

THE UK'S RESPONSE TO THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE OF 1994

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ABSTRACT

Former Prime Minister Tony Blair described the UK's response to the Rwandan genocide as "We knew. We failed to act. We were responsible";¹ this thesis sets out to explore these three claims. The thesis, which draws on newspaper archives, oral history interviews and government documents obtained by the author under the Freedom of Information Act, as well as British and US official documents already made public, begins by exploring Britain's knowledge and understanding of events in Rwanda in the build-up to, and during the first few weeks of, the genocide. It then moves on to review how the government responded and, by drawing on various theories of bystander intervention, to build up a multi-factor assessment of what influenced that response. The thesis finishes by addressing the question whether the British government, or indeed any other British foreign policy actor, bears responsibility for the crisis. It therefore looks at the Rwandan crisis from the perspective of various influences on foreign policy: the media, public opinion, Parliament and NGOs, as well as exploring the response of John Major's government. The thesis concludes that media coverage of the genocide led to a significant misunderstanding of the crisis; this misunderstanding influenced the public response and shaped discussion within Parliament and government. In terms of official response, whilst it has to be acknowledged that the government initially failed to correctly identify the events in Rwanda as genocide and consequently delayed their response until the majority of killings had ended, the thesis shows that rather than failing to act the British government was in fact a leading aid donor to Rwanda and a leading provider of troops to the UN peacekeeping mission serving in Rwanda. This aid did come too late to prevent or halt the genocide, but did save many thousands of lives in the immediate aftermath.

¹ Tony Blair, *A Journey* (London: Hutchinson, 2010), p.61.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the School's Ethics Committee in March 2010.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DPKO	UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations
EU	European Union
FAR	<i>Forces Armées Rwandaises</i> (the Rwandan Army)
FCO	Foreign & Commonwealth Office (The Foreign Office)
JEEAR	Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
ODA	Overseas Development Administration
PMQ	Prime Minister's questions
RoE	Rules of engagement
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army (the military wing of the RPF)
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front (largely Tutsi rebel group based in Uganda that invaded Rwanda in 1990)
RTLMC	Radio Télévision Libre Mille-Collines (Rwandan radio station)
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNOMUR	United Nations Observer Mission to Uganda-Rwanda
US	United States of America

MAP OF RWANDA



Highlighted area shows the region occupied by French forces during Operation Turquoise.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1885 Berlin Conference carve-up of Africa makes Rwanda a German protectorate.
- 1916 Belgium troops occupy Kigali during First World War.
- 1933 Belgian authorities issue all Rwandans with an identity card, allocating them to one of three ethnic groups: Hutu, Tutsi or Twa.
- 1959 November Hutu uprising forces thousands of Tutsi to flee to Uganda.
- 1960 First free elections in Rwanda return a large Hutu majority.
- 1962 Continued violence against Tutsi and failed attack on Rwanda by Tutsi refugees based in Burundi.
- 1962 1 July Rwanda gains independence.
- 1973 Coup d'état; Major Juvenal Habyarimana becomes President.
- 1986 Habyarimana announces Tutsi refugees will not be allowed to return to Rwanda as the country is too small.
- 1988 RPF forms in Uganda.
- 1990 October RPF invades Rwanda sparking civil war. France sends troops to support government.
- November Representatives of the RPF meet with the First Secretary and Military Attaché at the British High Commission in Uganda.
- 1991 Civil war continues. In Rwanda government begins building a civilian militia and enters into arms deals with South Africa and Egypt.
- 1992 April Habyarimana appoints new Cabinet which includes members from Hutu opposition parties.
- August Formal opening of peace talks between government and RPF at Arusha, Tanzania.
- 1993 March At the UN Security Council, France first suggests the deployment of a peacekeeping force to Rwanda.
- June UNOMUR established with a mandate to observe the border between Uganda and Rwanda.
- August The Arusha Accords are signed. Multi-party elections scheduled within 22 months.
- 3 October 18 US Rangers killed in Somalia whilst serving on a peacekeeping mission.
- 5 October UN Resolution 872 approves creation of UNAMIR. General Romeo Dallaire appointed its commander.

- 1994 1 January Rwanda takes up seat as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.
- January Violence towards Tutsi continues in Rwanda. No progress in made towards implementation of Arusha Accords.
- 11 January Dallaire sends the Genocide Fax to UN headquarters and is refused permission to raid arms dumps across Kigali.
- 22 February Edward Clay, Britain's High Commissioner to Uganda, visits Rwanda for three days and becomes first British non-resident Ambassador to present papers to the Rwandan government in over 4 years.
- March An additional 900 British troops are sent to Bosnia, taking total to over 3,000.
- 5 April UN Security Council approves Resolution 909, which renews UNAMIR's mandate.
- 6 April President Habyarimana killed when his plane is shot down returning from a regional meeting in Dar-es-Salam.
- 7 April Systematic violence breaks out across Kigali, genocide begins.
10 Belgian peacekeepers killed by Rwandan Presidential Guard.
- 9 April Evacuation of foreign nationals begins.
RPA renews the civil war and begins moving on Kigali.
- 10 April US closes embassy in Kigali.
- 14 April Publicly announced that Belgian peacekeepers in UNAMIR are to be withdrawn.
British delegation at the UN officially complains that it is not being provided with sufficient intelligence by the UN Secretariat.
- 21 April David Hannay convinces US Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, to ignore her instructions to vote in favour of full withdrawal of UNAMIR. UN Security Council approves Resolution 912 which authorises the withdrawal of the bulk of UNAMIR.
British government announces £820,000 of emergency aid for Rwanda.
- 28 April Oxfam press release suggests that what is happening in Rwanda is genocide.
- 29 April Rwandan refugees begin to cross border into Tanzania.
- 2 May *The Times* is first British newspaper to call the crisis in Rwanda "genocide".
- 3 May Oxfam lead a delegation to Downing Street calling for a more robust response to the crisis from the UN.
- 4 May Members of the Shadow Cabinet write to government ministers calling for the government to pressure the UN to respond to the crisis.

- 1994 10 May Nelson Mandela inaugurated as first black President of South Africa.
- 12 May John Smith, leader of the Labour party, dies unexpectedly.
- 13 May Disasters Emergency Committee launch a campaign for public donations to aid refugees in Rwanda.
- 17 May UN Security Council approves Resolution 918 which authorises the deployment of 5,500 troops to Rwanda, to be known as UNAMIR II.
- 18 May UN Secretary General makes a request to African countries to provide troops.
- 22 May British press extensively reports bodies being washed up on the shores of Lake Victoria in Uganda.
- 24 May Adjournment debate on Rwanda held in Houses of Commons, lead by Labour MP Tony Worthington.
- 25 May Ghana, Ethiopia and Senegal make commitment to provide troops to UNAMIR; Zimbabwe and Nigeria make similar offer over next week.
- 15 June British government offers UN 50 trucks as contribution to UNAMIR II.
- 17 June France announces plan to send troops to Rwanda to act as an interim peacekeeping force pending the deployment of UNAMIR II.
- 22 June UN Security Council approves the French mission in Resolution 929. First French troops enter Rwanda the following day as Operation Turquoise.
- In House of Commons Tom Clarke, Shadow Minister for Overseas Development, calls events in Rwanda “holocaust” and “genocide”.
- 4 July RPA take full control of Kigali.
- 12 July Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, writes to MOD suggesting British troops should be sent to Rwanda.
- 13-14 July Estimated 1 million Hutu flee across the border to Goma in Zaire.
- 18 July RPA announce a unilateral ceasefire.
- 19 July MOD rejects Hurd’s request to send British troops.
- 22 July President Clinton announces US troops will deploy to Zaire to help with the distribution of aid.
- 24 July FCO Minister Baroness Chalker visits Uganda and Rwanda.
- MOD’s Current Operations Group recommends the deployment of a British logistical support contingent to serve in UNAMIR.
- 28 July The Cabinet sub-committee on Overseas Policy and Defence approves the deployment of British troops.
- 29 July Chalker announces British government aid to Rwanda and the region has reached £60m.
- 1 August First British troops deploy to Kigali.

INTRODUCTION

In March 1994, Steven Spielberg's film about a German industrialist who saved over 1,200 Jews from the Nazi Holocaust won the Academy Award for Best Picture. In his autobiography, written sixteen years later, former Prime Minister Tony Blair recorded the profound effect seeing *Schindler's List* for the first time had on him. Watching the film, in spring 1994, made him think of the responsibility individuals and states have to come to the assistance of others; accepting that the responsibility to help those geographically near was beyond question, he continued:

But what of situations we know about, but we are not proximate to? What of the murder distant from us, the injustice we cannot see, the pain we cannot witness but which we nonetheless know is out there? We know what is happening, proximate or not. In that case, we are not bystanders either. If we know and we fail to act, we are responsible. A few months [after I saw *Schindler's List*], Rwanda erupted in genocide. We knew. We failed to act. We were responsible.¹

In the one hundred days from 7 April to 8 July 1994, just weeks after *Schindler's List* had been honoured, nearly a million Tutsi were brutally murdered, in the tiny central African country of Rwanda. In a killing spree, that had been meticulously planned, ordinary Hutu men, women and children became accomplices in genocide.² Hutu, who made up the ethnic majority in the country, goaded by propaganda, and often fuelled by drugs and potent banana beer, used machetes, home-made clubs, and garden tools, as well as guns and

¹ Tony Blair, *A Journey* (London: Hutchinson, 2010), p.61.

² There is great debate amongst scholars about which events fall into the category of genocide and what exactly is meant by the word. Paul Boghossian suggests that "One cannot use the word 'genocide' without supplying some definition or other, because one cannot rely on some common understanding that we all have of that word" (Paul Boghossian, "The Concept of Genocide" *Journal of Genocide Research*. Vol 12, No 1-2 (2010): p.70). William Schabas, however, argues that the word already has an established meaning (William Schabas, "Commentary on Paul Boghossian, 'The Concept of genocide'" *Journal of Genocide Research*. Vol. 12, No 1-2 (2010), p.97); 'genocide' has been defined by the United Nation's 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and therefore the Convention gives us a common understanding of the word. The definition included in the Convention though, does not appease everyone; in response to Boghossian's article Schabas notes that there are as many definitions of genocide as there are scholars working in the field (Schabas, "Commentary on Paul Boghossian," p.99); see Samuel Totten & Paul Bartrop (eds) *The Genocide Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2009) for a number of articles on alternative definitions. Boghossian also questions the Convention's definition highlighting a number of weaknesses, including suggesting that the groups included in the Convention are overly restrictive and that the use of the phrase "as such" is unnecessary – but the 1948 definition is ultimately the definition of the word. It is therefore this official definition which is adopted in this thesis. However, when discussing Rwanda, retrospectively, it is not necessary to engage overly in the semantics of the term 'genocide'. Whilst scholars debate whether the Turkish treatment of the Armenians in 1915, or the murder of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995, constitutes genocide, the vast majority of scholars accept that the events in Rwanda in 1994 were genocide. As Schabas argues, "The definition in the 1948 Convention fits the Rwandan genocide like a glove" (Schabas, "Commentary on Paul Boghossian," p.9).

grenades, to enact a genocide more bloody, more personal and quicker than the Nazi Holocaust of Jews fifty years earlier. Yet whilst thousands of people were being slaughtered, as US President William J. Clinton was later to suggest, “all over the world there were people like me sitting in offices, day after day after day, who did not fully appreciate the depth and speed with which [Rwanda was] being engulfed by unimaginable terror”.³

This thesis considers the international response to the events in Rwanda, but from a perspective that to date has been largely ignored by academia – it considers the response of the United Kingdom (the UK).⁴ Although there are various existing histories of the events in Rwanda and the international response, such as Samantha Power and Jared Cohen’s studies of the US response or Daniela Krosiak and Andrew Wallis’ two studies of French involvement,⁵ the British response has never received the attention it warrants. This thesis aims to fill that gap; it sets out to address Tony Blair’s claims – did the UK know, did it fail to act, was it responsible?

History of the Crisis

There is no generally accepted number of Tutsi that were massacred in the period April to July 1994. Alan Kuperman uses extrapolations from the 1991 census and survivor data to claim very precisely that 494,008 Tutsi were killed; Alison Des Forges in what is considered by many as the definitive account of the events of 1994 quotes “at least half a million”; General Romeo Dallaire, the commander of UN troops in Rwanda in 1994 typically refers to over 800,000 Tutsi having been killed; and Shaharyar Khan who during the second half of 1994 was the UN Special Representative to Rwanda, places the figure at

³ Extract from speech given by President Clinton on 25 March 1998 during visit to Rwanda. Quoted in Philip Auerswald, Christian Duttweiler and John Garofano (eds), *Clinton’s Foreign Policy: A Documentary Record* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2003), p.220.

⁴ Although pedants would argue that such an approach is technically incorrect, this thesis uses “the UK” and “Britain” interchangeably. “England” and “English” are only used in referenced quotes.

⁵ Jared Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide* (Lasham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Samantha Power, *“A Problem from Hell”: America and the Age of Genocide* (London: Flamingo, 2003); Andrew Wallis, *Silent Accomplice: The Untold Story of France’s Role in the Rwandan Genocide* (London: IB Tauris & Co, 2007); Daniela Krosiak, “The Responsibility of External Bystanders in Cases of Genocide: The French in Rwanda, 1990-1994.” (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 2002). There are also some studies of the Belgian involvement in the crisis, however these are exclusively written in French.

between 800,000 and 850,000. Linda Melvern, who has written most about Britain's involvement in the genocide, quoting figures from the Red Cross, is at the higher end of estimates, claiming one million were killed.⁶ The truth is that we will never know the true number of dead; the fact that whole families and communities were murdered means that there were often no survivors left to report the missing and the lack of accurate census information means that in reality it is impossible to know even how many Tutsi were living in Rwanda before the genocide. However, based on these various estimates it seems that a figure of around 800,000 killed in approximately 100 days is not unreasonable; Adam Jones calculates that this makes Rwanda the quickest genocide ever experienced with a killing rate five times that of the Nazi Holocaust.⁷ The semantics of whether it was half a million, 800,000 or a million makes the events no less tragic. To understand what motivated this scale of killing it is necessary to go back in time. Whilst there are already many excellent books and articles that chronicle the history of Rwanda and specifically the events of 1994⁸ it is useful to summarise the events in the years leading up to the outbreak of genocide and also the international response once the killings had begun.

Although it oversimplifies many years of history, the key issue in the pre-colonial period, given the events of 1994, was the relationship between the three ethnic groupings in Rwanda; the Hutu, about 82% of the population, the Tutsi (17%) and the Twa (less than

⁶ Alan Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), p.122. Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), p.1. Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (London: Arrow Books, 2004), p.5. Shaharyar Khan, *The Shallow Graves of Rwanda* (London: IB Tauris, 2000), p.1. Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide*. Revised ed (London: Verso, 2006), p.4.

⁷ Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), p.232.

⁸ Perhaps the two most complete histories of the Rwandan genocide are those by Alison Des Forges (*Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*) and Gerard Prunier (*The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide*). However, there are numerous other authors that provide very good summaries of the build up to and execution of the genocide. Amongst these the following are worthy of further reading and give a good cross section of the events: Alain Dexstexhe, "The Third Genocide," *Foreign Policy* Winter 94/95, no. 97 (1994) and Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide*. Revised ed. both provide a useful general account of the build up to 1994. In "Rwanda in Retrospect," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 1 (2000), pp.94-118, Alan Kuperman provides a good account of the spread of genocide across the country. Paul Magnarella, "The Background and Causes of the Genocide in Rwanda," *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 3, (2005), pp.801-22 and Peter Uvin, "Reading the Rwandan Genocide," *International Studies Review* 3, no. 3 (2001), pp.75-99 both discuss the causes of the genocide. There are also a number of firsthand accounts of life in Rwanda in 1994; for example Paul Rusesabagina, *An Ordinary Man: The True Story Behind Hotel Rwanda* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000) provides a survivor account and Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil* is a very frank memoir from the commander of the UN forces. There are many other histories, including many in French, see the bibliography for a fuller listing of the English language literature.

1%).⁹ The origins of the Tutsi and Hutu are not known with any certainty and although there were differences between the two groupings, particularly in terms of wealth distribution and cattle and land ownership, with the Tutsi typically, but not always, being richer, there was much that united Hutu and Tutsi. The one difference was that throughout this period the small aristocratic elite which governed the country was almost exclusively Tutsi. Peter Uvin however suggests it is more important to recognise the similarities between the two groups - they shared the same religion, the same language and the same customs and festivals.¹⁰ As Tony Vaux suggest, although the relationship between the groups was certainly complex, it did not seem to match the “Western stereotype of Africa [which] demands ... the monolithic, indivisible tribe, liable to fight other such tribes as a matter of custom”.¹¹

Rwanda came under colonial rule in 1885 having been claimed by Germany during the Berlin Conference’s carve up of Africa. German control however was brief, ending during World War I, when in May 1916 Belgian troops entered the capital Kigali. The new colonial power though made little impact on the country until 1926, when a series of reforms, known as “*les reformes Voisin*”, were introduced and then in 1933 required all Rwandans to carry an identification card showing their ethnic grouping. The main effect of these reforms was to codify the grip of the Tutsi elite on government and widen the gap between the Tutsi elite and ordinary Hutu; ordinary Tutsi, like ordinary Hutu, did not particularly benefit from these changes, though in Hutu minds they were now seen as different.¹²

Tutsi and Belgian domination continued until the late 1950s when the Belgians finally accepted increasing demands for independence. However, having governed through the Tutsi elite for four decades, the Belgian authorities, foreseeing the inevitable dominance of the Hutu majority once the country was granted independence, unexpectedly switched

⁹ Kuperman, “Rwanda in Retrospect,” p.95.

¹⁰ Peter Uvin, “Reading the Rwandan Genocide,” *International Studies Review* 3, no. 3 (2001), p.76.

¹¹ Tony Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist: Relief Work in Famine and War* (London: Earthscan, 2001), p.189.

¹² Magnarella is keen to point out that ordinary Tutsi peasants were also adversely affected by these reforms, with many losing their land and fleeing north to Uganda. (Magnarella, “The Background and Causes of the Genocide in Rwanda,” p.808.)

their favour to the formerly discriminated against Hutu.¹³ Prunier suggests that the shift in Belgian favour was also partly driven by Belgian domestic politics; he suggests that by the late 1950s Belgian priests and soldiers in Rwanda increasingly came from the working class, Flemish part of Belgium and therefore had no sympathy with the aristocratic Tutsi, instead their democratic ideals led them to more readily empathise with the “downtrodden Hutu”.¹⁴ Either way, emboldened by the new found Belgian patronage, Hutu were encouraged to form political parties and to begin to exert their position as the country’s majority. Suddenly in November 1959, false claims that a Hutu politician had been killed by Tutsi triggered Rwanda’s first major spate of ethnic violence. This one rumour was the spark that ignited the tinder box of resentment between Hutu, who had suffered years of discrimination and displacement at the hands of the Belgians, and the Tutsi. In the violence no discrimination was made between the Tutsi elite who had governed the country and ordinary Tutsi, all were attacked; within two weeks over 300 had been killed. In response, large numbers of Tutsi fled to neighbouring Uganda and Burundi. Once begun, the shift to Hutu domination was unstoppable: in 1960 only 19 of the 229 newly elected *bourgmestres* were Tutsi and in 1961 Hutu took 35 of the 42 seats in parliament. For many outside of Rwanda this was seen as a victory for democracy;¹⁵ however, these events led the United Nations (UN) to conclude in a 1961 report, “The developments of the last 18 months have brought about the racial dictatorship of one party ... An oppressive system has been replaced by another one ... It is quite possible that some day we will witness violent reactions on the part of the Tutsi”.¹⁶

Rwanda formally gained independence on 1 July 1962. Other than a second period of severe ethnic violence in 1964 following a raid by Tutsi refugees, that was firmly put down by President Kayibanda the situation in the country looked relatively stable until the mid 1980s. Then following the collapse of coffee and tin prices, Rwanda’s only two exports, the country became dependent upon foreign aid. Fairly quickly Rwanda came

¹³ Ibid, p.809.

¹⁴ Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis*, p.44.

¹⁵ Krosiak, *Responsibility of External Bystanders*, p.159.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.53.

under pressure from donor countries, particularly France, to renounce the system of one party government that had been in place since 1974. With no alternative but to acquiesce to the demands Rwandan politics was opened up and immediately a number of Hutu dominated liberal parties opposed to President Juvenal Habyarimana's dictatorship sprang up. Meanwhile, the number of Tutsi refugees, in Uganda since 1960, had swelled to 700,000; now under pressure from their hosts to leave, they saw the unsettled political situation in Rwanda as an opportunity to negotiate a return home. However, having initially failed to agree a peaceful return to Rwanda, the Tutsi, organised now as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), launched an armed invasion of Rwanda on 1 October 1990 with the intention of forcing their way back home.

At this point the RPF had 2,500 soldiers, armed with equipment plundered from the Ugandan army;¹⁷ whilst the Rwandan army (FAR) was 5,200 strong and equipped with modern weaponry supplied by France as part of a rather one sided military cooperation pact between the two countries. Despite their numerical superiority, FAR initially suffered losses; but by November the RPF had retreated back into Uganda. However, it was not FAR's numerical superiority that forced the RPF back. On 4 October 150 French paratroopers arrived in Kigali to support the Rwandan government and were soon reinforced by 450 more French troops sent on the personal instructions of President Mitterrand; France was effectively propping up the Rwandan government. The relationship between France and Rwanda had developed during the 1970s and mirrored the association between Paris and a number of other Francophone African countries. Daniela Krosiak in fact suggests the relationship with Rwanda is a clear example of France's "activist Africa policy" begun by Charles de Gaulle and continued by all subsequent French presidents.¹⁸ The paternalistic nature of this policy was though, she continues, all about promoting France's national interests; French presidents, she suggests, believed relations with African countries,

¹⁷ It is has also been suggested by various people, including Alison Des-Forges and Hazel Cameron, that the Ugandan army looked the other way, whilst knowingly letting the RPF walk off with the equipment. Allowing the RPF to arm themselves and launch an invasion, would have potentially solved the Ugandans' problem of Tutsi refugees occupying valuable agricultural land in the south of the country.

¹⁸ Krosiak, *The Responsibility of External Bystanders*, p.132.

including Rwanda, allowed France to dominate Africa economically, culturally and politically and as such confirmed France's role as a global power. The agreements though did mean that in cases of war, such as Rwanda in 1990, France was obliged to respond, even if it only to reassure other African leaders that they could trust their French friends.

The RPF though were not destroyed. Throughout 1991 and early 1992 their raids continued. Within Rwanda Hutu ultra-nationalists responded: over 2,000 Tutsi were killed in revenge attacks, FAR was expanded and arms imports grew.¹⁹ By 1993 Rwanda, one of the smallest countries in Africa had become one of its largest arms importers. Linda Melvern for example has uncovered details of contracts between the Rwandan government and South African arms dealers worth a staggering US\$56 million between October 1990 and May 1991 alone, as well as over \$10 million of deals with Egypt in a similar period. Such was the extent of the arms purchases that by 1994 in the town of Gitarama, which had a population of only 150,000, the government was able to distribute over 50,000 rifles, pistols and machetes to the Hutu population, as well as grenades and mortars.²⁰

In March 1992, finally succumbing to internal and French pressure, President Habyarimana announced the formation of a new coalition cabinet which included some of the Hutu opposition parties. The newly appointed ministers were quick to act, first agreeing a ceasefire with the RPF and then beginning peace talks in Arusha, Tanzania. After numerous false dawns, and intermittent violence from both sides, the Arusha Accords were finally signed in August 1993. The Accords provided for fairly radical change: a broad based transitional government would be installed until democratic elections could be held, the Tutsi refugees would be allowed home, the two warring armies would be merged, French troops were to withdraw completely from the country and the position of president would become largely ceremonial. It was this last provision that made it obvious to Rwanda observers, such as Human Rights Watch's Alison Des Forges, that Hutu extremists close to

¹⁹ Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families* (London: Picador, 2000), p.88.

²⁰ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, pp.64-6.

Habyarimana would not support the agreement and that therefore peace was far from inevitable.

In November 1993 UN peacekeeping troops arrived in Rwanda, after the Security Council agreed to oversee the Accords' implementation.²¹ The force, known as The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), was mandated to oversee the transition to a broad-based government and the merger of the two armies. The Accords' plans for power-sharing and elections seemed to be a perfect fit with the ideological belief that rapid liberalism and democracy would create conditions of stable and lasting peace that was permeating much of the international community in the early 1990s. For some in the UN, the mission was potentially a textbook example of how liberal peacekeeping could work. However, the key step of transferring power to the new government was delayed repeatedly.

By April 1994 the broad based government had still not been formed and the international community was losing patience. On 5 April the UN Security Council voted to renew UNAMIR's mandate, but a review after six weeks was stipulated in the hope that this would reinvigorate the peace process.²² Regional leaders also applied pressure, particularly to President Habyarimana who was seen as being responsible for the stalling. On 6 April, Habyarimana flew to Dar-es-Salaam, for a meeting with the Presidents of Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Burundi, all of whom demanded an end to the procrastination. Scolded, the President boarded his private jet, a gift of the French government, to return to Rwanda. As the plane came in to land at Kigali two surface-to-air missiles illuminated the night sky and the jet was shot down; all on board were killed.

Within hours road blocks, manned by government backed militia (the *Interahamwe*) and FAR, sprang up across Kigali. The next day opposition leaders and influential Tutsi were rounded up and killed by the Presidential Guard in a systematic manner that was

²¹ UN S/Res 872 (1993), 5 October 1993.

²² UN S/Res 909 (1994), 5 April 1994. The Security Council had used a similar tactic in the UN mission to Western Sahara in 1992; by only extending the mission by three months in this case they hoped to indicate to the two warring parties that "the patience and the resources of the international community were finite" (William J. Durch, "Building on Sand: UN Peacekeeping in the Western Sahara," *International Security* 17, no.4 (1993), p.168.)

indicative of thorough organisation. The killings quickly spread from Hutu opposition leaders to ordinary Tutsi, first in Kigali and then across the country. Among the first victims were ten Belgian peacekeepers captured and executed as they tried in vain to protect the moderate Prime Minister elect, Agathe Uwilingiyimana.

Two days after the killing started the RPF resumed the civil war and this time the French did not intervene. Three months later and after one hundred days of fighting and genocide, on 4 July the RPF captured Kigali, on 5 July Butare, the country's second city, and on 14 July Ruhengeri, the temporary home of the Hutu government. In the face of this relentless drive westward by the Tutsi guerrilla army, huge numbers of Hutu had fled, encouraged by local leaders and Radio Television Libre Mille Collines (RTLMC), a radical Hutu radio station which throughout the genocide had incited the ethnic violence. In the week ending 18 July alone, over one million Hutu, including the interim government and the majority of FAR, crossed the border into Zaire. On 18 July the RPF announced a unilateral ceasefire and installed a new government the following day. The events of those one hundred days were both the quickest genocide ever seen and the immediate cause of one of the worst refugee crises that the world has had to deal with.

The International Response

Before turning to the more thorough examination of the British response, it is worth the slight diversion of briefly considering why other countries responded in the way that they did. As Ian Budge has suggested, other states are generally a key influence on British foreign policy making²³ and as we will see this was true in the case of Rwanda. Here the responses of the three main international protagonists in the crisis are considered; the United States, France and Belgium.

²³ Budge, *The New British Politics*, p.531.

The United States

It is evident throughout the crisis that although there were a few mid-level officials that sought some form of US response, at a senior level the Clinton Administration, despite being aware of the genocidal nature of the crisis,²⁴ actively took steps to avoid becoming involved in Rwanda. Although options were considered, the response was always the same – there was a reason why direct US involvement should be avoided. For example, at one stage the State Department suggested jamming RTLMC; however, the idea was quickly rebutted by the Pentagon, who raised legal arguments against the plan and highlighted the cost and presumed inefficiency of the scheme before finally arguing that jamming a civilian radio station infringed the right to free speech. As early as mid-April the State Department’s legal advisers were considering whether the atrocities constituted genocide. Although they did eventually acknowledge that “acts of genocide” were happening, in April their advice was to avoid the use of the word “genocide” as this could “commit the [US government] to actually do something”.²⁵

Why the US were so hostile to any intervention can be explained by four key factors. Firstly, the response was dominated by the events in Somalia in late 1993. Only six months before the genocide broke out 18 US Rangers, in Somalia as part of the UN mandated peacekeeping force, had been killed during a failed mission to capture a Somali war-lord. The horror of the event was flashed across the globe as CNN showed a dead American being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. In response to this incident, President Clinton promised to withdraw all American troops from Somalia. The tendency to “fight the last war” meant that events in Rwanda were viewed through a Somali lens - the fear of another Mogadishu terrified American decision makers. Without the shadow of Somalia hanging over the US, maybe the response would have been different; as National

²⁴ John Dumbrell, *Clinton’s Foreign Policy: Between the Bushes 1992-2000*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), p.79. Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, pp.32-3.

²⁵ Discussion Paper, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Middle East/Africa Region, Department of Defense, 1 May 1994. Accessed at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB53/rw050194.pdf> on 12 June 2010.

Security Adviser Tony Lake was to subsequently suggest, “Rwanda was a casualty of chronology”.²⁶

Secondly, Congress heavily influenced the response. Clinton had taken office better disposed towards peacekeeping than any other administration in US history. But by 1994 Congress had made it clear that it did not support the rising cost of peacekeeping and that it felt the US, and UN, had to learn to say “no” to proposed missions. Although there were a few in Congress who called for greater US involvement in Rwanda, the majority were keen for the US to keep out; for example after the evacuation of American nationals from Kigali, Republican Leader in the Senate, Bob Dole, appeared on the CBS news programme *Face the Nation* saying “I don’t think we have any national interest here ... I hope we don’t get involved there. The Americans are out, as far as I am concerned in Rwanda. That ought to be the end of it”.²⁷ Ever conscious of the need for Congressional support to push through domestic reforms, there was no way that Clinton was going to incur the hostility and wrath of Congress over Rwanda.

The third factor is the drafting of US Presidential Decision Directive 25. Although not published until after the genocide had begun, PDD25 was being drafted in April 1994 and was therefore at the fore of decision makers’ minds. In the wake of the events in Somalia, the US’s future involvement in peacekeeping was reviewed and the new directive set out when the US would and would not intervene. From now on, US involvement would depend on certain criteria being met: whether US interests were at stake; whether there was a threat to world peace; a clear mission goal; acceptable costs; Congressional, public and allied support; a working ceasefire; and a clear exit route. Rwanda failed all these and passed only one of the criteria, evidence of a humanitarian emergency. In the absence of

²⁶ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence*, p.60.

²⁷ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p.172.

clear instructions to the contrary from the President, no senior government official was going to champion intervention when it clearly failed to satisfy the new stated policy.²⁸

The final factor influencing US policy was the fear in the White House and the Pentagon that the US was assumed to be the peacekeeper of last resort. Having seen what had happened in Somalia, the Administration feared that supporting any mission, even at the UN, would inevitably lead to US involvement; as Samantha Power suggests there was a “fear, articulated mainly at the Pentagon but felt throughout the bureaucracy, that what would start as a small engagement by foreign troops would end as a large and costly one by Americans”.²⁹ The Pentagon had seen foreign troops first hand in Somalia and did not believe in the capability of African troops to mount a mission in Rwanda; if the Belgians had been forced to withdraw what hope did African troops have?³⁰ The US was also aware that only they had the logistical resources necessary to support such a mission; no other nation had the airlift capacity to transport troops and equipment to the land-locked country. For this reason the US opposed not only their own involvement but also that of others.

The US did eventually deploy troops to the region, but only after the genocide had ended and only then into neighbouring Zaire to provide aid in the Hutu refugee camps. Jared Cohen nicely sums up the US response, calling it “100 days of silence”.³¹

France

The French response to the events of 1994 was also influenced by history, though in their case a longer history than the events of 1993. Since the wave of African independence in the 1950s and 1960s France had viewed Africa as falling within its sphere of influence, French presidents since De Gaulle believed that by dominating Africa they cemented their position as a world power and justified their permanent seat at the UN Security Council. French relations with Rwanda particularly had been especially strong as demonstrated by the

²⁸ Burkhalter, “The Question of Genocide,” p.49.

²⁹ Samantha Power, “Why the United States Let the Rwandan Tragedy Happen,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 2001.

³⁰ DiPrizio, *Armed Humanitarians*, p.76.

³¹ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence*.

very close personal relationship between Presidents Mitterrand and Habyarimana and their families.³² However, by the 1990s France, or at least President Mitterrand, was losing confidence in the dominant position in Africa; as Asteris Huliaras notes:

The developments in Rwanda were considered by many French politicians, diplomats and many journalists as evidence of an ‘Anglo-Saxon conspiracy’, part of a plot to develop an arc of influence from Ethiopia and Eritrea via, Uganda, Rwanda and Zaire to Congo and Cameroon. For them, the ‘Anglo-Saxons’ had a hidden agenda ‘to oust them from Africa’.³³

Some, including Gerard Prunier, have called this French perception the “Fashoda Syndrome”³⁴ referring to the 1898 territorial dispute that nearly led Britain and France to war in the small Sudanese village of Fashoda. The syndrome, he continues, explains the tendency within French foreign policy to assert French influence in areas which may be susceptible to British (or more recently US) influence. This underlying belief led the French government to conclude that the RPF incursions into Rwanda were supported by the English speaking Ugandan government and therefore by extension by the wider Anglo-Saxon world. If France was to retain its close relations with its various client states across Africa it had to stand up to the aggression of the RPF; President Mitterrand was determined to reassure the French public and African heads of state that France’s position in Africa, and therefore the world, would not be threatened. This meant actively intervening in support of the Rwandan government throughout the civil war, which they did by sending troops and supplying weapons.

Once the killings began in April 1994 the French political elite steadfastly refused to accept that what was happening in Rwanda was genocide. Throughout the summer of 1994, the French government described Rwanda as a civil war and called for a ceasefire between the two parties. They justified their relations with the interim Rwandan government on the grounds that this was the only way to encourage them to negotiate. When the French did

³² Krosiak, *The Responsibility of External Bystanders*, p.134.

³³ Asteris Huliaras. “The ‘Anglo-Saxon Conspiracy’: French Perceptions of the Great Lakes Crisis,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 36, no. 4. (1998), p.594.

³⁴ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p.104.

eventually acknowledge the genocide, they perpetuated the theory of double-genocide; for example, in May French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé spoke of both sides committing crimes and in September Mitterrand spoke of “genocides” deliberately using the plural.³⁵

The French, more than anyone, must have known what was happening in Rwanda; as well as deploying troops as part of the effort to evacuate foreign nationals there were still reputedly 200 military intelligence agents in the country in April 1994. The close connections with the Hutu regime also meant that the French government received first hand intelligence about what was happening on the ground. Yet the French did not intervene until June, did not encourage the UN to intervene more robustly, did not share their intelligence, did not seek to have the Rwandan ambassador removed from the Security Council and made no effort to influence their former allies in the interim government. As Andrew Wallis concludes, “Whilst Clinton used every trick in the diplomatic book to avoid getting involved in a country in which the USA clearly had no interest, Mitterrand and his military advisers were determined to get the best outcome for France out of the carnage”.³⁶ This meant deliberately ignoring the genocide and preservation of the Hutu government that France had supported since the mid-1970s; victory for the RPF was seen, by Mitterrand and others in the French political elite, as a threat to France’s position in Africa and hence its standing in the international community.

Belgium

Whilst it was unusual for ex-colonial powers to contribute peacekeepers to missions in their old colonies, the Belgian government was initially keen to support UNAMIR and Belgian troops formed the backbone of the UN mission. Why Belgium was the only NATO country willing in 1993 to offer troops is not clear, but Romeo Dallaire suggests that “a deal may have been struck with the French for Belgian troops to protect their [France’s] interests

³⁵ Krosiak, *Responsibility of Bystanders*, p.324.

³⁶ Wallis, *Silent Accomplice*, p.210.

in Kigali after the French battalion was shipped out”.³⁷ Once in theatre, however, it quickly became obvious to the Belgians that the peace process was precarious and in danger of collapsing. Belgian intelligence appears to have been more aware than most of the growing tension in the country: in November 1993 it noted the distribution of grenades across the country; in December officers warned that youth militias were being trained; and in January 1994 Belgian intelligence officers worked with Jean-Pierre, the Hutu informant that led General Dallaire to send what has infamously become known as the Genocide Fax. This fax, sent to UN headquarters in New York, has since been held up by some as the “smoking gun” that proves that genocide could have been foreseen; in January 1994 Jean-Pierre approached Belgian officers with intelligence about the planning of genocide. He claimed that he was a senior military instructor involved in training the Hutu militia and had seen lists of intended Tutsi victims. In return for asylum he promised to lead UNAMIR to a number of arms caches across Kigali. On 11 January Dallaire faxed New York with this information and requested authority to carry out raids on the caches based on Jean-Pierre’s intelligence. The request was denied by DPKO, who evidently feared a repeat of the Mogadishu fiasco, without ever having been discussed with Security Council members. Based on this catalogue of evidence, the Belgian ambassador in Kigali informed Brussels that UNAMIR should be given a more forceful mandate or be withdrawn. In February Willy Claes, the Belgian Foreign Minister, visited Kigali to see the situation first hand. On his return to Brussels he contacted UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to warn him that given its current mandate and resources UNAMIR was ineffective and it was therefore necessary to reinforce the mission. The Belgian ambassador at the UN also tried to push this demand but was reputedly told by officials that UNAMIR was considered a low cost and low priority mission and expansion would not be considered.³⁸

The initial response of Belgium to the renewal of fighting was to argue for a rapid deployment of extra troops. At the UN, the Belgian ambassador asked for UNAMIR’s

³⁷ Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, p.84.

³⁸ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p.104.

mandate and rules of engagement to be changed so that their troops could intervene to stop the violence, but acknowledged they would only do this with UN support.³⁹ There was no such support; on 8 April the Belgian ambassador informed Brussels that “certain permanent members” were opposed to broadening the UNAMIR mandate.⁴⁰ At home the government also came under fierce criticism following the death of the Belgian peacekeepers and public opinion quickly soured towards the involvement in Rwanda. In the face of this opposition, and with no international support, the government did an about face and on 10 April Belgian paratroopers landed at Kigali airport to assist in the evacuation of Belgian nationals. At the same time Boutros-Ghali was informed of the Belgian decision to withdraw its forces from UNAMIR. The official reason was that UNAMIR was now ineffective and that nothing could be done to stop the civil war.

Once this decision had been made, the Belgian Foreign Ministry set out to convince other Security Council members that UNAMIR should be withdrawn immediately. The effort devoted to what was effectively a face saving exercise, far exceeded their previous efforts to have UNAMIR reinforced; Willy Claes reputedly contacted many of his counterparts personally. As the former colonial power, with the most recent experience in Rwanda, the Belgian government was considered, by many, as the most qualified to speak of what was right for Rwanda. The murder of the Belgian soldiers and the public backlash was clearly the turning point for Belgium; like the US in Somalia, the government was forced to withdraw and wanted nothing more to do with the country. Like both France and the US, Belgium placed its own national interest before any belief in humanitarianism.

³⁹ The rules of engagement (RoE) for UNAMIR, as drafted by General Dallaire, did actually authorise the use of force, up to and including, deadly force, to prevent “crimes against humanity”. Dallaire states that these rules were cribbed from the UN mission to Cambodia and sent to New York and all troop contributing nations for approval. Only the Belgian government responded to Dallaire, and that was to indicate that they did not want their troops to be used for crowd control. The Belgian government had therefore tacitly agreed that force could be used to stop crimes against humanity, yet when the genocide began did not feel able to follow the RoE that they had signed up to. (Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, pp.72&99)

⁴⁰ Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell The Story*, p.619.

The UK and Rwanda

Turning now to the UK's response to the events in Rwanda, it is immediately apparent that the existing literature is limited and works that do anything more than touch briefly on the subject are rare. What literature there is on the UK is dominated by the former *Sunday Times* journalist Linda Melvern, who has written two books and a number of articles on the genocide. Although Melvern mainly concentrates on the role of the UN in the crisis, her various studies have more material on the UK than any others. A second area where there is slightly more, though still incomplete, coverage of the UK's involvement is in the media coverage of the crisis. The Glasgow Media Group has published two short studies on the crisis, Georgina Holmes has reviewed coverage of the genocide on the BBC's *Newsnight* programme and there are also a number of accounts written by journalists who reported from Rwanda either during, or in the immediate aftermath of, the genocide.⁴¹ Overall though, the existing literature's coverage of the UK's involvement in the genocide is incomplete and patchy. The summary below reviews the literature under five headings: the UK at the UN; the government's response; when did the government become aware of the genocide; the role of the media; and the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

However, given that so little has been written about the UK and Rwanda, it is maybe appropriate first to explain why the UK is a valuable case study subject. If we adopt Ervin Staub's definition of bystanders as being "people who witness but are not directly affected by the actions of the perpetrators",⁴² the UK's role in the Rwandan crisis was that of bystander; the UK was neither perpetrator nor victim. Specifically looking at genocide Daniela Krosiak expands on this definition:

⁴¹ Georgina Holmes, "Did *Newsnight* Miss the Story? A Survey of How the BBC's 'Flagship Political Current Affairs Program' Reported Genocide and War in Rwanda Between April and July 1994," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 6, no. 2 (2011), pp.174-192. Journalist accounts include accounts by Richard Dowden who was Africa editor of *The Independent* in 1994 ("The Rwandan Genocide: How the Press Missed the Story. A Memoir." *African Affairs*, no. 103 (2004): 283-90), Mark Doyle, who was the East Africa correspondent for the BBC ("Reporting the Genocide," in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* edited by Allan Thompson (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pp. 145-59) and George Alagiah (*Passage to Africa*. (London: Abacus, 2007)) and Fergal Keane (*Season of Blood: A Rwandan Journey*. (London: Penguin Books, 1996)), who both reported for the BBC.

⁴² Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.86.

bystanders to genocide are those people who are not directly affected by the genocidal policies of a regime. The crucial element to ascribe the label 'bystander' to a person or group is that they have to be aware of the events and the genocidal campaign against the victim group.⁴³

Despite the fact that bystanders are not actively involved in the genocide or other crises, a study of their behaviour is still valuable given the potential influence they can have on events by way of their intervention or non-intervention. Staub observes that "opposition from bystanders, whether based on moral or other grounds, can change the perspective of perpetrators and other bystanders".⁴⁴ He points to Hitler's avoidance of clashes with the established churches during the Holocaust as evidence of this claim. Ernesto Verdeja agrees: "Foreign support, indifference or hostility plays a crucial role in setting the parameters of genocide. The number and types of external deterrents, and their impact (or lack thereof) on the perpetrator regime, affect the scope and duration of the violence."⁴⁵ In the specific case of Rwanda, Jean Hatzfeld, during numerous interviews with Hutu who had participated in the genocide, discovered what an impact the withdrawal of UNAMIR and the lack of international condemnation had had on the killers. One for example, told Hatzfeld "We witnessed the flight of the [UN] armoured cars with our own eyes. Our ears no longer heard rumours of reproach ... [we were] assured of unchecked freedom to complete the task."⁴⁶ Although not active participants in the genocide, bystanders have a role that needs to be understood; it is this role which makes a study such as this one valuable.

The UK, amongst all bystanders, has been chosen specifically for this study because of the belief that the UK was/is a powerful and influential member of the international community:

The UK plays a unique role in the world's affairs. A member of NATO, the European Union, the Western European Union, the Commonwealth, the Group of Seven leading industrial nations and a Permanent Member of the UN

⁴³ Krosiak, *The Responsibility of External Bystanders in Cases of Genocide*, p.33.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.21.

⁴⁵ Ernesto Verdeja, "On Genocide: Five Contributory Factors," *Contemporary Politics* 8, no. 1 (2002), p.42.

⁴⁶ Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), p.92.

Security Council: no other country holds all these positions of international prominence and responsibility.⁴⁷ The UK has also been an active participant in international military interventions; for example since 1990 British troops have been deployed in the former Yugoslavia, northern Iraq, Afghanistan, Angola, Libya, Sierra Leone, and twice made significant contributions to the Gulf War coalitions. The UK's position in the international community is also affected by the close relationship with the US; as a partner, or even agent, of the US the so-called Special Relationship arguably means that on the international scene the UK punches above its weight. The UK then is one of the few countries potentially capable of significantly influencing world events. As Andrew Gowers concludes, the UK is amongst the few nations that make up what is commonly called the "international community" and it is this community that can influence world affairs:

The true international community – the one whose health and togetherness will determine the course of world events – is the group of states that created the rules and institutions in the first place. It is, essentially, the United States and Western Europe.⁴⁸

The final reason for a UK study comes from General Dallaire himself. Dallaire has written "the level and type of involvement of these three Western countries [the US, France and UK] in the genocide in Rwanda were unique and therefore worthy of special attention."⁴⁹ Despite this suggestion, to date the UK has not received the special attention Dallaire suggests is needed.

The UK at the United Nations

The role of the UK mission to the UN is the area best covered by the existing literature. In this literature the UK is typically portrayed as initially having been hostile to any intervention in Rwanda, then moving slowly towards a position of supporting African led intervention once it became impossible to ignore the genocide. For example, Michael

⁴⁷ A. Cooke, ed. *The Campaign Guide 1994: A Comprehensive Survey of Conservative Policy* (London: Conservative & Unionist Central Office, 1994), p.v. Although now known as the G8, in 1994 it was correct to talk of the G7 as Russia only formally joined the group in 1997.

⁴⁸ Andrew Gowers, "The Power of Two," *Foreign Policy*, no. 132 (2002), p.32.

⁴⁹ Dallaire *et al*, "Major Powers on Trial," p.862.

Barnett, an American academic temporarily seconded to the US mission to the UN, had responsibility for advising the US mission on Rwanda in 1994; he records the British position as: “Britain fought against the initial push for intervention in April and then shifted position in May when it had overwhelming evidence of the genocide. Still it contributed no real resources.”⁵⁰ Additionally, in many peoples’ analysis the UK’s position on the Security Council makes it responsible for the UN’s failure. Dallaire, for example, wrote in a co-authored article:

Faced with incontrovertible evidence of the most clear-cut case of genocide possible, the international community failed to denounce the evil and to take action to stop the killings taking place in Rwanda in 1994. Under the influence of three major powers - France, the United States and the United Kingdom - the United Nations was disabled from taking the necessary action because the mass slaughter of the Tutsi people did not impinge on these powers’ narrowly defined national interests.⁵¹

A report produced by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) makes a similar claim, quoting from an interview with Boutros-Ghali, it states “The US effort to prevent the effective deployment of a UN force for Rwanda succeeded, with the strong support of Britain ... The international community did little or nothing as the killing in Rwanda continued.”⁵² In this analysis, the UK, as one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, was directly responsible for the United Nations’ failure to halt the genocide.

The main reason used to explain this opposition is the suggestion that the British government believed UN resources were already overstretched and UN peacekeeping was becoming too expensive. With regard the first point, Alison Des Forges notes that the “UK government supposedly wanted to limit UN involvement to diplomacy, apparently fearing that the organisation might collapse under the strain of trying anything more ambitious”.⁵³ Alan Kuperman highlights both the cost of UN missions and the risk to peacekeepers in his explanation of inaction: “The United States and Britain blocked this initiative [to reinforce

⁵⁰ Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p.171.

