising finding from this study was that NGOs were not the only news source responsible for pointing to the planned aspect of the killings or offering important information that could have influenced the media discourse. The United Nations was also active throughout this period, issuing statements and in the case of U.N. Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, advocating for intervention, especially in late April and throughout the month of May. In fact, in *The Guardian*, both Oxfam and the U.N. were the first to introduce the word "genocide" into the discourse (their interventions appeared on the same day), and the U.N. was the first body cited calling the killings "genocide" in *The New York Times*. Nevertheless, as a group, NGOs were responsible in all three newspapers for the majority of the interventions that introduced a new discourse into the coverage.

Two other NGOs who appeared repeatedly in the coverage and played a critical role in the way the slaughter was portrayed were the International Committee for the Red Cross and Medecins Sans Frontieres / Doctors Without Borders, the only two relief organizations that maintained a presence in Rwanda throughout the genocide. It is important to note, however, that their interventions were substantially different from those of human rights advocacy organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty

International, and Oxfam, confirming hypothesis four (H4). ICRC and MSF limited their interventions to descriptions of the victims, estimates of the death toll, descriptions of the types of wounds inflicted, etc. In this sense, their observations were pivotal, because they reported the types of killings that were taking place, the weapons that were being used, the scale of the killings on a national basis, etc. Without their interventions, it is likely that it would have been twice as hard for human rights advocacy organizations to do their work convincing the outside world of the reality of events inside Rwanda. However, these organizations tended not to offer political explanations about the reasons why these killings were taking place or who was behind them. Their interventions were mostly descriptive. The one exception that stands out is a letter to the editor from Medecins Sans Frontieres, dated 23 April and published in *The New York Times*, explaining that genocide was being perpetrated against the Tutsis and that the extremists in the governments were trying to wipe out the opposition. This was MSF's most activist intervention and reflects the organization's more hybrid nature as a relief/human rights advocacy organization. The Red Cross, a longstanding neutral relief organization, refrained from making these kinds of assertions.

Confirming hypothesis five (H5), my findings also reveal that the U.S. government gradually changed its discourse. On 10 June, *The New York Times* published an article uncovering how the Clinton Administration had commanded its spokespeople not to describe the deaths in Rwanda as genocide. The administration had provided talking points to its officials, instructing them to say only that "acts of genocide may have occurred." Secretary of State Warren Christopher eventually had to answer accusations about using this evasive phrase. "If there is some particular magic in calling it genocide,

I have no hesitancy in saying that,” he finally said in a statement to the press several days after the June 10 article (Gordon, “U.S. to Supply 60 Vehicles,” 1994). On 16 July, when the administration finally cut ties with the Rwandan government, it cited as its reason the Rwandan government’s involvement in “genocidal massacre” (Bonner, “Trail of Suffering,” 1994). Like the media, then, the government gradually adopted the genocide discourse.

There is, in fact, possibly no better example of state and non-state actors engaged in a battle over meaning – or a “framing” battle, as Keck and Sikkink might have called it – than the contested use of the word “genocide” in the Rwanda debate. The government avoided using it, while NGOs introduced it and repeated it. According to Keck and Sikkink, advocacy networks’ discursive impact on states is the second stage of network influence. It would appear from these findings that NGOs were also at least partially responsible for the U.S. government’s discursive change by introducing the concept of “genocide,” pushing for it repeatedly, and correcting the misinformation that might have depicted the conflict otherwise. It might be too strong a leap of causality to suggest NGOs were the only reason the administration changed its discourse, but the media atmosphere – shaped so strongly by the NGOs – would certainly appear to have been a factor. Overall, my findings confirm the pivotal role transnational advocacy networks and NGOs play in issue creation and discursive change. Despite their use of “soft power,” human rights advocacy organizations have considerable influence. In Rwanda’s case, the world’s reaction came too late for most Rwandese. But it is hard to imagine that it would ever have come at all without the pressure of advocacy NGOs.

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