⁵¹ Romeo Dallaire *et al*, “The Major Powers on Trial,” *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 3, (2005), p.861.

⁵² Masire Ketumile, HE (Chairman). “Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide,” Organisation of African Unity, (1999), p.87. Interestingly this quote actually refers to the “Thatcher government” of Britain, suggesting either Boutros-Ghali, or more likely the report’s authors, were slightly out of touch with UK domestic politics.

⁵³ Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p.638.

the UN peacekeeping mission to Rwanda in February 1994], citing the costs of more troops and the danger that expanding the mission could endanger peacekeepers.”⁵⁴ In support of the argument that peacekeeping had become too expensive, Melvern claims that the US and UK “adamantly opposed” the Belgian plans to reinforce UNAMIR in February 1994 “for financial reasons”.⁵⁵ Melvern continues that throughout the crisis the UK tried to pass responsibility for Rwanda from the UN to the OAU, in an attempt to avoid the expense and risk associated with further UN involvement.⁵⁶

The literature also typically claims that the UK mission in New York allowed the US to take the lead in policy formation. Richard Dowden makes the general claim, “The US, *backed by Britain* and Belgium, forced the UN Security Council to cut the peacekeeping force as the genocide plan was rolled out across Rwanda” (*emphasis added*).⁵⁷ Similarly when describing the discussions at UN Headquarters on 7 April, when the US first proposed withdrawing the peacekeeping troops from Rwanda, Des Forges notes “Several members of the Security Council – described as ‘permanent’ and ‘western’ – shared these points of view, probably meaning that at least the UK supported the US position.”⁵⁸ For Mark Curtis, a rather radical and critical author on British foreign policy, such behaviour fits precisely into his model of how the UK operates at the UN. Curtis quotes *The Guardian* journalist Richard Gott to suggest that British support of the US at the UN is fairly typical: “[The Security Council] is a tight run ship organised chiefly by the British on behalf of the Americans ... Whilst the Americans provide the economic arm twisting, the British supply the diplomatic expertise”.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Kuperman, “Rwanda in Retrospect,” p.116.

⁵⁵ Linda Melvern, “The Security Council in the Face of Genocide,” *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 3, (2005), p.850.

⁵⁶ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p.192.

⁵⁷ Richard Dowden, *Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles* (London: Portobello Books, 2009), p.115.

⁵⁸ Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p.603.

⁵⁹ Mark Curtis, *The Ambiguities of Power: British Foreign Policy Since 1945* (London: Zed Books, 1995), p.183.

The Government's Response

Whilst the UK mission at the UN, along with their US counterparts, were supposedly trying to control the UN's response to Rwanda, the literature suggests that back in London there was no interest in the crisis. Richard Dowden writes:

Rwanda, a former Belgium colony, was of little interest to the Foreign Office, which had been forced to cut its staffing levels in Africa through the 1980s and early 1990s. Rwanda had no diplomatic, historical or commercial links with Britain and no media editor had put the story on the front page. Rwanda was ignored.⁶⁰

Both Mat Berdal and Gilbert Khadiagala support this interpretation, noting that post-independence Africa was not a core priority for the UK, and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) resources dedicated to the continent had gradually been reduced.⁶¹ For Dallaire the government's response can "be characterised from the outset by a determination to play the matter down".⁶² Linda Melvern and Paul Williams similarly conclude, "Based on the evidence presented we conclude that the British government displayed a deeply troubling indifference towards the victims of Rwanda's genocide"; they accuse the British government of a "deliberately misconceived version" of what was happening in Rwanda and a "wilful neglect of its obligations under the Genocide Convention."⁶³

Melvern though does quote one senior UK civil servant as saying "We weren't indifferent, it's just we didn't know what to do".⁶⁴ In support of this sentiment, there is certainly a consensus amongst many involved in the crisis that they were not looking for or expecting genocide in Rwanda and were therefore guilty of missing the signs when it did begin.⁶⁵ As something so out of the usual course of international events it caught many people, apparently including the British government, unawares and unprepared.

⁶⁰ Dowden, *Africa*, p.236.

⁶¹ Berdal, "Peacekeeping in Africa, 1990-1996: The Role of the United States, France and Britain," p.50; and Gilbert Khadiagala, "Europe in Africa's Renewal," in *Africa in World Politics*, edited by John Harbeson and Donald Rothchild (Boulder: West View Press, 2000), p.100.

⁶² Dallaire *et al*, "The Major Powers on Trial," p.873.

⁶³ Linda Melvern and Paul Williams, "Britannia Waived the Rules: The Major Government and the 1994 Rwandan Genocide," *African Affairs* 103, (2004), p.1.

⁶⁴ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p.272.

⁶⁵ Dowden, *Africa* and Barnett, *Eyewitness to a Genocide* both make this point.

However although the government was slow to respond to the genocide, it was quick to take action in response to the refugee crisis that followed the genocidal killings. For Prunier this is largely a reflection of the absence of the genocide from TV news – “events that do not happen on TV do not happen for people in the west. Whereas the genocide was not seen on TV the refugee crisis was”.⁶⁶ Dallaire also notes this obvious difference in the way the two events were treated; he somewhat backhandedly acknowledges that “the British government was rather more forthcoming with its response to the refugee crisis that followed the genocide”.⁶⁷ For some this is an indication that the UK government used the refugee crisis as an opportunity to disguise their lack of action and policy on the genocide itself.

When Did the UK Government Become Aware of the Genocide?

A key test of any bystander’s responsibility for events is their awareness of those events; clearly no-one can blame the British government for not doing more in Rwanda, if it genuinely did not, or could not, have known what was happening in the country. The timing of when the British government became aware of the fact that genocide was occurring is therefore an important point, yet to date this has not been fully or adequately explored. Des Forges, for example, notes “The major international actors – policy makers in Belgium, the US, France and the United Nations – all understood the gravity of the crisis within the first 24 hours”.⁶⁸ She notably does not include the UK in this list; in fact, she does not make any claim of when she believes the UK did become aware of the gravity of the situation. Dallaire on the contrary believes that as one of the world’s major powers, with a well equipped High Commission in Kampala (Uganda) the UK must have known about the genocide fairly early on.⁶⁹ Melvern agrees with this conclusion, noting that in March 1994 Edward Clay, the British High Commissioner in Kampala, had provided the FCO with a

⁶⁶ Prunier, *Africa's World War*, p.265.

⁶⁷ Dallaire *et al*, “The Major Powers on Trial,” p.875.

⁶⁸ Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p.595.

⁶⁹ Dallaire *et al*, “The Major Powers on Trial,” p.873.

report detailing what was happening in Rwanda after he visited Kigali.⁷⁰ Melvern also alleges that the UK had access to the reports that General Dallaire sent from Rwanda to the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations in New York; these “increasingly desperate cables” she claims “[warned] of impending calamity” in the country.⁷¹ Melvern certainly believes that the UK knew more about the situation in Rwanda than widely believed and sooner. The literature also suggests that whilst the UK must have been aware of the genocide, the government initially deliberately spoke of the crisis as a resumption of the on-going civil war. Both Hazel Cameron⁷² and Melvern, in her various works, suggest that this deliberate use of rhetoric was employed to avoid the need for the UK to actually respond.

The second point about knowledge of genocide relates to the alleged close relationship that the American and British governments had with the RPF prior to and during the genocide. Hazel Cameron, Wayne Madsen and numerous internet conspiracy theorists allege that the RPF received extensive support from the British and Americans in Uganda.⁷³ Cameron for example, suggests that the British army provided military training to the RPF guerrillas and that the 1990 invasion was launched with the full knowledge and active assistance of the British Secret Intelligence Service (more commonly known as MI6).⁷⁴

On the other hand, writers do also recognise that British intelligence may not have been that good. Melvern, for example, does quote Sir David Hannay,⁷⁵ the British Representative at the UN, as having said that the UK was “extremely unsighted” over Rwanda.⁷⁶ The fact that there was no British embassy in Rwanda and the low level of trade between the two countries meant that Rwanda was of little interest to the UK and intelligence and FCO resources were not at all focused on the country. Therefore, Hannay continues, the UK, like the non-permanent members of the Security Council, was dependent

⁷⁰ Melvern, “The Security Council in the Face of Genocide,” p.850.

⁷¹ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p.129. These reports were strictly UN internal documents and Melvern does not make it clear how the UK came to see them.

⁷² Hazel Cameron, “British State Complicity in Genocide: Rwanda 1994,” *State Crime* 1, no. 1 (2012), pp.78-80.

⁷³ Cameron, “British State Complicity.” Wayne Madsen *Genocide and Covert Operations in Africa 1993-1999* (Lampeter, Edwin Mellen Press, 1999).

⁷⁴ Cameron, “British State Complicity,” p.75.

⁷⁵ Hannay has since been elevated to the House of Lords as Lord Hannay of Chiswick. However, throughout this thesis I adopt the practice of referring to people by their title in 1994, and hence here call him “Sir”.

⁷⁶ Melvern, “The Security Council: Behind the Scenes,” p.111.

upon the UN Secretariat for information on Rwanda.⁷⁷ British officials were not looking for genocide, so when the killings began, the UK, looking through the frame of four years of protracted civil war and failed ceasefire agreements, saw these fresh events as a civil war spilling over into massacres of non-combatants; the view was therefore taken that Rwanda was consequently no environment for UN peacekeepers, after all there was no peace to keep.⁷⁸

The Role of the British Media

The literature generally suggests that the media in the UK missed the Rwandan genocide and only became interested in the story once it had become a refugee crisis. Dowden, who in 1994 was the Africa editor for *The Independent*, for example recalls the media response:

For most people, Rwanda was just another incomprehensible and irrelevant small war in Africa. The antagonists spoke French. They had silly names: Hutu and Tutsis? News editors giggled and spoke of ‘Tutus’ and ‘Whoopsies’ in news conferences. Even when they took it seriously they came up against an extremely complicated history, and they doubted their readers needed to know about it.⁷⁹

The Glasgow Media Group’s two studies support Dowden’s comments. In the first study, which looks at the portrayal of African disasters and rebellions generally, the group concludes that there is very little public knowledge of Africa, and that this is often also the case amongst the journalists who cover Africa. This ignorance leads to sweeping generalisations being applied to events there. For example, the study highlights how journalists assumed that as the state infrastructure had collapsed in Somalia in the early 1990s the same must be true of Rwanda, when the truth is that the two countries are far from analogous in this respect.⁸⁰ The second report, which focuses solely on television news reporting of Rwanda in July 1994, concludes that the media’s focus was on the refugee

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.111.

⁷⁸ Melvern and Williams, “Britannia Waived the Rules,” p.10.

⁷⁹ Dowden, *Africa*, p.237.

⁸⁰ Liza Beattie *et al.*, “The Media and Africa: Images of Disaster and Rebellion,” in *Message Received*, edited by Greg Philo (Harlow: Longman, 1999), p.260. The Rwandan genocide was highly organised and centrally planned and certainly not something that could have happened if the state infrastructure had collapsed.

crisis, whilst giving very little coverage to the genocide that precipitated the second crisis.⁸¹ The study found that the television media failed to provide any context to the refugee crisis and the limited coverage of the genocide was confused and fragmented.⁸² Georgina Holmes is similarly scathing of the media in her detailed study of *Newsnight's* coverage of the crisis. She concludes that despite being the BBC's flagship current affairs programme, *Newsnight* failed to give sufficient coverage to the crisis and failed to challenge British politicians over their handling of the crisis. She continues that *Newsnight* by "whitewashing events" failed to arouse the public's attention.⁸³

The Role of NGOs

The role of NGOs can be split into two geographical spheres; firstly what the NGOs did in the UK and secondly what they did in Rwanda and neighbouring countries. The NGOs' prime role in the UK was to attempt to highlight first the potential for, and then the actuality of, genocide in Rwanda. Anne Mackintosh, who was the Rwanda country co-ordinator for Oxfam in 1994, records that in the years 1991 to 1994 Oxfam made a number of attempts to highlight the increasing tension between Hutu and Tutsi; for example in 1993 Oxfam campaigner David Waller wrote, "Rwanda stands on the brink of an uncharted abyss of anarchy and violence, and there are too many historical, ethnic, economic, and political pressures that are likely to push it over the edge."⁸⁴ Mackintosh, herself recalls warning her superiors that the war in Rwanda was likely to resume in 1994, though she does not pretend to foretell the genocide that would accompany the resumption of fighting. But as Tony Vaux, himself a senior Oxfam manager, notes once the genocide did break out:

Oxfam did well to alert the world to the true nature of the genocide, but in the end no one can say that they did enough. Even those in Oxfam who wrote

⁸¹ Greg Philo *et al.*, "The Media and the Rwanda Crisis: Effects on Audiences and Public Policy," in *Message Received*, edited by Greg Philo (Harlow: Longman, 1999), p.226.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.220.

⁸³ Georgina Holmes, "Did *Newsnight* Miss the Story? A Survey of How the BBC's 'Flagship Political Current Affairs Program' Reported Genocide and War in Rwanda Between April and July 1994," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 6, no. 2 (2011), pp.188-90.

⁸⁴ Mackintosh, "Rwanda: Beyond 'Ethnic Conflict'," p.466.

letters to the newspapers rightly labelling the event as genocide when it was denied by others, must still question whether they could have done more.⁸⁵

Although Oxfam, and some other NGOs, did try to alert the UK to the genocide that was occurring in Rwanda it is not clear how successfully that message was spread and what impact it had on government and public opinion.

Secondly, the NGOs had a role in Rwanda. Having left the country when the war resumed and genocide broke out, British NGOs did not have a presence in Rwanda during the course of the genocide itself. However, NGOs, both British and those from other western countries, flocked to the region once hostilities ceased. Vaux describes this as “an unseemly scramble of aid agencies to respond to the genocide after the worst had happened”.⁸⁶ However, rather than working in Rwanda itself, most of the NGOs set up their operations in the refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania. These were occupied by Hutu refugees, some of whom certainly had been the perpetrators of genocide. As Andy Storey discusses, this led to accusations that the NGOs were aiding the perpetrators of genocide whilst the victims were ignored.⁸⁷ The fact that the refugee camps provided a base for the old government forces to launch armed raids into Rwanda also led to accusations that NGOs were feeding combatants.

It is also not clear how the NGOs in the region affected the media coverage of the crisis. Storey quotes the conclusion of an African Rights report, “with few exceptions, it is fair to say that the staff of international organisations and NGOs ... [did] not have a grasp of the political situation, let alone an incisive analysis”.⁸⁸ Vaux similarly notes, “some aid agencies apparently did not even realise that the people in the camps were killers rather than victims. They sent out aid workers who suddenly discovered that they were helping murderers.”⁸⁹ Yet the media rushed to hear the, often ill informed and frankly wrong,

⁸⁵ Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist*, p.186.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p.183.

⁸⁷ Storey, “Non-Neutral Humanitarianism: NGOs and the Rwanda Crisis.”

⁸⁸ African Rights, *Rwanda: A Waste of Hope*. Quoted in Storey, “Non-Neutral Humanitarianism: NGOs and the Rwanda Crisis,” p.389.

⁸⁹ Vaux, *The Selfish Altruist*, p.188.

opinions of aid workers in the refugee camps. Again what impact this had on public opinion and government policy has not been addressed, but as Vaux notes:

The public response to the camps in Goma, which were full of people who had been involved in the Rwanda genocide, was exceptionally large; possibly because the public failed to appreciate that their aid was mainly going to those who caused the problem and not to the victims themselves.⁹⁰

Central Research Question

As the above summary shows most of the existing work has focussed on the UK mission to the UN in New York or is written by journalists or aid-workers with personal experience of Rwanda, without setting this into the broader context of UK foreign policy or the response back in London. For example, although most of the literature is critical of the UK for failing to do more, only Melvern acknowledges that in 1994 the UK military was already heavily involved in the peacekeeping missions to the former Yugoslavia.⁹¹ Also no author has considered what the UK could realistically have done in Rwanda, as Alan Kuperman has done from a US perspective;⁹² Cameron for example accuses the government of gross failure with regards to Rwanda but gives no suggestion of what she expects the government to have done.⁹³ Instead the literature seems happy to blithely suggest the British government should have done more without considering the available resources to support such a response. Also, only Melvern and Cameron give any consideration to how parliament responded to the crisis, and then only in a very cursory fashion, less than one page in both cases. There is scant documentary evidence ever quoted for the general claims that the UK opposed the UNAMIR mission for financial purposes, rather this appears to have become a generally accepted truth. Nor has any author considered what UK troops and NGOs did actually do in Rwanda once they did respond to the crisis.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p.8.

⁹¹ Melvern, "The Security Council: Behind the Scenes," p.3.

⁹² Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*.

⁹³ Cameron, "British State Complicity."

Conscious of these gaps, the primary aim of this research is to understand how the UK responded to this unprecedented crisis. The thesis aims to build up a multi-factor, and indeed multi-actor, assessment of what influenced the British response. At this level, the research looks to answer two of the issues highlighted by Tony Blair; namely, to what extent was the UK aware of what was happening in Rwanda and secondly whether the UK did fail to act. In this respect the research provides new knowledge about the UK's role in the crisis and also a comprehensive and critical analysis of the policies and potential motivations of the key actors. Given the UK's initial reluctance to intervene in the crisis and then the eventual deployment of British troops to Rwanda, the study is also potentially a valuable contribution to the wider literature on foreign policy decision making more generally and also to the understanding of what triggers and motivates intervention. Having explored the existing literature on interventionism in Chapter One, the thesis seeks to answer the question of whether the UK's response could have been anticipated – can the response be explained by either of the two main theoretical frameworks of foreign policy, realism or liberalism, or does the response to this particular crisis add something new to our understanding of interventionism?

Finally, the thesis addresses the allegations of responsibility. The thesis attempts to look at this accusation objectively, rather than beginning the debate from the common angle of moral indignation. In line with the differentiation included in the *United Nations Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (The Genocide Convention), the question of responsibility is considered at various stages throughout the genocide. The Genocide Convention talks of a responsibility to prevent genocide, a responsibility to suppress genocide and a responsibility to punish genocide. The punishment of genocide falls outside the scope of this thesis, but Britain's role, and responsibility, in firstly preventing the genocide and secondly in suppressing the genocide will be explored.

In terms of actual scope, the thesis covers the period to 31 August 1994. Whilst it predominantly focuses on the events of 1994, the thesis necessarily reviews the UK's longer

term relationship with Rwanda – the “historic hinterland” as Peter Catterall would call it.⁹⁴ The thesis is predominantly interested in the response to the genocide and subsequent refugee crisis, and does not address the punishment of genocide in any depth. Finally, whilst the subject of the thesis is the genocide, this is first and foremost a study of foreign policy; the thesis has nothing original to say about the cause of the genocide in Rwanda or its practice.

Responsibility

Before proceeding it is worth a brief pause to address the question of responsibility; if we are to review the UK’s “responsibility” for the events in Rwanda it is important to consider what is actually meant by this word. The Cambridge Dictionary includes three separate definitions of responsibility.⁹⁵ The first relates to duty; to be responsible means to have a duty to ensure that certain things happen. Secondly, to be responsible means to accept the blame for something. The third definition is to have good judgement in decision making. To ask whether someone was responsible for something therefore is to ask the question of whether they had a duty to act in some way, or if they are to blame for an outcome. However, what these definitions do not make clear is that degrees of responsibility can vary. It is surely evident that we cannot all be equally responsible for all outcomes. We therefore need some way of measuring, or attributing responsibility.

Daniela Kroslak identifies three key factors which must be present if responsibility is to be assigned to a bystander of genocide; knowledge, involvement and capability:

How much did the bystander *know* about the preparation of the genocide or, during the genocide about its implementation? To what extent was the bystander *involved* with the genocidal regime prior to and throughout the atrocities? And what *capabilities* did the bystander have to intervene in some way, shape or form to prevent or suppress the genocide?⁹⁶ (original italics)

⁹⁴ Peter Catterall, “What (if Anything) is Distinctive About Contemporary History?” *Journal of Contemporary History* 32, no.4. (1997).

⁹⁵ Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary. Accessed on-line at www.dictionary.cambridge.org on 20 April 2010

⁹⁶ Kroslak, *The Responsibility of External Bystanders*, p.4.

Krosiak's test not only differentiates between a bystander who knew of the genocide and the one who did not, or the bystander that had an army which could have intervened and the one that did not, but continues to imply that a bystander can be responsible for omissions as well as commissions. On this basis the definition suggests that we are responsible for the results of our failure to act as well as for the outcomes of our actions. However, as J.R. Lucas argues, wrong commission is not on the same footing as omission, which means standing by and watching someone being killed cannot be considered equal to committing murder.⁹⁷ The suggestion therefore is that there are different degrees of responsibility; one for the person or state committing the act, another for the person who fails to respond to the act, a third for the person who tries to intervene but fails and so on.

Fritz Heider also argues that the degree of responsibility can vary. He identifies four levels of responsibility, measurable on a linear scale. The first, and lowest level, is mere "association", in the sense of an accidental co-occurrence (i.e. being in the same place when something goes wrong). The second level is "causality" or cause and effect relationship; one is responsible if one's action A leads directly to outcome B. The third level is "foreseeability", meaning having knowledge of the consequences of an action (i.e. knowing that your action A would lead to outcome B). The final level is "intentionality", meaning that the actor was not only aware of the consequences of their actions, but fully intended those consequences (i.e. deliberately undertaking action A to cause outcome B).⁹⁸ Therefore the bystander who by coincidence was present at the scene of an emergency bears the least responsibility; whilst the actor who intended the premeditated consequences of their actions bears the most. The Heider model is certainly a useful tool for measuring the level of responsibility that can be attributed to an actor. We will return later to these models to evaluate British responsibility with the regard the crisis of 1994.

⁹⁷ J. R. Lucas, *Responsibility* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.37.

⁹⁸ Hans Werner Bierhoff, *Prosocial Behaviour* (New York: Psychology Press, 2002), p.162.

Methodology

The fact that this study was undertaken before the release of official documents to the National Archives, under the 30 year rule, obviously affects the sources available. As Peter Catterall notes, without access to the traditional archives it is only with a much “great[er] difficulty” that a history of the recent past can be written.⁹⁹ However, this is not to say that it should not be attempted. To alleviate the fact that government documents relating to the crisis are not yet available, this study draws on a range of material; as Catterall continues “government documents are only one type of source for most fields of history ... and to assume that history simply cannot be written without the records that are eventually deposited in national archives seems to privilege one set of sources above all others”.¹⁰⁰ The major primary sources used in the study are outlined below.

Freedom of Information Act

Although government documents have not yet been released to the National Archive, it has been possible to obtain many documents under the Freedom of Information Act (FoI). During the course of the research over fifty requests were made to access information under FoI; these were mainly made to the FCO, but also to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), Treasury, Department for International Development and The Cabinet Office. Any documents obtained under FoI are clearly referenced as such in the footnotes.

There are however, weaknesses that must be acknowledged in the use of FoI. Prime amongst these is the fact that there are a number of exemptions to the Act, which mean that certain documents cannot be released; this includes any documentation which potentially damages the UK’s relationship with other states and also legal advice given to ministers. Copies of correspondence between the UK and the governments of other states will also be withheld. Documents will not be released if the cost of retrieval and copying is excessive;

⁹⁹ Catterall, “What (if Anything) is Distinctive About Contemporary History?” p.446.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p.447.

therefore, the volume of documents that will be released is limited.¹⁰¹ For these reasons it is not possible to use the FoI to obtain all relevant documents. Nor can one be sure of which documents, if any, have been withheld. Therefore, whilst the FoI has proved an incredibly valuable source of evidence, it has proved necessary to use other sources to identify and fill any gaps.

FoI requests were also made to the US State Department and the Bill Clinton Presidential Library. Additionally, the US government has already released a number of documents relating to Rwanda, including previously secret CIA papers, and made these freely available on the internet. The Rwanda Documents Project has also made all documents used at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda available on the internet. Whilst only a few of these documents relate to the UK, the documents do provide background information and a great deal of information on the US response.¹⁰²

Interviews

The possibility of interviewing people is a resource uniquely available to historians working on the very recent past. Although not without controversy, the use of interviews offers a number of benefits to the contemporary historian. Firstly, interviews can reveal information either not recorded in documents, or recorded in documents not yet released. Secondly, interviews can help explain documents and fill in blanks; for example, through interviews it is possible to explore decision makers' motivation and assumptions, things that are not typically recorded. Finally, interviews provide an opportunity to interpret personalities; documents for example, fail to record the underlying philosophies and approaches of decision makers, which is something that can be explored in an interview. As

¹⁰¹ For example, one MOD official indicated that the MOD has approximately 22 files relating to the deployment of UK troops to Rwanda, although it was suggested that most of this is routine correspondence, such as daily welfare reports. Whilst these may one day prove interesting to historians it is unlikely that they would add to this high level survey. However, it should also be noted that discussions with senior archivists at the National Archives suggest that much of this routine correspondence would typically be destroyed before being released to the archive after thirty years; meaning that it may never be made available to historians.

¹⁰² Documents released by the US government can be accessed at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB117/index.htm>. The Rwanda Documents Project can be accessed at <http://www.rwandadocumentsproject.net/gsd1/cgi-bin/library>.

Anthony Seldon succinctly concludes, “obtaining an interviewee’s comments can thus help clarify and explain areas that otherwise might remain baffling”.¹⁰³

Critics of interviews as a valuable historical resource would highlight that there are inherent weaknesses in the method; memory is fallible, interviewees tend to put themselves at the centre of their narrative, people may lie, there may be inaccuracies (intentional or otherwise), and interviews will naturally be distorted by hindsight. Two other significant weaknesses of interviewing are first that the technique can generate an unrepresentative sample (it is not possible to interview everyone) and secondly, interviewing is expensive in terms of cost and time. Because of these two latter factors Steinar Kvale suggests that most interview studies tend to be based on five to twenty interviews.¹⁰⁴ However, through triangulation with other sources most of these risks can be mitigated, making interviews a source that contemporary historians cannot ignore.

In this study eleven oral interviews were undertaken including with Sir Malcolm Rifkind (Secretary of State for Defence in 1994) and Baroness Lynda Chalker (Minister of State at the FCO, responsible for Sub-Saharan Africa and the Overseas Development Administration (ODA)); a list of the interviewees is included in the bibliography. Additionally, a number of off the record discussions and written correspondence with individuals involved in the crisis, or foreign policy decision making, have informed the conclusions; the more significant of these are listed in the Bibliography. The identity of interviewees and correspondents is only included when they gave their permission to be named and quoted. It is accepted that it was not possible to interview everyone that played a key role in the response to the crisis – Seldon’s issue of a limited sample. This has been mitigated by interviewing people with differing perspectives (politicians, civil servants, journalists and military) and also using autobiographies as a proxy for an interview.

¹⁰³ Anthony Seldon, “Interviews” in *Contemporary History: Practice and Method*, edited by Anthony Seldon (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p.8.

¹⁰⁴ Steiner Kvale, *Doing Interviews* (London: Sage, 2008), p.44.

Newspapers

On the basis that much of what the public, and for that matter politicians outside of the FCO, “know about foreign places comes from the news media”,¹⁰⁵ press coverage of the genocide is an important source for this study. The media also frames foreign crises; Garth Myers *et al* for example suggest that “borrowed, repeated and reinforced labels for and images of places, people or events are often key ingredients of interpretative frames” and impact how people understand an issue.¹⁰⁶ The media therefore not only provides the raw facts of a foreign crisis, but also leads the public to a particular interpretation of that crisis.

For this study a systematic review of the coverage of the crisis in British newspapers was carried out, over two thousand articles in total. Whilst it is acknowledged that the television news potentially has a wider impact on public opinion than the print media, this study has not attempted to fully explore television coverage of the crisis. This decision was made for three reasons: firstly, television coverage of the crisis has already been explored elsewhere,¹⁰⁷ secondly the resources were not available to ensure that a complete sample of television coverage could be reviewed,¹⁰⁸ and thirdly because interviewees that spoke of media coverage suggested that they were more familiar with newspaper coverage than television coverage.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, it was decided to concentrate on the UK print media, which has not yet been fully explored.

Following what has become fairly standard practice in fields such as linguistics, sociology, anthropology and communications studies, newspaper articles were identified by undertaking a computer assisted search on the LexisNexis database.¹¹⁰ The search term used was “Rwanda” and articles were obtained for the period 1 October 1990 to 31 August 1994.

¹⁰⁵ Garth Myers, T. Klak and T. Koehl, “The Inscription of Difference: News Coverage of the Conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia.” *Political Geography* 15, no.1 (1996), p.25.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ For example see Greg Philo *et al.* “The Media and the Rwanda Crisis: Effects on Audiences and Public Policy.” In *Message Received*, edited by Greg Philo (Harlow: Longman, 1999); or, Susan Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (London: Routledge, 1999)

¹⁰⁸ Some of the ITN coverage of the crisis is available on-line and I have drawn on this on a number of occasions. However, it has not been possible to access the full archive of BBC, Sky News or ITN.

¹⁰⁹ This is in line with Piers Robinson’s findings that elites are more influenced by what they read in the press than what they see on the television, mainly as they do not have time to watch television. (Robinson, “The CNN Effect,” p.3).

¹¹⁰ Myers *et al.*, “The Inscription of Difference,” p.27.

The newspapers searched in this way were: *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Financial Times*, *The Herald*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Evening Standard* and *The Scotsman*.¹¹¹ Additionally LexisNexis was used to identify articles in the current affairs journal *The Economist* for the same period.

Other Sources

A number of other sources have also been used in this thesis. Official documents relating to Britain's bilateral relationship with Rwanda, prior to 1980 were accessed at the National Archives (Kew). The paucity of such material was particularly informative of the historical links between the two countries. The Conservative Party Archive (Bodleian Library, Oxford) provided transcripts of over fifty speeches given by Douglas Hurd, as Foreign Secretary, in the period 1992 to 1994, as well as a number of speeches given by Baroness Chalker and other FCO Ministers. Parliamentary debates, in both the House of Commons and House of Lords, were reviewed in Hansard. The minutes of Shadow Cabinet meetings and meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party, were also accessed to provide evidence on the response of the Official Opposition. The regimental museums of the Royal Army Medical Corp, the Green Howards and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) provided information relating to the deployment of British troops to Rwanda. Finally, a number of official reports were used; these include reports undertaken by the UN, The OAU and the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda committee. A full list of sources is included in the bibliography.

Thesis Structure

The remainder of this thesis is laid out in five chapters. Chapter One explores the existing literature on intervention, with the aim of building up a model of the factors that potentially influence intervention. It begins by examining the literature on foreign policy, identifying a number of schools of thought with regard to foreign policy. The chapter then

¹¹¹ The Sunday editions of the newspapers were also searched. In the case of *The Guardian* this is taken to be *The Observer*.

moves on to consider why bystanders respond to crises, before finally reviewing British foreign policy and involvement in peacekeeping prior to 1994. Chapter Two examines the British response in the first few weeks of the crisis, covering the period to 21 April when the decision was taken to withdraw UNAMIR. It looks specifically at the early response and asks the question when did the UK realise that genocide was happening in Rwanda. Chapter Three covers the period from the end of April to the end of June. This chapter looks at the decision making in this period and also considers what the UK could actually have done in response to the crisis. Chapter Four considers July and August 1994. The chapter looks at the deployment of British troops, the involvement of NGOs and media coverage and concludes by comparing the response to Rwanda to similar humanitarian emergencies. Finally, the Conclusion summarises the British response and compares this back to the theoretical model of the factors influencing intervention. The thesis concludes with an assessment of whether the UK does rightfully bear any responsibility for the genocide.

CHAPTER ONE

TOWARDS A THEORY OF INTERVENTION

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the US led coalition's success in the first Gulf War (1991) humanitarian intervention looked to be on the way to becoming an international norm. The peaceful collapse of communism appeared to herald a new period in foreign policy, a period which US President George Bush (Senior) was to call "a new world order". The end of Cold War hostilities seemed to mean an end to the proxy wars between the US and Soviet Union and a refocusing of foreign policy and military might, in western countries at least, away from the super-power standoff to the achievement of moral good. There was now, Bush believed, an opportunity to use the military and aid to bring peace to the world. Consequently, in the first half of the 1990s alone, there was intervention in Somalia, Angola, Western Sahara, Bosnia, Haiti, Cambodia, Croatia, northern Iraq and of course Rwanda all aimed at bringing peace. In the years before President George W. Bush's (Junior) unpopular intervention in Iraq, a typical response to incidents of genocide, ethnic cleansing or even natural disasters was that "something must be done".

But despite the sudden increase in intervention, in many cases the international community's actual response was seen by many as not going far enough. Certainly in the case of Rwanda, the criticism of governments for not having responded sooner or more rigorously is strong. Ingvar Carlsson, for example, condemns the Security Council for its inaction, noting:

The parties to the 1948 Genocide Convention took upon themselves a responsibility to prevent and punish the crime of genocide. The Convention explicitly provides for the opportunity to bring such a situation before the Security Council. The members of the Security Council have a particular responsibility, morally if not explicitly under the Convention, to react when faced with a situation of genocide.¹

¹ Ingvar Carlsson, "The UN Inadequacies," *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 3, (2005), p.844.

Romeo Dallaire *et al* accuse the UK, United States and France of “shirking their legal and moral responsibilities”² in Rwanda, by failing to act sooner and Linda Melvern makes the claim that having established a peacekeeping mission to Rwanda, the UN became “responsible” for the country’s future and had an obligation to have done more.³ These critics suggest that the international community should have launched a more robust humanitarian mission to Rwanda and sooner than it actually did – the international community had a responsibility to do something. That “something” is generally meant as putting troops on the ground; Dallaire, Melvern and Carlsson argue that “humanitarian intervention” was the only appropriate response.

This chapter looks at this concept - humanitarian intervention - in more detail. It begins by providing a definition of the term before moving on to the theoretical basis underlying humanitarian intervention, looking at the two main schools of thinking on foreign policy, realism and liberalism. The chapter then moves on to review the literature relating to what triggers or motivates intervention. It addresses the question of why bystanders intervene in crises both at a state and an individual level and explores the various factors that have been identified as influencing (non)intervention, including: the CNN effect, the bystander effect, race, the importance of political leaders and bureaucracy. As the Rwandan genocide is a comparatively recent event, the review adopts a practice common in contemporary history and takes a cross-disciplinary approach, drawing on fields other than just history, including international relations, politics, sociology and psychology. The chapter concludes by looking specifically at the UK’s role in humanitarian intervention prior to 1994 and also foreign policy practice in the decades before the genocide.

Humanitarian Intervention Defined

One succinct definition of humanitarian intervention is provided by Adam Roberts: “humanitarian intervention is defined as coercive action by one or more states involving the

² Romeo Dallaire *et al*, “The Major Powers on Trial,” p.887.

³ Linda Melvern, “The Security Council: Behind the Scenes,” *International Affairs*, 77 (2001), p.108.

use of armed force in another state without the consent of its authorities, and with the purpose of preventing widespread suffering or death among the inhabitants.”⁴ In 1994 the European Parliament defined humanitarian intervention as “the protection, including the threat or use of force, by a state or group of states, of the basic human rights of persons who are subjects of and/or resident in another state”.⁵ As with most definitions, neither of these is universally accepted. The definitions do, however, capture the essential features of humanitarian intervention: it is a military response; it is by an actor outside of the state; consent is absent; it involves the use, or the threat of use, of force; and there are humanitarian motives for launching the intervention.

Humanitarian intervention can also be seen as sitting somewhere on a continuum of military action, which has war at one extreme and peacekeeping at the other. Whereas war is combat against a designated opponent, for gains in territory, resources or power, humanitarian intervention is motivated, not by a thirst for more power, but by a humanitarian concern for the welfare of others. Humanitarian intervention also is not necessarily against a known opponent; in humanitarian missions the military will often be deployed to stand between civilians and potential attackers, which could include armies, militias or gangs, where, as in Rwanda, the line between the person to be protected and the potential threat is not necessarily obvious. But nor is humanitarian intervention traditional peacekeeping. Traditional peacekeeping is based on consent, neutrality and the limit on the use of force to self defence only. In a traditional peacekeeping mission, the military will typically be deployed between two warring parties who have reached a mutual peace agreement. Murrack Goulding, the head of UN peacekeeping missions in 1988, summed up traditional peacekeeping as:

Peacekeeping soldiers carry arms only to avoid using them; they are military forces, but their orders are to avoid, at almost any cost, the use of force; they

⁴ Adam Roberts, "The So Called 'Right' of Humanitarian Intervention," In *Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law 2000* (The Hague: TMC Asser, 2001), p.4.

⁵ *Official Journal of The European Communities*, Nr C 128/225, Wednesday 20 April 1994. Note this resolution was being drafted at the height of the killing in Rwanda.

are asked in the last resort to risk their own lives rather than open fire on those between whom they have been sent to keep the peace.⁶

When we talk of humanitarian intervention, then, we are implying more than passive observation of a peace agreement. Troops on a humanitarian intervention mission will typically undertake a wider range of tasks, including protecting aid convoys, enforcing safe zones, confiscating and destroying weapons, assisting in the disbandment of armies or monitoring elections. In humanitarian intervention missions, troops would also be permitted to use force to protect non-combatants. This then is the sort of mission that the above commentators suggest should have been deployed to Rwanda.

Theories of Intervention

Placing humanitarian intervention into a historical context, it is immediately obvious that during the Cold War period suggestions that there was a moral or legal responsibility to intervene for humanitarian purposes in another sovereign state were exceptional. Yet during the 1990s there was a wave of UN peacekeeping missions launched on humanitarian grounds; Bosnia, Iraq, Haiti, Somalia, Kosovo, East Timor, Western Sahara, Angola and Rwanda all saw some form of humanitarian intervention. Statistics show this change: in the 1990s 35 UN peacekeeping missions were launched, nearly twice the 18 missions of the previous 45 years.⁷ It seems then that in the case of intervention in the early 1990s there was a period of evolution, which immediately followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War.

The literature on international relations is vast and contentious, but a brief review of the main arguments is sufficient to understand the influence the debate has on humanitarian intervention in practice; as Roland Dannreuther notes, “international relations theories can be bewildering in their complexity and proliferation, making them often as impenetrable as

⁶ Quoted in Adam LeBor, *“Complicity with Evil”: The United Nations in the Age of Modern Genocide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p.15.

⁷ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/list.shtml>. Accessed on 7 May 2010.

the reality they seek to explain”.⁸ Although this is somewhat of a simplification, the theory of international relations can be split into two schools: realism and liberalism.⁹ The two schools, to which we now turn, offer very different views on intervention and potentially go some way to explaining the international response to the crisis in Rwanda.

Realism

The realist theory can be briefly summarised as the assumption that the international system is anarchic, containing multiple units (or states) with no overall authority and that the key factor differentiating the units is their relative power. The realist world is one where “states constantly fear one another and seek to alleviate this fear through maximising their power and domination”.¹⁰ However, in order to instil some order into this anarchy a theory of sovereignty has developed which provides some protection to states, by reinforcing their position within the international system.

The realist interpretation of sovereignty dates back to 1648 when at the conclusion of the Thirty Years War, the Treaty of Westphalia established a principle of “the sovereign right of the state to act as a supreme arbiter within its national borders”.¹¹ The Treaty founded the principle that all states were independent and legally equal. Although borders were frequently crossed in times of war, the principle that no state would interfere in the domestic affairs of another essentially dominated international relations theory until at least the end of World War I. There was however a limited move away from this theory of sovereignty after the end of the War. Based on the belief that the First World War had been the “war to end all wars” the League of Nations was founded to promote international peace, but despite the foundation of the League as a supranational institution, international relations remained state focused. In fact by withdrawing a state’s legal right to go to war, other than in self defence, the League in many ways actually strengthened the Westphalian principle of

⁸ Roland Dannreuther, *International Security: The Contemporary Agenda* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p.35.

⁹ These names are not universally accepted, but are in common usage; for example, Chris Brown prefers communitarian theory and cosmopolitanism. Chris Brown, *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 2001).

¹⁰ Dannreuther, *International Security*, p.38.

¹¹ Quoted in Richard Conaughton, *Military Intervention and Peacekeeping: The Reality* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p.1.

state sovereignty - borders were now truly sacrosanct. Article 10 of the League's charter stated, "[each member state] undertakes to respect and preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all members of the League".¹² The principle of state sovereignty was reinforced in 1945 when the League of Nations was superseded by the UN. In the UN founding charter Article 2(7) states: "Nothing contained in the present charter shall authorise the UN to intervene in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state". But as well as defending the territorial sovereignty of states, the other thing that these various treaties and charters reinforced was the primacy of the state over both international institutions and the individual. This primacy of the state, over both the individual and supranational institutions is core to realist foreign policy theory.

But what is more relevant than the theory of realism, or the legal basis for the theory, is the impact that it has had in practice, particularly with regard to humanitarian intervention. In realist theory the belief that states should only intervene to protect their own national interests predominates. Aidan Hehir notes,

In the absence of a sense of community, states are compelled to act strategically, not morally, and aim at all times to maximise the national interest and protect their security. Therefore, a concern for those suffering abroad does not motivate states to act unless there are national interests involved.¹³

Alex Bellamy similarly argues that states have just one moral duty, and that is to prioritise the welfare of their own citizens. To intervene in other countries when no national interest is at stake is therefore a dereliction of that duty, especially if that intervention imperils the intervening state; for example, by risking the lives of its own citizens or incurring financial costs.¹⁴ Michael Smith continues, "states are necessarily self-interested creatures and are by definition unable to act in any other than self-interested ways. To expect them to do so – to support a genuinely humanitarian action – is to engage in self-delusion, error and

¹² Ibid, p.6.

¹³ Aidan Hehir, *Humanitarian Intervention: An Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.62.

¹⁴ Alex Bellamy, "Whither the Responsibility to Protect? Humanitarian Intervention and the 2005 World Summit," *Ethics & International Affairs* 20, no. 2 (2006), p.9.

hypocrisy.”¹⁵ Such arguments have at their core the realist belief that national interest alone should motivate foreign policy and in the realist framework national interest is essentially defined as power – either gaining power or maintaining power.

But clearly states do intervene and the realist school is able to explain such intervention through this focus on power. For example, Smith notes that there is a realist case for structuring and enforcing a more orderly international system, which may explain intervention such as the US involvement in Haiti in the early 1990s, or the leaders of Kenya, Tanzanian and Uganda’s willingness to pressure President Habyarimana to implement the Arusha Accords in 1994 (whilst these Presidents did not consider military intervention in Rwanda in early 1994, they did involve themselves in the domestic affairs of Rwanda for their own countries’ benefit). In the case of Haiti, Smith argues that if the US was to remain credible as a Great Power it could not allow Haiti, a near, but impoverished neighbour, “to thumb its nose at everything it [said]”.¹⁶ The intervention in Haiti was then less humanitarian and more about re-establishing the pecking order in the western hemisphere. Similarly, Noam Chomsky, a critic of humanitarian intervention, argues the US intervention in Kosovo in 1999 was more about ensuring NATO, and therefore US, credibility, than any moral purpose.¹⁷ The application of this theory means that it is hard to predict when a state will intervene (though it is somewhat easier to predict when they will choose not to intervene); rather than intervention being based on some objective, identifiable criteria, it is, realism suggests, actually driven by the more nebulous idea of national interest. As Hehir suggests, “international issues are dealt with according to prevailing exigencies rather than some abstract moral code”.¹⁸ He continues to suggest that in practice states maintain a case-by-case approach to humanitarian emergencies, and will intervene only when national

¹⁵ Michael Smith, “Humanitarian Intervention: An Overview of the Ethical Issues.” *Ethics & International Affairs* 12, no. 1 (2006), p.70.

¹⁶ Smith, “Humanitarian Intervention,” p.72.

¹⁷ Noam Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line: Kosovo, East Timor and the Standards of the West* (London: Verso, 2000).

¹⁸ Hehir, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p.62.

interests are at stake. Thomas Weiss suggests you do not have to be a “theoretical Realist” to accept this proposition, just a realist.¹⁹

The realist tradition can thus be summarised as opposing the norm of humanitarian intervention. It suggests that states do not act on the basis of moral concerns and international institutions do not significantly influence state behaviour. In fact, states adopt a selfish disposition, focused on their own narrow national interests, which curtail altruistic action. Rather than morality, “power is the primary catalyst for state action”.²⁰

The liberal tradition

However, whilst it is apparent that realism dominated political thought throughout the Cold War period, soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union there was, in some quarters, a shift towards a more liberal view of foreign policy. Roland Paris argues:

At the end of the Cold War, there was a widely shared conviction that political and economic liberalism offered a key to solving a broad range of social, political and economic problems from under-development and famine, to disease, environmental degradation and violent conflict.²¹

Whereas realism subordinates the rights of the individual to the state, liberalism inherently believes in guaranteeing the liberty of the private individual, manifesting itself internationally as preference for laws and practices that privilege the individual over the state. As Vaclav Havel wrote in the *New York Review*, “The enlightened efforts of generations of democrats, the terrible experience of two world wars ... and the evolution of civilisation have finally brought humanity to the recognition that human beings are more important than the state”.²² In the liberal tradition there is then a natural inclination towards intervention for the good of humanity; therefore “intervention in protection of human rights is considered part of the march of human progress and a means by which the global

¹⁹ Thomas Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

²⁰ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1954).

²¹ Roland Paris, “Saving Liberal Peacebuilding” *Review of International Studies*, 36, No.2 (2010), p.340.

²² Quoted in Chomsky, *A New Generation Draws the Line*, p.2.

transition to liberal democracy can be facilitated”.²³ So whilst realist theory is guided by the principle that intervention is negative, linked to the prohibition of the use of violence against a sovereign authority, the liberal tradition confers a positive view upon intervention, seeing it as an instrument for imposing human rights and democracy on a global scale.²⁴

The shift though was not purely a theoretical one; the post-Cold War period also saw a shift in foreign policy practice and international law. The European Parliament’s “Resolution on the Right of Humanitarian Intervention” of 1994, for example, recognised the move in political thought and practice that was evident in the period. The resolution confirmed an important move in international law towards an internationally acknowledged expansion of human rights that would not have been possible only a few years previously. In 2001, a panel of experts, brought together by the Canadian government as the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), published a report on humanitarian intervention, which promoted the concept of “Responsibility to Protect”. This report was then discussed at a World Summit in 2005 where the concept was generally accepted. ICISS placed the responsibility to protect citizens primarily on the state; however it went further, by claiming that if a state was unable or unwilling to offer such protection to its citizens the international community had, not just a right but, a responsibility to intervene. Ramesh Thakur summarises the general conclusion of the report, “Where a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the government in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the norm of non-intervention yields to this international responsibility to protect”.²⁵ Lindberg, writing in the *Washington Times*, noted that the ICISS declaration “replaced the state with human individuals as the primary focus of security and deterritorialised protection by giving all states a responsibility to uphold and protect basic human rights regardless of where they

²³ Hehir, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p.68.

²⁴ Zanetti, “Global Justice: Is Intervention Desirable?” p.215.

²⁵ Ramesh Thakur, “No More Rwandas: Intervention, Sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect.” *Humanitarian Exchange* 26, (2004), p.7.

were violated”.²⁶ This was a significant normative shift from the realist tradition that promoted non-interference in the affairs of sovereign states. In less than fifteen years, immediately following the end of the Cold War, 350 years of Westphalian sovereignty appeared to have been overturned.

The early 1990s also saw a number of actual interventions justified partially on the liberal grounds of protecting human rights. The first such mission was Operation Provide Comfort, which was launched in 1991 to provide both security and aid to the Kurdish population in northern Iraq, which was being persecuted by Saddam Hussein’s government following Iraq’s defeat in the first Gulf War. The mission, which saw British, American and French troops deploy into Iraq without the permission of the Iraqi government, can arguably be seen as a tipping point from the realist ideology to the new liberal ideology. By the end of 1991 a new context of forcible humanitarian intervention, albeit still controversial (only ten of the fifteen UN Security Council members voted in favour of the Iraq intervention) had been founded. UN Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar wrote in his 1991 annual report, “It is now increasingly felt that the principle of non-interference within the essential domestic jurisdiction of states cannot be regarded as a protective barrier behind which human rights could be massively or systematically violated with impunity”.²⁷

This normative shift consequently redefined what was meant by sovereignty. Whilst realists staunchly defend the sanctity of sovereign states, the liberal interpretation is that state sovereignty is contingent. Boutros-Ghali for example wrote in *Agenda for Peace* in 1995, “the time of absolute state sovereignty has passed”. Thomas Weiss described the position as, “when a government massively abuses the fundamental rights of its citizens, its sovereignty is temporarily suspended”.²⁸ In this liberal view, the sovereignty of a state rests, not on its own presumptive legitimacy, but rather it is derived from the individuals whose rights and well being are to be protected. Michael Waltzer, therefore, asserts that if a state

²⁶ Quoted in Bellamy “Whither the Responsibility to Protect?” p.144.

²⁷ Quoted in Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse. *Humanitarian Intervention in Contemporary Conflict* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p.84.

²⁸ Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p.23.

commits acts of aggression against its own population, it “can be invaded ... to rescue peoples threatened with massacre”.²⁹ Smith argues that “it follows, that a state that is oppressive and violates the autonomy and integrity of its subjects forfeits its moral claim to full sovereignty”.³⁰ This sudden, and arguably revolutionary, shift in thinking meant that when it came to human rights national boundaries were swept away. In this school of thinking, intervention in Rwanda would have been justified in 1994, even if national interests were not at stake.

Henry Shue supports this view and indirectly answers Tony Blair’s question “What of the murder distant from us, the injustice we cannot see, the pain we cannot witness but which we nonetheless know is out there?”³¹ Shue, adopting this liberal idea of foreign policy, suggests that the duty to help people geographically far away is no less than to people in the next country; they are both, after all, strangers.³² This then is the theory of “ethical universalism” or “cosmopolitanism” – the belief that humans are morally equal regardless of any communal membership. As citizens of the world, the argument goes, our basic duty is to the welfare of humankind, not just to those within our own borders; the duty to the people of Rwanda is no different from the duty to protect people in London or Paris. Zanetti notes that for cosmopolitans it is morally unacceptable that some people, just because they are born in the “wrong” part of the world, have nearly no access to the resources necessary to survive.³³ Equally it must be morally unacceptable to ignore the mass slaughter of an ethnic group just because they live many thousands of miles away.

Why there should have been such an apparent shift in thinking immediately following the Cold War, is not entirely clear, though David Chandler summarises four possible explanations.³⁴ Firstly, the move towards the prominence of human rights can be seen as a gradual shift starting in 1945, with intervening steps including the acceptance of

²⁹ Michael Waltzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), p.108

³⁰ Smith, “Humanitarian Intervention,” p.75.

³¹ Blair, *A Journey*, p.61.

³² Quoted in Krosiak, *The Responsibility of External Bystanders*, p.103.

³³ Zanetti, “Global Justice: Is Intervention Desirable?” p.210.

³⁴ David Chandler, *From Kosovo to Kabul and Beyond: Human Rights and International Intervention*, 2nd ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2006), pp.56-65.

the Genocide Convention in 1948, the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966 and the establishment of the UN Human Rights Committee in the 1970s. Secondly, the world was simply a more dangerous place after the end of the Cold War and the end of the super-power standoff and liberalism was seen as a way of reducing the increased risk. Thirdly, Chandler suggests the CNN effect (discussed in more detail below) and a shift in normative values of a more human rights aware population drove policy makers to adopt a more humanitarian approach. Chandler's fourth, and his preferred explanation, is that the end of the Cold War increased the "capacity of Western Powers to politically legitimise greater intervention abroad".³⁵ Adopting a more ethical and humanitarian foreign policy, Chandler suggests, was one way for western powers to garner widespread domestic support. Whereas domestic policy is divisive and subject to party politics, Chandler suggests ethical foreign policy is a no lose policy for western governments; voters will not, he argues, oppose apparently genuine efforts to help those in need abroad even if the efforts fails.

Regardless of the underlying cause of the shift, Dannreuther does hypothesize that the end of the Cold War did facilitate intervention.³⁶ The collapse of the Soviet Union, for example, weakened the fear that intervention in distant conflicts could potentially escalate into super-power conflict; intervention in the Former Yugoslavia would for instance have been unthinkable during the Cold War, given the country's strategically significant geographic position. The collapse of the Soviet ideology also made the world more homogenous; the vast majority of countries by 1990 accepted capitalism and liberal democracy as the dominant political ideology, leading Francis Fukuyama to claim in 1989 that this widespread adoption of liberalism marked "the end of history".³⁷ The end of the bi-polar US - Soviet politics of the Cold War, also reduced the likelihood of the UN Security Council veto being enacted by one of the Permanent Five; Dannreuther continues that this freed the UN from the straitjacket that had bound it for the period 1945 to 1989. More than

³⁵ Ibid, p.62.

³⁶ Dannreuther, *International Security*, pp.146-8.

³⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1992).

at any time, by 1992 in the aftermath of Operation Provide Comfort, the capability and willingness to intervene to protect human rights seems to have been established.

Opposition to Intervention

But the shift towards liberalism was not universally accepted – realism was far from dead when policy makers were making decisions about intervention in Rwanda in 1993 and 1994. As Roland Paris suggests, there has been in recent years “the emergence of what might be called a ‘hyper-critical’ school of scholars and commentators who view liberal peace building as fundamentally destructive or illegitimate.”³⁸ One of the main arguments against intervention is the belief that intervention in fact does more harm than good. As Roger Howard argues, “A ‘humanitarian war’, or any conflict justified on the grounds that it is in another’s best interest, is clearly oxymoronic because of the death and devastation that military intervention will inflict.”³⁹ There is a fairly common belief, for example, that an unintended consequence of providing humanitarian aid to civilians in a war zone is that the conflict is prolonged. As Tim Murithi points out, the distribution of humanitarian aid, such as food, water or medicine, confers power on the recipient, and if diverted to support the war effort actually sustains war.⁴⁰

Thomas Weiss presents three criticisms of intervention along this line.⁴¹ First, there is typically no willingness amongst interventionists to stay the course. Certainly in Somalia and East Timor, after brief interest in the countries the internal community essentially withdrew leaving both to re-descend into chaos. If there is no willingness at the outset to stay long enough to resolve the underlying issues, rather than just the humanitarian emergency, why start. Secondly, Weiss asks if military intervention will always bring about an outcome better than other alternatives, such as sanctions or diplomacy. Finally, Weiss suggests a purely economic judgement must be made of humanitarian intervention; do the

³⁸ Paris, “Saving Liberal Peacebuilding,” p.338.

³⁹ Howard, *What’s Wrong with Liberal Interventionism*, p.66.

⁴⁰ Tim Murithi, “NGOs and Conflict Resolution in Africa: facilitators or aggravators of peacekeeping?” in *Peacekeeping in Africa*. Edited by Oliver Furley and Roy May (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p.278.

⁴¹ Thomas Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention: Ideas in Action*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), pp.82-5.

benefits outweigh the costs? There are obvious difficulties of measuring a bottom line of humanitarianism (for example, what value is put on a life or, is the same value placed on the life of a western soldier as an African subsistence farmer) but this must be done if we can justify intervention rationally. For example, Weiss suggests, we should be able to reach a conclusion to such questions as is it better to save 100 civilian lives at the expense of a western soldier or if it means a conflict is extended by a month.

More academic, but equally significant, arguments against intervention include the point that intervention is justified on the grounds of protecting human rights, and yet this is a concept that is not universally accepted. For Roger Howard the problem with such a justification is the fact that human rights are so poorly defined “as to be illusionary”.⁴² Howard uses a rather philosophical argument that can be summarised as, human rights are supposed to be timeless and universal, yet they cannot have existed in medieval or prehistoric times when society was anarchic. If we do not accept that such rights existed in these anarchic times, we must agree that they cannot exist in similar situations in modern times where no society exists, such as Somalia or the Sahara Desert (two regions in which intervention missions operated in the 1990s).⁴³ For Howard, if there is no definitive agreement on what constitutes human rights and from what supreme authority they derive, military intervention cannot be justified on the grounds of defending these subjective rights. He concludes that “[humanitarian] interventionism is, to an important degree, really just a modern day reflection of colonial attitudes about the ‘superior’ and ‘civilised’ nations towards the backwards”.⁴⁴ And Howard is not alone in this argument. Philip Towle, for example, points out that “in a globalised world ... what seems self-evident in one country can be very different from what seems irrefutable somewhere else”.⁴⁵ Or as Samuel Huntington argues, in the appropriately named *The Clash of the Civilisations*, not all people want to be like the west and share western values of democracy and human rights, or alternatively have

⁴² Roger Howard, *What's Wrong with Liberal Interventionism: The Dangers and Delusions of the Interventionist Doctrine* (London: The Social Affairs Unit, 2006), p.24.

⁴³ Ibid, p.25.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.34.

⁴⁵ Philip Towle, *Going to War: British Debates from Wilberforce to Blair* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p.41.

other versions of democracy and human rights. He goes as far as to suggest “Western intervention in the affairs of other civilisations is probably the single most dangerous source of instability and potential global conflict in a multi-civilised world”.⁴⁶

For many then, the label humanitarian intervention is no more than a tool for powerful states to intervene in the affairs of the weak,⁴⁷ a way of pursuing a realist, power driven foreign policy whilst assuming an air of morality. So despite the shifting norm and the widening acceptance of humanitarian intervention in the developed countries of Europe and North America, there remains significant scepticism of intervention in the developing nations of Africa, Southern and Latin America and Asia. With a history of colonisation, developing nations have a tendency to be naturally wary of western imperialism dressed up as humanitarian intervention. David Reiff, writing of the massacres in the Darfur region of Sudan in the early years of the twenty-first century, for example, suggests that “[Whilst] in Europe and the United States, sending NATO forces to Darfur may seem like fulfilling the global moral responsibility to protect ... in much of the Muslim world, it is far likelier to be experienced as one more incursion of a Christian army into an Islamic land”.⁴⁸ It was certainly apparent at the 2005 World Summit which discussed the ICISS report, that whilst there was almost universal support of the proposals amongst the European delegations, developing nations plus China and Russia, were certainly less enthusiastic.⁴⁹ And it is not difficult to understand this objection to unwanted intervention; simply consider the hostile response of much of the UK media to EU involvement in the affairs of the UK, or President Clinton’s involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process. The compromise position that seems to have been reached is a preference that if there is to be intervention on humanitarian grounds, it should be carried out by regional, rather than western, powers.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilisations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993), p.22.

⁴⁷ Bellamy, “Whither the Responsibility to Protect?” pp.143-5.

⁴⁸ David Reiff, “A Nation of Pre-emptors?” in the *New York Times Magazine*, 15 January 2006; quoted in Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p.58.

⁴⁹ The US also rejected many of the recommendations; not for humanitarian or ideological reasons, but out of a fear that agreement to the ICISS recommendations would oblige the US to intervene in all humanitarian emergencies (Hehir, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p.117).

⁵⁰ David Reiff, “The Illusions of Peacekeeping.” *World Policy Journal* 11, no. 3 (1994), p.17.

A less ubiquitous argument against intervention is presented by Mohammed Ayoob, who argues that armed conflict was an essential ingredient of eighteenth and nineteenth century European state making, and that similar kinds of humanitarian disasters are the inevitable by-product of comparable processes at work in much of the Third World.⁵¹ There is some almost perverse logic to this argument when one recalls that the current national boundaries in Africa were mostly drawn up in the foreign ministries of Europe and that forty-four per-cent of African borders are straight lines that fail to reflect either geographical or ethnic realities.⁵² Only by allowing states to fail, boundaries to be redrawn and new political authorities to emerge, Jeffrey Herbt's similarly argues, can African violence be solved.⁵³ Reflecting an argument that was to be expressed by many during the Rwandan crisis, if there is to be long lasting peace in Africa, Africans themselves must find solutions to the problems and violence that seem endemic to the continent; and for Ayoob and Herbt's, this will inevitably involve bloodshed, distasteful as this may be to the European and American public.

Humanitarian Intervention – The Practice

The academic debate on humanitarian intervention and sovereignty, crucial as it is, however masks the fact that whatever the arguments, great powers have a history of intervention and this flourished in the 1990s.

However, despite the shift towards liberalism, the international community evidently does not always intervene in humanitarian emergencies. For example, Weiss notes the lack of action in the Darfur region of Sudan, despite the fact that US Secretary of State Colin Powell described the events as genocide in September 2004, and despite the fact that the US Senate voted 422 to 0 in July 2004 that the Sudanese government was pursuing a strategy of genocide, and despite the fact that in September 2004 the EU Parliament described the

⁵¹ Massad Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict and the International System* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

⁵² Hehir, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p.49.

⁵³ Jeffrey Herbt's, "Responding to State Failure in Africa" *International Security*, 21:3 (1996), pp.120-44.

events as “tantamount to genocide”.⁵⁴ The list of conflicts and countries experiencing severe abuses of human rights would extend far beyond the list of countries where the UN has intervened; for example, there have been no serious efforts at humanitarian intervention in the conflicts in the Niger Delta or the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia or the war in Democratic Republic of Congo. In practice, given the typical response of non-intervention it is hard to predict when the international community will break with the norm and actually respond to breaches of human rights – there are certainly no hard and fast rules of what circumstances will trigger military intervention, on the other hand, as we will see, there do seem to be certain circumstances that make intervention highly unlikely

Justifying Non-Intervention

As Nicholas Wheeler has pointed out, first of all there is no guarantee that when confronting a humanitarian emergency, states would agree that the just cause threshold has been crossed which would justify intervention.⁵⁵ As the above quote from the EU Parliament about Darfur shows, what is and what is not genocide, or ethnic cleansing, or a mass abuse of human rights, can be made a subjective question – the belief that something either is or is not genocide, in the real world of diplomacy is a gross oversimplification of what is taken to be a rather subjective question. Whilst the framers of The Genocide Convention most likely believed they had drafted a clear definition of genocide, it is evident that 60 years later governments still cannot definitively agree when something is genocide and therefore use terms such as “tantamount to genocide”. Depending on the view taken, intervention can either be justified, or deemed unnecessary. Even if the subjectivity could be removed there remains the get out clause of “nothing can be done”. Thakur, for example, argues that intervention should only be considered an option when there are reasonable prospects of it being successful.⁵⁶ This is possibly true in many instances of human rights abuses, but the argument also allows western governments to deny the value of intervening; this is Weiss’s

⁵⁴ Ibid, p.54.

⁵⁵ Nicholas Wheeler, “Legitimising Humanitarian Intervention,” *Melbourne Journal of International Law* (2001), p.566.

⁵⁶ Thakur, “No More Rwandas,” p.8.

economic cost-benefit test being applied. Finally, as many commentators suggest, despite the shift towards liberalism western governments remain primarily answerable to their domestic electorate. As Dannreuther notes, “In the post-Cold War period, the humanitarian arguments for intervention need to convince generally inattentive, fickle and domestically orientated Western publics, whose sense of moral outrage does not always translate into acceptance of serious costs and sacrifices”.⁵⁷

The post-Cold War moral shift, then, does not mean that western states will automatically intervene in humanitarian emergencies. There are clearly other factors involved in the decision making process of when and when not to intervene and the common view is that, in line with the realist argument, these are often heavily influenced by national interest and power. However, one definite change is the fact that intervention is now more commonly couched in the language of human rights and morality, rather than the preservation of power. The following quotes from Tony Blair illustrate this point nicely: speaking of intervention in Kosovo in 1999 “[Slobodan] Milosevic is determined to wipe a people from the face of the country. NATO is determined to stop him”⁵⁸ and “we cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violation of human rights within other countries if we still want to be secure”,⁵⁹ or in 2000 on involvement in Sierra Leone, “when people say ‘run an ethical foreign policy’ I say Sierra Leone was an example of that, not an example of not doing it. It is up on the high ground”.⁶⁰ The rhetoric of peacekeeping and intervention has become more morality focused even if the motivation has not.

When do States Intervene?

If non-intervention is the norm, what then motivates the numerous examples of intervention that have occurred? Certainly some work has been done to try to determine

⁵⁷ Dannreuther, *International Security*, p.148.

⁵⁸ Taken from *The Guardian*, 1999 (not dated) as quoted in Chandler, *From Kosovo to Kabul and Beyond*, p.74.

⁵⁹ Howard, *What's Wrong with Liberal Interventionism*, p.19.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.19.

what specifically it is that leads to a response to some humanitarian emergencies and not others. This work is summarised below.

Which states most commonly intervene?

To understand why states intervene in humanitarian interventions, we perhaps first have to understand which states are most commonly involved in humanitarian interventions. The most comprehensive empirical study of involvement in UN missions was performed by Laura Neack, who concluded that “the most likely participants are states that benefit from the status quo, and aspiring ‘powers’ that seek to achieve some relative prestige within the status quo”.⁶¹ The top ten of countries involved in UN missions, is made up of what Neack describes as middle powers (Canada, Australia, and Italy, Ireland), the Scandinavian countries, (Norway, Finland Denmark) and the emerging powers (Brazil and India). Because of an unofficial convention that developed during the Cold War, the Permanent Five are not high up the list of those countries involved in peacekeeping in the period prior to 1990; only the US makes it into the top ten, and France and China do not even make the top thirty. Neack therefore argues that involvement in peacekeeping missions is grounded entirely on serving national interest:

The particular interests that have been served by UN peacekeeping are those of the Western states whose interests are served by the status quo and a few non-Western states that lay claim to some prestige in international affairs through their UN activities.⁶²

However, Peter Jakobsen, has noted that in the post-Cold War period it has become more common for humanitarian intervention missions to be led by a Permanent Five member of the Security Council, usually the US.⁶³ One could argue that this reflects a shift towards liberalism on the part of the Permanent Five, or at least the US, France and the UK. However, Jakobsen suggests, the more likely explanation is that it is only these few

⁶¹ Laura Neack, “UN Peace-Keeping: In the Interest of Community of Self?” *Journal of Peace Research* 32, no. 2 (1995), p.185. Though note this study is limited to the period of 1948 and 1990.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.194.

⁶³ Peter V. Jakobsen, “National Interest, Humanitarianism or CNN: What Triggers UN Peace Enforcement after the Cold War?” *Journal of Peace Research* 33, no. 2 (1996), pp.205-15.

countries that have the necessary resources to mount a meaningful humanitarian intervention mission. As Richard Connaughton suggests, in practice there are only four world class armies capable of launching large, or even medium, scale missions independently: the US, France, India and the UK.⁶⁴ In practice then, it is only the medium and great powers that have the capability to launch intervention missions, though they will often be supported by lesser powers. But the resources of even the great powers are not limitless; as Weiss notes “military overstretch and prioritisation of strategic concerns is the sad reality”⁶⁵ and prevents a robust response to all emergencies.

National interest

If there has to be prioritisation (and recall that in 1994 there were humanitarian crises in Yugoslavia, Angola, Somalia and Haiti as well as Rwanda), the widely held belief is that this prioritisation will generally be driven by the question of national interest rather than morality or the relative need of the victims – realism in practice. As we saw above, Michael Smith argues that to suggest states participate in humanitarian actions for anything other than self-interest is delusional; states, he suggests, “only act when it is in their interests to do so and that therefore when they engage in humanitarian intervention they are really pursuing some other agenda”.⁶⁶ Paul Diehl similarly asserts that it is national interest that determines where peacekeepers are sent; he points to the high number of peacekeeping missions to the oil rich Middle East as evidence.⁶⁷ Fabrice Weissman likewise suggests that British involvement in Sierra Leone in 1999 achieved two objectives; first it was a face saving exercise that prevented UN failure, but secondly it enabled Tony Blair’s Labour government to trumpet its ethical foreign policy to the electorate.⁶⁸ If this particular interpretation is true, here is an example of the foreign policy being led by the interests of the governing party rather than strict national interest.

⁶⁴ Richard Connaughton, “The Military, Peacekeeping and Africa”, in *Peacekeeping in Africa*. Edited by Oliver Furley and Roy May (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p.289.

⁶⁵ Weiss, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p.55.

⁶⁶ Smith, *Humanitarian Intervention*, p.70.

⁶⁷ Paul Diehl, *Peace Operations* (Cambridge: Policy Press, 2008), p.59.

⁶⁸ Fabrice Weissman, “Sierra Leone: Peace at Any Price.” in *In the Shadow of 'Just Wars': Violence, Politics and Humanitarian Action*, edited by Fabrice Weissman (London: Hurst & Co, 2004), p.63.

As Neack suggests, national interest also includes intervening so as to maintain the status-quo. Despite the apparent shift towards liberalism, most intervention continues to be justified on the grounds of minimising the threat to international peace and order and to therefore maintain the status-quo. For example, the intervention in the Former Yugoslavia was justified by many on the grounds that the conflict posed a threat to peace in the wider Balkans region, was likely to generate a refugee crisis in Europe and risked an increase in criminal activity across Europe. In the case of the intervention to protect Kurds in northern Iraq it is also apparent that of the ten member states of the Security Council voting in favour of the intervention, all justified the intervention on the grounds of maintaining peace in the region and reducing the risk to security of a refugee crisis (mainly of refugees entering Turkey). Only France and the UK added concern for human rights, with France specifically noting that there was a responsibility to protect human rights as the Kurds' situation was partially brought about by the intervention in Iraq during the Gulf War.⁶⁹

Turning specifically towards the Rwandan genocide, there is certainly a belief amongst some that the western governments did not intervene because there was no national interest at stake. Romeo Dallaire says of the US, France and UK, "They tolerated the mass slaughter of the Tutsi people because it did not impinge on their narrowly defined national interests. Rwanda was clearly of no strategic value to these western nations – not geographically, politically or economically."⁷⁰ Anne Mackintosh shares this view:

The short answer to the question why the international community failed to take decisive and timely action is that Rwanda did not matter. A tiny, landlocked country with few natural resources, it was considered strategically and materially unimportant. Unlike Kuwait, it does not produce oil and was of no consequence to the influential members of the UN Security Council.⁷¹

With one eye clearly on the realist interpretation of foreign policy, Roger Howard, noting the same lack of national interest, however concludes that it was the correct decision for the western powers to not intervene, "the killings in Rwanda would not have justified armed

⁶⁹ Ramsbotham and Woodhouse, *Humanitarian Intervention in Contemporary Conflict*, p.76.

⁷⁰ Dallaire *et al*, "The Major Powers on Trial," p.875.

⁷¹ Anne Mackintosh, "Rwanda: Beyond 'Ethnic Conflict'," *Development in Practice*, 7, No. 4, (1997), p.465.

intervention by Britain, America or any other country whose national interests were not directly affected by what was happening.”⁷² All three agree that in Rwanda national interests were not at stake and this delayed western involvement.

One problem with this idea that foreign policy is driven by national interest though is the fact that “national interest” is such a nebulous term that it is almost meaningless.⁷³ Despite the ubiquity of the term, commentators, politicians or journalists never define what they mean by national interest. As Ian Budge notes, “it is a mistake to assume that there is a readily identifiable general British ‘national interest’ to be served by its foreign policy. Usually there are competing interests, one of which successfully asserts a claim to be the ‘national interest’ while the others lose out.”⁷⁴ And in many ways this in-definability is the reason for the term’s popularity. It is a term that can be used without being defined and it is therefore a term that can be used to justify action or inaction. Responding to any humanitarian emergency can easily be described as being either in or against the national interest – potentially suggesting that ultimately it is not national interest that determines whether the international community will intervene. If, as Budge suggests, the national interest can be defined in many different ways, surely it is possible to justify (or equally deny) the need for intervention in almost any circumstance.

Public opinion and the media

Whilst the generally held view historically was that public opinion had limited influence on foreign policy, recent studies have indicated that the public do in fact have a measurable impact.⁷⁵ Andy Storey notes that “with the end of the Cold War, Western governments are, for the most part, less interested in developing countries *per se*; the main impulse behind any action is more likely to be public relations rather than strategic

⁷² Howard, *What’s Wrong with Liberal Interventionism*, p.60.

⁷³ Robin Harris, “Blair’s ‘Ethical’ Policy.” *The National Interest*. Spring (2001), p.5.

⁷⁴ Budge, *The New British Politics*, p.536.

⁷⁵ Stuart Soroka, “Media, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy,” *Harvard International Journal of Press and Politics*. vol. 8, no. 1 (2003), p.27.

interest.”⁷⁶ In this respect, foreign policy, like domestic policies, are driven by politicians seeking to gain advantage at the polls by enacting popular policies.⁷⁷ The public, the argument goes, set a region of acceptability in foreign affairs and taking this into account political elites are either constrained or pushed towards action in response to international events.⁷⁸

Looking specifically at this question of public acceptance of intervention Bruce Jentleson and Rebecca Britton reached a three part conclusion: there is no direct relationship between a state’s vital interests and public support for intervention; it is overly simple to argue that the public opposes intervention with high stakes; and the public are more supportive of intervention when the political elite are united in support of military intervention.⁷⁹ As evidence of this they point out that the majority of the American public initially supported President Bush’s intervention in Somalia in 1993 despite no obvious national interest and secondly that the majority of Americans supported intervention to prevent North Korea acquiring nuclear weapons despite the high likelihood of massive casualty rates in any such intervention. Drawing on this research, Craig Frizzell also concluded that the public are more likely to support the use of military force when the objective is either to restrain the actions of a hostile state (for example the Gulf War in 1991) or to provide humanitarian relief (Somalia) and is likely to be unsupportive of the use of force to interfere in the internal affairs of another state.⁸⁰ In a similar study, Alan Kay concluded that the American public were more likely to support military intervention when six conditions were met: a rogue leader ruled the state to be intervened in; the leader had committed heinous crimes; non-military efforts had been exhausted; the US had military allies; there was a visionary objective; and intervention came before the leader was too

⁷⁶ Andy Storey, “Non-Neutral Humanitarianism: NGOs and the Rwanda Crisis,” *Development in Practice* 7, no. 4 (1997), p.385.

⁷⁷ Thomas Kneet and Stephen Weatherford. “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The Stages of Presidential Decision Making,” *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 50 (2006), p.707.

⁷⁸ Craig Frizzell. “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The Effects of Celebrity Endorsements,” *The Social Science Journal*, vol.48 (2011), p.315.

⁷⁹ Bruce Jentleson and Rebecca Britton. “Still Pretty Prudent: Post Cold War American Public Opinion on the Use of Military Force,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 42, no. 4 (1998), pp.406-7.

⁸⁰ Frizzell, “Public Opinion,” p.315.

strong.⁸¹ Kay in particular emphasises the need for there to be a villainous leader; “If a whole country, or leaderless mobs, or looting and pillaging ethnic factions are committing despicable acts, even genocide, but no leaders are known or can be identified ... a majority of Americans will not favor (*sic*) the use of force.”⁸²

Accepting the theory that public opinion can potentially influence foreign policy one has to ask what influences public opinion. The answer to this question, evidence suggests, is the media. As Knecht and Weatherford acknowledge “there is solid research evidence showing that national news coverage heavily influences citizens’ perceived salience of political issues”.⁸³ Soroka agrees, noting the “remarkably powerful effect of media content on the salience of foreign affairs for the public”.⁸⁴ Page *et al* also demonstrate that as well as highlighting issues as important the media are able to influence opinion, noting that news commentary from anchors, reporters in the field and special commentators has the most dramatic affect on the public.⁸⁵ Therefore if one accepts that the public influences government and the media influence public opinion, one logically concludes that the media has the power to influence foreign policy.

This theory that governments are forced to act, not out of either a liberal impulse or a realist national interest, but rather because they are responding to public pressure, stimulated by media coverage, has become known as the “CNN Effect”. Geoffrey Robertson argues that greater exposure to the world, through CNN and other media channels, has rekindled “the potent mix of anger and compassion” behind the establishment of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which now produces a democratic demand

⁸¹ Alan Kay. “When Americans Favor the Use of Force,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*,” vol. 12, no. 2 (1999), pp.186-8.

⁸² *Ibid.* p.186.

⁸³ Knecht and Weatherford. “Public Opinion,” p.714.

⁸⁴ Soroka, “Media, Public Opinion,” p.43.

⁸⁵ Ben Page, Robert Shapiro and Glenn Dempsey. “What Moves Public Opinion?” *American Public Science Review*, vol. 81, no. 1 (1987), p.31.

for something to be done every time a humanitarian emergency appears on western television screens.⁸⁶ Jakobsen describes the CNN effect thus:

Television images of atrocities → journalists and opinion leaders criticise government policy in the media (TV, radio, newspapers) → the pressure on the government 'to do something' becomes unbearable → the government 'does something'.⁸⁷

Certainly conventional wisdom holds that a government is unlikely to initiate an intervention without domestic support and therefore public opinion and media support is at least a highly significant or necessary factor in motivating intervention. Mark Nelson, writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, in April 1991 for example suggested that John Major and George Bush launched Operation Provide Comfort on the back of a public "tidal wave of outrage" against Saddam Hussein's treatment of the Kurds.⁸⁸ Similarly one of Major's senior advisors has been quoted as saying the prime minister was "panicked [into action] by newspaper headlines".⁸⁹ Most famously the US intervention in Somalia is held up as evidence of the power of the media; Bernard Cohen notes:

Television has demonstrated its power to move governments. By focussing daily on the starving children in Somalia ... TV mobilised the conscience of the nation's public institutions, compelling the government into a policy of intervention for humanitarian reasons.⁹⁰

However, Jakobsen's study of the role played by the media in five separate interventions in the early 1990s⁹¹ concludes that the CNN effect alone is not sufficient to explain intervention. Instead Jakobsen states that in cases of "traditional national interest" the government is not at all influenced by the media, rather they will intervene regardless of the level of media coverage and public support; however, in such cases the government will typically use the media to mobilise international and domestic support.⁹² In cases where

⁸⁶ Geoffrey Roberston, *Crimes Against Humanity* (London: Penguin, 1999), p.373.

⁸⁷ Jakobsen, "National Interest, Humanitarianism or CNN," p.206.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Jakobsen, "National Interest, Humanitarianism or CNN," p.208.

⁸⁹ Ben Brown and David Shukman, *All Necessary Means* (London, BBC Books, 1991).

⁹⁰ Quoted in Jonathan Mermin, "Television News and American Intervention in Somalia: The Myth of a Media-Driven Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly*. Vol.112, No.3 (1997), p.385.

⁹¹ Kuwait, northern Iraq, Somalia, Rwanda and Haiti

⁹² Jakobsen, "National Interest, Humanitarian or CNN," p.212.

there is no traditional or obvious national interest, for example the US intervention in Somalia, Jakobsen argues that “the CNN effect [will] put the issue of intervention on the agenda but the decision whether or not to intervene [will be] ultimately determined by the perceived chance of success”.⁹³ Similarly Jonathan Mermin suggests that in the specific case of Somalia, journalists focussed on the possibility of US intervention only after it had first been advocated in Washington.⁹⁴ Robert DiPrizio supports this view; he suggests that the role of public opinion in George Bush’s decision to intervene in northern Iraq in 1991 has been overstated. The evidence is that public opinion possibly speeded up the decision making process, but Bush would have followed the same course of intervention regardless.⁹⁵ DiPrizio, Mermin and Jakobsen seem then to agree that whilst the media places an issue on the international agenda, media coverage does not *automatically* of itself lead to intervention. Lawrence Jacobs and Benjamin Page, having performed a statistical analysis of foreign policy making in the US, similarly conclude, “the public does not appear to exert substantial, consistent influence on the makers of foreign policy”.⁹⁶ It appears that public opinion has the potential to be one influence but alone does not explain intervention, or indeed non-intervention.

Chance of success

For Jakobsen, neither traditional national interest nor the CNN effect are sufficient to explain why western governments have intervened in the post-Cold War period; a high chance of success, he argues, must also be present if intervention is to be justified. He notes, “Intervention is highly unlikely unless the chances of success are perceived as good.”⁹⁷ He continues, “once [a conflict] has [been] placed on the agenda, the perceived chances of success become the principle factor determining whether an enforcement operation will take place”.⁹⁸ And it is at this point that we must make a distinction between cases where there is

⁹³ Ibid, p.212.

⁹⁴ Mermin, “Television News and American Intervention,” p.389.

⁹⁵ DiPrizio, *Armed Humanitarians: US Interventions from Northern Iraq to Kosovo*, p.39.

⁹⁶ Lawrence Jacobs and Benjamin Page, “Who Influences US Foreign Policy,” *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 99, No. 1, (2005), pp.117-118.

⁹⁷ Jakobsen, “National Interest, Humanitarianism of CNN,” p.212.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p.213.

a traditional national interest and those where there is none. Jakobsen suggests that where a clear national interest exists the calculation of whether success is likely becomes more flexible; he demonstrates this by suggesting that countries are more willing to bear military casualties when there is a national interest than when no obvious interest is present. A finding of national interest therefore sets the bar lower in the calculation of whether success is likely, making an enforcement action more likely.

Certainly many authors point to this phenomenon in practice. Mary Kaldor suggests this is what was seen in the case of Bosnia. As the national interest was initially judged to be low, a high hurdle was set before intervention would be authorised; this, she argues, meant European countries, initially seeing no national interest and fearful of being dragged into the war and incurring casualties, provided only limited and ineffective peacekeeping, rather than more assertive humanitarian intervention. Having acknowledged to themselves that they were not going to intervene in a meaningful way, Western governments, particularly France and the UK, looked to redefine the situation to justify their response; “the Serbs were too strong to attack”, the “Bosnians could not be helped”, “there was nothing we could do”.⁹⁹ Yet as the crisis in Yugoslavia expanded it became apparent that it did threaten European interests, consequently the chance of success threshold was lowered; meaning troop contributing nations were willing to incur higher costs, both monetary and in terms of casualties and the operation was expanded.¹⁰⁰ As the perceived threat to the national interest increased, the readiness to intervene similarly increased and the old excuses and risks were somewhat downgraded – despite nothing changing on the ground suddenly the chance of success was considered acceptable and peacekeeping expanded.

Rieff’s work on Bosnia also illustrates that as with all decision making, the decision on whether to intervene in a humanitarian emergency is influenced by past experience; in the case of Bosnia the savagery of World War II influenced decision making. As Towle describes this, “the participants in pre-war [or pre-intervention] debates are deeply

⁹⁹ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, pp.154-9

¹⁰⁰ Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*. 2nd ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p.61.

influenced by the shadows of past wars, some long gone and some more recent”.¹⁰¹ The calculation of whether a particular intervention will be successful will, Towle suggests, be largely shaped by similar missions in the past; in the case of Rwanda, the events in Somalia in 1993 were an obvious analogy. Clearly when, based on past experience, states anticipate high costs of intervention (in terms of monetary cost, lives lost or the impact on other priorities) they naturally and instinctively become less inclined to launch any humanitarian intervention mission. Conversely, the expectation that humanitarian missions can be achieved with relatively low costs but high benefits, makes intervention much more likely.

International law

Since 1945 the international community has codified numerous treaties covering human rights and humanitarian law; including, most pertinently to this thesis, The Genocide Convention. There is then an argument that humanitarian intervention in cases of extreme human rights abuses such as occurred in Rwanda is, as Hazel Cameron for example suggests, an obligation under international law.¹⁰² Helen Fein notes that “the responsibility under international law to prevent genocide is clear, but it is not clear that it would be deemed right, permissible, or wise to intervene in the case of civil war or failed states”.¹⁰³ However, it can equally be argued that a state’s obligations under The Genocide Convention are far from clear. Whilst signatories to The Genocide Convention pledge to “prevent”, “suppress” and “punish” genocide they do not pledge to intervene to “stop” it. Nor do individual signatories pledge to actually intervene themselves; rather they agree to call on the UN to take action. Even then the convention is only enacted when the events fall within the rather strict definition laid out in The Genocide Convention, and given the convention’s requirement to determine intent this is not necessarily straight forward. If human rights abuses are not deemed to constitute genocide there is then no responsibility, or even automatic right under international law, to intervene.

¹⁰¹ Towle, *Going to War*, p.67.

¹⁰² Cameron, “British State Complicity,” p.84.

¹⁰³ Helen Fein, “The Three P’s of Genocide Prevention: With Application to the Genocide Foretold – Rwanda,” in Samuel Totten and Paul Bartrop (eds) *The Genocide Studies Reader* (New York. Routledge, 2009), p.334.

Under international law, intervention is also only permitted if approved by the UN Security Council. In practice this means that a majority of the 15 members must vote in favour of the resolution for intervention and none of the Permanent Five use their veto against the resolution. Under the UN Charter the Security Council can approve two forms of intervention, either Chapter VI or Chapter VII. Chapter VI relates to what has previously been called traditional peacekeeping and Chapter VII to humanitarian intervention. Thomas Weiss and Cindy Collins describe the difference between the two as: “Chapter VI is theoretically impartial and neutral; Chapter VII makes a highly political statement regarding which belligerent is at fault and must be brought back into line by concentrated and coercive actions of the international community.”¹⁰⁴

That said there is at least one example of the Security Council being side stepped before a humanitarian intervention mission was launched and that is the NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999. Fearing a veto from Russia or China, the US, UK and France decided to launch an air campaign against the Serbian aggressors in Kosovo without UN approval. It is also apparent that in 2002 President George W. Bush was willing to intervene in Iraq with or without explicit UN approval (which was ultimately obtained).¹⁰⁵ These two examples seem to suggest that international law is not a major influence on humanitarian intervention. The Genocide Convention and other treaties are written in such a way that they do not actually compel a response from any particular state, and in certain cases it is apparent that states are willing to ignore convention and to pursue their own interest with or without the support of the international law.

Bureaucracy

A further factor to be acknowledged when considering any government decision making, not just humanitarian intervention, is the role of the bureaucracy. Whilst it is easy or convenient to speak of a “British” or “French” position regards an issue, as Graham

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Weiss and Cindy Collins, “Politics of Militarised Humanitarian Intervention,” in Samuel Totten and Paul Bartrop (eds) *The Genocide Studies Reader* (New York. Routledge, 2009), p.369.

¹⁰⁵ George W. Bush, *Decision Points*, (United States. Virgin Books, 2010), p.237.

Allison suggests, “this simplification must not be allowed to conceal the fact that a government consists of a conglomerate of semi-feudal, loosely aligned organisations, each with a substantial life of its own”.¹⁰⁶ There is then a school of thought that foreign policy is not coherently and rationally devised but rather is the output of a bureaucratic system. By way of illustration former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, when speaking of another major foreign policy event, claimed in a 1973 lecture that “there is no such thing, in my view, as a Vietnam policy; there is a series of programs of individual agencies concerned with Vietnam”.¹⁰⁷ Allison calls this interpretation of foreign policy making the “Organisational Process Model”; it is, he emphasises, the processes and procedures of the organisations which make up government that effectively formulate foreign policy rather than an over arching rational conception of pursuing what is best for national interest.

A number of scholars have identified significant weaknesses in the bureaucratic management system that so dominates government decision making. First amongst these is that bureaucracy can actually impede the ability of the head of government to definitively influence policy. As Weiss and Collins suggest in their study of intervention, “institutionalism argues that barriers in structures and [bureaucratic] processes may prevent or may facilitate state participation even if dominant political elites hold an opposing view”.¹⁰⁸ In terms of decision making Margaret Takeda and Marilyn Helms continue that bureaucracy is a barrier to swift action. In any bureaucracy there is a need for a great deal of time consuming knowledge sharing amongst experts, each with only a limited role within the system; there are a large number of individuals involved in the decision making process but each lacks the authority to act. Instead the authority to make decision rests somewhere higher up the bureaucratic chain. This creates three problems. The first identified by Gordon Tullock is that as information is passed from individual to individual the content of the message becomes increasingly distorted. The message reaching the decision maker is

¹⁰⁶ Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision Making: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston. Little Brown and Company, 1971), p.67.

¹⁰⁷ Henry Kissinger, “Bureaucracy and Policy” *The Washington Post*, 17 September 1973, p.A24.

¹⁰⁸ Weiss & Collins, “Politics of Militarised Humanitarian Intervention,” p.367.

then subject to a great deal of “noise”.¹⁰⁹ Secondly, the decision maker will most likely be overloaded with information. For example, as early as 1951, long before the advent of e-mail and 24 hour news, Foreign Secretary Herbert Morrison recorded that “under present day conditions the burden on the Foreign Secretary is excessively heavy”, continuing that he often only got five hours sleep a night.¹¹⁰ There is also the problem of bureaucracy physically preventing information reaching the decision maker; in the US Henry Kissinger, for example, recalls his initial surprise that despite being a presidential advisor he would not have free access to President Kennedy; it was not until Kissinger was given the specific role of National Security Adviser, under President Nixon, that he realised how few people actually had direct access to the President.¹¹¹ The assumption then that decision makers in a bureaucratic system make decisions in possession of the full facts is clearly not correct – as Tullock notes “in practice, high level officials frequently demonstrate publicly the most egregious ignorance concerning the area that they allegedly supervise.”¹¹²

Bureaucracies also tend to become insular. Takeda and Helms note the inability of bureaucracies to consider outside information, this also includes a disdain for accepting assistance from actors outside of the system.¹¹³ They record, for example, how after the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 governments, including Thailand and Cambodia, were reluctant to work with western NGOs. Christopher Coyne believes this can also be seen in government departments; he notes how ineffective the US State Department and the Pentagon were in working together in the post-war reconstruction of Iraq.¹¹⁴ He calls this “organisational patriotism” whereby bureaucracies believe their organisation is superior to others. Such parochialism can obviously be problematic when specifically looking at humanitarian intervention, which requires the involvement of various bodies.

¹⁰⁹ Gordon Tullock, “The politics of bureaucracy” in *The Selected works of Gordon Tullock: Vol 6*, ed. C Rowley (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), pp.148-52.

¹¹⁰ John Dickie, *The New Mandarins: How British Foreign Policy Works* (London: IB Tauris, 2004), p.88.

¹¹¹ Kissinger, “Bureaucracy and Policy,” p.A24.

¹¹² Tullock, “The Politics of Bureaucracy,” p.169.

¹¹³ Takeda and Helms, “Bureaucracy Meet Catastrophe,” p.210.

¹¹⁴ Christopher Coyne, “The Politics of Bureaucracy and the failure of post-war reconstruction,” *Public Choice*. 135 (2008), p.15.

Takeda and Helms also argue that bureaucracies do not deviate from a failing course of action. Kissinger agrees with this suggestion that it is difficult to alter the direction of a bureaucracy: "Once the American decision making process has disgorged an answer it becomes technically very difficult to change the policy ... If one wishes to influence American foreign policy, the time to do so is in the formative period."¹¹⁵ Allison identifies this phenomenon in his study of the Cuban missile crisis suggesting that bureaucracies operate with a bounded "repertoire" of processes. Rather than rationally and systematically considering all responses to a crisis, a bureaucracy will adopt the first satisfactory response that they come across within the standard operating procedures that they work from; the effect of this is that bureaucracies tend to respond to a crisis in the same way that they responded to previous similar crises. As Allison suggests "the best explanation of an organisation's behaviour at t is $t - 1$; the best prediction of what will happen at $t + 1$ is t ".¹¹⁶ Or as Takeda and Helms put it socialisation within a bureaucratic system leads individuals to hold a sense of loyalty "to the way things are done here".¹¹⁷

Race

The final issue to discuss here is the argument that race influences the humanitarian intervention decision. Certainly, with specific reference to the Rwandan genocide there have been suggestions by some, including Boutros-Ghali, that the West was willing to watch thousands of Africans be killed, yet they were quick to respond to the rich (read white) man's crisis in Bosnia.¹¹⁸ The US particularly is accused of allowing its foreign policy to be influenced by race. W.E.B. Du Bois for example, maintained that American:

foreign policy ... [is] ... a mirror image of [her] domestic policy. [Thus] a nation whose ... white citizens could not treat with equity, justice and equality, black neighbours and citizens living in the same ... nation could not develop a

¹¹⁵ Kissinger, "Bureaucracy and Policy," p.A24.

¹¹⁶ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p.88.

¹¹⁷ Takeda and Helms, "Bureaucracy Meet Catastrophe," p.211.

¹¹⁸ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 31 December 1992, Sarajevo; quoted in Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, (New York: Modern Library, 1999), p.174.

foreign policy involving international relationships reflecting equality and justice with two-thirds of the people of the world who are of color (*sic*).¹¹⁹

By way of example, Mark Ledwidge points to the US (and European) reluctance to become involved in the Italy-Ethiopia war of 1934; “for most whites in America, Ethiopia was a mysterious and faraway [and black] place for which it was not worth abandoning [the US’s] isolationist policies”.¹²⁰

One of the key issues in this field is the fact of racial stereotyping and the impact that this potentially has upon decision making. For example, Michael Krenn highlights the shift in the treatment of Muslims following the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York. Following the attacks, Islam became conflated with terrorism, hate crimes against Muslims increased, hundreds of Arab-Americans were arrested and thousands of Muslims denied entry to the US on the suspicion that they were potential bombers.¹²¹ Specifically looking at Africa, it was Henry Morton Stanley who opened up Africa for the western general public in the late nineteenth century. Stanley’s descriptions of a continent “still fixed deeply in barbarism” were to stick for many years in the western psyche.¹²² Similar views of a dark continent were also to influence the British Empire belief in the “white-man’s burden” to civilise the savages. This image continued into the twentieth century with Hollywood portrayals, such as the Tarzan films, exaggerating to absurd levels the negative perceptions that most Americans and Europeans had of Africa – in Hollywood Africa was dark, dangerous and violent.¹²³

This view of Africa, led to a belief in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that the “immature and unsophisticated” Africans were unable to govern themselves.¹²⁴ The belief in the “white-man’s burden”, namely the belief that whites had an obligation to govern and try

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Charles Cheng, “The Cold War: Its impact on the Black Liberation Struggle in the United States,” in *The African American Voice in US Foreign Policy Since World War II*, ed Michael Krenn (London: Garland Publishing, 1999), p.129.

¹²⁰ Mark Ledwidge, “Race, African Americans and US Foreign Policy,” (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Manchester, 2006), p.216.

¹²¹ Michael Krenn, *The Color of Empire: Race and American Foreign Policy* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2006), p.102.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.77.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.80.

to develop black Africa, was particularly strong in the UK. In the 1890s, Pears' Soap even used the theme to advertise soap, encouraging white people to teach blacks how to wash themselves. Although there was arguably a slight shift during the Cold War, when Western governments were forced to support African and Asian nations in the face of the Communist threat, the underlying, and perhaps unconscious, belief in racial difference remained. For example, it is apparent throughout the Cold War period, certainly in the US, there was a preference for states in Africa with white governments. Although this was justified on the grounds that they were more stable, friendly and anti-communist, turning the argument around suggests there was a view that black governments were unstable, hostile and easy prey to communism.

There was still an underlying belief, Krenn suggests, that black Africa was culturally deficient compared to the West.¹²⁵ As Peter Dahlgren has argued this has led to the developing world being portrayed as the bipolar opposite of the West:

'They', the people of the Third World appear as unstable and prone to violence. Incessant glimpses of disorder and violence serve as a reminder that these societies continue to act out their essential character; they are virtually driven by violence. 'We' on the other hand the industrialised West, are typified by order and stability, a higher form of civilisation.¹²⁶

It is certainly apparent that this negative view of the developing world, Africa in particular, is the dominant popular image in the UK. Mike Wooldridge, the BBC world affairs correspondent, recalls that "the overwhelming image of 1990s Africa was that it remain[ed] a continent of mud huts and primitive lifestyles."¹²⁷ Similarly a VSO report of 2002 noted that "80% of the British public strongly associate the developing world with doom-laden images of famine, disaster and Western aid."¹²⁸ The report continued that the dominant news images of disaster, famine and war reinforce the "victim" image of the developing world. The media, VSO claimed, also fails to create emotional points of connection between

¹²⁵ Ibid, p.92.

¹²⁶ Peter Dahlgren, "The Third World on TV News: Western Ways of Seeing the 'Other'," in *Television Coverage of International Affairs*, ed William Adams (Norwood (NJ): Ablex, 1982), p.53.

¹²⁷ Mike Wooldridge, "Reporting Africa," *An Irish Quarterly Review*. Vol. 84, No. 336 (1995), p.368.

¹²⁸ VSO, "The Live Aid Legacy: The Developing World Through British Eyes," (2002). Frances Harding, "Africa and the Moving Image," *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. Vol. 16, No.1 (2003) makes the same point.

the West and the developing world; combined with a “lack of personal connection [this] generates emotional distance, which generates disinterest.”¹²⁹ All combined these factors have the effect of “othering” black Africa – in this image, Africans are different from “us”. The VSO report concluded with the assertion that this negative imaging of the developing world, which can be traced to colonial times,¹³⁰ has had the effect of “dehumanising, distancing and devaluing the people [of the developing world]”.¹³¹ Clearly such strong public opinion and cultural framing is liable to influence foreign policy decision making.

Lessons from the Field of Psychology

An alternative approach to the question of why states intervene is to look at the work of psychologists and sociologists that have addressed the question of why individuals intervene in emergencies. By examining the behaviour of individual bystanders it may be possible to build a better understanding of state intervention. This is the approach adopted by Stanley Cohen, who argues that the response to atrocities is often the same at an individual and a state level.¹³²

Altruism

Altruism, meaning the promotion of the interests of others, is a subject that has perplexed philosophers for years. Why are some people willing to help others, when to do so typically involves some cost to the altruist? To understand what motivates some individuals to act altruistically potentially illuminates why some states are willing to provide aid or assistance on the international stage. David Myers identifies that essentially the various theories of altruism can be synthesised into two general theories of motivation. Altruism, he suggests, is motivated either by self-interest or by empathy / moral duty¹³³ - a split not too dissimilar to the realism versus liberalism debate.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p.9.

¹³⁰ Dahlgren, “The Third World on TV News,” p.53.

¹³¹ VSO, “The Live Aid Legacy”, p.11.

¹³² Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), p.1.

¹³³ David Myers, *Exploring Social Psychology* (Boston: McGraw & Hill, 2004), pp.336-337.

Self-interest

Thomas Hobbes, writing in 1651, was one of the first to argue that altruism was more about egoism than selflessness. Hobbes presented humans as motivated by self-interest, constantly striving to satisfy their own selfish desires. However, his natural laws recognised that humans had certain common interests that if met would maximise one's own security. The Hobbesian interpretation of altruism is therefore grounded on the principle of reciprocity; namely the anticipation that the beneficiary will one day return our good deed makes us sometimes act altruistically towards others.

More recent authors have also argued that altruism is actually an egotistical act. Friedrich Nietzsche, for example, in the late nineteenth century wrote that help for others is merely a reflection of our own suffering. Nietzsche uses as an example, the altruist who jumps into a lake to rescue a drowning victim. For Nietzsche this apparently altruistic action is motivated by self interest, even if the rescuer is not conscious of that at the time. We help the person in need, he suggests, in order to relieve ourselves of the feeling of pity for the victim.¹³⁴ Jerzy Karlowski reaches the same conclusion for another reason. He identified "endocentric altruism", by which he meant altruism that is largely concerned with our own moral self image; the altruist is motivated by the desire to look good to others and to feel good themselves.¹³⁵

More recently psychologists have empirically demonstrated this theory of self-interest by researching guilt as a catalyst for intervention. Guilt is defined by Martin Hoffman as "an intensively unpleasant feeling of disesteem for oneself that results from empathic feeling for someone in distress combined with awareness of being the cause of that distress."¹³⁶ As Bierhoff succinctly concludes "caused distress motivates compensation, which leads to more intervention than neutral witnessed distress".¹³⁷ As a simple every-day

¹³⁴ Ibid, p.19.

¹³⁵ Ibid, p.67.

¹³⁶ Martin Hoffman, "Varieties of empathy based guilt," in *Guilt and Children*, edited by Jane Bybee (San Diego: Academic Press, 1998).

¹³⁷ Bierhoff, *Prosocial Behaviour*, p.140.

example, E. Rawlings demonstrated that individuals are more likely to agree to donate blood if they felt they have somehow harmed the person making the request.¹³⁸ Or at the state level, as we saw earlier, the French involvement in Operation Provide Comfort was partially justified on the grounds of righting a wrong done to the Iraqi Kurds as a result of the Gulf War.

However, E. Walster *et al* conclude that guilt does not necessarily lead to intervention.¹³⁹ They accept that whilst a harm-doer will seek to alleviate their own feelings of discomfort this will not necessarily be by positively aiding the victim. As an alternative the harm doer is just as likely to alleviate their suffering either through self-punishment (for example, by donating to a charity) or psychologically. In this latter scenario, the harm-doer may derogate the victim (i.e. convince themselves that the victim deserves the harm), may deny responsibility (i.e. convince themselves that someone else was responsible for the harm) or may simply minimise the victim's suffering (i.e. convince themselves that the harm was not too serious). Melvin Lerner, continuing this line of research, even concluded that there is significant evidence that observers tend to ascribe responsibility to the victim for their suffering, thereby devaluing the victim's suffering and easing their observer's feelings of guilt.¹⁴⁰ This is particularly the case where the cost of helping the victim is perceived to be high.

Empathy

The alternative view is that altruism is motivated out of empathy for the victim or a moral duty. Just twenty years after Hobbes, Samuel Pufendorf wrote "every man should promote the advantage of the other, so far as he conveniently can" and he accepted that this would involve some cost to oneself.¹⁴¹ In this interpretation an individual should help

¹³⁸ E. Rawlings, "Reactive Guilt and Anticipatory Guilt in Altruistic Behaviour," In *Altruism and Helping Behaviour*, edited by Jacqueline Macaulay and Leonard Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1970), p.164.

¹³⁹ E. Walster, E. Berscheid and G. Walster, "The Exploited: Justice of Justification," In *Altruism and Helping Behaviour*, edited by Jacqueline Macaulay and Leonard Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1970), pp.184-6.

¹⁴⁰ Melvin Lerner, "The Desire for Justice and Reactions to Victims," in *Altruism and Helping Behaviour* edited by Jacqueline Macaulay and Leonard Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1970), p.208.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.10.

another, for no other reason than they have a duty to so. Christian Wolff, in 1738, continued this theme emphasising “the obligation to help those who are in need, insofar as one is capable”.¹⁴² More recently Paul Miller has argued that the simple fact that we feel satisfaction when our children, friends or family succeed, or equally suffer when they do, is proof that empathy is the motivator for altruism.¹⁴³ As Hans-Werner Bierhoff notes, under this view of altruism, any reward for the altruist is an unintended consequence; the ultimate goal of such intervention is to reduce the suffering of another person.¹⁴⁴

However, if we accept that it is empathy that leads to altruism we must also accept that the altruist adopts the perspective of the victim. Therefore altruism must surely be more likely when the potential altruist can more easily empathise with the victim. Bierhoff identifies three factors that significantly increase our ability to empathise with a victim. These are: that the observer has been in a similar position to the victim in the past; the observer is attached to the victim; and the observer is made to imagine what the victim’s situation must be like.¹⁴⁵ Application of these criteria would then suggest that altruism is not equally applied; some victims are more likely to receive assistance than others. These factors are particularly pertinent when exploring the response to crises in Africa, where the victims, with whom we have no connection, are in a situation of famine or war that very few westerners can begin to imagine.

Failure to intervene

As well as trying to explain why some people do intervene, social psychologists are also interested by the question of why people do not intervene as frequently as one might expect. Although this literature is extensive, certain key and consistent principles emerge and these have come to be collectively known as the “bystander effect”.

¹⁴² Ibid, p.10.

¹⁴³ Myers, *Exploring Social Psychology*, p.336.

¹⁴⁴ Bierhoff, *Prosocial Behaviour*, p.191.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, p.196.

Pluralistic ignorance

Among the first to study the bystander effect were Bibb Latane and John Darley,¹⁴⁶ who identified that the presence of other bystanders greatly decreased the likelihood of intervention, and this was not simply a case that each bystander hoped that someone else would act. They surmised that more subtle factors were influencing bystander behaviour. As the number of bystanders increased, any given bystander was less likely to notice the incident, less likely to interpret the incident as an emergency, and less likely to assume responsibility for taking action.

In one of their many experiments, a subject was asked to wait in a room that gradually filled with smoke; it was noted that when alone the subject would respond much sooner than if other people were in the room. The presence of others appeared to make the subjects less likely to even notice the emergency. Latane and Darley also concluded that the presence of bystanders led to events being misinterpreted. Subjects in the room with other people admitted that they interpreted the smoke as a problem with the air-conditioning, whereas those on their own feared a fire. Latane and Darley suggest that many emergencies have this level of ambiguity and before a bystander will take action in such circumstances, they must first define the event as an emergency and decide that intervention is the proper course of action.¹⁴⁷ In the course of making these decisions, it is likely that an individual bystander will be considerably influenced by the decisions he perceives other bystanders to be making. In such cases, although the bystander at some level probably knows that some form of response is required they have a strong incentive to reinterpret the situation so as to persuade themselves that the emergency does not really exist. Latane and Darley called this phenomenon of bystanders being influenced by the perceived calmness of others “pluralistic ignorance”.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Bibb Latane and John Darley, “Group Inhibition of Bystander Intervention in Emergencies,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 10, (1968), pp.215-21.

¹⁴⁷ Bibb Latane and John Darley, “Social Determinants of Bystander Intervention in Emergencies,” in *Altruism and Helping Behaviour*, edited by Jacqueline Macaulay and Leonard Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1970), pp.14-15.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.15.

One thing that the Latane and Darley experiments demonstrated was that there is only one path that leads to a bystander intervention; they must notice the incident, must interpret it as an emergency and then assume personal responsibility to act. At each stage in this decision making process, the presence of other bystanders is likely to divert a person down the route of not acting.¹⁴⁹ It therefore appears to be not apathy that leads to non-intervention, but a genuine (mis)interpretation of the situation that leads the bystander down one of the routes of non-intervention.

Cost arousal

Again looking at bystanders that do not intervene, Irvin and Jane Piliavin¹⁵⁰ concluded that the perceived cost to the bystander influences their response. In field experiments they staged mock emergencies on underground trains in a number of US cities. In each experiment an actor would feign collapsing and bystanders' responses were monitored. The situation was varied such that the victim appeared to be either ill or drunk. The results clearly showed that bystanders were significantly more likely to intervene in cases where the actor appeared to be ill. From this, Piliavin and Piliavin concluded that intervention is more likely when the perceived cost to the bystander is relatively low. This conclusion has come to be known as the "cost-arousal model".¹⁵¹ It hypothesizes that a bystander will choose the response that will most efficiently reduce their arousal (i.e. their feeling that they should intervene or their anticipated guilt if they don't intervene) and in the process incur the fewest costs (in time, money, distress etc).

Further experiments have also shown that the likelihood of bystander intervention is increased if the bystander actually witnesses the emergency – whereas Piliavin and Piliavin recorded their ill victim receiving help in 90% of their staged emergencies,¹⁵² Bierhoff recorded only 27% of bystanders stopping when then came across an apparent victim of a

¹⁴⁹ Myers, *Exploring Social Psychology*, p.338.

¹⁵⁰ Irvin Piliavin and Jane Piliavin, "Good Samaritanism: An Underground Phenomenon," *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 13, no. 4 (1969), pp.289-99.

¹⁵¹ Scott and Seglow, *Altruism*, p.66.

¹⁵² In the same series of experiments the drunk was only helped 20% of the time.

bicycle accident that they did not witness.¹⁵³ A further factor to come out of this bystander research is the aversion to help those dissimilar to ourselves. As Stanley Cohen, suggests “It is quite abnormal to know or care very much about the problems of distant places”, implying that we are more disposed to care about those near us and like us.¹⁵⁴ More empirically, Kuntsman and Ash found that white bystanders were more like to come to the aid of a white rather than a black victim.¹⁵⁵ Drawing on the cost-arousal model, they suggested that the perceived cost of helping a victim of a different race is higher than helping a victim of the same race. These findings all support the suggestion that the likelihood of empathetic altruism is increased when we have an emotional tie to the victim and it is easier to feel such emotion for those that are similar to ourselves.

Defensive redefinition

Concluding that a not untypical response of a bystander to an emergency is to not intervene, S.H. Schwartz identified a factor he described as “defensive redefinition of the situation”.¹⁵⁶ If a bystander decides that intervention is the morally correct thing to do in an emergency situation, yet they fail to act, they will redefine the situation in one of two ways. Either the bystander will deny the consequences of their actions, convincing himself that his response would not actually have the desired outcome; or, alternatively they will deny responsibility, in which case they will change their own perception of their capability to control what is happening to the victim. In both cases the bystander is convinced that they are incapable of assisting the victim and therefore, although not necessarily in accordance with moral norms, it actually becomes right, in their own mind, for them to not intervene. Cohen calls this phenomenon “interpretative denial”. He suggests that language plays a part in this process “by changing words, by euphemism, by using technical jargon, the observer

¹⁵³ Bierhoff, *Prosocial Behaviour*, pp.20-23.

¹⁵⁴ Cohen, *States of Denial*, p.160.

¹⁵⁵ J. Kuntsman and E. Ash (2008), “Racing to Help: Racial Bias in High Emergency Helping Situations,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95, no. 6 (2008), pp.1499-1510.

¹⁵⁶ S.H. Schwartz, “Moral Decision Making and Behaviour,” in *Altruism and Helping Behaviour*, edited by Jacqueline Macaulay and Leonard Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1970), p.131.

disputes the cognitive meaning given to an event and re-allocates it to another class of event”.¹⁵⁷

Applying these various findings back to our study of state intervention supports many of the factors discussed previously. As suggested earlier for example, states who do not want to intervene will redefine the humanitarian emergency, either arguing that there is no emergency or that nothing can be done; as we will see both of these arguments were used in the case of Rwanda. Or as suggested with regard involvement in Yugoslavia, the cost arousal model could be used to explain why intervention stepped up when the perceived cost of action decreased.

The UK and Humanitarian Intervention

Twentieth century politics in the UK was dominated by the Conservative Party which between 1922 and 1997 was in government for 56 years. A review of Britain’s foreign policy in the twentieth century then is in many ways a review of Conservative (or Tory) foreign policy; this is particularly true of 1994 when the Conservatives had been in government for fifteen years. How then can we define Conservative foreign policy?

For Michael Clarke there is no debate, “Attempts to analyse British external relations cannot avoid defining them in essentially Realist terms”.¹⁵⁸ The Conservative Party in the post-war period differentiated itself from the opposition by continually reiterating its commitment to defence and the need to preserve and protect the national interest. Clarke continues that during the Cold War:

[Britain’s] approach to security can be fully understood in Realist terms: Britain responds through NATO to direct threats to its own security in Europe; it responds to indirect threats elsewhere by contributing to defence and peacekeeping operations around the world; and it helps to uphold the milieu of the Western world order through the visible presence of its military establishments alongside those of other Western powers.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Cohen, *States of Denial*, p.8.

¹⁵⁸ Clarke, *British External Policy Making*, p.4.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.52.

This is a foreign and defence policy grounded on the idea of promoting national interest; a national interest that was focussed on maintaining the *status quo* of western domination in the global sphere. Harold Macmillan summed up this view of foreign policy in his first speech as prime minister in 1957, “We are a great world power and intend to remain so”.¹⁶⁰

For the Conservatives national interest has also meant promoting global trade for the benefit of British business. Margaret Thatcher, for example, records in her autobiography the efforts that she went to to open the Japanese market to Scottish whisky producers and to open up Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan to British imports. She also records how she tried to build trade relations with Indonesia despite “serious human rights abuses” in the country.¹⁶¹ Similarly during the 1980s the Conservative government deployed three Royal Navy vessels in the Arabian Gulf, not in any way to influence the war between Iran and Iraq or to come to the aid of civilians caught up in the fighting, but instead to keep the commercial shipping lanes open. As John Coles notes, under Thatcher, it was clear that the top two priorities of foreign policy were firstly safeguarding the country’s security and secondly promoting its prosperity.¹⁶² The approach to the developing world was also largely driven by trade. Conservative MP Enoch Powell, for example, opposed aid to the former British colonies on moral and economic grounds, “the former colonies should rather adopt the free market in order to advance economically”¹⁶³ and Margaret Thatcher stated that “what the developing world needed more than aid was trade”.¹⁶⁴

In the 1970s to 1990s Conservative foreign policy was also based on the fundamental belief in the primacy of the sovereign state. Peter Dorey for example, records that the “objection to Britain joining a single European currency, and being bound by a Central European Bank, was that sovereignty would be fundamentally eroded”.¹⁶⁵ The

¹⁶⁰ John Charmley, *A History of Conservative Politics 1900 – 1996* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1998), p.159.

¹⁶¹ Margaret Thatcher, *Margaret Thatcher: The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), pp.500-3.

¹⁶² John Coles, *Making Foreign Policy: A Certain Idea of Britain* (London: John Murray, 2000), p.77.

¹⁶³ Brendan Evans and Andrew Taylor, *From Salisbury to Major: Continuity and Change in Conservative Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), p.166.

¹⁶⁴ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.169.

¹⁶⁵ Peter Dorey, *British Politics Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p.233.

image of Margaret Thatcher standing up to foreign powers to defend British interest was one she was keen to present to the media in the 1980s¹⁶⁶ and one that Douglas Hurd recalls as being accurate. He recounts how on being appointed Foreign Secretary, Thatcher instructed him, “You won’t let the Europeans get away with too much will you Douglas?”¹⁶⁷ It was not just British sovereignty however that the Conservative government was keen to protect. In her memoirs Thatcher records her anger at the US invasion of Grenada in 1983; she opposed the unnecessary intervention “in the affairs of a small, independent nation, however unattractive its regime”.¹⁶⁸ Her condemnation of the American action was clear in a statement she made on the BBC World Service, “We in western countries use our force to defend our way of life. We do not use it to walk into other people’s countries, independent sovereign territories.”¹⁶⁹ The 1991 Gulf War was also justified as war to defend sovereignty. Douglas Hurd recalls:

No-one doubted Saddam Hussein was a wicked man who had done terrible things to his own people and to others. It would be better if he went ... But we were not going to war to rid the world of an evil rule. We were acting very specifically to reverse an act of aggression.¹⁷⁰

The consistent theme that is evident in Conservative foreign policy is the promotion of national interest; which encompasses promoting trade, defending sovereignty and protecting the UK’s place in the international community. During the periods of Conservative government at least, this promotion of national interest evidently trumped morality; as prime minister, Thatcher was prepared to build a relationship with Indonesia despite the human rights abuses in the country, opposed the deportation of General Pinochet to Spain despite the allegations of state sponsored abuse and opposed the establishment of a

¹⁶⁶ Clarke, *British External Policy Making*, p.144.

¹⁶⁷ Douglas Hurd, *Memoirs* (London: Abacus, 2004), p.413.

¹⁶⁸ Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p.331.

¹⁶⁹ Quoted in Malcolm Rikfind, “Britain Restored in the World,” in *Margaret Thatcher’s Revolution: How it Happened and What it Meant*, edited by Roy Subroto and John Clark (London: Continuum, 2005), p.34.

¹⁷⁰ Hurd, *Memoirs*, p.454.

European Court of Human Rights as it would enable “scandalous abuses of the asylum system”.¹⁷¹ Conservative foreign policy was realism in practice.

In contrast the perception in the post-war era is that Labour advocated a more moral foreign policy than the Conservative party, a foreign policy more driven by ideas than interests. However, despite the appearance of liberalism, as Stuart Croft suggests, “Labour fail[ed] to deliver on its promises in foreign policy”.¹⁷² For example, Croft highlights Labour’s shift to the right under Neil Kinnock before the 1987 election as he deliberately disassociated the party from CND having realised that former leader Michael Foot’s opposition to nuclear weapons made Labour unelectable.¹⁷³ Nor did Labour’s more liberal constituency make them more inclined to support intervention; Harold Wilson for example, was unwilling to deploy British troops to the Congo during the civil war of 1960 to 1966 and supported the Nigerian government in their civil war of 1967 to 1970 despite public sympathy for the Biafran rebels forced into a state of famine. Despite the more pacifist nature of many within the party, Labour did however support the Conservative government’s deployment of British troops to the Falklands in 1982 and to Kuwait in 1991, both of which were military actions justified in terms of defending national interest and preserving international order. For the majority of the Cold War period Labour, whilst clearly representing a more liberal membership, pursued a foreign policy not too dissimilar from that of the Conservative party, very much based on the defence and promotion of national interests. It was only once John Smith became leader of the party in 1992 that Labour evidently became more inclined to support intervention; Smith for example, called for more troops to be sent to Bosnia in February 1994.¹⁷⁴ This continued under Tony Blair once Labour came into power in 1997. However, as both Stuart Croft and Caroline Kennedy

¹⁷¹ Margaret Thatcher, *Statecraft: Strategies for a Changing World* (London: Harper Collins, 2002), p.277.

¹⁷² Stuart Croft, “Ethics, Labour and Foreign Policy,” in *British Politics Today* edited by Colin Hay, (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), p.217.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.219.

¹⁷⁴ Stephen Goodwin, “Inside Parliament,” *The Independent*, 18 February 1994, p.9.

note, even under Blair morality was only part of Labour's foreign policy it was never the core; that always remained the realist promotion of national interests.¹⁷⁵

Britain's Involvement in Peacekeeping

In the years prior to 1994 Britain had not been one of the leading contributors to humanitarian missions in terms of troops deployed – of the 32 UN peacekeeping missions that came before UNAMIR, British troops were deployed in only seven.¹⁷⁶ However, the military was not idle; in the second half of the twentieth century the British military was deployed overseas on numerous occasions, seeing active service in Malaya, Korea, Kenya, Oman, The Falklands and Kuwait. What connects these deployments is that they were actions in defence of sovereignty. The operations in Oman, Malaya and Korea were mounted against rebel insurrections; the Korean War was fought to defend the Republic of Korea from communism; and both The Falklands and Gulf Wars were fought to reverse acts of aggression. In this period the military was predominantly a Clausewitzian instrument of the government's realist foreign policy.

However, there were two examples in the early 1990s of the Conservative government authorising intervention on what can be seen as humanitarian grounds; the first was Operation Provide Comfort, the 1991 deployment of troops to northern Iraq to protect the Kurdish population and the second the participation in the UN missions to the Former Yugoslavia. The 1991 Kurdish uprising against the government of Saddam Hussein resulted in an Iraqi military response. Fearing a massacre similar to the Anfal campaign¹⁷⁷ millions of Kurds fled towards the Turkish border. Initially the western world did little in response, but in early April Douglas Hurd announced a change in international policy, one that had been driven by the personal intervention of John Major. Hurd announced that the “restrictions imposed by the UN Charter could no longer be allowed to block the

¹⁷⁵ Croft, “Ethics, Labour and Foreign Policy,” p.220. Caroline Kennedy, “Britain in the International Arena,” in *Developments in British Politics* edited by P. Dunleavy *et al*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.328.

¹⁷⁶ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/>

¹⁷⁷ The Anfal Campaign was launched by Saddam Hussein against the Kurdish population in northern Iraq in 1986 to 1989. The campaign, which involved the use of chemical weapons, led to over 100,000 Kurdish deaths and the destruction of over 4,000 Kurdish villages.

amelioration of mass suffering of the Kurdish population”.¹⁷⁸ The response was a deployment of a joint US, French and British task force to northern Iraq to establish a Kurdish safe haven. However, whilst the means of this particular deployment can be seen as essentially humanitarian, it is not as certain that the ends were humanitarian. Rather the mission appears to have been largely motivated by more realist factors. As Piers Robinson notes:

the sequence of events, the close contact between President Ozal of Turkey and [President George] Bush, the stated objectives of the intervention, plus most of the anecdotal evidence all indicate that the intervention decision was grounded in geo-strategic concerns regarding the vast number of unwanted Kurdish refugees that threatened to flood southern Turkey.¹⁷⁹

Operation Provide Comfort then can be seen more as a mission to protect a NATO ally than necessarily to alleviate the suffering of Kurds.

The second of these deployments was to the Former Yugoslavia. British troops were deployed in the Balkans region, first as part of an EU peacekeeping force, then as part of the UN peacekeeping mission and also as part of the NATO peace enforcement mission in Kosovo.¹⁸⁰ The build up of British troops in the Balkans was incremental and not universally accepted within the government or the media. Hurd records how “My colleagues in government and all parties in the Commons were, with individual exceptions, sceptical of the need for even the limited intervention we undertook.”¹⁸¹ The crisis in the Balkans though did lead many to intellectually and morally question existing foreign policy thinking – how far could the international community legitimately intervene in a civil war, should they intervene proactively on the side of one of the belligerents, should they accept the territorial gains achieved through violence if it brought the war to an earlier end? Whilst there were clearly national interests in ensuring that the conflict did not spread further, the

¹⁷⁸ Mark Stuart, *Douglas Hurd, the Public Servant: An Authorised Biography* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1998), p.279.

¹⁷⁹ Piers Robinson, *The CNN Effect: The Myth of news, foreign policy and intervention* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.71.

¹⁸⁰ There are numerous books that thoroughly cover the British deployment in the Balkans. These include: Brendan Simms, *Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia* (London: Penguin, 2002); David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995); and Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, (London: Pan, 2002).

¹⁸¹ Hurd, *Memoirs*, p.492.

deployments to the Former Yugoslavia certainly were motivated by humanitarianism more than previous missions. Yet it was this humanitarianism that made the mission so controversial.

It is evident then that despite the prominence of realism in British foreign policy there was a slight shift in the early 1990s, when intervention became more acceptable. Certainly though there was no revolution in British foreign policy; humanitarian intervention had not suddenly become a widely accepted principle. Intervention was still rare and evidently still largely motivated by national interest rather than morality; as Hurd states in his memoirs “The doctrine of humanitarian intervention will never be universal; it will always depend on time, place and circumstances”.¹⁸² The conclusion therefore seems to be that amongst the Conservative government there was a reluctant acceptance of humanitarian intervention when it was aligned with national interest – realism not liberalism.

Summary

We are left then, with two apparently mutually exclusive schools of thought. Firstly that intervention, either at a state or individual level, is motivated by self-interest; or alternatively, intervention is motivated by some higher moral obligation or altruism. Yet despite the rhetoric of morality, altruism, or liberalism the more commonly held view is that at a state level foreign policy practice, and therefore intervention, seems to be dominated by a realist ideology, that emphasises both the sacrosanct nature of national borders and also the fact that foreign policy is, and should be, motivated primarily by national interest. Philosophy, psychology and empirical data from historians all seem to suggest that we are unrealistic if we expect state intervention to be motivated by anything else.

However, the specific case of the UK and Rwanda allows us to test this dominant view. The fact that the UK initially appeared unwilling to intervene in Rwanda and then eventually deployed troops provides us with an opportunity to explore what motivated the

¹⁸² Hurd, *Memoirs*, p.542.

two decisions and to understand what, if anything, changed when the decision was taken to deploy the troops. The remainder of this thesis focuses on the various factors that influenced decision making throughout the crisis – was the national interest considered, how was the crisis portrayed in the media, did race influence the decision, did the UK government defensively redefine the crisis? By understanding the factors that influenced the UK in 1994, we can add to our understanding of intervention and potentially conclude if either school of intervention adequately explains the response.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IGNORANT BYSTANDER?

THE PERIOD to 21 APRIL 1994

“Rwanda was the classic small country far away of which we knew and wished to know nothing ... The country was poor, overcrowded, French speaking and offered no obvious attractions to us.”¹ Edward Clay, Britain’s non-resident Ambassador to Rwanda wrote these words in 1995, recalling Neville Chamberlain’s 1938 characterisation of Czechoslovakia, and succinctly summing up the UK’s attitude towards Rwanda before the genocide. As a country, Rwanda could never be said to have been at the top of Britain’s foreign policy priority list – it probably did not even make the top 100. In the decades before the genocide Britain’s relations with, and interest in, Rwanda had variously been described by the FCO as “minimal”, “tenuous” and “insignificant”.² As “insignificant” as Rwanda may have been though, the UK’s position on the UN Security Council meant that in 1993 and 1994 the UK was forced, at least momentarily, to pay some attention to the small country far away.

This chapter explores the period up to 21 April, when the decision was taken to withdraw the bulk of UNAMIR.³ First the chapter reviews domestic interest in the crisis, by exploring media coverage, NGO response and parliamentary debate. It then moves on to consider government intelligence on what was happening in Rwanda before considering the official response. For ease the sections are broken down into rough chronological periods: pre-1990; the civil war period from October 1990 to October 1993; the deployment of UNAMIR from October 1993 to early April 1994; and then the first two weeks of the genocide from 7 to 21 April. The chapter concludes by addressing the question of whether more could have been done in this period, specifically looking at whether at this stage

¹ FCO, “Rwanda: Annual Review 1994,” 11 January 1995. Released to author under FoI.

² National Archives: FO 371/181953, Foreign Office note, 1 April 1965; FCO 31/291 FCO annual review 1968; FCO 31/1801, briefing note to Secretary of State, April 1974.

³ UN S/Res 912, 21 April 1994.

anyone in the UK recognised the events in Rwanda as genocide. It also addresses the accusation that the UK was closer to the RPF than has been publicly acknowledged.

The Media, Parliament and Public Response

Although Britain had been keen to “acquire” Rwanda in the carving up of Africa at the 1885 Berlin Conference, once the country had been claimed by Germany, there was little interest shown in the country again. Other than a short question in 1926, relating to the Belgian right to demand native work under the League of Nations’ mandate, Rwanda was not mentioned in the House of Commons until Jeremy Thorpe, Liberal MP for North Devon, asked the Foreign Secretary:

Whether he will instruct the British delegation at the United Nations to raise immediately, in the Security Council, as a threat to peace, the killing of members of the Tutsi tribe by the Rwanda Republican Government, as a violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.⁴

This was February 1964 and Thorpe was referring to President Kayibanda’s forceful response to the first incursion of the Tutsi diaspora from Uganda. In response Peter Thomas, Minister of State at the FCO, agreed that the events in Rwanda did constitute genocide. Despite this assertion the government of the day did not believe that the UN Security Council was the “appropriate forum for this matter”. Instead Thomas confirmed that although the situation was less than clear, the FCO had expressed their concern to the UN Secretary General and hoped that Rwanda’s neighbours could exert some influence over Kayibanda.⁵ After this brief show of interest in the affairs of Rwanda, the country slipped from the view of the House of Commons for the next thirty years. A review of Hansard from 1964 to 1990 simply shows Rwanda being listed as one of the many countries to receive British aid and one of many countries with a refugee crisis.

⁴ Hansard. HC Deb, 10 February 1964, vol. 689, cc.15-17.

⁵ Ibid.

Media coverage of Rwanda was no more comprehensive. Lucy Jarosz suggests that Africa is the “dark continent” only in that the media leaves its readers in the dark; this was certainly the case over Rwanda.⁶ Throughout the 1980s any media coverage of Rwanda invariably focussed on Dian Fossey,⁷ AIDs, or the impact on East Africa generally of falling coffee prices. More frequently Rwanda was mentioned as the neighbour of Burundi or Uganda, both of which experienced terrible civil wars. Rwanda did not even make it onto the back pages of the newspapers; in 1987 a couple listed Rwanda as one of the countries in Group D of the football World Cup qualifiers - they did not make the finals! The only times Rwanda received anything more than passing coverage was when it was suggested as a destination for a trekking holiday to view the native mountain gorillas. However, even then such articles highlighted the remoteness of Rwanda from Britain and the difficulties facing any British tourist. In 1990, for example, Sheila Hayman wrote in *The Independent*:

Rwanda used to be Belgian, so you have to fly Sabena, from Brussels; your passport has to make two Brussels trips, as there is no nearer consulate to issue a visa. Arranging all these practicalities and fixing up, via fax, a personalised itinerary with Rwanda Explorations Ltd - one office in the capital Kigali - took so much energy and time.⁸

In this period the gorillas were clearly the media stars of Rwanda; gorilla stories appeared in travel sections, letters to the editors, film reviews and also in a number of news articles; for example, forest fires which threatened the gorillas’ territories in July 1990 were widely reported. As well as the infrequency of Rwanda’s appearances in the press the other notable fact is that almost without exception any articles mentioning Rwanda were filed by journalists in Kenya, Uganda, or at a desk in London; British journalists did not venture into Rwanda before 1990.

⁶ Quoted in Garth Myers, Thomas Klak and Timothy Koehl, “Inscription of Difference: News Coverage of the Conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia,” *Political Geography* 15, (1996), p.31.

⁷ Dian Fossey was an American naturalist who lived in Rwanda for over twenty years studying mountain gorillas. She was murdered in December 1985, and her story immortalised in the 1989 film *Gorillas in the Mist*.

⁸ Sheila Hayman, “When Mother Went to the Mountains,” *The Independent*, 25 March 1990, p.45.

The Civil War Period – Still no Interest

The outbreak of civil war in October 1990 did not fundamentally change the level of interest in Rwanda either in the media or in Parliament. It took until January 1993 for the first question on the situation in Rwanda to be tabled in the House of Commons. In response to a question about what the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) was doing to aid Rwandan refugees, Minister of State Mark Lennox-Boyd confirmed that the UK was doing nothing bilaterally.⁹ Similarly two months later Lennox-Boyd confirmed that the UK government had made no direct representation to the government of Rwanda over human rights abuses in the country, though the EC had made a statement on behalf of its member states.¹⁰ Lennox-Boyd however did continue to suggest that although there was no British diplomatic mission in Kigali, the FCO had regular “consultations with EC partners and other western countries who have resident representations in Rwanda”.¹¹ Presumably, this meant France, Belgium and the US, who all not only had representation in Rwanda, but also had observer status at the peace talks in Arusha.

However, a statement by Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd in April 1993 demonstrates that the government was not completely ignorant of the crisis in Rwanda. In a debate on ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, Hurd acknowledged the “atrocious killings, on a much larger scale” that were happening in Rwanda; however, at the same time he also referred to on-going crises in Cambodia, Angola, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Sudan.¹² He noted that whilst there were numerous humanitarian crises in the world, it was only Bosnia that was being widely reported in the British press; he suggested “We [meaning the British public] are deeply moved and angered by what has been happening in Bosnia. Why? Because it is carried day by day and night by night in our newspapers and on our television.” He concluded:

⁹ Hansard. HC Deb, 18 January 1993, vol.217, c.17w.

¹⁰ Hansard. HC Deb, 8 March 1993, vol.220, c.374w.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Hansard. HC Deb, 29 April 1993, vol. 223, cc.1175-1176.

Anger and horror are not enough as a basis for decisions. It is a British interest to make a reasoned contribution towards a more orderly and decent world. But it is not a British interest, and it would only be a pretence, to suppose that we can intervene and sort out every tragedy which captures people's attention and sympathy. I have never found the phrase 'something must be done' to be a phrase which carries any conviction in places such as the House or the Government where people have to take decisions ... Decisions cannot be based either on false analogies or on a desire to achieve better headlines tomorrow than today.¹³

There was a clear indication in Hurd's speech that the government's view was that, contrary to the arguments of proponents of the CNN effect such as Bernard Cohen, British intervention would not simply be motivated by headlines and that Britain did not have the capacity to intervene in all crises. The intervention in Bosnia was justified, Hurd argued, on the grounds that as a European crisis it was relatively local to the UK, but also on the grounds that there was a belief that intervention would achieve something:

From my slight knowledge of the former Yugoslavia, I do not believe that hatred and killing are inevitable, somehow irredeemably logged in the history books as something that has to happen. That is not the history of the former Yugoslavia. The killing and hatred will come to an end - perhaps not soon, but never too soon.¹⁴

In this one relatively short speech, we have an accurate expression of the government's view of humanitarian intervention and evidence that Peter Jakobsen is perhaps correct to argue that the perceived likelihood of success is a, if not the, prime motivator of intervention.¹⁵

The civil war in Rwanda received as little attention in the media as it did in Parliament. The initial RPF invasion in October 1990 was fairly extensively covered, with articles appearing in all of the broadsheets. But it was not until 8 October that the first report was actually written by a journalist in Rwanda; for the first week all reports were filed from Paris, Brussels or Uganda.¹⁶ Although at this stage no newspapers spoke of a threat of genocide, some reports did recall the horror of previous violence in the country. For example, Catherine Watson writing in *The Independent* informed readers that the 1959

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Jakobsen, "National Interest, Humanitarianism of CNN," p.212.

¹⁶ Catherine Watson, "Rwandan Guerrillas Advance on Capital," *The Independent*, 8 October 1990, p.14.

revolution was “a brutal revolt: according to one account the Hutu literally cut their tall and elegant Tutsi masters down to size by chopping off their legs at the knee”.¹⁷ However, it is noticeable that much of the reporting, especially in *The Times*, focussed not on the actual hostilities, but on the French and Belgian efforts to evacuate European nationals. Similarly ITN only reported the outbreak of war once and even then the focus was on the arrival of French and Belgian troops in Kigali.¹⁸

Within a fortnight of the invasion though, media interest in Rwanda had again waned. Reporting of the civil war, or Rwanda more generally, again became sporadic and cursory. As Greg Philo argues, as is typical of reporting Africa, the absence of large scale conflict or a pressing humanitarian disaster meant that the media attention shifted elsewhere;¹⁹ only *The Guardian* and *The Independent* reported the 1990/91 peace negotiations. What limited attention there was on Rwanda, once again, shifted back to concern for the gorillas.²⁰ Matthew Parris, of *The Times*, noting the lack of public interest in both the collapse of Yugoslavia and the Rwandan civil war provided one, slightly tongue in cheek, explanation:

When it comes to interesting the British public in Yugoslavia's constituent republics, the main problem is that they have no internationally known football teams ... In Rwanda and Burundi the Hutu and the Tutsi have been slaughtering each other relentlessly for years without engaging our interest ... But none commands the notice that Cameroon will be due, should anything go amiss for the fatherland of that plucky little World Cup team.²¹

Flippant as it may seem, Parris highlighted the complete lack of public awareness of Rwanda; whilst the British public was aware of Cameroon's footballers, Rwanda had never registered in the conscience of the British public or political elite.

¹⁷ Catherine Watson, “Rwanda Invaded by Armed Refugees,” *The Independent*, 3 October 1990, p.16.

¹⁸ ITN Archive, “Rwanda: French and Belgian Troops Go In,” 5 October 1990.

¹⁹ Philo *et al.*, “The Media and the Rwanda Crisis,” p.13.

²⁰ Catherine Watson, “Civil War Threatens Gorillas,” *The Observer*, 10 March 1991, p.17; Anon, “Gorilla Warfare,” *The Independent*, 6 February 1991, p.9; Andrew Morgan, “Stars Back Rescue as War Menaces Gorillas in the Mist,” *The Sunday Times*, 28 April 1991.

²¹ Mathew Parris, “...and moreover,” *The Times*, 13 May 1991.

Whilst there was a steady trickle of newspaper coverage of the crisis throughout 1992/93, it was almost exclusively in the broadsheet press, and then more particularly in what can be described as the more liberally minded press: *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. However, as Michael Clarke points out, whilst broadsheets dedicate about 40 per cent to foreign news, the mid range tabloids dedicate only 15 per cent and the so called “red-tops” only five per cent.²² It is therefore no surprise that Rwanda, at this point just another guerrilla war in Africa, received such little attention in the popular press; it had not, as Lindsey Hilsum suggests, crossed the threshold of significance that would have seen it covered in the tabloids.²³ It is also true to suggest that it would first be entirely possible to miss the coverage (articles were often short and relegated to deep inside the newspapers) or second to underestimate the severity of the crisis – by June 1992, *The Guardian* was again suggesting Rwanda as a tourist destination.²⁴ The press also highlighted that the situation in Rwanda was not particularly unique. Richard Dowden, writing in *The Independent* noted that the end of the Cold War and western calls for democracy were opening up “old divisions and local disputes” across Africa, before cataloguing crises in Nigeria, Mali, Senegal, Somalia, Togo, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Congo.²⁵ As *The Guardian* recorded on New Year’s Eve 1992, “large parts of the globe remain plagued by conflict”; of the 25 conflicts listed in the article, the war in Rwanda was considered the one with most hope of being resolved.²⁶ The sheer number of potential world crises meant that Rwanda was, as Peter Sharp reported on the ITN lunchtime news in May 1993, “virtually unreported” and “overshadowed by Bosnia and Somalia”.²⁷

If the media and parliament were not particularly aware of the situation in Rwanda at least some NGOs were. In 1992 Oxfam commissioned a report on the Rwandan refugees; the author warned that “the ... region remains potentially extremely unstable, and ... unless

²² Clarke, *British External Policy Making*, p.139.

²³ Lindsey Hilsum, “Reporting Rwanda: The Media and the Aid Agencies,” in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* edited by Allan Thompson, (London: Pluto Press, 2007), p.176.

²⁴ Michael Woods, “Travel: Rwanda,” *The Guardian*, 27 June 1992, p.25.

²⁵ Richard Dowden, “Africa’s Uneasy Walk to Freedom,” *The Independent*, 3 February 1992, p.12.

²⁶ Anon, “The End of History,” *The Guardian*, 31 December 1992, p.16.

²⁷ ITN Archives, “Rwanda: Civil War Refugees,” 16 May 1993.

serious work is done on all fronts to tackle the ... problems of the region ... the potential for further explosive conflict is considerable”.²⁸ In a second report a year later, Oxfam’s representative in Kigali wrote “Rwanda stands on the brink of an uncharted abyss of anarchy and violence, and there are all too many historical, ethnic, economic, and political pressures that are likely to push it over the edge.”²⁹ Oxfam recorded that at this time no-one was interested in the story; in fact they had to employ the, not unusual, tactic of funding journalists’ visits to Rwanda just to generate some coverage of the country’s problems.³⁰ Yet despite these warnings, even Oxfam was not predicting genocide; Anne Mackintosh, at the time Oxfam’s representative in Rwanda, states that, whilst she foresaw the resumption of the civil war, as late as February 1994 she “did not imagine ... how monstrous” the violence would be.³¹

Whilst not explicitly predicting genocide, Amnesty International also attempted to highlight the increasing ethnic tension in Rwanda in the period from the outbreak of civil war right up to the genocide. For example, on 21 February 1991 an Amnesty statement noted “The media in Rwanda is reported to have been advocating revenge and violence against the Tutsi. Hutu vigilantes have been involved in violent attacks on Tutsi.”³² A year later they informed members that “since the guerrilla war started in October 1990 several thousand Tutsi have been killed by Hutu vigilantes and members of the security forces.”³³ Amnesty recorded this growing ethnic tension throughout 1992 and into 1993, making it clear to anyone who read their reports that violence against Tutsi was becoming almost institutionalised in Rwanda in this period. As a result, Amnesty called on the UN to agree a more robust mandate for UNAMIR in December 1993; noting the tension in Burundi and the

²⁸ Peter Wiles, “Rwandese Refugees and Migrants in the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa”, unpublished report, Oxford: Oxfam UK and Ireland (1992) quoted in Mackintosh, “Rwanda: Beyond ‘Ethnic Conflict’”, p.466.

²⁹ Mackintosh, “Rwanda: Beyond ‘Ethnic Conflict’”, p.466.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid, p.470.

³² Amnesty International, “Legal Concern/ Fear of Ill Treatment,” 21 February 1991. Available as document UA 63/91 at www.amnesty.org/en/library.

³³ Amnesty International, “Rwanda: Possible Extrajudicial Executions,” 11 March 1992. Available as document UA 84/91 at www.amnesty.org/en/library.

fragility of the situation in Rwanda, they called on the UN to specifically include protection of human rights in the mandate for UNAMIR.³⁴ This was ignored by the UN.

The UN Security Council discussions on a possible peacekeeping mission for Rwanda and the subsequent deployment of UNAMIR largely went unnoticed in the UK; not a single question was raised in Parliament relating to the proposed mission. In fact in the six month period from October 1993 to April 1994, which was to prove pivotal on the road to genocide, only two questions were asked in Parliament regarding affairs in Rwanda.³⁵ Neither focussed on whether Britain should be doing more or even whether the international peacekeeping force should be reinforced or more proactive.

Deliberations on the deployment of UN troops to Rwanda were similarly absent from the press. In October 1993, rather than Rwanda, the press was more focussed on the coup in neighbouring Burundi, which like Rwanda had a volatile ethnic mix of Hutu and Tutsi. Whilst the situation in Rwanda looked relatively calm to outsiders, the assassination of the President of Burundi and the subsequent violence looked to be the real story in the region. In a headline that could have been recycled only a few months later with only the country changed, Mark Huband wrote “Burundi Bloodbath Runs its Course as West Looks On”.³⁶ However, despite the violence in Burundi no-one in the media warned of the risk of Rwanda igniting in similar fashion. George Alagiah for example reported from Burundi for the BBC and whilst he admits that given editorial policies it would have been unusual for a BBC journalist to make public statements about possible violence, he suggests that no journalists can honestly say they foresaw a similar outbreak of violence in Rwanda.³⁷

³⁴ Amnesty International, “Amnesty International News Service 168/93,” 15 December 1993. Available at www.amnesty.org/en/library.

³⁵ Hansard. Lord Averbury, *HL Deb, 10 March 1994, vol. 552, c.19WA* and Tony Worthington MP: *HC Deb, 29 March 1994, vol. 240, c.634W*.

³⁶ Mark Huband “Burundi Bloodbath Runs its Course as West Looks On,” *The Observer*, 31 October 1993, p.17.

³⁷ Author’s interview with George Alagiah, 23 November 2011.

The Genocide Begins: Rwanda Becomes Headline News

The shooting down of Habyarimana's plane finally made Rwanda, literally, headline news. Both *The Herald* and *The Evening Standard* led on 7 April with news of the assassination of both the Rwandan President and there were two articles in *The Times* that day.³⁸ The press, despite previous disinterest in Rwanda, were also quick to highlight the risk of violence reigniting. *The Times*, for example, told its readers that "UN officials expressed fears of an eruption of tribal violence. Past genocides in the strife-torn central African states have resulted in tens of thousands of deaths."³⁹ *The Evening Standard*, going to print later in the day as it does, was able to report that violence had already broken out in Kigali. The paper also quoted the German Ambassador to Rwanda, who had reported that the homes of two German families living in Kigali had been damaged by mortar fire – this was the first indication that the story, in the UK press at least, was going to be more about the threat to westerners than the deaths of thousands of Rwandans.

In the following fortnight four consistent themes characterised the coverage in the media. Firstly, the focus on the threat to westerners in Rwanda continued. *The Times* reported a "bloodbath in Kigali" and that several Belgian citizens had been killed in the fighting;⁴⁰ similarly, *The Evening Standard* began their coverage by reporting that 90 British citizens were at risk in the "war-torn" country.⁴¹ By the following day, *The Times* was reporting that "expatriates huddled in their homes, too fearful to venture out" and that "foreigners waited anxiously for news of evacuation".⁴² *The Herald* and *The Guardian* both reported on their front pages that the US embassy in Kigali was under attack and that a French expatriate couple had been killed in their home.⁴³ All of the newspapers dramatically reported that French and Belgian paratroopers were "rac[ing] to evacuate westerners from

³⁸ Presumably the news of the crash came in too late for *The Independent* and *The Guardian*. Despite previous interest in Rwanda, *The Guardian* did not report the crash on 7 April and *The Independent* only had a 29 word report on page 12.

³⁹ Anon, "Two African Presidents Assassinated," *The Times*, 7 April 1994.

⁴⁰ Anon, "Rwanda to Halt Attacks on Peacekeepers," *The Times*, 8 April 1994.

⁴¹ Chris Adamsom, "The Brutal Struggle in the Dreamland for Tourists," *The Evening Standard*, 8 April 1994, p.5. Again clearly to make the story more relevant to readers, the article continues with numerous references to Dian Fossey and the film *Gorillas in the Mist*.

⁴² James Landale and Lucy Berrington, "Foreigners Await Rescue from Rwandan Ordeal," *The Times*, 8 April 1994.

⁴³ Anon, "Bloodbath in Rwanda," *The Herald*, 9 April 1994, p.1. Lyndsey Hilsum, "Thousands Massacred in Rwanda," *The Guardian*, 9 April 1994, p.1.

Rwanda”.⁴⁴ Similarly the television news concentrated on the plight of westerners; on four consecutive nights, beginning 9 April, ITN’s coverage of Rwanda focused on the evacuation of expatriates.⁴⁵ Though this is not to say the threat to the locals was ignored completely; on 10 April *Scotland on Sunday* informed its readers that the Rwandan mountain gorillas were in danger as US zoologists that had been observing them had been evacuated!⁴⁶

The second theme that the newspapers focussed on was the fact that such violence had happened before; the press seemed almost resigned to the fact that tribal violence in Rwanda was the norm and should be expected – and accepted. For John Palmer, in *The Guardian*, there was a “traditional enmity” between Hutu and Tutsi which explained the violence.⁴⁷ Robert Block writing in *The Independent* began an article:

Since independence from Belgium in 1962, their histories [Rwanda and Burundi’s] - inexorably intertwined - have been marked by ethnic hatred and tribal violence. Atrocities are so commonplace that a news magazine once remarked: ‘Another week, another 300 massacred in Burundi.’ The observation could have just as easily been made about neighbouring Rwanda.⁴⁸

Similarly *The Herald* noted, “Events in Rwanda and Burundi are extremely ugly. They are also acutely depressing, for although the latest incidents have a certain malign individuality the reality is that they fit a persistent pattern which now stretches back 30 years.”⁴⁹ *The Sunday Times* similarly reported that Rwanda had the African “continent’s most savage history” continuing that, “the cycle of violence is the result of xenophobia, paranoia and geography”.⁵⁰ The tone of the article was to suggest that this cycle could not be broken. This theme came out even stronger on ITN’s coverage. On 9 April for example John Draper reported on the ten o’clock news “There is little hope of peace”⁵¹ and the following night

⁴⁴ Kim Willsher, “Paratroopers in Race to Rescue Westerners,” *Mail on Sunday*, 10 April 1994, p.6.

⁴⁵ ITN Archive, “Belgian Troops Flying to Rwanda,” 9 April 1994; “Ceasefire and Evacuation,” 10 April 1994; “Foreigners Flee,” 11 April 1994; and “Evacuation,” 12 April 1994.

⁴⁶ Jeremy Watson, “Scientists Forced to Leave Gorilla Station,” *Scotland on Sunday*, 10 April 1994.

⁴⁷ John Palmer, “Belgium Seeks Joint Force for Rwanda,” *The Guardian*, 9 April 1994, p.16.

⁴⁸ Robert Block, “Rwanda and Burundi Straddle Perhaps Africa’s Most Gory Faultline,” *The Independent*, 8 April 1994.

⁴⁹ Anon, “Depressing Pattern of Events,” *The Herald*, 8 April 1994, p.14

⁵⁰ Nick Gordon, “Angels Avenge Rwandan God,” *The Sunday Times*, 9 April 1994.

⁵¹ ITN Archive, “Belgian Troops Flying to Rwanda,” 9 April 1994.

“The rival Hutu and Tutsi factions have been in conflict for decades”.⁵² The ITN coverage really did assume there was no hope for Rwanda.

The third factor obvious in the press reports is the misinterpretation and confusion of events on the ground. The media’s initial response was to describe the violence in Kigali as “anarchy”,⁵³ “random”,⁵⁴ or “chaos”.⁵⁵ Such descriptions ignored the highly orchestrated nature of the killings. Whilst some reports identified that the Tutsi were the main victims of the violence, there was no underlying recognition that this was an organised attempt to destroy the Tutsi population, which was being centrally directed by the government using pre-prepared lists of targets. The witness accounts coming out of Rwanda were also confused; the press therefore reported variously that the fighting was between FAR and the RPF, was the Presidential Guard responding violently to the death of the President, or was being led by civilian militias. The BBC’s Mark Doyle recalls:

I have to admit that during the first few days I, like others, got the story terribly wrong. Down on the ground, up-close – if you could get close enough safely enough – it did look like chaos. I said so. I used the word chaos. What I could clearly see in the first few days was the shooting war between the RPF and the government and the dead bodies. It was not clear who had killed whom.⁵⁶

Because of this, the situation was typically interpreted as a resumption of the civil war, rather than as the outbreak of genocide. In this period, for example, words such as “soldier”, “war”, “troops” or “fighting” were three times more prevalent in the press coverage than “refugee”, “child”, “civilian” or “victim”. Not until 12 April did Catherine Bond acknowledge in *The Times* “Although it is impossible for outsiders to identify who is murdering who, most of the killing is probably not random but carried out along ethnic and political lines.”⁵⁷ The confusion was also evident on 9 April when a number of papers reported a supposed ceasefire between the army and the RPF, quoting UN Security Council

⁵² ITN Archive, “Ceasefire and Evacuation,” 10 April 1994.

⁵³ James Landale and Lucy Berrington, “Foreigners Wait for Rescue from Rwandan Ordeal,” *The Times*, 9 April 1994.

⁵⁴ Sarah Lambert, “Rwandan Pillaging and Killing Out of Control,” *The Independent*, 9 April 1994, p.10.

⁵⁵ Anon, “Thousands Die in Orgy of Bloodletting,” *The Daily Mail*, 9 April 1994, p.12.

⁵⁶ Mark Doyle, “Reporting the Genocide,” in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, edited by Allan Thompson (London: Pluto Press, 2007), p.145.

⁵⁷ Catherine Bond, “Rebels Advance as Kigali Slaughter Goes On,” *The Times*, 12 April 1994.

President, Colin Keating, as saying the situation in the country was improving.⁵⁸ Yet the following day the possibility of “full scale war” was again being reported.⁵⁹ Certainly the reporting concentrated on the war element of the crisis, with most articles reporting the movement of the rebel forces from the north and battles between the RPF and FAR. With only a handful of journalists in the country, it is apparent that the news reaching the UK was patchy, often second-hand and sometimes contradictory.

The fourth theme is fairly typical of reporting Africa, and is the press’ tendency to illustrate the violence as tribal and savage, with all the connotations that that cliché embodies. The Hutu militia, *The Independent* told us were armed “with machetes and sharpened bamboo spears”,⁶⁰ the Glasgow *Herald* wrote of an “orgy of tribal bloodletting”,⁶¹ and *The Evening Standard* said that “Rwanda with its beautiful, steaming rainforests ... [had] a savage history of inter-tribal warfare”.⁶² ITN, having described the situation as “madness”, “tribal slaughter” and “savagery”, even quoted one expatriate as describing Rwandans as like “animals ... They kill each other worse than animals.”⁶³ The media representation of the crisis was straight out of *Tarzan* or Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, it was stereotypical Africa where savages killed each other all the time. The media intensified this tribal framing by failing to make the coverage at all personal. At no point were the Rwandan victims given names and at no point did the press interview Rwandans; rather they fell back on convenient labels of “a Tutsi” or “a Hutu” and as is fairly typical of reporting of Africa took their quotes from aid workers, nuns, the UN or fleeing expats;⁶⁴ anyone as long as they were not Rwandan or black.

Although the newspapers might not have accurately reported the crisis or the fact that it was Tutsi and opposition politicians that were being deliberately and systematically killed, they did graphically report the horror of what was happening. Mark Huband for

⁵⁸ Lyndsey Hilsum, “Thousands Massacred in Rwanda,” *The Guardian*, 9 April 1994, p.1.

⁵⁹ Lyndsey Hilsum, “Bloody Vengeance in Rwanda,” *The Observer*, 10 April 1994, p.98.

⁶⁰ Richard Dowden, “Rwanda’s Twins Locked in Eternal War,” *The Independent*, 10 April 1994, p.12.

⁶¹ Aiden Hartley, “Rwandan Refugees Shelled as Some UN Troops Pull Out,” *The Herald*, 20 April 1994, p.6.

⁶² Colin Adamsom, “The Brutal Struggle in Dream Land for Tourists,” *The Evening Standard*, 8 April 1994, p.5.

⁶³ ITN Archive, “Foreigners Flee,” 11 April 1994 and “Rwandan Fighting: Belgians to Withdraw,” 14 April 1994.

⁶⁴ Woolridge, “Reporting Africa,” p.372.

example wrote in *The Guardian*, “In the centre of Kigali, drunken soldiers and gangs of youths brandishing machetes manned roadblocks on streets where piles of mutilated corpses lay”.⁶⁵ Catherine Bond, also in Kigali, wrote “Rwandan soldiers bayoneted to death two patients at Kigali’s central hospital on Monday amid the dying ... At the back of the hospital compound about 40 bodies were piled high, rotting in the drizzle.”⁶⁶ The newspapers also were reporting the magnitude of the killings; with the benefit of hindsight they may have been under reporting the extent of the crisis at this early stage, but the numbers involved were still staggering. *The Guardian* reported at least 15,000 killed on 12 April,⁶⁷ on the same day *The Daily Mail* reported up to 20,000 dead,⁶⁸ a figure which was repeated on the front page of *The Independent* the next day.⁶⁹ It was also fairly clear in many of the reports a week or more after the shooting down of Habyarimana’s plane that the dead were not victims of war but were deliberately targeted civilians. For example, *The Daily Mail* reported on 16 April, “A bloodthirsty mob slaughtered 650 children in a massacre in a church in Rwanda, it emerged last night”.⁷⁰ Although no papers were yet talking of genocide, it was apparent from the press, but only to those who were following the coverage closely, that there were two crises in Rwanda – a resumption of the conventional civil war and secondly a targeted effort to persecute Tutsi civilians. In fact on 14 April the Channel Four news explicitly acknowledged that “Beside the battle, tribal slaughter goes on with tens of thousands dead”.⁷¹

Despite the graphic images there was hardly any suggestion in the press that the international community should be doing something; Jakobsen’s description of the mechanics of the CNN effect moving from images of atrocities to media condemnation of

⁶⁵ Mark Huband “French Lead Flight from Rwanda,” *The Guardian*, 11 April 1994, p.1.

⁶⁶ Catherine Bond, “Rebels Advance as Kigali Slaughter Goes On,” *The Times*, 12 April 1994.

⁶⁷ Mark Huband “UN Troops Stand by and Watch Carnage,” *The Guardian*, 12 April 1994, p.22.

⁶⁸ Tony Halpin, “Caught in the Crossfire,” *The Daily Mail*, 12 April 1994, p.14.

⁶⁹ Anon, “Amid Stench of Death, Government Flees as Rebels Close in,” *The Independent*, 13 April 1994, p.1.

⁷⁰ Anon, “Massacre as 650 Children Killed in Church,” *The Daily Mail*, 16 April 1994, p.2.

⁷¹ ITN Archives, “Belgian Troops to Withdraw,” 14 April 1994.

government inaction does not appear to have been correct in this case.⁷² In an editorial of 11 April *The Times*, for example, concluded:

The anarchy in Rwanda would seem to provide a classic case for armed international intervention. There is a precedent in Somalia. But the analogy is flawed. There is no method in Rwanda's madness. It will not be easy for the United Nations to act as fireman: a number of fires rage and it is not clear who fans the flames. Which parties would be asked to cease fire against whom? A 'classical' peacekeeping operation could not be mounted at least not without long and careful preparation ... France and Belgium have flown in troops to evacuate foreign nationals. But they cannot cure Rwanda's blood frenzy. It is for Rwandans themselves to do so, before more life is senselessly consumed.⁷³

On the same day *The Independent* similarly suggested, "The slaughter of Belgian members of a United Nations force only highlights the helplessness of the international community. In any attempt to rank the world's trouble spots according to their potential to benefit from outside help, Rwanda must rank low."⁷⁴ *The Herald*, although cautioning against reinforcing UNAMIR, did go slightly further by suggesting a potential role for the OAU in peacekeeping.⁷⁵ Having emphasised the history of violence in Rwanda and by framing it as tribal savagery the media seemed to convince themselves of the hopelessness of the international community in this particular conflict; from the outset most of the press was suggesting that it was up to Rwandans, or wider Africa, to solve the crisis.

In these first few days only *The Guardian* suggested that it was wrong of the west to accept the inevitability of violence and to avoid becoming involved; instead in a leading article the paper called for a more "serious UN peacekeeping effort".⁷⁶ Later it condemned the UN for failing to instruct UNAMIR to intervene, noting "UNAMIR's weakness and the UN's moral failure as it leaves Rwandan staff to the mercy of marauding soldiers have once more battered its image".⁷⁷ Whilst most of the print media was clearly beginning to angle on the urgent need to evacuate westerners and the threat to the UN peacekeepers, *The Guardian* was alone in suggesting, to quote Douglas Hurd, "that something should be done", and even

⁷² Jakobsen, "National Interest, Humanitarianism or CNN," p.206.

⁷³ Anon, "Carnage in Africa," *The Times*, 11 April 1994.

⁷⁴ Anon, "Leading Article: Africa is Not a Lost Continent," *The Independent*, 11 April 1994, p.15.

⁷⁵ Anon, "Rwandan Role for OAU," *The Herald*, 11 April 1994, p.10.

⁷⁶ Anon, "Leading Article: Blood at the Bottom of the Barrel," *The Guardian*, 8 April 1994, p.23.

⁷⁷ Lyndsey Hilsum, "Rwandan Blood Flows as Foreign Forces Depart," *The Guardian*, 16 April 1994, p.12.

then not very vigorously and from deep inside the paper rather than loudly from the front page.

This malaise was similarly reflected in the letters pages. In the period from 7 to 21 April there were only thirteen readers' letters published in the broadsheet press. Of course newspaper editors have the power to decide which letters they print and therefore this may not be an accurate reflection of the number of letters actually written; but it must be assumed that if there had been a deluge of readers' letters, editors would have felt compelled to publish more. Of the thirteen, only three called for more rigorous UN involvement; one of those was from Oxfam and a second from ActionAid. Whilst two argued that, based on the experience of Bosnia, the international community were right to keep out of Rwanda, most letters simply did not address the issue of intervention; instead they focussed on the causes of the conflict, the FCO's [mis]management of the evacuation of British citizens or called for Rwandans in the UK to be granted asylum.

If letters to the editor can be taken as a barometer of public interest, however blunt, the public was certainly more interested in, or aware of, the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia than the events in Rwanda, with letters about Bosnia outnumbering those on Rwanda three to one.⁷⁸ There were in fact more letters mourning the death of the American rock-singer Kurt Cobain (of Nirvana fame) or about censorship of violent videos.⁷⁹ The evidence of letters sent to newspapers seems then to support the claim that the public learn the relative importance of issues through the amount of news coverage those issues receive in the media.⁸⁰ The lack of coverage of Rwanda, relative to Bosnia, seemed to lead the public to conclude Rwanda was a less important issue or at least a crisis for which little could be done.

⁷⁸ Although no systematic search has been performed, at least thirty-five letters relating to the Bosnia crisis were identified in the period 7 to 21 April 1994; this compares to the thirteen that were identified in what was a systematic search of the media relating to Rwanda.

⁷⁹ Identified by author using LexisNexis database.

⁸⁰ Wayne Wanta and Yu-Wei Hu, "The Agenda Setting Effects of International News Coverage: An Examination of Differing News Frames," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1993), p.250.

Government Intelligence

In the same way that the media and parliament ignored Rwanda before 1990, the FCO also had a marked lack of interest in the country. In a memo responding to the non-resident Ambassador's annual report of 1968 one FCO official wrote: "Admirable though it [the annual review] is, both its length and detail are, I submit, greater than Her Majesty's Government's very minor interest in Rwanda warrants."⁸¹ The fact that there was no British ambassador resident in Rwanda meant that intelligence of the country was minimal and FCO documents suggest that, at most, diplomatic staff would visit the country once, maybe twice, a year. In 1977, the non-resident Ambassador highlighted that not being present in the country meant that "one cannot get the 'feel' that comes to any reasonably intelligent resident". He continued that mail between Kinshasa⁸² and Rwanda could take as long as a year to be delivered, making communication with the country very difficult.⁸³ The lack of intelligence on the country was highlighted by a short report produced by the FCO African Section Research Department in 1977:

We have little knowledge of Rwanda in the Research Department. The country has no newspapers and we have no post there. Therefore one can only guess from the absence of bad news that the country is peaceful and stable at present as it appears to have been for the last 13 years.⁸⁴

It is no surprise that there was an apparent disinterest in Rwanda in this period. There is clear evidence that in the post-independence period, from an FCO perspective at least, Africa could be divided into two categories; those countries which had formerly been part of the British Empire, and were now members of the Commonwealth, and those countries that were Francophone.⁸⁵ Whilst the UK had diplomatic representation (i.e. a High Commissioner) in all Commonwealth countries in 1990, diplomatic relations in seventeen of the twenty-six Francophone countries were on a non-resident basis. The bilateral aid figures

⁸¹ National Archives, FCO 31/291. FCO memorandum attached to the 1968 Annual Report on Rwanda, dated January 1969.

⁸² In 1977 the British Ambassador in Kinshasa (Zaire) was also non-resident Ambassador to Rwanda.

⁸³ National Archives, FCO 31/2183. R.J. Stratton's valedictory despatch, 5 September 1977.

⁸⁴ National Archives, FCO 31/2183. Research Department memorandum, 6 September 1977.

⁸⁵ A handful did not fall into either category; for example Liberia, Ethiopia and Somalia.

show a similar situation. In 1988, for example, British bilateral aid, on a per capita basis, averaged £4.79 to Commonwealth countries and only £0.12 to Francophone countries.⁸⁶ The figures show the same story between 1989 and 1991. As a Francophone country, Rwanda fell into this second tier of African countries – there was no British embassy and it was low down on the list of African aid recipients. As an aside, in 1965 the Rwandan government had enquired about the possibility of joining the Commonwealth, mainly with the aim of improving relations with its Commonwealth neighbours, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The response of the Commonwealth Relations Office was fairly dismissive, noting that there was no British tradition in Rwanda and they “use[d] a different language”; instead Rwanda was encouraged to “mend fences” with its Anglophone neighbours.⁸⁷

The Civil War Period – Bilateral Relations Unchanged

Following the outbreak of civil war in October 1990 there appears to have been little change in the relationship between Rwanda and the UK. By this time it was the British High Commission in Kampala (Uganda), rather than the Embassy in Zaire, that nominally covered Rwanda; but still visits to the country were rare. As the annual report for 1990 made clear “there was little in way of bilateral relations”.⁸⁸ In terms of trade as well, contact was minimal, as Table 1 shows. Bilateral aid was also minimal, at around £400,000 in 1989/90 and 1990/91, falling to only £200,000 in 1991/92, and was focussed predominantly on the funding of two English language teachers, who left the country after the October invasion.⁸⁹

Table 1: UK Trade with Rwanda (1990 – 1994)

	UK Imports from Rwanda (£000)	UK Exports to Rwanda (£000)
1990	2,128	1,915
1991	2,193	2,333
1992	2,582	1,552
1993	1,892	3,337
1994	1,666	2,542

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics, HM Revenue & Customs

⁸⁶ Hansard. HC Deb, 15 February 1993, vol.219, cc.6-9w.

⁸⁷ National Archives, FO 371/181953. Foreign Office memorandum, August 1965.

⁸⁸ FCO, Rwanda: Annual Review 1990, 23 January 1991. Released to author under FoI.

⁸⁹ DFID, Rwanda Project Listing 1989/90 to 1994/95. Data released to author under FoI.

Between May 1991 and February 1994, the UK did not have an ambassador who had presented credentials to the Rwandan government; therefore visits to the country were even rarer than usual. The High Commission in Uganda did maintain telephone contact with the few British expats who lived in the country (mainly missionaries), but there is no record of what intelligence these calls generated, if any.⁹⁰ There was also an honorary consul resident in the country - Tony Woods the owner of a coffee plantation in the country (and also Leyton Orient Football Club in the UK). But despite these small efforts the absence of an accredited ambassador combined with the continuing fighting along the Uganda/Rwanda border, which made travel between the countries less safe and certainly less easy, meant that there was very little firsthand experience or knowledge of the country. The infrequency of travel between the two countries is illustrated by the fact that when making his first visit to Rwanda in February 1994 Edward Clay depended on a photocopy of the relevant page of *The Lonely Planet* travel guide to East Africa – Clay did not even have the guide to Rwanda!⁹¹

But despite the rarity of visits to Rwanda it is apparent that there was some awareness of the violence in Rwanda. Following a private visit to Rwanda in 1992 an official from the British Embassy in The Hague wrote a report of what he had witnessed: “Many of the Tutsi villages are now in ruins; huts have been burned and their corrugated iron roofs stolen. More seriously, hundreds of Tutsi had been killed, often in extremely grisly ways”.⁹² The report also alluded to the incidents that British expats were witnessing and presumably feeding back to the High Commission in Uganda during phone conversations. However, it is not clear to whom this report was circulated and if it had any impact on its readers; we can perhaps assume, as Tullock would suggest, this intelligence became lost in the bureaucracy of the FCO.⁹³ Overall the intelligence of what was

⁹⁰ FCO, letter from unnamed diplomat at British Embassy in The Hague to FCO London, entitled “Private Visit to Rwanda: 10-14 April”, 23 April 1992. Released to author under FoI.

⁹¹ FCO, memorandum from Edward Clay to FCO London; date redacted but likely to be early March 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁹² FCO, letter from unnamed diplomat at British Embassy in The Hague to FCO London entitled “Private Visit to Rwanda: 10-14 April,” dated 23 April 1992. Released to author under FoI.

⁹³ Tullock, “The Politics of Bureaucracy,” pp.148-52.

happening in Rwanda in 1990 to 1993 seems to have been as limited as it was in the 1960s to 1980s.

Intelligence from Uganda

Whilst links with Rwanda were weak and there was limited direct intelligence in this period, Britain's relationship with, and presence in, neighbouring Uganda was strong. This leads to the inevitable question of how much intelligence the UK had on Rwanda through its presence in Uganda. There is some evidence of direct contact between the RPF and the High Commission in Kampala but this appears to have been minimal and came only after the October invasion. On 27 November 1990 two representatives of the RPF visited the High Commission and met with the First Secretary and the Defence Attaché. The record of the meeting, as sent to the FCO and copied to the MOD and Cabinet Office, indicates that this was the first meeting between the parties. The discussions covered the RPF's thinking on the historical background to the invasion and their objectives, which were said to be to achieve a peaceful settlement with President Habyarimana. However, there is a suggestion that the RPF's relationship with the UK was not that close; the confidential memorandum recorded, for example, that:

They [the RPF representatives] assured us that they could find adequate volunteers, funds and logistical support to continue fighting in Rwanda for a considerable time ... [But] they would not be drawn on their sources of support, their military disposition or their negotiating stance.⁹⁴

Whilst the First Secretary suggested that there were benefits in maintaining low level contact with the RPF, given their future "potential importance in Rwanda",⁹⁵ no pledges or promises of support or aid were given to the two representatives.

The First Secretary met with the two representatives again on 6 December 1990 (the Military Attaché is not recorded as having attended this second meeting), this time to discuss the results of negotiations between the RPF and the government of Rwanda. In response to

⁹⁴ FCO, confidential memorandum from Kampala to FCO, 29 November 1990. Released to author under FoI.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

the question of the UK's attitude towards the conflict, the First Secretary records his response as:

We had no close historical connections with Rwanda and could not see anything that we could usefully do at the moment. In any case, Rwanda was an African problem which should really be solved by Africans.⁹⁶

This second meeting so soon after the first though worried the FCO back in London:

Given that two meetings took place within 10 days we believe there is a risk that RPF may draw the wrong conclusion about the extent of our interest and willingness to become involved in the conflict (notwithstanding Smith's clear statement of our position at the second meeting). We therefore think it wiser if you were to decline any early request for a third meeting and let several weeks elapse before agreeing to see the RPF again.⁹⁷

Throughout 1991 and 1992 the FCO continued to monitor the on-going attempts at peace negotiations both through the High Commission in Kampala and also the High Commission in Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania), which commented on the discussions being held at Arusha. However, the infrequency of the memos sent back to London, and the nature of the conversations with RPF representatives, suggests that the conflict was not viewed with any high priority, even amongst the High Commission staff in Kampala let alone FCO officials in Whitehall.

Finally in this period, it could be suggested that the High Commission in Kampala should have been aware of the potential for the refugee problem in the south of the country to lead to violence in Rwanda. However, whilst it is the case that the High Commission was aware of a refugee problem in southern Uganda, this was only one of many internal issues facing the government of Uganda. In the years before the RPF invasion there was also fighting in the north and east of Uganda, which caused refugee problems at least as significant as the problem of the Rwandans in the south. After October 1990 the High Commission acknowledged that something needed to be done about the refugees camped in the south, but before then Rwandan refugees do not seem to have been a major cause for

⁹⁶ FCO, confidential memorandum from Kampala to FCO, 7 December 1990. Released to author under FoI.

⁹⁷ FCO, confidential telegram from FCO to High Commission Kampala, 13 December 1990. Released to author under FoI.

concern. Nor is there any evidence that the officials from Kampala visited the refugee camps or discussed the issue of Rwandan refugees with the Ugandan government.

UNAMIR Deployed: Some First Hand Intelligence

The deployment of UNAMIR from October 1993 onwards did not alter the nature of the relationship between the UK and Rwanda – it remained a country of limited interest to the British, but soon after UNAMIR deployed Edward Clay made his first visit to Rwanda. Recording his visit of February 1994, Clay wrote to the FCO, “The accreditation to Kigali of the first British ambassador for nearly three years may have raised hopes about closer British involvement in and aid to Rwanda. I hope I dispelled these.”⁹⁸ The accreditation of an ambassador however did mean that London received some eye witness intelligence on the country, the first for a while.

Clay visited Rwanda from 22 to 25 February; in that three day visit he saw for himself what was happening in Rwanda and his observations were fed back to London in two reports. He began the first of these:

Political impasse continues in Rwanda. Most serious danger-point last week now passed, but tension remains high. Habyarimana both the key and a major impediment to implementation of the Arusha Accords. No other options than for the international community to press for the implementation of those agreements.⁹⁹

Whilst the emphasis of the reports was on the political situation Clay could not avoid mentioning the intermittent violence which by this point was spreading across the country. The report emphasized the ubiquity of road blocks and soldiers across the country and recorded that during his visit “individual killings, allegedly mostly Tutsi, numbered between 30 and 50 dead”.¹⁰⁰ However, he continued “it would be dangerous and unwise to try to ascribe responsibility for these killings”. The overriding message coming out of these two

⁹⁸ FCO, memorandum from Edward Clay to FCO London, undated but likely to be late February. Released to author under FoI.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

reports, presumably the first received in London for a number of years, was that the resumption of *civil war* looked likely; Clay went as far as to suggest that an RPF statement of 23 February, attacking Habyarimana, amounted to a declaration of war. He recorded that there was limited hope of a peace settlement and that the return of Tutsi refugees to Rwanda was unrealistic. The only option available to the international community, he repeated, was to keep the pressure on both sides to implement the Arusha Accords; however, in the meantime he suggested “it would be useful to get firm confirmation that the Belgians would be responsible for evacuating our citizens, if it came to that.”¹⁰¹

A final source of intelligence that was allegedly available to the British officials at the UN were the communications between the UN’s Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and General Dallaire in Kigali. Although these cables were supposed to be private and not shared with Security Council members, Linda Melvern claims that the UK mission had access to them and was therefore more informed about the impending crisis than has been publicly acknowledged.¹⁰² However, David Hannay, Britain’s ambassador to the UN, categorically denies that he ever saw the correspondence, but accepts that other officials may have without his knowledge.¹⁰³ It would seem odd though if the British mission had access to the cables that they would not be shared with the Permanent Representative. Nor is there any public evidence that the cables or even their contents were fed back to Whitehall; none of the correspondence between London and New York, released under FoI, make reference to anything that appears to have come from Dallaire’s cables. One senior FCO official based in London at the time, but who was in regular contact with Hannay, certainly makes it clear that they never saw any of Dallaire’s correspondence, stating that they were not even aware of the existence of the infamous “genocide fax” until a number of years later.¹⁰⁴ Interestingly the Czech Ambassador to the Security Council in 1994, Karel Kovanda, claims that Dallaire’s cables were shared with the US, France and

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, p.129.

¹⁰³ Author’s interview with Sir David Hannay, 23 April 2010.

¹⁰⁴ Author’s interview with senior FCO official, 27 November 2011.

Belgium; he makes no mention of the UK.¹⁰⁵ It is not, however, beyond the realms of imagination that the cables could have been intercepted by the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) or leaked to a British official either by a UN official or someone in the US mission who allegedly had access to the cables – such claims are at the believable end of espionage conspiracy theories.

If we accept for a moment that the UK did have access to Dallaire's cables, Melvern claims that they would have read "increasingly desperate warnings of an impending calamity".¹⁰⁶ Certainly Dallaire claims that throughout this period he sent "very detailed sitreps, special incident reports and periodic and military assessments".¹⁰⁷ Of the Dallaire cables the one that has become the most infamous is the so called "Genocide Fax" of 11 January. In brief, in this cable Dallaire told how UNAMIR had been approached by a Hutu informant who claimed that a massacre of Tutsi was being planned and that the militia in Kigali had the capacity to kill over 1,000 civilians in twenty minutes. Dallaire finished by asking for permission to raid an arms depot in Kigali identified by the informant. The cable has been named the "Genocide Fax" as it allegedly foretold the genocide that broke out three months later. However, the importance of this cable, in terms of British intelligence, must not be overstated for two reasons. First, it did not predict genocide. It claimed that the Hutu were training militias who could carry out attacks on Tutsi civilians in Kigali - this is not the same as genocide, the systematic and intentional attempt to kill an *entire* ethnic group. Secondly, in breach of all UN etiquette Dallaire sent this cable directly to General Maurice Baril, a fellow Canadian and the military adviser to DPKO, rather than to the civilian DPKO staff as would be usual.¹⁰⁸ Even if the FCO did have access to routine cables, and it seems unlikely it did, it is even less likely that they would have seen this one sent in an unusual manner as it was. Karel Kovanda, one of the more forceful advocates of intervention on the

¹⁰⁵ Karel Kovanda, "The Czech Republic on the UN Security Council: The Rwandan Genocide," *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 5, 2 (2010), p.198.

¹⁰⁶ Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, p.129.

¹⁰⁷ Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, p.208.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.145.

Security Council, has also confirmed that the fax was never disclosed to Security Council members.¹⁰⁹

The Genocide Begins: Border with Uganda Closes

The morning after Habyarimana's plane was shot down, Clay sent a report to London; its contents appear to have shaped the British response, certainly for the next few weeks:

The situation in Kigali meantime appears to be calm. We have spoken to our honorary consul. He and Kanyarushoke [the Rwandan Ambassador to Uganda] both spoke of there having been some prolonged periods of shooting. But Kanyarushoke believes this was the Presidential Guard reacting hysterically and firing wildly in the air, rather than to kill.¹¹⁰

The memo suggested that rather than responding to an outbreak of violence against civilians the priority for all parties was to move urgently towards the swearing in of the transitional government as agreed at Arusha. The Clay memo of 7 April therefore focused on the political problems and highlighted the need for a political solution, led by the Rwandans themselves. From this point on the High Commission in Uganda ceased to be an effective source of information - the border between Uganda and Rwanda was closed and the only British official left in the country, honorary consul Tony Wood was unable to provide any valuable intelligence. Wood was evacuated on 12 April, after having been "under siege in the capital with just two watchmen and parrots for company"¹¹¹ and despite his best efforts was unable to communicate effectively with the outside world because of the failure of Kigali's telephone system.¹¹² By 13 April, the High Commission was completely reliant on the unarmed observers of the UN observer mission, UNOMUR, which patrolled the Uganda/Rwanda border for any information; as Clay recognised on 12 April in a memo to London, "These sitreps are very indirect and necessarily out of date".¹¹³ The FCO was now reliant on

¹⁰⁹ Kovanda, "The Czech Republic on the UN Security Council," p.196.

¹¹⁰ FCO, memorandum from Edward Clay to FCO London, 7 April 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹¹¹ Peter Smerdon, "Belgian Troops Fly in for Rwanda Rescue," *The Herald*, 11 April 1994, p.1.

¹¹² John Hampshire, "Britons Marooned by Massacre in the Mist," *The Daily Mail*, 11 April 1994, p.22.

¹¹³ FCO, memorandum from Edward Clay to FCO London, 12 April 1994. Released to author under FoI.

third party sources for its intelligence on what was happening in Rwanda; this appears to have come from the media, from allied countries (especially Belgium) and from the UN Secretariat.

The Government Response

As noted above, the British government simply did not respond to the outbreak of civil war in 1990. In fact the government had no practical involvement in the crisis until it was brought to the attention of the UN Security Council in 1993. In this period up to 21 April the Security Council made two key decisions relating to the crisis; first the decision to deploy a UN peacekeeping mission (UNAMIR) and then secondly the decision, taken at the end of April 1994, to partially withdraw UNAMIR, leaving only a rump in Kigali to facilitate, what proved to be unsuccessful, ceasefire negotiations. Other than a limited role in the evacuation of British expats in April, Britain's involvement in these two UN Security Council resolutions was the extent of the official involvement in the crisis in this period.

Britain's Role in the Decision to Deploy UNAMIR

On 22 June 1993 the Security Council approved the establishment of the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMUR) which was tasked with observing the Uganda/Rwanda border to ensure no military aid, intended for the RPF, crossed it.¹¹⁴ UNAMIR was then established by Resolution 872 on 5 October. The UK's role in the debates surrounding these two missions appears to have been minimal.

David Hannay records a distinct lack of enthusiasm amongst Security Council members for the proposed peacekeeping mission in September 1993, suggesting that some members (not named) believed the mission "had been landed on the UN's doorstep without adequate preparation or consideration".¹¹⁵ The Arusha Accords had after all only been signed in August and UNAMIR was approved and deployed by the end of October; Dallaire

¹¹⁴ UNOMUR was eventually rolled up into UNAMIR.

¹¹⁵ Hannay, *New World Disorder*, p.166.

notes that this compares well to other UN missions which typically took six months or more from mandate to deployment;¹¹⁶ in the case of MINURSO (the UN Mission to Western Sahara in 1991) for example only a handful of observers were on the ground with limited logistical support five months after the mission was approved.¹¹⁷ To approve and launch a mission as quickly as UNAMIR was therefore unprecedented. Hannay continues, however, that it was pressure from the French, as well as support from other African nations, that pushed through the resolution and eventually compelled the Security Council to authorise the mission. In an interview with the author, Hannay stated:

The French had got themselves trapped [in Rwanda]. They wanted their troops out, but did not want the Habyarimana regime to collapse ... Undoubtedly it was the French who pushed for UNAMIR ... We went along with the original decision with some reluctance but we supported our French allies.¹¹⁸

A US report on the draft wording of Resolution 872 similarly makes the point that it was the French pushing hardest for a mandate for a UN force.¹¹⁹ In fact the French insistence on the need for a peacekeeping mission became so intense that one ambassador to the Security Council remembers it “becoming a standing joke in the Council”.¹²⁰

Despite the suggestions that the UK opposed the mission because of cost considerations there is no publicly available evidence to support such a claim. Rather UNAMIR was kept small for three reasons. Karel Kovanda records that:

UNAMIR was not very big, and its members were lightly armed; their mandate was rather weak. All this followed from the view of the UN Secretariat (with which the Security Council agreed at the time) that the toughest part was to get the parties to actually reach an agreement; putting it into effect was not expected to be too much of a problem.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, p.96.

¹¹⁷ Durch, “Building on Sand” p.162.

¹¹⁸ Author’s interview with Sir David Hannay, 23 April 2010.

¹¹⁹ US Department of State, Confidential report from US Mission to the UN to Secretary of State “Rwanda: Text of Proposed SC Res from 9/30,” 1 October 1993. Released to author under FoI.

¹²⁰ Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, “The International Response to Conflict in Rwanda: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience. Study 2: Early Warning and Conflict Management,” Steering Committee of the JEEAR, 1996, p.27.

¹²¹ Kovanda, “The Czech Republic on the UN Security Council,” p.194.

The mandate was therefore based on the assumption of consensus between the two warring parties; there was no provision for protecting civilians in the mandate, or deploying a heavily armed UN force, as this was not deemed to be necessary. As one FCO official close to the debates suggests, Rwanda was viewed as a potentially model peacekeeping mission; there was a generally accepted peace settlement and a plan on how to achieve this.¹²² The size of the mission was in fact similar to UN observer missions launched in the early 1990s; the authorised strength of UNAMIR was 2,500, which compares favourably to the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (2,500), UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (1,000), UN Observer Group in Central America (1,000) and UN Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (1,200).¹²³ Whilst UNAMIR was mandated to do more than observe, a force of 2,500 seemed sufficient given the size of the country. However, as with many other UN missions the force never actually got up to authorised size and suffered from poor logistical support.¹²⁴ It is only with the benefit of hindsight though that the force sent to Rwanda looks inadequate.

The second reason for UNAMIR's size was the fact that there was genuine concern amongst Security Council members, particularly the UK, New Zealand and Russia, about UN overstretch. There had been a rapid expansion in the number of UN missions and the number of troops deployed. As Norrie MacQueen highlights in this period, the UN was already heavily committed in Bosnia and Somalia and was also under pressure from the US to authorise a mission to Haiti and from Russia to authorise a mission to Georgia.¹²⁵ Some Security Council members, Hannay suggests the UK included, were therefore sincerely asking whether the UN infrastructure was adequate to cope with this expansion. For example, at the time DPKO was not staffed on a 24 hour basis. A CIA briefing paper, prepared on 1 October 1993, reflected this concern, "The international relief system, already under severe strain, faces burgeoning demands in the future. The resources of the US and

¹²² Author's interview with senior FCO official, 27 November 2011.

¹²³ Norrie MacQueen, *The United Nations Since 1945: Peacekeeping and the Cold War* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 1999), pp.123-25.

¹²⁴ Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, pp.176-9.

¹²⁵ MacQueen, *The United Nations Since 1945*, p.67.

other donors will be spread more thinly and donors will have to be more selective about which crises it addresses.”¹²⁶ For this reason the automatic approval of a mission, however worthy, was not guaranteed.

The third reason related to fears for the safety of UN personnel. Resolution 872 was issued only days after “the battle of Mogadishu” in which 18 US Rangers were killed, and after 24 Pakistani soldiers had been killed also in Somalia in June 1993. The UK, US and Russia in particular showed real concern about the potential risk to UN troops being deployed; Russia and the UK therefore insisted on a reference to UN Security Council Resolution 868 being made in the Rwanda resolution. Conscious of a number of attacks on UN peacekeepers, 868, which had been passed on 29 September 1993, essentially implied that UN troops would be withdrawn from any mission where their safety could not be ensured.¹²⁷ Despite claims that the two warring parties in Rwanda were supportive of a UN mission, the British contingent at the UN was cautious and demanded wording in the resolution that allowed for the review of the mission’s performance. If there was no sign of progress or of a threat to the UN peacekeepers the British, from the outset, wanted the right to withdraw the mission.

By the time of the 5 April debate on renewing the mandate, whilst the UN Secretariat recommended the maximum extension of six months, Security Council members were not keen to grant this; the US for example, made it clear that they wanted the extension to be as short as possible; their opening suggestion was one month.¹²⁸ Since October, reports to the Security Council had emphasised the lack of progress in implementing the Arusha Accords; consequently, Hannay recalls a real “feeling of impatience” amongst Security Council members.¹²⁹ The Council eventually compromised on an extension of the mandate to 29 July; however, it agreed that UNAMIR should be withdrawn after six weeks if further progress had not been made in the implementation of the Accords and Hannay’s speech to

¹²⁶ All CIA papers were accessed at www.foia.cia.gov. CIA, “Global Humanitarian Emergencies Report,” 1 October 1993.

¹²⁷ US Department of State, “Rwanda: Text of Proposed SC Res,” 1 October 1993.

¹²⁸ Kovanda, “The Czech Republic on the UN Security Council,” p.194.

¹²⁹ Hannay, *New World Disorder*, p.166.

the Council during this debate suggests the UK supported this. Again this decision was not led by concerns over cost, but rather from a belief that UNAMIR was not achieving its objectives. Even at this stage, there was a general belief that the crisis could only be solved, long term, by the Rwandans themselves.

Britain Opposes Withdrawal of UNAMIR

On 21 April Security Council Resolution 912 was published. Through it the Security Council members declared that they were “appalled at the large scale violence in Rwanda” and “deeply concerned by the continuing fighting, looting, banditry and breakdown of law and order, particularly in Kigali”.¹³⁰ Yet whilst they “condemned” the violence against Rwandan civilians, they “*strongly* condemned” (emphasis added) the violence against UNAMIR, which was a breach of “international humanitarian law”. The outrage against the murder of the Belgian peacekeepers and ongoing mortar attacks on the UN headquarters in Kigali was one of the main factors that led to the decision to withdraw a large section of UNAMIR, and the UK was instrumental in the making of this decision.

The Security Council’s first response to the renewed violence was to issue a Presidential Statement on 7 April, which expressed concern about the loss of life amongst civilians, opposition politicians and particularly the UN peacekeepers. It called on the Secretary General to collect all available information and report to the Council as soon as possible.¹³¹ This report was formally made on 20 April, but in the meantime the Security Council had been presented with two other pieces of information. On 13 April the Belgian Permanent Representative wrote to the Security Council, informing the Council of Belgium’s decision to withdraw its troops from UNAMIR. The letter argued that with “widespread massacres” and “chaos” in the country, the implementation of the Accords was seriously jeopardised and therefore Belgium called for the entire UNAMIR operation to be

¹³⁰ UN S/Res 912, 21 April 1994.

¹³¹ UN S/Prst/1994/16, 7 April 1994.

suspended.¹³² Then on 14 April, following an official complaint from the UK that the Secretariat was not providing the Council with sufficient information, the officials from the DPKO suggested to the Security Council that there were two possible options for UNAMIR; either withdraw immediately and fully, or alternatively leave UNAMIR in Rwanda for three weeks longer to determine whether there was any prospect of a ceasefire. If we assume that the UK had access to Dallaire's cables back to the DPKO, as discussed above, the UK may also have seen a cable dated 19 April which argued against the withdrawal of UNAMIR:

The consequences of withdrawal by UNAMIR will definitely have an adverse affect [*sic*] on the morale of the civilian population, especially the refugees, who will feel that we are deserting them. However, in actual fact, there is little that we are doing at the present time except providing security, some food and medicine and a presence. Humanitarian assistance has not really commenced.¹³³

Even if the UK mission did not see this cable, it seems likely that based on the information they did have, they also concluded that UNAMIR was achieving little. It was not therefore a surprise that on 20 April the Secretary General presented three options to the Security Council; increase UNAMIR and strengthen the mandate, reduce the force to circa 250 personnel focussed on achieving a ceasefire, or withdraw completely.¹³⁴ In fact Hannay had informally suggested the very same options to the Security Council in a discussion on the escalating violence over a week earlier.

The Security Council was not initially unanimous on the eventual decision to partially withdraw UNAMIR. On 13 April Nigeria presented a draft resolution to the Council on behalf of the Non-Aligned Caucus advocating a strengthening of UNAMIR. However, the loudest, and most powerful, voice on the Council, that of the US, was calling for a full and immediate withdrawal. With violence flaring up across the country and the death of the Belgian peacekeepers the Clinton Administration immediately foresaw another Somalia. Viewing the events in Rwanda through a Somali lens the fear of another

¹³² UN, "Report of the Independent Inquiry into the actions of the United Nations during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda," 16 December 1999, p.20.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.21.

¹³⁴ UN, "Special Report of the Secretary General on UNAMIR," UN S/1994/470, 20 April 1994.

Mogadishu terrified American decision makers. Combining this with the apparent lack of hope of achieving a ceasefire, the State Department concluded that UNAMIR was achieving nothing other than endangering the lives of the peacekeepers, it must therefore be withdrawn. Instructions were sent to the US Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, on 15 April:

Department has considered the prospect of additional wide scale conflict and violence in Rwanda, and the threat ... to remaining foreign civilian and military personnel ... Taking these factors into account Department believes that there is insufficient justification to retain a UN peacekeeping presence in Rwanda and that the international community must give highest priority to full, orderly withdrawal of all UNAMIR personnel as soon as possible.¹³⁵

With no peace to keep and the violence increasing, the White House saw the inevitable failure of UNAMIR as a threat to the reputation of UN peacekeeping. Another failed mission, so soon after failure in Somalia, would, they suggested, be fatal to the concept of UN peacekeeping.

The British on the other hand, whilst not supporting the reinforcement of UNAMIR or maintenance of the status quo, did not support full withdrawal. The UN Secretariat recorded that the UK responded to Nigeria's preference for Option One, reinforcement of UNAMIR, by stating that the option "was not feasible because of the lessons drawn from Somalia that conditions on the ground could evolve rapidly and dangerously".¹³⁶ Intelligence from Belgium was also likely to have informed this decision. As well as the letter sent to the Security Council which warned that there was no chance of a ceasefire, the Belgian Foreign Minister Willy Claes had telephoned Hurd directly to explain why Belgium was withdrawing its troops.¹³⁷ Hurd does not record the content of this call, but we can safely assume that having made the decision to withdraw, Claes would have been keen to paint as dark a picture as possible of the situation in Rwanda, so as to lessen any criticism of

¹³⁵ US Department of State, cable number 099440, to US Mission to the United Nations, New York, "Talking points for UNAMIR withdrawal," 15 April 1994. Accessed at <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB53/rw041594.pdf> on 12 June 2010

¹³⁶ UN, "Independent Inquiry," p. 22.

¹³⁷ Hurd, *Memoirs*, p.541.

its decision. Karel Kovanda recalls that a similar call was made to the Czech Foreign Ministry in Prague, and confirms that Claes did very much argue for the full withdrawal of UNAMIR.¹³⁸ The British also appear to have been realistic about the likely success of option one. David Hannay, for example, recalls that there were “quite compelling” military arguments against launching a full Chapter VII peace enforcement mission; these included the fact that the UN did not control Kigali airport, the only rapid route of access into Rwanda, and that “in the aftermath of the debacle in Mogadishu” there were no willing troop contributing nations.¹³⁹ Support of the “reinforce and strengthen” option would, at this time have, realistically, been futile; even if the Security Council had overridden the US objections, there was simply no country willing to provide troops. For these reasons the UK rejected option one.

However, whilst the UK did not support efforts to reinforce UNAMIR, it is clear that the British, unlike the US, opposed the option of full withdrawal. Whereas the US delegation at the Security Council argued that anything short of full withdrawal risked the reputation of the UN, the British maintained that a full withdrawal would instead highlight the impotence of UN peacekeeping. In direct contradiction to the US view, Hannay therefore argued at the Security Council that to withdraw completely would harm the reputation of the UN and would actually worsen the situation on the ground. Hannay recalls how he was approached by Madeleine Albright before the vote on Resolution 912:

In the margins of the first consultation I was approached by Madeleine Albright. She said her instructions were to propose the immediate withdrawal of the peacekeeping force, its whole rationale and mandate having been invalidated. What did I think? I said I thought that would really not do. The peacekeeping force might not be able to carry on with its original mandate, but it might be able to perform some humanitarian tasks and to save lives. The UK would not be supporting any requests for a withdrawal. Could she not get her instructions changed?¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Kovanda, “The Czech Republic on the UN Security Council,” p.199.

¹³⁹ Hannay, *New World Disorder*, p.168.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.167.

Despite not fully appreciating the situation in Rwanda, the British appreciated that UNAMIR was doing key, if limited, work in protecting civilians in a handful of sites across Kigali and that more significantly UNAMIR was uniquely placed to negotiate between the warring parties. Already the British view appears to have been that the only way to stop the violence was by the two sides implementing the Arusha Accords and this was more likely with a UN presence in the country; this of course reflected the message that the FCO had received from Edward Clay on 7 April. In New York, the British view won out. Albright, bypassing the State Department, phoned a senior official at the National Security Council: “I first asked them for more flexible instructions, then yelled into the phone, demanding them”.¹⁴¹ Albright eventually voted in favour of a partial, rather than full and immediate, withdrawal. Mark Curtis’ suggestion that the British mission to the UN is little more than a puppet of the US seems, in this case at least, to not hold up to the evidence.¹⁴²

The Ignorant Bystander?

Having reviewed the press coverage and the government response, we turn now to a discussion of three questions that inform the debate on British responsibility. These are: did the UK support the RPF in the war; in this period was the UK aware of the “genocide”; and could the UK have done more to prevent or stop the genocide? These three questions directly address Daniela Kroslak’s considerations of responsibility discussed earlier: how much did the bystander know, were they involved and what capabilities did they have to intervene?

Support for the RPF

Claims that the UK and US were more closely aligned with the RPF than publicly acknowledged have been present from the time of the crisis itself and recently have been revisited by Hazel Cameron.¹⁴³ Cameron suggests that in October 1990 “the order for

¹⁴¹ Albright, *Madam Secretary*, p.150.

¹⁴² Curtis, *The Ambiguities of Power*, p.183.

¹⁴³ Cameron, “British State Complicity.”

aggression against [Rwanda] was made with the full knowledge and approval of the British intelligence services” and that “the evidence available to date infers a degree of complicity in the crimogenic [*sic*] behaviour of the guerrilla force of the RPF until 1994”.¹⁴⁴ This general theory is based on two underlying assumptions: firstly the RPF was dependent upon the government of Uganda and secondly that the UK and US both had a strong presence in Uganda and must therefore have been close to the Anglophone RPF. Throughout the crisis many in the French political elite, including President Mitterrand, also believed that the RPF invasion of Rwanda was an Anglo-Saxon plot to evict France from Africa – a proxy war between client armies, the RPF supported by Britain and America, the FAR by France.¹⁴⁵ It was not just the French who thought this though; Adelman claims that the Canadian Foreign Minister visited the FCO in 1992, to confront Britain over Uganda’s support of the RPF. Clearly the Canadians also believed that the UK had some degree of influence over Uganda and therefore the RPF.¹⁴⁶

In terms of actual evidence, a key plank of this argument is the fact that Major Paul Kagame the leader of the RPA, as well as other RPA commanders, received training from the British and American militaries prior to 1990.¹⁴⁷ However, as prior to the 1990 invasion these men were senior officers in the Ugandan army that is not a surprise.¹⁴⁸ The MOD, for example, ran a number of Junior Command and Staff courses for the Ugandan army in Jinja in south Uganda in the late 1980s – one course was even running at the time of the 1990 invasion.¹⁴⁹ Additionally seven members of the Ugandan army attended courses at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the British army’s officer training college, prior to 1990 and one attended army staff college in the UK.¹⁵⁰ Although there are no records of who attended these various courses, it seems feasible, given the senior positions they held in

¹⁴⁴ Hazel Cameron, “Britain’s Hidden Role in Rwandan State Violence” *Criminal Justice Matters*, 82, 1 (2010), p.18.

¹⁴⁵ Asteris Huliaras. “The ‘Anglo-Saxon conspiracy,’” p.594.

¹⁴⁶ Howard Adelman, “Canadian Policy in Rwanda” in *The Path of a Genocide: The Crisis from Ugandan to Zaire*, edited by Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999), pp.192-93.

¹⁴⁷ Cameron, “British State Complicity,” p.75. Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, p.46.

¹⁴⁸ Many Rwandan refugees had served in the National Resistance Army which had fought a civil war against President Obote of Uganda from 1981 to 1986. After victory in this war the new President, Yoweri Museveni, retained the Rwandans, including Paul Kagame in the official Ugandan army. Paul Kagame in fact served as the head of Ugandan military intelligence from 1986 to October 1990.

¹⁴⁹ MOD. Information released to author under FoI.

¹⁵⁰ MOD. Information released to author under FoI.

the Ugandan military, that amongst the trainees were a number of Rwandans who would later held positions in the RPF. As Lt. Colonel Mike Wharmby, the officer who commanded British troops deployed to Rwanda in July 1994, noted “RPF soldiers and officers held themselves and behaved in a manner which demonstrated their professionalism and suggested they had received training from western militaries.”¹⁵¹

However, there is no suggestion that the UK viewed this training as being provided to a rebel army; rather correspondence between Kampala and London shows that the training provided to the Ugandan army was seen as a way of strengthening the relationship between Uganda and the UK. For example, MOD records do not show any ethnic Rwandans as having been at Sandhurst; whilst some of the seven officers trained in the UK may have actually been exiled Rwandans, they were recorded as being Ugandan and the training was made available in their capacity as members of the Ugandan army not in their capacity as members of a rebel army. Despite Hazel Cameron and Alaine Destexhe’s attempts to portray the relationship between the UK and the RPF as sinister, this was training being provided to an allied government with historic links to the UK and it fitted into a perfectly normal pattern of providing training to Commonwealth armies; it was not training being deliberately provided to a rebel army. It is also apparent that it was not just the British and US who were providing training to the Ugandan army; in 1989 there were military training teams from Libya, the Soviet Union, China, North Korea and Tanzania in the country and Ugandans also travelled to India, Cuba and Zimbabwe for training.¹⁵²

A number of inferences with regard to Britain’s role in Uganda can also be drawn from declassified US intelligence documents. The CIA, drawing on information from the Defence Intelligence Agency, which is known to have had agents in Uganda throughout the 1990 to 1994 period, stated as early as 5 October 1990 that FAR had “foreign support”, yet

¹⁵¹ Author’s interview with Lt Colonel Mike Wharmby, 13 September 2010.

¹⁵² MOD, Defence Adviser to British High Commission in Kampala’s Annual Report, dated 3 April 1990. Released to author under FoI.

at this early stage there was no mention of foreign support for the RPF.¹⁵³ However, by 12 December 1990 the CIA was suggesting that “Libya may have provided financial and military support to ethnic Tutsi rebels who invaded Rwanda from Uganda in early October”.¹⁵⁴ Given the fact that the British government was at this time accusing Colonel Gaddafi of supporting international terrorism, including the IRA in Northern Ireland, and of having planned the Lockerbie bombing, it seems highly unlikely that they would have supported a rebel group which appears to have had links with Libya. In none of the CIA documents released, many of which were at the time top secret and restricted to US eyes only, does the intelligence agency suggest that the UK had any role in the conflict. This is despite fairly blunt assessments of the French, Belgian and Ugandan involvement in the crisis.

Nor can the claim that the British supported the RPF be accepted blindly without testing the motivation of any alleged support. As noted above Britain really had no interest – economic, historic, cultural or strategic – in Rwanda in 1990; in fact both the FCO and Cabinet Office had previously been very hostile to the idea of Rwanda joining the Commonwealth, which would have brought the two countries closer. Why then would the British support the invasion of a country that had nothing to offer? A possible explanation, given the UK’s close relationship with the Ugandan government, would be to ease the refugee crisis in southern Uganda. However, this explanation cannot be accepted for three reasons. Firstly, the easiest way to solve the refugee crisis would have been through diplomatic channels; yet there is no evidence of the British supporting this. Secondly, it would have been obvious to anyone that a Tutsi invasion of Rwanda threatened to unsettle the whole region (especially Burundi); certainly a regional war raged for a number of years after the events of 1994. Why would the UK risk sparking a regional war just to resolve a relatively minor refugee problem in which it had shown no previous interest? And finally, the British government was clearly sensitive about its relationship with the government of

¹⁵³ CIA, “Support Cable: Briefing on Middle East and Africa,” 5 October 1990.

¹⁵⁴ CIA, “Special Analysis of Libyan Activity in Africa,” Reference: CPAS NID 90-288JX, 12 December 1990.

Uganda. In this period there was an embargo on selling lethal equipment to Uganda and in 1991 an approach from the Ugandan government to provide military training to game rangers was rejected “on the grounds that it might be seen as UK connivance in the training of guerrillas”.¹⁵⁵ With such evident caution, it would be hard to accept that the British government knowingly supported the RPF.

The conspiracy theory also ignores the above evidence that the High Commission staff in Uganda had only a very tentative relationship with the RPF. The FCO also claim that no requests for aid, equipment, assistance or arms were ever received from the RPF;¹⁵⁶ in fact all photographs of RPF soldiers show them carrying Kalashnikov rifles and wearing distinctive East German army camouflage clothing, items more likely to have been purchased on the black market than supplied by the British.¹⁵⁷ The theory also ignores all of the above evidence of ignorance of Rwanda amongst FCO staff. It is of course impossible to completely rule out a claim that a small element of MI6, perhaps a single agent, was more closely aligned to the RPF than we will ever know; but even if this were the case this is not indicative of official support of the rebels. Suggestions that the British military or intelligence agencies in Uganda were deliberately and malevolently aligned with the RPF are not convincing – this was not, as President Mitterrand might have thought, a proxy war between Britain and France fought out between the RPF and the Rwandan government.

Finally and most significantly, even if one does accept the rather circumstantial evidence of high level British support, it must never be forgotten that the RPF did not carry out the genocide; the genocide was perpetrated by the Rwandan government. Even, if against the evidence, we accept for a moment that the British provided aid to the RPF and trained its soldiers and that MI6 agents worked with Paul Kagame, those facts in no way incriminate the British government in the perpetration of genocide. The RPF, like the wider world, was shocked by the genocide and certainly did not intend the invasion to trigger such

¹⁵⁵ MOD, Defence Adviser to British High Commission in Kampala’s Annual Report, 15 October 1991. Released to author under FoI.

¹⁵⁶ FCO. Assertion made in response to a FoI request made by author.

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Goose and Frank Smyth, “Arming Genocide in Rwanda,” *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 5 (1994), p.89.

wide spread killing. Cameron's suggestion then that the British government was complicit in the genocide because of its close relationship with the RPF seems difficult to sustain.

What Genocide?

Before 21 April no-one in the British political elite had publicly described the events in Rwanda as genocide, but in this period could, or should, the government have been more aware of what was happening? In terms of determining when the government became aware that the events constituted genocide there are two relevant factors that have to be considered. Firstly, Rwanda as a country was not important from a British perspective; it would have therefore been especially hard for events in the "small country far away" to register with British decision makers. Secondly, the intelligence that the British had was not sufficient to lead anyone to firstly predict the genocide before it began, or to identify it once it had broken out.

Although many would argue being busy, or focussed elsewhere, does not absolve an individual or a government from their responsibility to intervene in an emergency, it is a factor that pragmatically must be acknowledged. Clearly in this period the growing crisis in Rwanda was only one of a multitude of international crises. As Madeleine Albright records in her memoirs what, with the benefit of hindsight can, be seen as warnings of impending genocide:

had to compete for attention against an avalanche of other information from crisis spots around the globe. At the time, there were clashes or extreme tensions in Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Angola, Liberia, Mozambique, Sudan, Cambodia, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, as well as on-going defiance of Security Council resolutions by Saddam Hussein's Iraq.¹⁵⁸

In addition to this long list of international crises which were all competing for attention and limited resources, the British government faced a number of significant domestic issues all more significant and more urgent than the growing crisis in Rwanda – as

¹⁵⁸ Albright, *Madame Secretary*, p.149.

Michael Heseltine states in his autobiography, in spring and summer 1994 “the government’s problems” including leadership rumours and euro scepticism “continued unabated”.¹⁵⁹ For example, in an interview with Anthony Seldon, John Major recalled that he was spending at least 15 per cent of his time on Irish affairs (in February 1994 Gerry Adams, the leader of the IRA had been granted a visa to visit the US and in March the IRA attacked Heathrow airport).¹⁶⁰ Secretary of State for Defence, Malcolm Rifkind, and the MOD were focussed on firstly the deployment in Bosnia, where an additional 900 British troops were sent in March 1994, and secondly on the preparation of the Frontline First Defence Review which was published in the second half of 1994.¹⁶¹ At the FCO, Hurd was dealing not only with the crisis in Bosnia and the impact this was having on Anglo-American relations, but also with the highly controversial debates over the new voting methodology to be adopted by the soon to be enlarged European Union. Hurd, and the other FCO ministers, obviously were also expected to travel extensively making it even harder to keep up to date with the fast moving events in Rwanda; at the time Habyarimana’s plane was shot down, for example, Hurd was on a five day tour of Brazil and the Falklands.¹⁶²

As well as these specific issues that were monopolising ministers’ attention it is apparent that the Foreign Secretary particularly faces a huge workload that means in practice they personally cannot focus on every international issue. During his brief spell as Foreign Secretary John Major revealed to his eventual successor Douglas Hurd:

I can’t do this job as it should be done, it is impossible. There’s a world full of 150 countries, always exploding into bits and pieces, there are boxes full of stuff about places I’ve never heard of. And I’m expected to take decisions about them!¹⁶³

Whilst wading through what former Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe believed was four tonnes of paperwork per year,¹⁶⁴ it is easy to see how a Foreign Secretary could miss, or pay

¹⁵⁹ Michael Heseltine, *Life in the Jungle: My Autobiography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000), p.475.

¹⁶⁰ Anthony Seldon, *Major: A Political Life* (London: Phoenix, 1997), p.443.

¹⁶¹ Author’s interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 March 2010.

¹⁶² Hurd, *Memoirs*, p.546.

¹⁶³ Seldon, *Major*, p.88.

¹⁶⁴ Coles, *Making Foreign Policy*, p.20.

scant attention, to a crisis in a remote central African country, unless it was specifically brought to his attention. That said, as John Dickie explains there are over 3,000 members of staff at the FCO in London, responsible for monitoring the world and briefing the Foreign Secretary accordingly.¹⁶⁵ However, despite these legions of civil servants, Dickie acknowledges the sheer scale of information flowing into the FCO makes it impossible to keep ministers keep fully informed of all international issues.¹⁶⁶ It is therefore necessary for civil servants to filter the most important information to arrive on ministers' desks. It seems that FCO staff did not have the intelligence available to them to adjudge Rwanda a crisis worthy of significant ministerial attention. As Hurd's autobiography makes it clear in the period before the genocide civil servants did not bring Rwanda to his attention; with Hurd unaware of the severity of the developing crisis it is no surprise that he did not support strengthening UNAMIR.

The second key point here is that whilst Rwanda experts looking back at the events of 1990 to 1994, in isolation and with the benefit of hindsight, see ample evidence of the brewing genocide, an outsider seeing the same evidence in real time and alongside other issues would most likely not have reached the same conclusion. For the British the evidence was much less obvious than critics now suggest. Baroness Lynda Chalker, FCO minister with responsibility for Africa, openly admits that prior to 1992 she personally knew nothing of Rwanda; only two years after the outbreak of civil war did she really become aware of the issues affecting the country.¹⁶⁷ As she points out there was very little British aid going into the country, there were very few reports coming out, there were very few British NGOs in the country and even Ugandan contacts knew little of what was happening in the French speaking country. She describes FCO contact with Rwandans as "minimal, occasional and accidental almost".¹⁶⁸ Chalker recalls that prior to 1994, whenever anyone spoke to her of Rwanda it was invariably about the gorillas.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, as Michael Barnett points out it

¹⁶⁵ John Dickie, *Inside the Foreign Office* (London: Chapmans, 1992), p.43.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.55.

¹⁶⁷ Author's interview with Baroness Chalker, 18 August 2010.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

was junior desk officers at the various foreign ministries, who had probably never visited Rwanda and were also responsible for monitoring other Central African countries, that were seeing the intelligence on Rwanda, not anthropologists or historians with an expert knowledge of the country. That these junior officials missed some of the evidence of an impending genocide or failed to bring it to the attention of their overly busy superiors is, Barnett suggests, no surprise.¹⁷⁰ For the UK this is certainly the case; for example, just one diplomat monitored *all* the intelligence relating to Africa that came to the mission at the UN in New York.¹⁷¹ Christopher Meyer, who would eventually rise to the rank of Britain's ambassador to Washington, also recalls that his first role in the FCO, after only one month's training was monitoring "French speaking African countries plus Liberia"¹⁷² a formidable task for anyone let alone someone straight out of university. So once the crisis developed this vacuum of intelligence was filled, by necessity, by three sources, the media, Britain's European allies, namely France and Belgium, and the UN Secretariat.

In terms of dependence on the media, Rifkind openly admits that "essentially what we knew [of Rwanda] was what we read in the newspapers like everyone else".¹⁷³ It is alleged that Hurd was briefed on the crisis by civil servants whose only source of information was CNN. Whilst Chalker denies this, she accepts that CNN was one of a few good sources available to the FCO.¹⁷⁴ The reliance on the media meant that the crisis did not receive the government attention that it merited. Someone dependent upon the media for intelligence in this period would not have foreseen genocide; media coverage was not sufficiently comprehensive or accurate enough to have reached that conclusion. Then once the genocide did erupt, for the first two weeks at least the press interpreted the killings as simply the resumption of a vicious tribal based civil war. Without further intelligence, or a more thorough understanding of the history of Rwanda, one would not have read into the

¹⁷⁰ Barnett, *Witness to a Genocide*, pp.56-58.

¹⁷¹ Author's interview with Sir David Hannay, 23 April 2010.

¹⁷² Christopher Meyer, *Getting our Way. 500 Year of Adventure and Intrigue: The Inside Story of British Diplomacy*, (London: Phoenix, 2010), p.8.

¹⁷³ Author's interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 March 2010.

¹⁷⁴ Author's interview with Baroness Chalker, 18 August 2010.

media coverage of April 1994 that genocide was actually happening. The press themselves did not even use this word.

The other key sources for British decision makers were the French and Belgian governments and the Security Council. As the old colonial power and the new great-power sponsor, Belgium and France respectively, were seen by the FCO as having responsibility for Rwanda. One FCO official told Linda Melvern “We tended to believe what the French were telling us”.¹⁷⁵ Rifkind concurs, agreeing that given Rwanda’s history the UK government “would [have] naturally look[ed] to the French for a lead”.¹⁷⁶ Yet whilst these two countries probably had more intelligence than anyone on what was actually happening in Rwanda even they failed to anticipate the genocide. The Belgian Senate, in a report on the Rwandan crisis, concluded for example that whilst the Belgian civilian and military authorities had large amounts of information, this was not shared amongst interested parties and consequently any potential warning signs were missed.¹⁷⁷ Then within a couple of days of the genocide beginning, both the French and Belgian governments were widely and publicly advocating the need for UNAMIR to withdraw. In the first days of the genocide the two countries had troops on the ground and both described the situation as anarchy. Both governments spoke of the ferocity of the renewed fighting – the Belgians to justify their withdrawal from UNAMIR and the French to justify their on-going support of the Rwandan government. Both had a self interest in presenting the crisis as civil war rather than genocide and the British appear to have trusted that conclusion.

Similarly those present at Security Council debates highlight that prior to 7 April there was no suggestion that genocide was on the horizon. Colin Keating, New Zealand’s representative in New York, recalls that in this period the intelligence placed in front of the Security Council did not suggest any possibility of genocide. In a 1999 radio interview he recalled, “I think really the information suggested that there was banditry, that there was

¹⁷⁵ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p. 271.

¹⁷⁶ Author’s interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 March 2010.

¹⁷⁷ Belgian Senate, “Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Events in Rwanda,” 6 December 1997. Available to download at <http://www.senate.be/english/rwanda.html>

ongoing sporadic fighting, but it was more in the character of skirmishes related to the civil war rather than any suggestion that the civil population as a whole was at risk".¹⁷⁸ Even after the genocide had broken out, the debate and focus at the UN remained on the war rather than the genocide. Albright recalls:

As I look back at my records of the meetings that first week, I am struck by the lack of information about the killing that had begun against unarmed Rwandan civilians, as opposed to the fighting between Hutu and Tutsi militias ... oral summaries provided to the Security Council lacked detail and failed to convey the full dimensions of the disaster.¹⁷⁹

The Security Council, directed by Boutros-Ghali, like the French, the Belgians and the media was concentrating on the war not genocide.

Whilst many commentators who focus their studies on Rwanda express astonishment that governments across the world failed to foresee the genocide, it is easy to see how in this crowded environment intelligence was missed and how the crisis was misinterpreted by most, for the first two weeks at least, as renewed civil war rather than genocide. Clay's suggestion in March 1994, that the FCO should approach the Belgian government to discuss the plans for evacuating British civilians from Rwanda was not some Nostradamic prediction of genocide but rather a warning of the likelihood of renewed civil war. Once the violence began in April the British saw what they expected – a civil war; and all their other intelligence sources told them the same. The British government could not realistically have known of the genocide before 21 April.

What Could the UK Have Done?

The final question to address in this chapter is what the UK could actually have done in this period that would have mitigated the killing; or as the Genocide Convention describes it to "prevent" and "suppress" the genocide. Once the genocide had begun essentially there were two options that the UK could have pursued that would potentially have had a

¹⁷⁸ Bronwyn Adcock, "The UN and Rwanda: Abandoned to Genocide?" Radio National (Australia), 21 February 1999. Transcript available at <http://www.abc.net.au>

¹⁷⁹ Albright, *Madame Secretary*, p.149.

significant impact: deploy British troops unilaterally or secondly push the Security Council to authorise the reinforcement of UNAMIR.

In the first days of the genocide Dallaire suggested to New York that with 5,000 troops he could stop the genocide. Whilst theoretically, the British could have deployed troops unilaterally this was never an option for numerous reasons. Firstly, as discussed above, in this period the British government was not aware that the crisis was genocide but instead believed it to be civil war; the British had not intervened militarily in any previous African civil war and there was no reason why they would in April 1994. First it would be dangerous to deploy troops into a civil war environment and secondly as we have seen the fundamental belief in state sovereignty would have inclined the Conservative government to avoid becoming involved in the domestic affairs of another state. Added to this, as we have seen, for historical reasons the British felt the responsibility for Rwanda rested with France and Belgium; if anyone should intervene it should be them not the British.

Technically, also it would have been difficult for the British to intervene; unlike the French and the Belgians the UK had no troops already in Africa and when British troops did eventually deploy to Rwanda in July they were dependent upon US transport planes to move soldiers and equipment. In October 1993, the UK also had expressed concerns about the safety of UN peacekeepers; the murder of the Belgian soldiers so early in the genocide would simply have heightened those fears. Even if the British government had been fully aware of what was happening in Rwanda and had decided to send a peace enforcement mission to the country, the British army was not in a position to deploy sufficient numbers of well armed and, given the murder of the Belgians, well protected frontline troops quickly enough to Rwanda to stop the killing in this first fortnight.¹⁸⁰ It was for these reasons that Hurd records in his memoirs “It never occurred to us to send combatant troops to Rwanda to stop the killing. I record this as a bleak fact”.¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ The army’s ability to deploy to Rwanda is considered more fully in the next chapter.

¹⁸¹ Hurd, *Memoirs*, p.541.

Alternatively in early April Britain could have attempted to have UNAMIR strengthened. If the British had pursued this option they certainly would have faced an uphill struggle to convince other Security Council members to support a strengthening of the mission; US reluctance to support the mission has already been noted. But the UK would also have been aware that China, always hesitant to allow the international community to interfere in what it saw as domestic issues, would have almost certainly have opposed a Chapter VII mission and potentially would have used its veto. A CIA paper from August 1993 also suggests that Russia was threatening to use its veto “because of budget constraints and concerns about over extending UN peacekeeping efforts”.¹⁸² If there was a threat of the veto being wielded in August 1993 it seems even more likely that the veto would have been used to oppose a significant increase in UNAMIR’s size and budget in April 1994. It seems highly likely that one of the Permanent Five would then have vetoed an effort in April to launch a Chapter VII mission. Therefore, even if Britain had supported this option it probably would not have been approved by the full Security Council.

This option is also based on the erroneous belief that supporting the reinforcement of UNAMIR would actually have achieved anything. As we have seen within days of the genocide beginning the Belgian contingent was withdrawn, quickly followed by the Bangladeshi element, leaving only a Ghanaian battalion in Rwanda alongside Dallaire’s headquarters force. Over 4,000 troops would then have had to be found to bring UNAMIR up to the level Dallaire suggested was necessary. Boutros-Ghali has given evidence that in the two weeks up to 21 April he tried to find governments willing to contribute troops to UNAMIR to no avail.¹⁸³ British support for strengthening UNAMIR would have been futile as there were no troops to deploy.

If there was little opportunity to have done much immediately after the genocide broke out, there was potentially scope to have done more to prevent the genocide before April 1994. There was opportunity in October 1993 to have approved a larger peacekeeping

¹⁸² CIA, “Africa Review,” 13 August 1993.

¹⁸³ Kovanda, “The Czech Republic on the UN Security Council,” p.203.

force and then again in February when the Belgian government proposed reinforcing UNAMIR. Rather than only approving what Hannay called “a pretty exiguous force (three small battalions to be provided by Belgium, Bangladesh and Ghana)”¹⁸⁴ the UK could have argued for a larger force. Again though, such a suggestion is made with knowledge of subsequent events, rather than being a realistic option that presented itself at the time. When they made the decision to support UNAMIR, Security Council members were already concerned about UN overstretch, they were concerned about the safety of UN peacekeepers and they were being told, by France and the two warring parties, that only a small force was required; as we have seen UNAMIR was viewed by many on the Security Council as a model mission. There was no need for Britain to argue for a bigger force, at the time such an argument made no sense.

Much of the existing literature also suggests that having seen the growing evidence of imminent genocide the Security Council should have authorised an increase in UNAMIR’s size and a strengthening of its mandate. From a UK perspective this argument must be dismissed for two reasons. As has been discussed in this chapter, the British government did not have or fully appreciate that intelligence; whilst the British may have been cautious about the resumption of civil war, they did not predict the genocide. Secondly, as Adelman and Suhrke suggest “policy makers who are continuously faced with actual crises are disinclined to pay attention to hypothetical ones, even though experience tells us that prevention is better than cure”.¹⁸⁵ So whilst there may have been evidence of the potential for impending genocide, there was, for example, already evidence of a humanitarian crisis actually happening in Bosnia and consequently Bosnia received more attention. The British were focussed on existing crises, rather than worrying about potential ones. One can argue whether this is a sensible way for the government to operate, but this was (is) the reality.

¹⁸⁴ Hannay, *New World Disorder*, p.165.

¹⁸⁵ Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, “Early Warning and Response: Why the International Community Failed to Prevent the Genocide” *Disasters*, 20, 4 (1996), p.302.

Summary

From a British perspective then the first two weeks of the genocide were generally characterised by confusion and misunderstanding. Rwanda was a country with which the UK had very few links: trade was minimal, there were no historic links and Rwandans spoke French. Other than mountain gorillas, Rwanda was absent from the minds of media, parliament and government. Even the minister at the FCO with responsibility for Africa admits that she knew little of the country. It was as Edward Clay so rightly suggested a “small country far away of which we knew little”. It is not therefore a surprise that the FCO and journalists did not understand the history of Rwanda and failed to spot first the risk of massive human rights abuses and then actual genocide. The British, media and government, concentrated on the civil war because that is what they expected. In this period British people, even foreign policy experts, did not recognise the genocide that was happening and consequently failed to respond to it. Instead the government and the media could only respond by calling for both sides, the RPF and FAR, to return to the negotiating table and reach a diplomatic solution. This misunderstanding though changed fairly soon after 21 April.

CHAPTER THREE

THE UNINTERESTED BYSTANDER?

22 APRIL to 30 JUNE 1994

Having agreed to partially withdraw UNAMIR, the world eventually began to recognise the killings in Rwanda as more than the anarchic by-product of civil war; by early May it was apparent that what was happening in Rwanda was a massive humanitarian crisis and genocide. Yet despite this, there was no immediate practical response to the crisis; only in mid-May did the Security Council agree to reinforce UNAMIR but no new troops appeared in theatre. Eventually in late June, France unilaterally declared that it would send troops to Rwanda and the Security Council somewhat reluctantly ratified this mission. It was nearly three months since the killing had started and the first effective military force was only just arriving in Rwanda.

This chapter reviews the period from 22 April, the day after the Security Council agreed to withdraw most of UNAMIR, to 30 June, a week after the French deployment. Following the format of the previous chapter it begins by looking at media coverage, before moving on to look at Parliament's response. The chapter then explores the work of NGOs and finally the government response. These subsections are broken down roughly chronologically covering first the period to 16 May, when the Security Council approved Resolution 918 authorising UNAMIR II; then the period to 19 June when France announced that it would send a mission to Rwanda; and, finally the first days of French deployment to 30 June. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the level of interest in the genocide and again questions what more the British government could have done.

Media Coverage

Although a few newspapers reported Oxfam and Christian Aid's concerns about UNAMIR's withdrawal, generally the media seemed content to suggest that once expatriates

had been evacuated there was nothing more the international community could do to stem what newspapers called the “orgy” of ethnic violence. However, over the ten week period covered by this chapter a change in media coverage can be identified. Having to this point shown only passing interest in the crisis, during May and June the media started to question the international response.

In the week immediately following the withdrawal of UNAMIR there is no evidence of the media responding to or criticising the Security Council’s decision. James Bones, in *The Times*, told readers that there “was no end in sight to the wholesale slaughter”.¹ He did not question a UN official’s statement that he quoted, which suggested UNAMIR should not be left at risk in Rwanda when there was nothing that the force could meaningfully do. Similarly on 23 April *The Independent* front page included an article saying that the decision to withdraw UNAMIR had been condemned by Oxfam, but the paper itself made no further comment on the decision.² On 24 April, *The Sunday Mail* briefly reported ceasefire negotiations taking place in Tanzania, without even referring to the UN decision, let alone suggesting it was wrong.³ On the same day *The Sunday Times* ran a shocking article that vividly recorded the horrors of Kigali:

On the outskirts of the city the stream of refugees grew to a tide. Dozens of bodies lay piled up on the roadside. One twitched. In front of us, a uniformed man lifted his machete. We heard the skull crack. In three hours we saw more than 100 corpses.⁴

Yet despite the graphic nature of this report it did not even pause to consider how the world should have been responding. In fact the title of the article “White South Africa Watches Rwandan Bloodbath with Dread” implied firstly that Rwanda was less significant than the first post-apartheid elections in South Africa that were due to be held on 27 April and also suggested that once power was passed to blacks in South Africa, there would inevitably be

¹ James Bones, “Retreating UN Leaves Token Force in Rwanda,” *The Times*, 22 April 1994.

² Annika Savill, “UN Slashes Rwanda Force,” *The Independent*, 23 April 1994, p.1.

³ Anon, “Rebels Sign Ceasefire,” *The Sunday Mail*, 24 April 1994, p.17.

⁴ Annabel Heseltine and Mwambu Wanendeya, “White South Africa Watches Rwandan Bloodbath with Dread,” *The Sunday Times*, 24 April 1994.

an outbreak of racially motivated violence – the suggestion, in line with the findings of Peter Dahlgren and VSO,⁵ being that black Africans were naturally disposed towards violence.

As was the case in the first days of the genocide, it was only *The Guardian* and *The Observer* that questioned the Security Council's response. On 24 April Mark Huband wrote:

Clearly there is little desire on the UN's part to stand up to such killers. Consequently it has insisted on portraying the slaughter as an armed conflict between the two sides in Rwanda's civil war ... To stop the slaughter the UN must send troops to confront the guilty civilians.⁶

Two days later in a parliamentary sketch reporting Kim Howells' House of Commons question to Douglas Hurd on whether there was one law for Europeans (referring to British involvement in Bosnia) and another for Africans, Simon Hoggart suggested that the FCO's view was in fact "[Y]es. Rwandans are thousands of miles away. Nobody you know has ever been on holiday to Rwanda. And Rwandans don't look like us."⁷ On 1 May *The Observer* condemned the decision to withdraw UNAMIR, suggesting that the reduced force was not sufficient to count the bodies let alone save lives.⁸ However, whilst critical of the UN's failure to respond robustly, neither newspaper called for British intervention.

Hoggart's article though was only one of a number that by late April questioned the difference in response to the Bosnian and Rwandan crises: Cameron Doudo called on Boutros-Ghali to resign and expose the "racism of the Security Council";⁹ Victoria Brittain spoke of "double standards at the UN";¹⁰ and, an *Observer* leading article concluded "when it comes to blacks, the white-dominated world doesn't want to know".¹¹ Yet whilst some newspapers identified the apparent differences in the level of interest, the media itself still showed much more interest in Bosnia; for example, in the period 23 April to 17 May a keyword search of *The Guardian* and *The Observer* identifies 92 references to Bosnia and

⁵ Dahlgren, "The Third World on TV News," p.53. VSO, "The Live Aid Legacy".

⁶ Murk Huband, "UN Leaves Rwanda in Grip of Killers," *The Observer*, 24 April 1994, p.16.

⁷ Simon Hoggart, "Policy and Politics," *The Guardian*, 26 April 1994, p.6.

⁸ Anon, "Leading Article: It's Not Too Late for Rwanda," *The Observer*, 1 May 1994, p.26.

⁹ Cameron Doudo, "Dear Boutros Boutros-Ghali," *The Independent*, 25 April 1994, p.19.

¹⁰ Victoria Brittain, "Aid Agencies Condemn UN Pull Out," *The Guardian*, 23 April 1994, p.12.

¹¹ Anon, "Leading Article: It's Not Too Late for Rwanda," *The Observer*, 1 May 1994, p.26.

only 55 to Rwanda; in *The Times* and *Sunday Times* the ratio was even more skewed towards Bosnia at 96 to 36.¹² As one reader's letter to *The Herald* noted "It would appear that the fate of local people does not matter to either the UN or the media because they are black".¹³

At the end of April the crisis developed in a way that generated a new burst of media coverage but distracted the media from the actual genocide. On 29 April over 250,000 Rwandan refugees fled into Tanzania in what *The Times* described as the largest "exodus the UN has ever had to handle".¹⁴ Whilst having been slow to call for action over the genocide the media was quick to call for a response to this new refugee crisis. *The Independent*, *The Observer*, *The Herald* and *The Guardian* all called on the international community to provide at least emergency food, shelter and water to the refugees. Of course much of this increased coverage can be explained by the fact that whilst Rwanda remained unsafe and effectively closed off to journalists, reporters could quite easily travel to Tanzania; Tom Walker even described "planes crowded with journalists" arriving at the refugee camps.¹⁵

On 2 May *The Times* described the events in Rwanda as "genocide", making it the first paper to do so;¹⁶ *The Guardian* then used the word three days later in an article by Lindsey Hilsum.¹⁷ With this recognition that events in Rwanda constituted genocide, combined with the refugee driven increase in media attention, finally there were suggestions in the media that something should be done. However, there was no consensus on what that something should be. *The Independent* said that "the UN must not turn its face from the crisis",¹⁸ and, *The Herald* commented "If there is to be intervention in Rwanda it would be best under the aegis of the Organisation of African Unity".¹⁹ *The Guardian* suggested that military intervention was unlikely to be successful, but continued "Yet non-intervention

¹² Author's review using LexisNexis database.

¹³ Letters to the Editor, *The Herald*, 27 April 1994, p.16.

¹⁴ James Adams, "Rwanda Exodus Overwhelms UN," *The Sunday Times*, 1 May 1994.

¹⁵ Tom Walker, "Hutu Refugees Loot Food Lorries After Press Keeps Them Waiting," *The Times*, 4 May 1994.

¹⁶ James Bones, "Shamed UN Asks West to Intervene," *The Times*, 2 May 1994.

¹⁷ Lindsey Hilsum, "Refugees from Terror Scratch Out Existence Under Plastic," *The Guardian*, 5 May 1994, p.14.

¹⁸ Anon, "Leading Article: The Means for Mercy in Rwanda," *The Independent*, 2 May 1994, p.13.

¹⁹ Anon, "Intervention in Rwanda," *The Herald*, 2 May 1994, p.10.

does not mean doing nothing. Diplomatic efforts at mediation must accelerate; and, above all, we must rally to the help of the quarter million refugees who have crowded into Tanzania.”²⁰ By 12 May *The Independent* had changed its view on intervention “If the moral case for intervention looks overwhelming, so do the practical difficulties”.²¹ Like others in the media, *The Independent* acknowledged the various practical obstacles that stood in the way of any intervention, cataloguing the difficulty of finding troops, US reticence to become involved, the opposition of the warring parties and logistical hurdles. Some in the media even questioned what a new mission could achieve; for example, Sam Kiley wrote in *The Times* “Look at the statistics, there were about two million Tutsi in Rwanda, some 80,000 have fled, a few thousand remain in camps. Where are the rest? Is there any point in coming when there is almost none left to save?”²²

However, as we will see below, by this time (early May) the Security Council was already reviewing the decision to withdraw UNAMIR. The debates that were being played out in the media were the same ones that were also being held in New York; mirroring the different views seen in the press, some on the Security Council, Nigeria for example, advocated a more robust response, others were cautious and some, the US in particular, doubted what the UN could achieve. In fact it is evident that much of the media debate was actually just reflecting the discussions at the UN. Such a conclusion is of course in line with Jonathan Mermin and Piers Robinson’s findings on Somalia,²³ that the media does not lead foreign policy discussion but rather draws on official sources such as the FCO, US State Department, defence ministries and the UN, for their foreign news.

The Media Fails to Awaken Interest

The Security Council’s decision on 16 May to increase UNAMIR’s size to 5,500 (known as UNAMIR II) received a mixed response in the press, interestingly though no

²⁰ Anon, “Leading Article: The Orphan of Africa,” *The Guardian*, 4 May 1994, p.19.

²¹ Anon, “Leading Article: Peace Making: a Task for Africans,” *The Independent*, 12 May 1994, p.19.

²² Sam Kiley, “I Saw Hills Covered With Bodies,” *The Times*, 14 May 1994.

²³ Mermin, “Television news and Intervention in Somalia,” p.388. Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, pp.58-62.

newspaper particularly celebrated the decision. Having catalogued the problems facing any intervention only days before, *The Times*, *Independent*, and *Guardian* all focussed on, and criticised, the US's reluctance to support the resolution. *The Independent* called the debate one of the "most shameful debates" in the UN's history before claiming that Rwandans were dying because "the US messed up in Somalia".²⁴ Reflecting the generally held sentiment, that following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US was by 1994 the world's only remaining superpower and therefore was to take the lead in what President Bush had called the "New World Order", *The Independent* article concluded: "If the United Nations is blocked from acting on Rwanda because Congress is picking over a few nickels and dimes for peace-keeping, what right has America to claim global leadership?" *The Guardian* was similarly critical, noting that "the impact of the resolution was blunted by intense lobbying from the US".²⁵ The article rather accurately predicted that:

Despite a Security Council vote to send in the force to protect refugees and help deliver desperately needed aid, a hard-line stance by Washington has effectively ensured that the UN contingent will only dribble in over the coming weeks and months.

The Times was a little less critical; James Bone in New York explained that the US had simply announced that they would not support the deployment until the mandate was clear and agreement had been reached with the warring parties.²⁶ *The Times* instead proposed an alternative plan "The UN should be concentrating its military effort on border sanctuaries [rather than deploying into Rwanda]".²⁷ It was this very plan that was to become known as the "outside-in" plan and was for a period the option favoured by the US.

Whilst interest in the UNAMIR II plan soon all but disappeared from the press, changes on the ground, as well as the fact that Nelson Mandela had been inaugurated as President of South Africa and journalists were now free to cover other African stories, meant that by late May more journalists were reporting directly from Rwanda (albeit the border

²⁴ Richard Dowden, "Don't Blame the UN for an American Mess," *The Independent*, 18 May 1994, p.16.

²⁵ Larry Elliot, "Fury Greet US Block on Peace Force," *The Guardian*, 18 May 1994, p.11.

²⁶ James Bone, "US Veto Holds Back UN Peace Force," *The Times*, 18 May 1994.

²⁷ Anon, "Into the Dark," *The Times*, 18 May 1994.

regions controlled by the RPF) and they appear to have been keen to shock. Rather than analysing or trying to explain the civil war and genocide, as is fairly typical of reporting of the global south the media focused on the grotesque nature of the killings. The following extracts were not unusual: “Next to a dead sow, bloated to bursting point, lay a woman. Her legs were splayed, her skirt pulled above her waist. Her throat had been slit”,²⁸ “[the woman] said ‘I lost my child. When I refused to kill, the government soldiers banged a gun on my child's head and she died.’”,²⁹ “Many victims had their feet cut off and were left to die slowly. Pregnant women, still alive, slit open. Men tied, their genitals cut off and stuffed into their mouths”.³⁰

One particularly gruesome aspect of the crisis that was widely reported was the washing up of corpses on the Ugandan shores of Lake Victoria. The scenes described, as this example from *The Sunday Times* shows, were almost perversely voyeuristic:

Swarms of flies gathered around the corpse, which was turning white after weeks in the river. The flesh appeared to have the same texture as raw chicken and was almost the same colour. The man's hair and flesh had come off his skull, exposing his cream-coloured cranium. The lips on his face were missing and he appeared to be smiling.³¹

The following day *The Guardian* ran a similar story describing how some of the corpses “had their hands bound behind their backs. Others had been shot or had limbs or their heads chopped off”.³² *The Independent* put the story on the front page, *The Daily Record* and *The Herald* both ran the story and even *The Daily Mail* had a short article (though only on page 15). Television images, despite being carefully edited, were also fairly graphic. A Lindsay Taylor report for Channel 4 news whilst shot from a distance clearly showed bodies and mutilated limbs, bleached white by their time in the water, being removed from the lake.³³ Taylor though, like many of the newspaper reporters, focussed his report not on the cause of the bodies in the lake, but the consequence. Only in the last few seconds of the four minute

²⁸ Sam Kiley, “Desolate Village Bears Witness to Rwandan Carnage,” *The Times*, 19 May 1994.

²⁹ Mark Hubbard, “I Killed my Brother,” *The Guardian*, 30 May 1994, p.20.

³⁰ Richard Dowden, “The Graves of the Tutsi are Only Half Full,” *The Independent*, 24 May 1994, p.1.

³¹ Mwambu Wanendeya, “Rwanda’s Deadly Tide Pollutes Lake Victoria,” *The Sunday Times*, 22 May 1994.

³² Anon, “Rwandan Rebels Seize Key Installations,” *The Guardian*, 23 May 1994, p.24.

³³ ITN Archive, “Lake Victoria Health Risk,” 23 May 1994.

report did Taylor acknowledge that the risk of typhoid spreading to the Ugandan communities that depended on lake water and fish was, when compared to the massacres in Rwanda, “relatively minor”.³⁴

As more journalists arrived in Rwanda and neighbouring Tanzania, suddenly more articles about the work of British NGOs began to appear in the press. Such stories, as James Dawes points out, served both the media and NGOs.³⁵ From a media perspective NGO stories gave a British angle to the otherwise quite foreign crisis, and also made it easier for the journalist to get a story in the first place; after all it required less effort to quote an English speaking nurse than to try to interview a Kinyarwandan speaking Rwandan. The NGOs also benefited, in terms of image and recognition, through heightened coverage and awareness of the crisis. Such reports are therefore fairly common in the reporting of news from Africa. *The Sunday Times* ran the first such article; entitled “Momma Humanity” it followed a Scottish nurse, Sheila Wilson, who managed a Red Cross refugee camp in Tanzania.³⁶ The article though completely failed to link the horror of the genocide with the unfolding refugee crisis, the fact that one million people had been killed was ignored. Wilson, for example, was quoted as saying, “I was surprised the people were not in more of a bad state, some were traumatised and had sore feet.”³⁷ To concentrate on the refugees’ blisters whilst failing to even mention the on-going slaughter illustrates the nature of the media coverage throughout the crisis; namely it was much easier to fall back on cliché and stereotype, in this case white nurse helps black African orphan, than to try to understand what was actually happening in Rwanda. It was, to coin a phrase used by the BBC reporter George Alagiah, “template reporting”.³⁸

The Evening Standard in fact reviewed the media coverage in an article of 25 May entitled “Do we not care about Rwanda’s killing fields? Or has Fleet Street’s indifference to

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ James Dawes, *That the World May Know: Bearing Witness to Atrocities*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p.2.

³⁶ Rupert Steiner, “Momma Humanity,” *The Sunday Times*, 22 May 1994.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ George Alagiah, quoted in DJ Clarke, “The Production of a Contemporary Famine: the Image Economy, Indigenous Photographers and the Case of Mekani Philipos,” *Journal of International Development* 16, (2004), p.699.

African genocide denied us the full, horrific story?”³⁹ It is of course ironic that *The Evening Standard* had itself run only a handful of articles about Rwanda and this particular exposé was relegated to page 45. The article however did highlight the poor standard of reporting of the genocide. The first failing identified was that the press initially failed to send big name reporters to cover the crisis; whilst Martin Bell, John Simpson and Kate Adie all reported from Yugoslavia,⁴⁰ coverage of the genocide was initially left to early career journalists or to Reuters. The failure to send big name reporters meant that the public did not automatically consider the crisis to be that significant. The second issue raised was that the media focus was on shocking rather than explaining. The continuous stream of massacre stories and pictures of corpses significantly outnumbered analysis of the crisis or Rwandan history and certainly discussions on how the crisis could be brought to a halt. As Philip Gourevitch recorded, in the press “you had a faceless, anonymous mass of Africans. And what do Africans do in the press? They die of miserable things”.⁴¹ The impact of this style of coverage, *The Evening Standard* argued, was that “the press failed to awaken our interest”;⁴² Rwanda was, they suggested, viewed as just another African crisis that the west could do nothing about.

Media Response to France’s Operation Turquoise

The launch of France’s Operation Turquoise generated another of the sporadic surges of media interest in the crisis; on the 21 June for example, *The Independent* alone ran five separate articles on Rwanda and a further four two days later, including the front page. The response to the French mission though was almost universal condemnation; and whilst US support of the mission was reported, the opposition of the RPF, aid agencies and some members of the Security Council received more attention.

³⁹ Stephen Glover, “Do We Not Care About Rwanda’s Killing Fields?” *The Evening Standard*, 24 May 1994, p.45.

⁴⁰ Kate Adie did eventually report on the refugee crisis in neighbouring Zaire, but did not cover the genocide. John Simpson reported from Rwanda in late July.

⁴¹ Quoted in Dawes, *That the World May Know*, p.23.

⁴² Stephen Glover, “Do We Not Care About Rwanda’s Killing Fields?” *The Evening Standard*, 24 May 1994, p.45.

France's historical involvement in Rwanda, particularly its support for President Habyarimana, and its supplying of weapons were the prime reasons that most of the press opposed Turquoise. *The Independent* for example charged "No country is less well placed for such a mission" before continuing "The French should think hard before sending troops to Rwanda ... a French intervention is likely to do more harm than good."⁴³ *The Times* agreed with this last sentiment. One consequence of the French deployment was that UNAMIR was forced to withdraw any French speaking troops that remained in the force for fear of antagonising the RPF; *The Times* therefore pointed out that whilst French troops offered security only in the largely Hutu western third of Rwanda, Tutsi in Kigali were now being protected by a smaller UNAMIR force.⁴⁴ Noting this same issue, *The Guardian* concluded "the right strategy is to despatch a mainly African force, with strong logistical support from Europe and North America ... For French troops to barge in from eastern Zaire would only compound the disaster."⁴⁵

It was not just France's previous involvement in Rwanda and the impact on UNAMIR though that led to criticism of the mission. The majority of the print media accused President Mitterrand of opportunism. In an article entitled "The Unofficial Motives Behind a Perilous Plan" *The Scotsman* questioned whether this was genuinely a humanitarian mission. It continued to suggest that the mission was as much driven by a French desire to "cut a dash on the world scene" and to show "French speaking Africa that it had not been abandoned" than genuine humanitarian concern for Rwanda.⁴⁶ As Asteris Huliaras argues, in the early 1990s, with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a more powerful neighbour with the reunification of Germany, France's historic feeling of self grandeur and status was being undermined. Flexing its muscles in Africa, where France had historical links, was then a way of demonstrating its position as a great power.⁴⁷ *The Guardian* suggested that Mitterrand launched Turquoise to score a "public relations coup"; it

⁴³ Anon, "Leading Article: A Rash French Venture in Rwanda," *The Independent*, 21 June 1994, p.15.

⁴⁴ Anon, "Rwanda Francais," *The Times*, 23 June 1994.

⁴⁵ Anon, "Leading Article: The French in Rwanda," *The Guardian*, 21 June 1994, p.23.

⁴⁶ Anon, "The Unofficial Motives Behind the Perilous Plan," *The Scotsman*, 22 June 1994.

⁴⁷ Huliaras, "The 'Anglo-Saxon Conspiracy'," p.598.

was a demonstration to the French public of France's unique power to intervene in African crises.⁴⁸ In a similar vein *The Times* acknowledged rather cynically on the first day of the mission "tonight's television screens will at last bring good news, footage of Tutsi infants cradled in the arms of French soldiers."⁴⁹ Overall the press was not impressed by France, seeing the whole operation as foolhardy, hypocritical and politically motivated. Only *The Herald* called the mission "worthy"; whilst recognising the issues surrounding the mission, it concluded that if no-one else is willing, France should at least be allowed to "try" to save lives – not an overly ringing endorsement.⁵⁰

Parliament

Having been largely silent on the issue of Rwanda throughout the civil war period and into the first three weeks of the genocide, Parliament started to show some interest in the crisis from the end of April. Even so, a search of Hansard shows that despite being recognised by Foreign Secretary Hurd as the "worst tragedy in the world in terms of quantity of suffering"⁵¹ Rwanda still did not command a huge amount of attention. For example, in May 1994 "Rwanda" is recorded 65 times in Hansard; this falls somewhat short of the 112 mentions of "Bosnia" in the same month, demonstrating the continued dominance of this European crisis from a British foreign policy perspective.

Kim Howells (Lab, Pontypridd), at FCO questions on 25 April, was the first to question the government's response to the crisis. Referring to the decision to reduce the number of peacekeepers and highlighting the issue of race, he asked, "Is there one level of compassion for our European friends in Bosnia and another for black Africans?"⁵² Brian Donohoe (Lab, Cunninghame South) continued this line of questioning, asking "when will the Government put pressure on the United Nations to bring back its troops to prevent

⁴⁸ Andrew Gumbel, "French Aim in Rwanda is 'To Save Lives'," *The Guardian*, 20 June 1994, p.9.

⁴⁹ Anon, "Rwanda Francais," *The Times*, 23 June 1994.

⁵⁰ Anon, "Worthy French Initiative," *The Herald*, 21 June 1994, p.12.

⁵¹ Hansard. HC Deb, 25 April 1994, vol.242, c.26.

⁵² Hansard. HC Deb, 25 April 1994, vol.242, c.16.

further slaughter?”⁵³ Hurd’s response was to reiterate the conclusion of the Security Council’s debates that nothing could be done; “I am not sure how” he responded “either honourable Gentleman supposes that maintaining a United Nations force on the original scale will help assuage these horrors.”⁵⁴ In the final question on the crisis at this session, Hurd received support from his colleague James Lester (Con, Broxtowe) who suggested that the only viable response was for the government to support the OAU in reaching a negotiated settlement. Hurd agreed.⁵⁵

Over the next week Labour MPs tabled a few more questions on the response to the crisis. Though it is notable that there was no suggestion whatsoever that the UK should actually be involved in Rwanda; instead, the Labour Party thought it was for the UN and the OAU to do something. For example, Tony Worthington (Lab, Clydebank), an MP with a significant interest in Africa and development,⁵⁶ asked whether the government would propose to the Security Council a strengthening of the UNAMIR mandate.⁵⁷ Similarly, in the only statement from the Labour front bench in this period, John Reid, opposition spokesman on defence, said during a debate on the British army:

Earlier today I saw ... television pictures of what is happening in Rwanda. I was staggered by those photographs. I am also slightly staggered by the apparent indifference in the west to what is going on in Rwanda. I do not suggest that there is a racial element, but I and my party believe that the appalling slaughter of innocent people in Rwanda must be stopped. We believe that the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity need to organise the immediate deployment of military forces to try to end the genocide.⁵⁸

In the same debate Calum MacDonald (Lab, Western Isles) agreed, but was even blunter laying the responsibility for Rwanda squarely in the hands of Africa. He continued that Bosnia was a problem for the Europeans and Rwanda one for Africans; in direct opposition

⁵³ Hansard. HC Deb, 25 April 1994, vol.242, cc.16-17.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Tony Worthington records on his website that since the early 1990s he has been asked by NGOs, including Oxfam, Save the Children, Interact Worldwide, Plan UK and Marie Stopes, to become involved in their work and press for parliamentary action.

⁵⁷ Hansard. HC Deb, 28 April 1994, vol.242, c.263w.

⁵⁸ Hansard. HC Deb, 4 May 1994, vol.242, c.755.

to the conclusion of cosmopolitan thinkers, MacDonald suggested that those countries nearest trouble spots “obviously had much greater” interest in intervening than those far away.⁵⁹

The opposition though was not especially vocal in publicly holding the government to account over their response to the crisis. In the weeks up to 16 May Labour asked only four questions in the House, including one at Prime Minister’s Questions (PMQs), and only 18 written questions were tabled (17 by Tony Worthington). The Liberal Democrats, who in 1994 had 20 MPs, asked only two written questions. Behind the scenes however, Labour were somewhat more active. At a meeting of the Shadow Cabinet on 4 May, Tom Clarke, Shadow Minister for Development, informed his colleagues, that he “was strongly pressing the ODA for more decisive action to help with the humanitarian crisis on the borders of Rwanda”.⁶⁰ Jack Cunningham, Shadow Foreign Secretary, at the same meeting expressed his disappointment that, despite Labour’s requests, the Speaker of the House of Commons had refused permission for a Private Notice Question (PNQ) to be raised.⁶¹

Members of the Shadow Cabinet also wrote to their opposite numbers in government. On 4 May, in an obviously co-ordinated move, Tom Clarke wrote to Baroness Chalker, Jack Cunningham to Douglas Hurd and David Clark to Malcolm Rifkind, all called for more action. In his letter to Hurd, Cunningham wrote “I am writing to urge you most strongly to support the initiative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, who is seeking to establish a significant UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda.”⁶² Cunningham continued by contrasting how Europe was responding to the events in Yugoslavia whilst seeming to show little concern for “the future well-being of black African citizens”. David Clark, Shadow Secretary of State for Defence, wrote to Malcolm Rifkind a second time on 17 May. In this letter, Clark set out Labour’s position:

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Labour Party Archive. Minutes of meeting of the Shadow Cabinet, 4 May 1994.

⁶¹ PNQ’s, known since 2002 as Urgent Questions, are parliamentary questions of an urgent nature, for which no previous notice has been given and which relate to a matter of public importance. The government is required to respond orally to a PNQ in the chamber of the House. It is up to the Speaker to decide whether a PNQ can be tabled.

⁶² FCO. Letter from Jack Cunningham MP to Douglas Hurd MP, 4 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

Labour believes that the situation in Rwanda is just as much a challenge to the authority of the UN as the situation in Bosnia. We must ensure that the international community acts to stop mass murder wherever it occurs. Above all as we strengthen the ability of the UN to bring peace we must be consistent in our process.⁶³

Recalling how the RAF had assisted in the humanitarian crises in Ethiopia and Northern Iraq, Clark continued to suggest that the government should agree Labour's "proposals to provide military *advice* to help end the killing" (emphasis added).⁶⁴ In a subsequent letter Clark clarified that he had not meant to suggest that British troops should actually be deployed to Rwanda, given the "substantial contribution" they were already making to UN operations in Bosnia, but rather should make "expertise and equipment" available to the UN.⁶⁵

Some Limited Parliamentary Debate

Parliamentary pressure did not increase significantly in the four weeks to 19 June; in the period 28 written questions were tabled in the House of Commons, of which 16 were from Labour's Tony Worthington and a further nine were from Ieuan Wyn Jones (Plaid Cymru, Ynys Môn). There was though the first debate on the crisis and a number of Rwanda related questions were raised at the monthly FCO questions. One would perhaps have expected more interest in the issue given that the NGO Africa Rights "presented to a large gathering" of MPs its analysis of the situation in Rwanda, which concluded that the violence was orchestrated and state sponsored.⁶⁶

The first opportunity to properly debate Rwanda came on 24 May, when Worthington raised the issue in an adjournment debate. At 11.42pm, in front of a nearly empty House of Commons, Worthington noted how little interest the House had shown in Rwanda before moving on to be, in his words, "very critical" of a number of people. He

⁶³ MOD. Letter from David Clark MP to Malcolm Rifkind MP, 17 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ MOD. Letter from David Clark MP to Malcolm Rifkind MP, 24 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁶⁶ The date of this presentation is not known, but presumably will have been in the days before Worthington mentioned the meeting in a question of 24 May. Hansard. HC Deb, 24 May 1994, vol.244, c.309.

began by claiming that racism was affecting the response; “It is inconceivable” he suggested “that an atrocity in which half a million white people had died would not have been extensively debated in the House.”⁶⁷ He then criticised the media for its continued portrayal of the crisis as “tribal” before moving on to “condemn the members of the United Nations Security Council for their inactivity and ineptitude”, suggesting that as the UK sat as a permanent member of the Council it must “share in the blame”. He continued by questioning why having described the crisis as “genocide” the government had not called for the provisions of the Genocide Convention to be enacted. (Worthington was incorrect here; no minister had actually described the events as genocide. Mark Lennox-Boyd in a written response of 23 May had said “No representations have been made to the Rwandan government about genocide”; this was the first use of the word “genocide” by a minister, but was certainly not acceptance that genocide was occurring in Rwanda.)⁶⁸ This was the fiercest condemnation of the government’s response to date and the only one that openly criticised the government for its inaction. Yet it must be put in perspective: this censure came from a lone Labour backbencher known for his interest in Africa; was played out to less than a dozen MPs; and, was not reported in the press. This was not the sort of debate that would lead the government to alter course.

The crisis received more attention at the monthly questions to the Foreign Secretary which came on 15 June. During this session eight questions related to Rwanda (split five from Labour and three from Tories), none called on the UK to do any more than put pressure on the UN to accelerate its response to the crisis. For example, referring to UNAMIR II Glenda Jackson (Lab, Hampstead) asked “Does [the Minister] not agree that ... the Government should be bringing pressure to bear to ensure that the 5,500 troops are deployed immediately”⁶⁹ and Jack Cunningham asked “Is not the response of the United Nations in the face of this horrendous tragedy deplorably slow?”⁷⁰ Similar sentiments were expressed

⁶⁷ Hansard. HC Deb, 24 May 1994, vol.244, cc.308-316.

⁶⁸ Hansard. HC Deb, 23 May 1994, vol.244, c.43w.

⁶⁹ Hansard. HC Deb, 15 June 1994, vol.244, c.613.

⁷⁰ Hansard. HC Deb, 15 June 1994, vol.244, c.614.

by Labour in the House of Lords, where Lord Judd asked of Baroness Chalker “does the Minister agree that it is essential that the 5,500 troops should be sent to Rwanda as soon as possible?”⁷¹

Labour’s Shadow Cabinet also continued to express concern about what was happening in Rwanda. At one meeting, on 25 May, Tom Clarke reminded his colleagues of the need to reschedule a parliamentary debate on overseas aid, which would also focus on the situation in Rwanda (such a debate had been scheduled for 18 May, but had been cancelled following the sudden death of Labour leader John Smith on 12 May).⁷² In the same meeting Cunningham informed the Shadow Cabinet that the Speaker continued to turn down his requests for either a PNQ or a government statement on Rwanda; he accused the Speaker of “colossal misjudgement” in refusing these requests.⁷³ Cunningham continued that he was angered to hear Tony Worthington accuse the Shadow Cabinet of doing nothing on Rwanda given his, and Tom Clarke’s, efforts to get some form of debate. It was therefore agreed that the Shadow Cabinet would issue a statement on Rwanda, calling for a speedier response. The discussion also reinforced the publicly stated sentiment that UK troops (or combat troops at least) should not be considered; David Clark suggested that a further 5,000 British soldiers would soon be needed for Bosnia and Margaret Beckett (acting party leader) confirmed that during a conversation she had had with President Mugabe of Zimbabwe, he had expressed a desire that any further UN troops for Rwanda should be Africans. At the next Shadow Cabinet meeting (15 June) the committee was again briefed on the situation in Rwanda by Tom Clarke; this time Rwanda appeared as a separate agenda item, showing the significance the crisis had at least to the Shadow Cabinet.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Hansard, HoL Deb, 19 May 1994, vol.555, cc.352-353.

⁷² Labour Party Archive. Minutes of meeting of the Shadow Cabinet, 25 May 1994.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Labour Party Archive. Minutes of meeting of the Shadow Cabinet, 15 June 1994.

Labour's Suspicion of Operation Turquoise

On 22 June the Opposition Day debate focused on overseas aid. Tom Clarke began the debate by noting the government's "failure to respond adequately to emergencies such as the current holocaust in Rwanda".⁷⁵ He went on to describe the crisis as a "genocidal war", before saying that it was "disgraceful that Britain agreed to the withdrawal of most of the United Nations force". For Clarke, Britain and the wider international community lacked the political, not the military, will to bring the crisis to an end; "If only we had a fraction of the will which we saw in the Gulf War and the Falklands, the British people could hold their heads up high."⁷⁶

Clarke then moved on to specifically speak about the French mission. "[L]et me make it plain", he began, "on behalf of the Opposition that we regard the French initiative as being fraught with difficulty, if only because there are clearly grave questions about their neutrality in Africa".⁷⁷ He continued:

What we require now ... is not the dispatch of troops from Western Europe; we need full logistical support for the African troops by the United Nations and a more substantial British contribution to humanitarian aid ... We want the United Nations' impact to be effective, worthwhile and supported by Great Britain and the western nations in terms of the necessary equipment.⁷⁸

This was Labour saying quite categorically that they believed genocide was taking place and that the British government should be doing something practical in response; and this response should not simply be supporting the misguided proposed French mission.

Over the next few days a number of written questions also related to the French deployment, though still most of these came from Tony Worthington, the only backbench MP who showed prolonged interest in the crisis. On the 28 June for example, Worthington asked whether Britain had been asked to provide troops to Operation Turquoise and how the

⁷⁵ Hansard. HC Deb, 22 June 1994, vol.245, cc.243-246.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

European Union had responded to the French initiative;⁷⁹ two days later he asked if the Foreign Secretary had imposed any conditions on British support for the mission and whether the government thought France was suitable to lead the mission.⁸⁰ Like Tom Clarke, Worthington clearly did not support Operation Turquoise.

The final mention of Rwanda in Parliament in this period came at PMQs on 30 June. David Alton (Lib Dem, Liverpool Mossley Hill) mindful of the role John Major had played in convincing world leaders to deploy troops to northern Iraq in 1991, in what became Operation Provide Comfort, asked “is there not some personal initiative [the Prime Minister] could take to ensure that the 5,000 troops promised by the United Nations one and half months ago are now all deployed”.⁸¹ The Prime Minister expressed “horror and revulsion” at the images coming from Rwanda, and stated that he supported the efforts of the UN, but promised no personal action.

The Work of British NGOs

British NGOs were fairly active in this period, operating both in the countries neighbouring Rwanda to alleviate the refugee crisis and also in the UK to raise parliamentary and public awareness of the on-going killing. In this period though, due to the continual violence there was little that could actually be done in Rwanda itself.

In terms of lobbying, Amnesty International, ActionAid, Oxfam, Christian Aid, Survival International and Africa Aid all made efforts to raise politicians’ awareness of the crisis by giving statements and interviews to the media and also by contacting politicians directly. The NGOs were the first to publicly call the killing “genocide” and were certainly less focussed on the civil war element of the crisis than either the media or government. For example, in a press statement of 26 April Amnesty wrote, “The international community misunderstands the cause of the killing. They are not solely ethnic. There is a campaign to

⁷⁹ Hansard. HC Deb, 28 June 1994, vol.245, cc.521-2w.

⁸⁰ Hansard. HC Deb, 30 June 1994, vol.245, c.679w.

⁸¹ Hansard. HC Deb, 30 June 1994, vol.245, c.943w.

eliminate any Hutu who are opposed to the campaign and to exterminate all Tutsi.”⁸² Similarly in a lengthy interview given to *The Independent* after being evacuated back to the UK, Anne Mackintosh, Oxfam’s country co-ordinator for Rwanda, explained that the media misunderstood the situation,

It is not nearly as simple or as mindless as tribal fighting. It is not neighbour turning on neighbour for no reason. It is elements of the presidential guard and the Rwandan army and hardline politicians - the people who stood to lose from the peace agreement - hanging on for grim death.⁸³

The NGO Africa Aid also briefed MPs, including Tony Worthington, at a meeting in the House of Commons. Despite these, and similar efforts from other NGOs, for a number of weeks the British establishment however continued to call the events in Rwanda civil war or tribal.

As well as trying to educate the public, media and politicians about what was actually happening in Rwanda, the NGOs also lobbied for action. Amnesty International was at the forefront of these demands as the following press releases show: 3 May “Amnesty is urging the UN Security Council to immediately expand the capacity of UNAMIR to protect human rights”; and, 26 May, “Amnesty welcomes the meeting of the UN Human Rights Commission, but calls for stronger action”.⁸⁴ Oxfam also campaigned for a more robust response. On 3 May David Bryer, an Oxfam director, led a delegation of officials from Britain’s leading NGOs to Downing Street to protest at the lack of international response to the genocide; and, on 19 May Brendan Gormley, Oxfam’s Africa Director, wrote to *The Independent* calling on the government to support the urgent deployment of UNAMIR II troops, whilst also noting the need to agree a ceasefire.⁸⁵ *The Times*, which reported the Downing Street meeting, also suggests that Bryer accused the government of double standards like many others comparing the response to Bosnia and Rwanda,

⁸² Amnesty International News Service, 26 April 1994. Available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library>

⁸³ Celia Dodd, “Rwanda: Have My Friends Survived?” *The Independent*, 22 April 1994, p.22.

⁸⁴ Amnesty International News Service, 3 May 1994 and 26 May 1994. Available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library>

⁸⁵ Brendan Gormley, “Letter: The Killing in Rwanda,” *The Independent*, 19 May 1994, p.21.

concluding that without urgent action up to half a million Tutsi faced death.⁸⁶ Alex de Waal and Rayika Omaar, however, are critical of the NGOs lobbying. They highlight that the lobbying was preoccupied with the despatch of UN troops, something that was never going to be achieved quickly. NGOs, such as Oxfam, they continue, did not express outrage at what was happening in Rwanda, or name the individuals alleged to be leading the genocide, or demand diplomatic measures such as economic sanctions. In this respect, they conclude, NGOs had a mistaken priority and did nothing to stop the slaughter.⁸⁷

However, the onset of the refugee crisis somewhat altered the priority of most NGOs. Whilst human rights focussed groups, such as Amnesty and African Rights, continued to lobby for action, other groups turned their focus towards the crisis in Tanzania. As de Waal argues, “at the end of the day, relief organisations will always make charitable works their priority”.⁸⁸ Certainly the NGOs’ efforts to trigger a response were more effective in relation to the refugee crisis than the genocide; in this period the British government for example allocated a fairly significant amount of aid to Rwanda through British NGOs. On 21 April Mark Lennox-Boyd informed Parliament that £820,000 of emergency aid had been committed to the “victims of the conflict in Rwanda”.⁸⁹ This amount gradually increased as the crisis continued; by 9 May over £1.1 million of humanitarian assistance had been provided, a further £2 million was then made available in the first week of May,⁹⁰ by 24 May the figure was “more than £4.5 million”⁹¹ and by the end of June the figure was approximately £11 million.⁹² Most of this funding was channelled through British NGOs, but did also include the donation of emergency food and equipment; for example, two mobile grinding mills were donated to the World Food Programme for the production of maize flour.⁹³ The government, through the ODA, also provided a steel

⁸⁶ Michael Binyon, “Children Murdered at Red Cross Hospital,” *The Times*, 4 May 1994.

⁸⁷ Alex de Waal and Rayika Ommar, “The Genocide in Rwanda and the International Response,” *Current History* 94, (1995), p.158.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.161.

⁸⁹ Hansard. HC Deb, 21 April 1994, vol.241, c. 614w.

⁹⁰ Hansard. HC Deb, 9 May 1994, vol.243, c.28w.

⁹¹ Hansard. HC Deb, 24 May 1994, vol.244, c.314.

⁹² Hansard. HC Deb, 15 June 1994, vol.244, c.618.

⁹³ Hansard. HC Deb, 14 June 1994, vol.244, c.389w.

bailey bridge to improve access between the refugee camp at Benaco in Tanzania and the nearest town, Ngara and an airbridge at Mwana which enabled relief supplies to be flown to the camps.⁹⁴

Whilst it is obviously hard to quantify whether the level of aid was sufficient, and it is of course easy to argue that any amount of aid is never enough, one comparative figure shows that the UK was a key donor to the aid fund. When on 9 May it was announced in Parliament that £1.1 million had already been provided and a further £2 million made available to NGOs, it was noted that “Other EU countries and the European Commission have announced nearly £2 million of assistance so far”.⁹⁵ Based on this figure, British aid outweighed that of the rest of Europe combined in the first month of the crisis. It is also apparent that without ODA support the operation of the refugee camps would have been less successful; ODA funding of the airbridge, the bailey bridge and various logistical experts, if nothing else significantly contributed to the operation of the camps in Tanzania and enabled relief efforts to operate.

As well as government funding, the British public were encouraged to donate to the crisis. Initially individual NGOs, including the British Red Cross and Oxfam, ran their own appeals. Then on 13 May the Disasters Emergency Committee (the umbrella organisation that brings together Britain’s leading NGOs) launched a Rwanda appeal that in the first two weeks generated over £2 million.⁹⁶ By 16 June, and following a television appeal fronted by Helen Mirren and Michael Palin, the DEC had raised £4.25 million, four times the amount raised by a similar appeal for Yugoslavia earlier in the year.⁹⁷ Ultimately the DEC appeal would raise £37 million before it closed in early 1995; making it the DEC’s fourth most successful appeal of all time.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ ODA. “Rwanda and Burundi Refugees and Displaced: Humanitarian Aid Assessment and Monitoring Mission 21 – 26 May 1994”. Released to author under FoI.

⁹⁵ Hansard. HC Deb, 9 May 1994, vol. 243, c.28w.

⁹⁶ Anon, “Hutu Refugees Accuse Rebels of Massacring Entire Villages,” *The Guardian*, 27 May 1994, p.13.

⁹⁷ Richard Dowden, “Britons Donate £4.25 million to Appeal,” *The Independent*, 16 June 1994, p.13.

⁹⁸ www.dec.org.uk/appeals/appeals-archiv. Correct at time of writing in July 2012. The bigger appeals were: Tsunami earthquake appeal, 2004 (£390m); Asia quake appeal, 2005 (£59m); and, Kosovo crisis appeal, 1999 (£53m).

The government and public funding was used predominantly in the refugee camps in countries neighbouring Rwanda, particularly Tanzania in this period. The DEC funding paid for much of the infrastructure at the Benaco refugee camp, including the Red Cross shipping over 38 tonnes of medical equipment to the camp,⁹⁹ Oxfam managing the water supply to the camp and Care International managing the warehousing and distribution of aid equipment and food.¹⁰⁰ As well as the work in Tanzania, British NGOs were active in other neighbouring countries. Save the Children Fund for example received government funding to assist with the clearing and burying of the bodies that washed up on the shores of Lake Victoria and in late June Care UK set up an office in Bukavu (Zaire) to prepare for an anticipated inflow of refugees (this area would eventually receive over 300,000 Hutu refugees).¹⁰¹ British NGOs were certainly responsive to the crisis in Rwanda. But it has to be noted that throughout this period their main emphasis was on responding to the refugee crisis; partly because much of Rwanda remained inaccessible given the fighting, but also because NGOs were prepared and resourced to respond to such crises. Whilst the NGOs were resourced and quick to provide food, sanitation, water and shelter to refugees in Tanzania, there was little they could do to ease or prevent the massacres in Rwanda.

The Government's Response

In the days and weeks after the decision to withdraw UNAMIR the government continued to focus on the civil war element of the crisis rather than the genocide. The crisis was described by the FCO Minister Mark Lennox-Boyd as a "horrific and tragic civil war" on 9 May¹⁰² and by the Prime Minister as a "bitter civil war" on 17 May.¹⁰³ As long as the crisis was perceived to be civil war the government's response was to recall how the international community had responded to previous civil wars, look to others to manage the situation and, as we have seen, to donate aid.

⁹⁹ Sarah Wilson, "British Aid is Flown out to Hell on Earth," *The Scotsman*, 27 June 1994.

¹⁰⁰ Joanna Gibbon, "Rwandan's Secret Lifeline," *The Independent*, 30 June 1994, p.35.

¹⁰¹ JEEAR, "The International Response to Conflict and Genocide, Vol. III," p.40.

¹⁰² Hansard. HC Deb, 9 May 1994, vol.243, c.28w.

¹⁰³ Hansard. HC Deb, 17 May 1994, vol.243, c.671w.

Priority is for a Ceasefire

As responses to parliamentary questions demonstrated, the government continued to believe in late April and early May that the crisis would only be brought to an end by the warring parties returning to the negotiating table. Mark Lennox-Boyd said on 20 April “The priority for the moment is to establish a ceasefire”¹⁰⁴ and again on 21 April “The first priority is to try to bring about a ceasefire”.¹⁰⁵ The UN’s successes in bringing to an end civil wars in Mozambique and Namibia through diplomatic means “proved” to the FCO that diplomacy rather than intervention was the most likely way of ending the killing in Rwanda. Recent experience also confirmed to the FCO that UN troops intervening directly was not the solution; the deaths of Pakistani and American troops in Somalia in 1993 had certainly shown the risk of UN forces being dragged into a civil war. In one parliamentary answer, Hurd also drew on the UN’s experiences in Angola earlier in 1994, where peacekeeping troops had also been withdrawn from a ceasefire monitoring mission once widespread hostilities resumed.¹⁰⁶ As Graham Allison would suggest, the British government appeared to have drawn on its experience of previous crises to determine the response to the current crisis; when the FCO looked through its “repertoire of processes” it determined that the standard response to civil war was to call for a ceasefire and this was the line it pursued for the first six weeks of the genocide.¹⁰⁷

If experience suggested that the first priority was to achieve a ceasefire other parliamentary answers show who the government believed was responsible for trying to broker this: Alastair Goodlad on 5 May “We support the *United Nations*’ efforts to promote a ceasefire”;¹⁰⁸ Lennox-Boyd “We also stressed the importance of retaining a *United Nations* presence in theatre to support ... their efforts to secure a ceasefire”;¹⁰⁹ Douglas Hogg “The *United Nations* Secretary General is still pursuing diplomatic efforts aimed at securing

¹⁰⁴ Hansard. HC Deb, 20 April 1994, vol.241, c.538w.

¹⁰⁵ Hansard. HC Deb, 21 April 1994, vol.241, c.613w.

¹⁰⁶ Hansard. HC Deb, 25 April 1994, vol.242, c.16.

¹⁰⁷ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p.88.

¹⁰⁸ Hansard. HC Deb, 5 May 1994, vol.242, c.615w.

¹⁰⁹ Hansard. HC Deb, 6 May 1994, vol.242, c.675w.

a ceasefire” (*emphasis added*).¹¹⁰ As far as the FCO were concerned, the responsibility for responding to Rwanda rested with the UN Secretary General, not the UK. Consequently the government’s response in this period was far from proactive.

Security Council Resolution 918

Whilst in London the government continued to speak publicly of the need for a ceasefire, the Security Council, on the advice of the Secretary General, was considering reversing the decision to withdraw UNAMIR. In a report of 13 May, Boutros-Ghali proposed the deployment of an enlarged UN force – UNAMIR II. The report envisaged a force of approximately 5,500 troops, tasked with providing safe conditions for displaced persons, providing security to humanitarian organisations and monitoring Rwanda’s borders.¹¹¹ Notably at this stage Boutros-Ghali made no suggestion that this mission was dependent upon a ceasefire. Whilst he conceded the long-term need for a return to the principles of the Arusha Accords, the report called for there to be “no delay” in the deployment and for the Security Council to consider what “measures it can take before a ceasefire is achieved”.¹¹²

However, by the time Resolution 918 was actually agreed late on 16 May¹¹³ it is clear that the Security Council had moved to a position of requiring a ceasefire to be in place at least before the bulk of UNAMIR II deployed. After the standard preamble, the Resolution’s action points began “[the Security Council] demands that all parties to the conflict immediately cease hostilities, agree to a ceasefire, and bring to an end the mindless violence.”¹¹⁴ It continued “the Secretary-General [is requested] to report as soon as possible on the next phase of UNAMIR’s deployment, including inter-alia, on the cooperation of the parties [and] progress towards a ceasefire”.¹¹⁵ Here was an indication that the Security Council would only agree to the deployment with a ceasefire in place and with consent from

¹¹⁰ Hansard. HC Deb, 11 May 1994, vol.243, c.161 w.

¹¹¹ UN S/1994/565. 13 May 1994.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ The Resolution was formally adopted on 17 May 1994.

¹¹⁴ UN SCR 918. 16 May 1994.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

the warring parties. The specific use of the word “mindless” also suggests that the Security Council still did not recognise the incredibly orchestrated nature of the killing.

There is evidence that the UK supported these pre-conditions and was probably instrumental in having them included in the mandate. In his formal statement given after the adoption of Resolution 918, David Hannay called on the UN to “not lose sight of the need to achieve a ceasefire”.¹¹⁶ More telling of British opinion though was Lennox-Boyd’s statement to Parliament given on 24 May. He said that, despite supporting the passage of Resolution 918 “there was no question of UNAMIR providing an interposition force in the civil war without a full ceasefire between the parties”.¹¹⁷ UNAMIR, he explained, could only be successful if it had the consent and support of the opposing factions. Malcolm Rifkind similarly wrote to David Clark on 23 May that “there is no support for any operation to enforce a peace in Rwanda”.¹¹⁸ Whilst it can be taken that Rifkind here was meaning there was no international support for a Chapter VII peace enforcement mission, he could equally have meant neither was there British support.

However, throughout this period Edward Clay, Britain’s High Commissioner in Kampala, continued to inform the FCO back in London that the chances of a ceasefire being negotiated were slim. In one undated telegram, Clay reported that whilst a ceasefire had been declared in Kigali it “must continue to be exceedingly fragile, given that the RPF declared it unilaterally but subject to conditions which the RGF [Rwandan Government Forces] have not accepted”.¹¹⁹ In another, Clay reported that the RPF appeared to be “going for broke” and that “our impression is increasingly that the RPF hope to establish themselves as the only organisation remaining in Rwanda capable of doing business with the outside world”.¹²⁰ In a third, Clay informed London of reports in the Ugandan press that the RPF

¹¹⁶ FCO. Telegram David Hannay, New York to FCO London, 17 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ MOD. Letter from Malcolm Rifkind MP to David Clark MP, 23 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹¹⁹ FCO. Telegram from Edward Clay, Kampala to FCO London, Undated. Released to author under FoI. Although this telegram is not dated we can deduce that it must come from late April or early May 1994.

¹²⁰ FCO. Telegram from Edward Clay, Kampala to FCO London, Undated, but stamped by the FCO 12 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

would attack any UN troops who attempted to prevent an outright military victory.¹²¹ The ODA assessment mission also highlighted the low likelihood of an imminent cease fire, noting in the 27 May report that “an early end to the civil conflicts is not anticipated”.¹²² With this intelligence coming from Clay and ODA staff, one can fairly conclude that by the end of May the FCO knew there was little chance of a ceasefire being agreed; yet publicly this is still what the British government called for and was set as a precondition of UNAMIR II’s deployment.

Britain, the US and UNAMIR II

Given the various claims of Melvern, Curtis and Des Forges that British policy at the UN was to simply support the US in their efforts to keep peacekeepers out of Rwanda, it is worth considering at this point how the British and American response to the UNAMIR II plans differed.

Whilst Boutros-Ghali was still drafting the report that would be released on 13 May, the US government was already trying to influence the recommendations. In a memorandum to the US mission to the UN, the State Department wrote:

As Vice President Gore has indicated [to Boutros-Ghali], we are interested in exploring the possibility of using an expanded force to create one or more secure zones in Rwanda along the border for the protection of refugees and displaced person in most immediate danger.¹²³

It is this plan that Samantha Power named “outside-in”, as it was the opposite of General Dallaire’s proposal to deploy new troops to Kigali and then work out across the rest of Rwanda (“inside-out”).¹²⁴ The US clearly had significant reservations about deploying troops into Kigali whilst the civil war continued, noting that a “Kigali based operation in

¹²¹ FCO. Telegram from Edward Clay, Kampala to FCO London, 20 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹²² ODA. “Rwanda and Burundi Refugees and Displaced: Humanitarian Aid Assessment and Monitoring Mission 21 – 26 May 1994”. Released to author under FoI.

¹²³ US State Department. Memorandum from State Department, Washington to US Mission to UN, New York, 13 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹²⁴ Samantha Power, “Bystanders to Genocide: Why the United States Let the Rwandan Tragedy Happen,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 2001.

current circumstances would require a Chapter VII mandate”;¹²⁵ a Chapter VII mission being one mandated to enforce peace in a country without the consent of the host state. As has been suggested by various authors, including Power and Holly Burkhalter, with the events in Somalia still fresh in the minds of the US Administration there was significant opposition to Chapter VII missions generally, especially at the Pentagon, and especially to ones in Africa.¹²⁶ The proposed outside-in mission was a way of doing something, but at significantly less risk and with less troops than the alternative inside-out proposal. The US would also have been conscious that the outside-in option had proved successful in Operation Provide Comfort, the joint US, British and French humanitarian mission to northern Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War. In that mission troops had deployed to the borders of Iraq to protect Kurds being persecuted by Saddam Hussein’s government troops.

Whilst supporting the general principle that the UN should not deploy into Rwanda while the civil war continued, the FCO opposed the suggested outside-in mission. As David Hannay described the situation, “People were being killed inside Rwanda, not outside. You were not going to stop the genocide by operating in Uganda or Tanzania.”¹²⁷ Even after Resolution 918 had been agreed the US plan did not disappear; on 3 June the FCO wrote to the UK mission in New York “We would hope to see resources concentrated in areas where there is a genuine risk to the civilian population, and not, for instance, on the border areas.”¹²⁸

That the American outside-in plan was never implemented suggests that claims that Britain and the US were united at the UN are overstated. The comments from Hannay show that the UK had real reservations over the efficacy of the proposed plan. It must also be fair to assume that if the UK had been actively supporting the plan it would most probably have been implemented. If two permanent members, both of whom were key providers of

¹²⁵ US State Department. Memorandum from State Department, Washington to US Mission to UN, New York, 13 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹²⁶ Power, “A Problem from Hell,” p.350. Burkhalter, “The Question of Genocide,” pp.44-54.

¹²⁷ Author’s interview with Sir David Hannay. 23 April 2010.

¹²⁸ FCO. Memorandum from FCO, London to UK Mission to UN, New York, “Rwanda: Secretary General’s Report”, 3 June 1994. Released to author under FoI.

resources to UN missions, had supported outside-in it would have been unlikely that the remainder of the Security Council would have opposed it; with it being based in neighbouring countries, the proposed outside-in mission could not have been considered an infringement of Rwanda's sovereignty and would most likely not have incurred the opposition of China and Russia. The fact that outside-in did not proceed seems then to suggest American and British diplomats did not agree that this was the best approach. Instead it seems that Resolution 918 was a compromise agreement, acceptable to both the US and UK; inside-out, but only once a ceasefire had been achieved.

Britain's Limited Contribution to UNAMIR II

Despite having voted in favour of UNAMIR II there seems to have been no initial consideration of British troops being deployed. Instead the government, in the words of Hannay, "actively encouraged African nations to contribute troops".¹²⁹ The FCO appeared keen on pursuing this option for three reasons. First, there was no appetite amongst the press or in Parliament for Britain to send troops; and if Margaret Beckett's comment about her conversation with President Mugabe is true,¹³⁰ then African nations themselves had no appetite for a western intervention. Second, the FCO did not feel that the UK had the resources to respond positively. Chalker explained the dilemma as "How do you justify taking people off one valuable project to deal with another event"; the common view within the FCO, she suggested was that "we cannot take that on as well".¹³¹ Britain at the time was after all the fourth largest troop contributing nation to the UN¹³² and was certainly heavily involved in Bosnia; for this reason it appears that there was a belief that someone else should deal with the Rwandan problem. And this is the third reason; this was widely perceived to be an African problem that required an African solution.

¹²⁹ Author's interview with Sir David Hannay. 23 April 2010.

¹³⁰ The author has not been able to identify any other source of evidence to corroborate this claim. However, the fact that it was made in private at a meeting of the Shadow Cabinet means there is no reason to disbelieve Beckett.

¹³¹ Author's interview with Baroness Chalker. 18 August 2010.

¹³² After Pakistan, France and India. Source: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml

The government did though agree to make a contribution to UNAMIR II. On 15 June Hannay was instructed to inform the UN of Britain's "readiness in principle to provide 50 British Army trucks for UNAMIR".¹³³ Various it has been suggested that these four-wheel-drive trucks, each capable of carrying 20 soldiers, never arrived in Rwanda, that they were not fit for purpose, or that they were a mere gesture by the British government. Certainly the vehicles did arrive in theatre, but it appears that they did not impress General Dallaire. He recalls:

Not to be outdone by the Americans [who had offered to lease the UN 50 armoured personnel carriers (APCs)] the British offered fifty Bedford trucks – again for a sizeable amount to be paid up front. The Bedford is an early Cold War-era truck, which in 1994 was fit only to be a museum relic ... The British later quietly withdrew their request for payment and provided some of the vehicles, which broke down one at a time until there were none left.¹³⁴

Dallaire is certainly correct that the trucks were initially offered to the UN "for a sizeable amount". The Secretariat was initially told that the "MOD were prepared to sell the trucks at a cost of 4,500 pounds per vehicle"; additionally refurbishment costs, including spraying the vehicles white, would add an estimated £1,500 per vehicle.¹³⁵ Whilst a fax from David Hannay to FCO in London suggests agreement was reached to pay for the vehicles by 31 March 1995, there is no public evidence either way of whether this amount was ever actually paid.¹³⁶

However, Dallaire's suggestion that these vehicles were fit only to be placed in some military museum would seem unfair. Whilst it is true that the Bedford was a Cold War era vehicle (in 1994 the MOD was in the process of replacing the Bedford with new Leyland DAF vehicles and the 50 Bedfords were being withdrawn from service as part of this process) these particular vehicles were on average only 14 years old. The FCO memo sent to New York records "MOD have advised that the Bedford trucks have been well maintained ... Their average mileage is of the order of 60,000 ... since they have been

¹³³ FCO. Telegram FCO London to UK Mission to New York, 15 June 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹³⁴ Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, p.376.

¹³⁵ FCO. Telegram FCO London to UK Mission to New York, 15 June 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹³⁶ FCO. Fax UK Mission to New York to FCO London, 2 August 1994. Released to author under FoI.

operational until the last minute MOD believe that a full service should be sufficient for most”.¹³⁷ It is important to note that if these particular vehicles had not been offered to UNAMIR, they would have remained in frontline service with the British army for at least another year.

Lt. Colonel Mike Wharmby, who commanded the British contingent deployed to Rwanda in July, also disputes Dallaire’s comments. In response to the question “was Dallaire’s criticism of the trucks provided by the UK fair?” Wharmby answered “No – the same trucks were still in service with the British army. They weren’t the newest, but they were what was available ... my soldiers managed to drive them everywhere.”¹³⁸ It seems rather that it was not the Bedfords themselves that were the problem, but instead the fact that they were being driven in a very harsh and unforgiving environment, initially by soldiers with little experience of driving or maintaining that particular vehicle and that spare parts were not available for the vehicles. One senior FCO official recalls, for example, that before the British troops arrived in Kigali in August 1994, UNAMIR did not even have the capability to repair punctures.¹³⁹ Certainly, these vehicles were not the newest or the best, but once the British contingent arrived in Rwanda they were able to maintain and service the vehicles and provided experienced, well trained drivers. At that point they began to make a valuable contribution to UNAMIR.

Dallaire’s cynical suggestion that the British government only offered the trucks so as not to be outdone by the American offer of APCs is also slightly unfair, though in some ways not too far from the truth. Rather than trying to match the Americans, it appears to have been the French announcement that they were planning to send troops to Rwanda that had more influence on the British decision to offer trucks. In a memorandum to the FCO, the mission in New York wrote:

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Author’s interview with Lt. Colonel Mike Wharmby. 13 September 2010.

¹³⁹ Author’s interview with senior FCO official. 27 November 2011.

The latest French initiative seems to me to strengthen further the case for issue of an early press release announcing our offer. If for any reason the offer is not followed up by the UN, we will have lost nothing by announcing it. If we have not announced it, we will have nothing at all to say about UK help to UNAMIR.¹⁴⁰

The FCO made such an announcement on 17 June, a couple of days before the French mission became public. Given that the FCO and MOD had been considering the UN's request for equipment since late May¹⁴¹ one could cynically conclude that the offer of the trucks was only made in response to the announcement of France's plans. However, whilst the FCO documents suggest that the timing of the announcement was certainly influenced by the French, the actual decision to offer the trucks was made independently of this. Another relevant factor identified by David Hannay was that as the UK was actively trying to encourage African nations to provide troops to UNAMIR II, Britain had to be seen to be making a contribution herself, hence the offer of the trucks.¹⁴²

Nor are suggestions that the trucks were merely gesture politics correct. At this point in the crisis the UK had not been asked to provide personnel for the operation. As Malcolm Rifkind wrote to his Labour counter-part David Clark "We have, along with several other nations, been asked by the UN whether we can provide *vehicles* for the expanded force and we are investigating this possibility" (emphasis added).¹⁴³ African nations had offered to provide troops to the mission but they were incredibly poorly equipped and would be reliant on western countries to provide logistical support. The offer to supply trucks, whilst on the face of things a rather ungenerous one, was in fact exactly what had been requested by the UN; as Lennox-Boyd responded to a Parliamentary question about the trucks "The hon. Gentleman grossly underestimates our contribution to assistance in Rwanda. The 50 trucks that he dismissed so contemptuously are precisely what the Secretary General asked us to supply."¹⁴⁴ One should also recall that logistical support and

¹⁴⁰ FCO. Telegram, UK mission to New York to FCO, London, 17 June 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹⁴¹ MOD. Letter from Malcolm Rifkind MP to David Clark MP, 23 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹⁴² Author's interview with Sir David Hannay. 23 April 1994.

¹⁴³ MOD. Letter from Malcolm Rifkind MP to David Clark MP, 23 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹⁴⁴ Hansard. HC Deb, 22 June 1994. vol.245. c.245.

expertise were exactly what the media and Labour Party had been suggesting the government should offer.

Reluctant Support of Operation Turquoise

The government's response to the announcement that France would deploy troops to Rwanda unilaterally, albeit with Security Council support, was not entirely consistent; whilst publicly the FCO and ministers expressed support for the proposed mission, there is evidence that privately there was less enthusiasm.

Various British newspapers reported that whilst on a scheduled visit to the UN on 21 June Hurd had expressed his support for the French mission: "‘I think the French are acting courageously, obviously at some risk, to fill a gap in time, while the UN force gets itself together,’ Hurd said" the *Evening Standard* reported.¹⁴⁵ Correspondence between the FCO and the UK's mission in New York however reflects less than wholehearted support for the proposal. In a telegram to Hannay on 21 June the FCO wrote: "Ready to support a resolution backing the French plan, but remain concerned about its effect on UNAMIR and on the credibility of UN peacekeeping generally".¹⁴⁶ (That this telegram had to be sent to Hannay when the Foreign Secretary was already in New York, suggests that at this stage it was not Hurd who was leading policy on Rwanda.) The FCO appear to have had two linked concerns; first the fact that the French military had actively supported FAR throughout the Rwandan civil war could not be ignored, and secondly, the RPF were indicating that they opposed the French mission believing it to be a veil for fresh French support of the interim government. The telegram to Hannay continued, "the French will in practice have difficulty in maintaining impartiality".¹⁴⁷ The FCO were therefore aware that support for the French mission would most likely lead to some level of extra support being given to FAR against the RPF and also would almost certainly lead to RPF hostility towards the UNAMIR force proper; in fact the 21 June telegram references General Maurice Baril's statement that the

¹⁴⁵ Anon, "Rebels Battle for Rwandan Capital," *The Evening Standard*, 22 June 1994, p.24.

¹⁴⁶ FCO. Telegram FCO London to UK mission in New York, 21 June 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

RPF had already begun to view French speaking troops in UNAMIR as legitimate targets. In the FCO, the private view appears to have been that Turquoise was a high risk and unwelcome mission.

However, against this was the clear acceptance of the unfortunate truth that, due to difficulties in finding troops and logistical support, UNAMIR II would not be deployed in the immediate future. In the meantime massacres would continue in Rwanda despite the Security Council's call for something to be done. Resolution 918, which had authorised UNAMIR II, had "under[lined] the urgent need for coordinated international action to alleviate the suffering of the Rwandan people and to help restore peace in Rwanda"¹⁴⁸ yet still six weeks later nothing had been done, making the UN seem quite impotent. The FCO concluded that this continued failure of the UN to do anything jeopardised the whole concept of UN peacekeeping. In the telegram to Hannay the FCO wrote "UN credibility would be badly affected by an operational fiasco in Rwanda on top of last year's problems in Haiti and Somalia."¹⁴⁹ This left the FCO in the position of not genuinely supporting the French mission, but on the other hand having to agree to it because there was no other viable option available.

For most governments such a dilemma would have in reality been of little significance; however, as a permanent member of the Security Council, the British, through economic and diplomatic pressure, wielded a remarkable amount of power or at least influence with fellow Europeans, the US and those states dependent on the UK for aid or trade. As Mark Curtis argues, the FCO's diplomatic expertise makes Britain particularly powerful at the UN.¹⁵⁰ This power was, John Dickie suggests, demonstrated by Britain's role in building Security Council and international support for both the invasion of Iraq in 1991 and the recapture of the Falkland Islands in 1982.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ UN Sec Res 918. 17 May 1994.

¹⁴⁹ FCO. Telegram FCO London to UK mission in New York, 21 June 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹⁵⁰ Curtis, *The Ambiguities of Power*, p.183.

¹⁵¹ Dickie, *Inside the Foreign Office*, pp.181-201.

It is clear that the Security Council was split on the idea of the mission, with some members, New Zealand in particular, opposed on the grounds of France's historic role in Rwanda. In an interview Hannay, also highlighting the fear of retaliatory attacks by the RPF, summed up the British position:

No we were not enthusiastic about it at all ... We identified some of the subsequent problems that would arise; people with blood on their hands would be saved. But we feared there could be massive loss of life amongst ordinary Hutus not just people involved in the killings if something was not done ... If we had abstained, I think the resolution would have failed.¹⁵²

The documentary evidence suggests that Hannay was instructed to neither openly oppose nor endorse the mission, but privately to caution other members of the Security Council of the risks of the mission. Hannay was instructed to "continue to question the proposal" and to "not discourage others [redacted] from pressing for further briefing orally or in writing on the implications for UNAMIR".¹⁵³ The instructions also contain the intriguing part sentence "... and we do not wish to be associated with any attempts to sabotage it"; the first half of this sentence has been redacted and we can therefore only speculate at Hannay's full instructions. However, that the instructions conclude "if the French look like getting the votes, you should support" seems to indicate that the FCO did not support this proposal, but did not want to be seen as the country that prevented something being done in Rwanda. A number of interviewees also highlighted the fact that there was no way that the UK would in the end oppose a resolution proposed by France, who at the time was Britain's closest ally on the Security Council.

The British reluctance to wholeheartedly support the mission though is reflected in the fact that despite requests from the French, the government did not provide British troops or logistical support to Operation Turquoise.¹⁵⁴ Douglas Hogg, Foreign Office Minister, confirmed that France had approached the UK and other European allies for logistical

¹⁵² Author's interview with Sir David Hannay. 23 April 2010.

¹⁵³ FCO. Telegram FCO London to UK mission in New York, 21 June 1994. Released to author under FoI. Three or four words have been redacted from this sentence of the document that has been released.

¹⁵⁴ In response to a Freedom of Information request the FCO confirmed that an approach was received from the French government to provide troops but refused to release any of the documents relating to this request.

support, but “in the event [the French] supported their operation nationally”.¹⁵⁵ The British press however seemed to suggest that the French request had actually been refused by the FCO. *The Guardian* wrote of Douglas Hurd that when “[a]sked why Britain had not contributed any troops, as France requested, he said: ‘We don’t contribute troops to every peacekeeping initiative.’”¹⁵⁶ *The Times* was fairly blunt in its coverage suggesting that Hurd had “rebuffed a personal appeal” from Alain Juppe, France’s Foreign Minister, to provide troops. It continued to claim that a FCO spokesman had suggested that “for historic and practical reasons, it was unlikely that Britain would offer troops”.¹⁵⁷

Britain: The Uninterested Bystander?

It could quite easily be argued that in May and June 1994, the British media, public and politicians showed little interest in Rwanda. There was fairly widespread recognition by the end of this period that genocide was taking place, but overall it is fair to conclude that as a bystander to the crisis, Britain was not particularly quick in stepping forward and offering some form of practical response or assistance. But does this mean that Britain was an uninterested bystander?

Was the British Public Interested in the Genocide?

On 11 May Edward Mortimer wrote in the *Financial Times*, “It would be wiser not to write about Rwanda. Very few FT readers want to know about it ... for most of us in London and New York and Tokyo, [Rwanda is] a very faraway country indeed.”¹⁵⁸ This comment raises a question that has not been addressed in any depth in the existing literature that is, what was the level of public interest in the genocide? As discussed earlier, there is a school of thought that in the post Cold-War period public opinion came to have a much more significant role in foreign policy making and humanitarian intervention in particular.¹⁵⁹ Proponents of the CNN effect especially argue that public opinion, as reflected in the media,

¹⁵⁵ Hansard. HC Deb, 28 June 1994. vol.245. c.521.

¹⁵⁶ Mark Huband, “Militiaman Claims France Trained Rwanda’s Killers,” *The Guardian*, 22 June 1994, p.14.

¹⁵⁷ James Bone *et al.* “UN Ready to Back French Intervention in Rwanda,” *The Times*, 21 June 1994.

¹⁵⁸ Edward Mortimer, “A Blot on the Map,” *Financial Times*, 11 May 1994, p.24.

¹⁵⁹ Storey, “Non-Neutral Humanitarianism,” p.385.

is a key driver of intervention. Even if one does not accept the CNN effect, there is an argument that public opinion sets foreign policy regions of acceptability within which governments must operate; these dictate when a government will, for example, deploy or withdraw troops.¹⁶⁰ Public opinion can then, arguably, be a powerful force on foreign policy. Certainly it is a force that cannot be ignored in any multi-factor study of foreign policy decision making - after all public opinion appears to have influenced government policy in the US (to not send troops), Belgium (to withdraw troops) and in France (to launch Operation Turquoise). If the public influenced governments in these three countries it could have influenced the government in the UK.

Measuring public opinion is of course notoriously difficult, especially in this case as there is no opinion poll data from the UK relating to the Rwandan crisis.¹⁶¹ The absence of poll data however is no surprise; as Knect and Weatherford note, poll data relating to foreign policy and public opinion is only collected occasionally.¹⁶² In this particular case the only useful poll data comes from the US. Jentleson and Britton use data from five US polls in their research (unfortunately they do not record the date of the polls). Their conclusion was that there was “very substantial” support for humanitarian relief in response to the refugee crisis but very low levels of support for what they call “internal political change” (i.e. involvement in the civil war).¹⁶³ In fact support for intervention in Rwanda to alleviate the suffering of refugees received over 75 per cent support, the highest level in their survey which also looked at possible interventions in Iraq, Haiti, Bosnia, Somalia and North Korea.¹⁶⁴

In terms of wider surveys that can be dated, the Harris “key issue” surveys in August and September 1994, which asked respondents to name the two most important issues facing the US government, identified Rwanda as being a key issue for one per cent of respondents

¹⁶⁰ Frizzell, “Public Opinion,” p.315.

¹⁶¹ The polling organisations Harris and GfK NOP confirmed to the author that no polls covering Rwanda were conducted by their organisations. No relevant polls were available on the online archives of Ipsos MORI and ICM and no published opinion polls were identified during the review of media sources.

¹⁶² Knect and Weatherford, “Public Opinion and Foreign Policy,” p.715.

¹⁶³ Jentleson and Britton, “Still Pretty Prudent,” p.403.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p.402.

in August and half a per cent in September.¹⁶⁵ This is a very different question from whether respondents supported intervention, but demonstrates that the crisis was registering with the public. Rwanda does not however register on the surveys earlier than August, i.e. during the actual genocide. A couple of inferences can be made from these surveys. Firstly, in the same Harris surveys, the crisis in Haiti registered two per cent in August and eight per cent in September; contrary to the idea of cosmopolitanism, Americans appeared to have been more interested in the crisis in their “own back yard” rather than those on other continents (Bosnia also only registered one per cent of the vote).¹⁶⁶ Secondly, Rwanda only registered one per cent in August and less than half a per cent in September; during the genocide phase of the crisis Rwanda did not receive sufficient votes to register. The American public’s interest seemed to have peaked during the refugee crisis. This pattern fits in with the findings of empirical research in this field. Wanta and Yu-Wei, for example, conclude that the public learn the relative importance of foreign policy issues through the amount of coverage issues receive.¹⁶⁷ In the US, media coverage of Haiti always outweighed coverage of Rwanda and the coverage of Rwanda peaked in August exactly mirroring the poll data. Whilst it is always dangerous to extrapolate US data to the British public, it is not unreasonable to assume that a similar phenomenon would have been seen in the UK.

The absence of British poll data forces us to look elsewhere for evidence of public interest. A second potential source is the number of letters from the public either to their MP or to the media. In a letter to *The Independent* on 29 June Tony Worthington wrote, “Like all MPs, I am receiving dozens of cards and letters about Rwanda. Your extensive coverage reflects public concern”;¹⁶⁸ though the Wanta and Yu-Wei results above suggest that it may in fact have been the exact opposite that was true, namely the extensive coverage heightened public concern. Worthington though is not necessarily correct in his assertion

¹⁶⁵ The Harris Poll. Released 10 October 1994. Available at: <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/Insights/HarrisVault.aspx>

¹⁶⁶ Jentleson and Britton, “Still Pretty Prudent,” p.403.

¹⁶⁷ Wanta and Yu-Wei, “The Agenda Setting Effects of International News Coverage,” p.250.

¹⁶⁸ Tony Worthington, “Letter, Government Silence on Rwanda Genocide,” *The Independent*, 29 June 1994, p.15.

that all MPs were receiving letters. Of the 19 MPs who responded to this author's survey¹⁶⁹ only Nick Harvey (Con, North Devon) recalled receiving letters from constituents and then "only in the tens"; sixteen MPs did not recall any correspondence at all. Andrew Smith (Lab, Oxford East) was unusual in the small sample in recalling being visited by a Rwandan constituent before the scale of the genocide came to wider public attention; he also recalled receiving "tens rather than hundreds" of letters from constituents. Obviously the vagaries of time may have led some to fail to recall accurately the number of letters they received on one particular subject over 17 years ago and responses from around three per cent of total MPs from 1994 does not allow us to make any claims of statistical significance, but here is a suggestion of an apparent lack of public interest. Against this Andy Bearpark, Head of Emergency Aid at the ODA told *The Independent* in June 1994, at the time of the Tanzanian refugee crisis, that "We've had an enormous postbag on Rwanda. It shows that Africa is not being marginalised."¹⁷⁰ Whilst this evidence is not entirely consistent, it does to some extent support the mechanics of the CNN effect; there were public calls for the government to do more and these seem to have come after media coverage of suffering during the refugee crisis.

In terms of letters sent to newspapers, in May and June less than 30 letters were published in total in *The Times*, *Guardian*, *Independent* and *Financial Times*; six of these were written on behalf of charities and one was from the MP Tony Worthington. Whilst obviously it would be wrong to expect everyone with any interest in the genocide to write to the newspapers, 30 is not that many; at least twice as many letters were published relating to Bosnia in the same period. However, this number does compare favourably to other humanitarian crises in which the British intervened; for example, in the month before the deployment of Operation Provide Comfort (Iraq) the author was able to identify 21 letters in the broadsheet press, and in the three months before the deployment of British troops to

¹⁶⁹ The author contacted 123 MPs by e-mail. These were the MPs from 1994 that were still in Parliament in 2011.

¹⁷⁰ Richard Dowden, "Britons Donate £4.25 million to Appeal," *The Independent*, 16 June 1994, p.13.

Angola in 1995 only three letters were identified.¹⁷¹ There also seems to have been some public demand for the media to report the story of Rwanda. For example, Jeremy Thompson who covered Rwanda for Sky News recalls being “asked to report daily for several weeks, often with many live broadcasts each day”.¹⁷² A commercial media enterprise would unlikely devote such coverage to a news story that the public were not expressing an interest in.

So whilst there is evidence of public interest in the crisis and also some evidence of members of the public demanding a response from government, it appears that the public responded more strongly to the refugee crisis than the actual genocide. For example, the US poll data shows Rwanda was considered a key issue only once the refugee crisis developed; letters to the media were more often related to the plight of refugees than about stopping the genocide; and, it was the ODA, not the FCO, who received the “enormous postbag”. The very significant response to the DEC campaign, noted above, also demonstrates that the public was moved to respond to the refugees in a way that they were apparently not for the genocide. The secondary literature explored in Chapter 1 can help explain this.

As we have seen, when it comes to foreign policy the public, due to their own lack of direct experience of an issue, are generally led by the media. The way the media reports a story therefore influences how the public interpret it; effectively “media frames organise the world for consumers”.¹⁷³ In the first few weeks the genocide was portrayed as tribal, as anarchy, as historical and inevitable and most significantly as unstoppable. Media suggestions that there was little that could be done to halt the ancient enmity between Hutu and Tutsi would certainly have influenced public perceptions of the crisis. By portraying the crisis as a civil war and concentrating on the grotesque, the media also made the Rwandans seem responsible for their own plight. As the foreign correspondent Martin Bell has argued, such reporting does not allow a reader to get close to the story and as such there was little

¹⁷¹ Author’s survey using LexisNexis database. For Operation Provide Comfort search term was “Kurd” and period was 6 March to 6 April 1991. For Angola, search term was “Angola” and period was 14 January 1995 to 14 April 1995.

¹⁷² Author’s e-mail correspondence with Jeremy Thompson. 4 October 2011.

¹⁷³ Wanta and Yu-Wei, “The Agenda Setting Effects of International News Coverage,” p.253.

chance of the public empathising with the plight of ordinary Tutsi.¹⁷⁴ Without this empathy, as the psychologist Hans-Werner Bierhoff argues, bystanders are less likely to intervene;¹⁷⁵ or as in this case the public were less likely to demand intervention. The public were also able to conclude that there was nothing that could be done, or the cost of intervention was too high. The end result seems to have been that the public defensively redefined the crisis; it was civil war, the Rwandans were responsible for their own fate, there was nothing that could be done and as seen in the US poll data support for intervening in the civil war was very low.

In contrast the public responded positively to the refugee crisis. The refugee crisis certainly generated a spike in media coverage, which in itself would be enough to make the public interpret the crisis as more important.¹⁷⁶ The media also facilitated a public response; for example, details on how to donate were included in a number of newspapers and on both ITV and BBC, and the media showed how money was being used in refugee camps. The images of homeless mothers and starving children also meant that the public could empathise more easily with the victims. Suddenly the public seemed to be travelling down the path towards bystander intervention that Latane and Darley set out;¹⁷⁷ they noticed the crisis, identified it as an emergency and took personal responsibility for responding to it. This response manifested itself as both donations to charity and calls for the government to act. This was no longer a public that could be described as uninterested.

Was Parliament Interested?

In *A People Betrayed: The role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* Linda Melvern wrote "In the House of Commons there was no attempt to address the issue [of Rwanda]".¹⁷⁸ Whilst she is correct to suggest that it was a number of weeks before Parliament showed an

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in Susan Carruthers, *The Media at War: Communication and Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 2000), p.236.

¹⁷⁵ Bierhoff, *Prosocial Behaviour*, p.196.

¹⁷⁶ Wanta and Yu-Wei, "The Agenda Setting Effects of International News Coverage," p.250.

¹⁷⁷ Latane and Darley, "Social Determinants of Bystander Intervention in Emergencies," pp.14-5.

¹⁷⁸ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p.231.

interest in the crisis, Parliament's response was not as limited as she suggests. Parliament was not disinterested in the crisis.

Michael Clarke reminds us that in the UK, "Parliament has no constitutional rights to be consulted about foreign affairs and no constitutional role at all in foreign policy making".¹⁷⁹ He continues that this results in very few MPs having anything more than a passing knowledge of foreign affairs; only 20 to 30, he suggests, could genuinely call themselves foreign affairs experts.¹⁸⁰ There are also few mechanisms for MPs to hold the government to account over foreign policy. In terms of formal scrutiny this task falls to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee; however its scope is fundamentally retrospective. It would be very rare for the Committee to comment on contemporary issues and it certainly made no assessment of Rwanda in 1994.

A second route available to MPs and Lords is to ask questions of ministers with responsibility for foreign policy. *Erskine May*, the politicians' handbook of parliamentary procedure, informs MPs that "the purpose of a question is to obtain information or to press for action".¹⁸¹ By asking a question an MP is able to highlight subjects that they consider important and worthy of further government explanation. Questions can then be considered a barometer of parliamentary interest in an issue. Whilst in this two month period there was a steady flow of questions, more in June in fact than there were on Bosnia, with questions being raised most days that Parliament was in session, these came only from a handful of MPs, Labour's Tony Worthington, who was one of Clarke's handful of foreign policy experts, in particular. If questions are considered a barometer of interest, ministers would have concluded that whilst there was strong interest amongst some MPs, overall there was limited pressure to do more.

The third avenue available to MPs to address foreign policy, now and in 1994, is through an adjournment debate. Such debates come at the end of a parliamentary day and

¹⁷⁹ Clarke, *British External Policy Making*, p.116.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p.118

¹⁸¹ Quoted in Paul Silk, *How Parliament Works, 4th Edition*. (London: Longman, 1998), p.176.

provide an opportunity for a backbencher to question a minister in much more detail than possible in normal questions. However, the right to lead an adjournment debate is made by ballot and as such each backbencher can expect to lead only one per year and then not at a time of their choosing.¹⁸² When Worthington was able to raise the issue of Rwanda in such a debate, he himself noted that “we are able to discuss the issue only because of my luck in a raffle”.¹⁸³ That there was not a debate sooner is not then evidence of lack of interest, but rather a demonstration of the parliamentary system. In fact a search of Hansard suggests that Rwanda received much more parliamentary attention than Angola did in 1995 when British troops were deployed again as part of a UN peacekeeping mission.

However, whilst it may be difficult for backbench MPs to bring forward a debate on a foreign affairs issue, it would be within the power of the Opposition to do so. As Robert Blackburn *et al* suggest one of the key roles of the Opposition is to “take the initiative in seeking to bring to the public’s attention aspects of the Government’s policies and administration which would not otherwise be brought before Parliament.”¹⁸⁴ However, as the Shadow Cabinet papers show, even the Labour front bench was not able to force the debate on Rwanda through a PNQ without the Speaker’s approval. The issue was included in an Opposition Day debate of 22 June and would have come earlier had it not been for John Smith’s death. The only other public avenue available to the Opposition was to highlight Rwanda at PMQs, where the Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity, twice a week, to ask the Prime Minister three questions. Whilst one can argue that if Labour truly thought Rwanda an important issue they would have raised the subject at PMQs, this does in some ways misunderstand the dramatic nature of PMQs. Whilst questions to the Prime Minister should focus on the key issues of the day, in truth the Opposition leader will typically ask questions intended to embarrass the government and receive media attention – Rwanda fell into neither of these categories.

¹⁸² The Speaker exercises their right to personally select the speaker at the adjournment debate on Thursday nights; so could therefore stimulate a debate on a particularly pressing issue by selecting a backbencher known to have an interest in the issue.

¹⁸³ Hansard. HC Deb, vol.244, c.309.

¹⁸⁴ Robert Blackburn *et al*, *Parliament: Functions, Practice and Procedures* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1998), p.338.

The difficulty of actually winning the opportunity to ask an oral question or lead an adjournment debate aside, there were a number of other relevant issues which affected how much attention Rwanda received in Parliament. First of these is the fact that the House of Commons was in recess twice in the period of the genocide; first from 1 to 11 April for Easter and then 27 May to 14 June for campaigning for elections to the European Parliament. Elections themselves were another factor that distracted attention from Rwanda. The Labour Party archives show clearly that throughout April and May the Shadow Cabinet was heavily focussed on campaigning for these elections, as well as local elections and a number of by-elections. The third factor to note is the sudden death of Labour leader John Smith on 12 May. Smith's unexpected death clearly affected the Labour Party significantly, both at a personal level but also by refocusing much of Labour's attention inwards until Tony Blair was elected leader on 21 July.

The various factors combine to mean that we should not actually be surprised that Rwanda did not receive more attention in Parliament. The recesses, the various elections and the difficulties of actually finding time on Parliament's agenda meant that there was little opportunity for debate. We do know though that behind the scenes Labour did try to force a debate and this was refused by the Speaker, Betty Boothroyd. As we have seen Shadow Cabinet Ministers also wrote to their opposite numbers questioning why more was not being done by the government. Hansard also shows that a number of MPs called for the UK to provide logistical support to the UN mission and asked for the government to put more pressure on the UN to speed up its response, some even called for direct British involvement. Taking all these points into account it is not clear what more Parliament could really have done.

What More Could the British Government Have Done?

If we are to judge Britain's responsibility for the crisis, we must again turn to the question of what more the government could have done; we must, as Krosiak suggested,

measure their capacity to respond. This question can be split down to diplomatic efforts and capacity for military intervention.

The Diplomatic Effort

As the British focus throughout May and June was on achieving a ceasefire, the government could arguably have played a more active role in this process, rather than delegating it to the UN. However, it is hard to see what role the UK would have performed. As we have seen, the FCO did not have any meaningful relationship with the members of the Rwandan interim government (remember the British Ambassador to Rwanda had spent only one weekend in the country in three years). The FCO view was that they were not positioned to compel the interim government to move towards a ceasefire. They would also have been aware that France maintained links with the government in Rwanda and we can reasonably assume that the FCO were happy to leave negotiations with the Rwandan leaders to the French. Nor does it seem that the UK's relationship with the RPF was sufficiently close to have been influential in encouraging that party to the negotiating table. Numerous reports from Edward Clay in Uganda show that he did not have free access to the RPF and keeping close to the UK was not a RPF priority; Clay wrote in one telegram "We have tried but failed to contact RPF spokesman in Kampala" before continuing "Like you, we rely largely on Reuters and press reports about the situation in Rwanda".¹⁸⁵ Certainly the British government continued to publicly call for a ceasefire, but there is no reason to believe that they were in any way well placed to have had any more success in achieving a negotiated end to the fighting than anyone else.

Sending home diplomats is a standard way of expressing objections to the policies of a particular government and in the case of Rwanda would have demonstrated the isolation of the interim government from the international community. A number of authors, including de Waal and Omaar of African Rights,¹⁸⁶ have for example criticised the US

¹⁸⁵ FCO. Telegram from Edward Clay, Kampala, to FCO, London, 3 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹⁸⁶ De Waal and Omaar, "The Genocide in Rwanda," p.158.

government for not dismissing the Rwandan Ambassador to Washington and his staff sooner (this was eventually announced on 14 July). No such course of action was available to the UK as, at the time, there was no Rwandan embassy in London. The UK could however, have argued for the Rwandan Ambassador to the UN to be dismissed from the Security Council, to which, in one of those coincidences of fate, the country had been elected on 1 January 1994 (Tony Worthington indeed suggested this in Parliament on 24 May). This move would have had two effects; it would have firstly indicated that the international community did not condone the actions of the Rwandan government and secondly would have stopped Rwandan officials having access to and attempting to influence the private discussions of the Security Council about how the UN should respond to the crisis. In one telegram to London, David Hannay expressed his frustration that the Rwandans were able to use the Security Council as “a mouthpiece for their faction”. Hannay wrote:

Highlights, and low points, of the Council debate on Rwanda. Rwandan Foreign Minister makes offensive speech blaming four centuries of Tutsi domination, and Ugandan interference, for Rwanda’s problems. Puts responsibility for the massacres on the RPF. New Zealand reacts sharply, questioning Bicomumpaka’s right to sit at the Council table.¹⁸⁷

However, whilst at least some individuals within the FCO would have liked to have taken some form of action, Hannay explains that such a move would have been almost impossible to achieve:

[Rwanda] had been elected [to the Security Council] by the General Assembly. No provision exists to expel a member. Personally I felt strongly that they should at least have been suspended, but the Russians were desperately opposed to this and the Americans were not keen. There was concern over the precedent this would have set. Remember, we were not too far from the end of the Cold War. There was some fear that such a precedent could be abused.¹⁸⁸

With hindsight it is easy to dismiss this Cold War dimension; however, at the time it clearly was incredibly relevant. Hannay was clear that despite behind the scenes discussions of Security Council members, the Russians feared such a move would create a precedent that

¹⁸⁷ FCO. Telegram from Sir David Hannay, New York, to FCO London, 18 May 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹⁸⁸ Author’s interview with Sir David Hannay. 23 April 2010.

the western allies would at some point abuse and would have vetoed any move to expel Rwanda.¹⁸⁹ Dismissal was then not a viable option.

Other diplomatic measures that were never properly considered were economic sanctions, the public naming and condemnation of the leaders of the genocide or the public threat of indictment of perpetrators. Given the limited nature of trade and aid between the UK and Rwanda, unilateral economic sanctions would have been worthless. There was though no reason why the British government could not have brought these potential measures to the UN or European Union for discussion. However, there is no evidence that British diplomats did do this. It seems that instead British diplomats, like other members of the UN, the media and NGOs, got caught up in the calls for a ceasefire or the discussions of the need for a UN force. The misinterpretation of the crisis as civil war made this approach almost inevitable and meant that other diplomatic measures, which may have had more impact, were not considered. In this respect then it can be said that the British government could have done more, but their failure to do so is explained by a fundamental misunderstanding of the crisis.

Military Intervention

Looking now at military intervention what more could the UK have done? First is the question of whether frontline British troops could have been deployed as part of UNAMIR II. Linda Melvern correctly suggests that in 1994 the UK had two military units that could have been rapidly mobilised for deployment overseas - the 5 Airborne Brigade and the Special Air Service (SAS);¹⁹⁰ however, there were other units that were also available that could have been deployed. The SAS, the army's special forces unit, was not really suited to the proposed peacekeeping mission if for no other reason than the fact that it did not have the necessary manpower; the SAS only consists of one regiment (approximately 400 men) and at least one quarter of the force was (and continues to be) on permanent stand by in an anti-terrorist role. The SAS are also known to have been committed in Bosnia and

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p.232.

Northern Ireland. Any suggestion that they could have been sent to Rwanda should then be dismissed. Elements of the 5 Airborne Brigade, however, could have been deployed. The Brigade was made up of two battalions from the Parachute Regiment and various support units (a battalion being approximately 550 men). In 1994 some of 5 Airborne's units, including one of the Parachute battalions, were maintained on a state of readiness of five days (meaning that from receipt of orders deployment in theatre could be achieved in under a week). There are however reasons that made deployment of this Brigade unlikely. First it cannot be ignored that when British troops did eventually deploy to Rwanda in August 1994 they depended on the US Air Force for airlift capability; without this support the deployment of 5 Airborne Brigade at this stage would have been much slower if not impossible. Secondly, 5 Airborne Brigade was in 1994 the army's rapid response force. Given the British involvement in Bosnia, which at any time may have required reinforcement to ensure the troops' safety, the MOD would have been less than eager to send a combat element of this force to Africa; to do so would have increased the risk faced by troops already deployed.

In addition to 5 Airborne Brigade there were, however, a further eight infantry battalions that were not deployed on active service (including Northern Ireland), recently returned from active service, or training for imminent deployment and could therefore have potentially been deployed to Rwanda.¹⁹¹ Additionally two of the three Royal Marine Commandos were available to deploy.¹⁹² The Royal Marines particularly had experience of peacekeeping operations, having served as part of Operation Provide Comfort, and as would be shown in October 1994, when 45 Commando deployed to Kuwait to deter a threat of another Iraqi invasion (Operation Driver), were able to deploy overseas on very short notice.

The question of ability to deploy to Rwanda though must be addressed before simply accepting that British troops could have been sent. As Melvern notes 5 Airborne Brigade was on five day movement orders, and certainly when British troops did deploy to Rwanda in July at least some units were in country within a matter of days; however this

¹⁹¹ These were: The Royal Scots, The Green Howards, The Cheshire Regiment, The King's Own Scottish Borders Regiment, The Queen's Own Highlanders, The Gordon Highlanders, The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the UK based battalion of The Gurkha Rifles.

¹⁹² 42 and 45 Royal Marine Commando

movement was largely reliant on the US Air Force. Other units would certainly have taken longer than 5 Airborne. Major General Andrew Farquhar, in 1994 the Commanding Officer of the infantry battalion The Green Howards, believes that assuming airlift capability was available, his battalion would have been able to deploy a command group within 48 hours, a lead company within seven days (a company being around 120 men) and the whole battalion within 30 days.¹⁹³ He continues that given their experience in Northern Ireland, British soldiers were more experienced in peacekeeping than most other armies and as such would have required little special training or reorganisation. As further proof of the speed of deployment, in October 1994 over 1,000 Royal Marines deployed to Kuwait as part of Operation Driver in just ten days. Whilst a deployment to Kuwait would have been much quicker than one to Rwanda, given the differences in infrastructure, it does seem feasible to suggest that practically British troops could have deployed to Rwanda, in sizeable numbers, in around one to two months. However, such claims are all dependent upon the availability of air lift capacity. The deployment of British troops in August demonstrated that the RAF alone did not have the capacity to move large numbers of troops and equipment to Rwanda on its own. Without the support of the US Air Force, any deployment of British troops would have been much delayed; in May and June, as we have seen the Pentagon was adamantly opposed to any role for the US military in Rwanda.

However, despite their availability, in this period no British troops were volunteered to either UNAMIR or Operation Turquoise. As we have seen Malcolm Rifkind informed his Opposition counterpart that the UN did not make any request to the UK to provide front line troops; instead the UN requested Britain provide logistical support. Whilst this may be true, Melvern suggests it is not,¹⁹⁴ alone it does seem a rather unconvincing explanation of why Britain did not send troops to Rwanda. Britain may not have been asked directly to provide troops, but the government was certainly aware that the UN was desperately trying to find 5,500 soldiers; Britain had after all supported the

¹⁹³ Author's e-mail correspondence with Major General Andrew Farquhar. 5 October 2011.

¹⁹⁴ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p.232.

enlargement of UNAMIR. If there had been the will amongst the British political elite to do something practical in Rwanda, infantry troops were available and could have been volunteered even if they had not been requested. Such a deployment would have had a massively positive impact on UNAMIR II; the British troops would have been well trained, well equipped and certainly some were able to deploy relatively quickly. A British deployment may also have encouraged other nations to provide troops. Whilst we must acknowledge Alan Kuperman's very convincing argument that given the speed and scale of the genocide a deployment of troops in early June would probably have been too late to save the majority of Tutsi;¹⁹⁵ if Britain had sent troops at this time, some lives, probably running into the tens of thousands, would have been saved.

Even without British troops being deployed it has to be questioned whether the government could have done more to speed up the deployment of UNAMIR II. First they could have been less stringent about deployment being conditional on a ceasefire and secondly they could have accelerated the offer of the 50 trucks. Looking first at the need for a ceasefire it is easy to see why the British government was so adamant about this precondition. As we have seen, the British were concerned about the reputation of UN peacekeeping generally should the mission to Rwanda fail. The government seems to have been genuinely concerned that the deaths of more UN troops, so soon after the Somalia fiasco and the Belgian deaths in Rwanda back in April, would have seriously undermined the credibility of neutral peacekeeping. The government also continued to believe that there was nothing that could meaningfully be done while the war still raged. The UN mission, they reasoned, would only be successful once fighting stopped; Somalia had shown that the UN could not stand in the middle of a war. The insistence on there being a ceasefire in place was then not just a way of delaying the deployment of UNAMIR but was the government's genuine belief on how the crisis would best be solved. It must also not be forgotten that the Americans would have, and did, oppose any attempts to deploy without a ceasefire being in

¹⁹⁵ Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*.

place first. Therefore, even if the British had removed this pre-condition UNAMIR still would probably not have deployed any sooner.

With regard the second issue of why it took so long for the UK to approve the offer of the Bedford trucks there appears to be no obvious explanation and the British government must face some criticism for this procrastination. The UK, like other countries, was formally asked what equipment they could provide on 16 May (and possibly informally even earlier); yet the offer of the vehicles was not made to the Secretariat until 16 June,¹⁹⁶ a whole 30 days later. However, even then the UN did not accept the offer immediately, responding that they required some time to consider the offer whilst they awaited final equipment requests from the troop contributing nations. It would seem a safe assumption that these various delays were driven largely by bureaucratic inefficiency, as the UN's request passed from the mission in New York to the FCO in London to the MOD and back through the same long and tortuous chain – an indication perhaps that there was no senior figure in the British government, at this stage, championing a quick and positive response that could have bypassed these steps. If the vehicles had been made available sooner it is possible that at least one of the African battalions that would eventually serve with UNAMIR II could have deployed sooner; there is no way of telling what the impact of this would have been but we can reasonably assume that some Rwandan lives would have been saved.

Summary

To call Britain an uninterested bystander does not seem fair. Certainly the government were not particularly proactive in intervening in this period, but there was interest in the crisis and both the government and public response to the flow of refugees into Tanzania was quick and significant. But the response to the genocide was less impressive. For much of the period the government believed that someone else should lead the response, whether that be the UN or other African nations; Britain was after all, along with France, already leading the intervention in Bosnia. Whilst the media, Parliament, the

¹⁹⁶ Hannay made the offer to the UN the day after receiving the telegram from London.

Labour Party and NGOs all called on the government to provide logistical support and press the UN to speed up the deployment of UNAMIR II, no one seriously suggested that Britain should actually intervene directly. The government could have done more in this period, certainly in terms of military intervention – the failure to offer troops or the delay in providing the trucks did cost lives. But the UK was no different in this respect from other countries; certainly the government was less hostile to intervention than the Clinton Administration. There was also a gradual shift in direction in this period; having supported the partial withdrawal of UNAMIR, by the end of June Britain was actively encouraging African nations to send troops to Rwanda, and as we will see in the next chapter, by August Britain was itself the second largest troop contributor to UNAMIR.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BYSTANDER WHO DID TOO LITTLE TOO LATE?

1 JULY to 31 AUGUST 1994

Having approved UNAMIR II back in May, the international community, with the exception of France, was not quick to go much further. In the UK, trucks had been offered to the mission and aid was being donated to the refugee camps in Tanzania but there was little serious consideration of doing more. However, in July this suddenly changed; Britain, and various other western nations, agreed to send troops to Rwanda and massively ramped up the level of aid flowing to the region. However, the historian Sir Adam Roberts describes this response as “too little too late”.¹ This chapter explores the change in policy in July and August, in order firstly to address Tony Blair’s suggestion that the UK did not respond to the crisis and secondly to try to understand the motivation and mechanics of the foreign policy decision making process. In line with previous chapters it explores media coverage of the crisis and then looks at parliamentary debate. The chapter then moves on to consider the UK’s decision to deploy troops to Rwanda as part of UNAMIR, before looking at the role of NGOs and the ODA. The chapter concludes with a review of Britain’s involvement in three other peacekeeping missions, in Iraq, Libya and Bosnia, to determine whether these help us better understand the intervention in Rwanda and answer the question of whether more could have been done – was the UK the bystander that did too little too late?

Media Coverage

By July Rwanda was almost fully open to journalists. In the north and east, reporters were able to travel relatively easily accompanied by Rwandan Patriotic Front guides; in the west, the French controlled zone was now safe; and the refugee camps in neighbouring Tanzania and Zaire continued to provide newsworthy stories. Only the small

¹ Adam Roberts, “The UN and Humanitarian Intervention,” in *Humanitarian Intervention and International Relations*, edited by Jennifer Welsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.71.

area in the north-west, which the interim Hutu government continued to hold, remained unsafe and inaccessible (it was of course in this area that genocide continued). This easing of access meant that coverage of the crisis grew in quantitative if not qualitative terms throughout July; the sudden explosion of journalists covering Rwanda in no way helped clarify or better explain the crisis to the public. Instead as Mel McNulty argues “the western news consumer was fed a series of unlinked reports about seemingly unrelated crises, which generally fitted into the typical African mould of biblical catastrophes.”²

In the first two weeks of July, media focus shifted from the refugee crisis in Tanzania to western Rwanda as journalists entered the recently opened up French controlled safe zone. This led, for a short period at least, to fairly extensive coverage of the RPF’s continuing advance, and a potential standoff between French and RPF troops when the two met. The RPF’s objection to France’s involvement in the west of the country was of course based on France’s history of supporting Habyarimana’s regime. The RPF viewed Operation Turquoise not as a humanitarian mission but an attempt by the French government to prevent the RPF achieving an outright victory against the old Hutu government. In early July a war of words developed, with both France and the RPF demanding that the other did not interfere in its mission. The media, sensing the potential for open conflict between the two, reported this mini-crisis enthusiastically; notably, despite the media cynicism of Operation Turquoise only a few weeks earlier, it was the French who were now portrayed as the heroes in this drama as they attempted to protect refugees from the advancing, and villainous, RPF. For example, Sam Kiley wrote in *The Times* “French forces came under attack from the Rwandan Patriotic Front yesterday during an operation to rescue the front’s own Tutsi supporters”.³

This particular angle was part of a noticeable shift in reporting that suddenly started presenting the Hutu as victims and Tutsi dominated RPF as aggressors. Whether this was because journalists in the west now saw firsthand the suffering of Hutu refugees or because

² McNulty, “Media Ethnicization and the International Response to War,” p.270.

³ Sam Kiley, “Rwanda Rebels Fire on French Force,” *The Times*, 4 July 1994.

of deliberate media efforts to achieve some level of objectivity in reporting the crisis is not clear; the eminent journalist Martin Bell suggests it may have been the latter.⁴ Having reported the atrocities committed by the Hutu militia since April, the media now seemed desperate to identify and report examples of Tutsi violence; almost as if editors could not believe that only one side was committing atrocities. Mark Doyle, who reported for the BBC, for example recalls:

I used to take regular calls from BBC editors in London asking me to make sure that I 'put the other side'. The implication, of course, was that the RPF must be killing as many as the Interahamwe and the government army and I should be reporting this.⁵

The print media similarly assumed that the RPF must be either carrying out atrocities or would as soon as they reached areas where Hutu control had been strong. Robert Block, on the front page of *The Independent*, for example, was not exceptional:

To the east an angry rebel army pressed ahead with its offensive ... The speed of the assault on Butare [Rwanda's second city] led to a daring French mission yesterday to evacuate 600 Rwandan orphans and displaced children, and 100 nuns and priests ... Hutus in government-controlled areas say the RPF is killing Hutus in retribution for attacks on the minority Tutsi population ... Desperate [Hutu] men begged rides from journalists and French troops as they left the city.⁶

The Herald similarly quoted the commander of the French troops in Rwanda as having predicted "If Kigali falls there will be massacres".⁷

Mirroring the sudden criticism of the RPF was the media's sudden sympathy for the suffering of the Hutu refugees that were beginning to flee westwards in the face of the RPF advance. Whilst the reporting of the refugee crisis would reach a crescendo in the second half of July and into early August, the media began reporting the potential for a crisis from the second week of July: "Hundreds of thousands of people are fleeing a rebel offensive in

⁴ Bell, "TV News," p.10.

⁵ Mark Doyle, "Reporting the Genocide," in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* edited by Allan Thompson. (London: Pluto Press, 2007), p.154.

⁶ Robert Block, "Entire City Flees the Rwandan Rebels," *The Independent*, 4 July 1994, p.1.

⁷ Anon, "Rebels Fire on Evacuation Convoy," *The Herald*, 4 July 1994, p.1.

northwest Rwanda, creating a fresh humanitarian crisis”;⁸ “The first wave of refugees stripped the crops from the fields. Those following behind must often make do with roots, bulbs and leaves that make them sick.”⁹ Whilst media coverage continued to depict Rwanda as war savaged and unstable, there was a definite shift in the second week of July away from reporting the war to reporting the impending refugee crisis. Suddenly the more empathetic word “refugee” became more prevalent in the press than “rebel”, “troops” or “soldier”.¹⁰ Such a change in language, Piers Robinson argues, reminds people of the humanity of the victims and the similarity to themselves, making some form of bystander response more likely.¹¹ It also gave the reader the impression that the Hutu were in no way responsible for the position they found themselves in, thereby, as Bierhoff suggests, increasing the likelihood of people empathising with their suffering.¹²

This shift added to the confusion of the reporting of the overall crisis. As McNulty suggests, in the eyes of the western media consumer Rwanda was a collection of separate crises: there had been a civil war, a massacre, refugees were in Tanzania, then bodies washed up in on the shores of Lake Victoria, then in July the war was being won by the rebels and there were still more refugees. Newspapers readers and television audiences especially could be easily excused for not really understanding the crisis and whether it was the Hutu or Tutsi who were the victims, or indeed both or neither – maybe they were as bad as each other. As both Mike Woolridge and Fergal Keane¹³ suggest is typical of reporting of Africa, journalists failed to contextualise the various elements of the crisis in their reporting; instead the reader/viewer was presented with unlinked “snapshots”¹⁴ and the dominant snapshot by the middle of July was of the suffering Hutu. Over the next few weeks this became even more apparent as the Goma refugee crisis unfolded.

⁸ Guy Dimore, “Rwandans Flee Big Rebel Push,” *The Independent*, 11 July 1994, p.12.

⁹ Chris McGreal, “Rwanda’s Latest Nomads Flee Advancing Gunfire,” *The Guardian*, 13 July 1994, p.11.

¹⁰ Author’s own survey using LexisNexis. In the week 11 to 17 July, “refugee” appeared 131 times in articles also mentioning Rwanda; this compares to 62 mentions of the word “rebel”, 29 of “troops” and 26 of “soldier”.

¹¹ Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, p.138.

¹² Bierhoff, *Prosocial Behaviour*, p.196.

¹³ Woolridge, “Reporting Africa,” p.371. Fergal Keane, unpublished lecture delivered at Northumbria University, 10 June 2011.

¹⁴ Woolridge, “Reporting Africa,” p.371.

The Media in Goma

From around 17 July the reporting of Rwanda changed completely, the new focus was solely on the Goma refugee crisis. Fearing the advance of the RPF, huge proportions of the Hutu population, including the genocidal militia and the army, moved westwards en-masse, stopping first in the French safe zone and then travelling further west into Zaire, particularly the town of Goma. As many as one million Hutu became refugees in the second half of July. This mass movement of people again made Rwanda front page news; in the week 18 to 24 July the crisis appeared on the front page of *The Guardian* 5 times, *The Independent* 3 times and even *The Evening Standard* once (the first time that the *Standard* led with Rwanda since the first week of genocide back in April).¹⁵ The refugee story was also extensively covered on television news, partly because it was so easy for journalists to travel to the refugee camps and the images made strikingly good television; but also, as Mark Colvin of the Australian Broadcasting Corporations points out, because aid agencies practised a policy of encouraging journalists to cover the story so as to generate public interest.¹⁶ The academic Susan Moeller acknowledges the same point; she recalls one television image that demonstrated the sudden influx of journalists to Goma: “One showed Rwandans dying somewhere near Goma. The camera panned out toward ten other cameras surrounding and filming the dying”.¹⁷ There would eventually be over 500 journalists based in Goma, whilst the number actually in Rwanda remained fairly low.¹⁸

Two particular aspects are evident in the reporting of this period; both fall into what McNulty describes as the media’s tendency to report Africa through “ready recourse to cliché”.¹⁹ First is the frequent description of the crisis as being Biblical, which McNulty accepts is typical of reporting Africa. *The Times* for example described the crisis as being an

¹⁵ *The Guardian*: 18, 20, 22, 23, 24 July. *Independent*: 20, 23, 24 July. *Evening Standard* 19 July. The database used does not record which page articles from *The Times* appeared on.

¹⁶ Mark Colvin, “Letter: Reality and Rwanda,” *The Guardian*, 6 August 1994, p.24.

¹⁷ Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue*, p.295.

¹⁸ JEEAR, “International Response to Conflict, Vol. III,” p.36.

¹⁹ McNulty, “Media Ethnicization and the International Response,” p.270.

exodus of “biblical proportions” on 20 July;²⁰ on 23 July *The Guardian* in a leading article wrote “The hell fires are burning in Goma”;²¹ and, the *Daily Mail* perhaps employed the most exaggerated biblical cliché with the headline “Exodus of Lost Tribe: Refugee Scenes of Biblical Proportions Overwhelm Aid Effort”.²² Such terminology however, had the potential to distort the public’s, and indeed politicians’, understanding of the crisis. Words such as “exodus” and “lost tribe” were not neutral; instead they recalled the story of Moses leading the Israelites to freedom pursued by their former Egyptian enslavers – this kind of reporting easily led to the incorrect assumption that the Hutu were the wronged party fleeing the murderous Tutsi. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw also argues that describing events in these biblical terms, which he points out was also the case in the reporting of the 1984 Ethiopian famine, strips the human responsibility from the crisis; rather than being a human disaster it becomes one that must have divine causes and one therefore likely to stimulate a bystander response.²³ To represent the movement of Hutu across Rwanda, fleeing the pursuing RPF as being in any way similar to the Moses story was of course to ignore the previous months of history when the Hutu had been enacting genocide on the Tutsi minority. The media representation ignored this and projected the Hutu refugees very much into the role of innocent and powerless victims suffering their own hell.

The second aspect of the reporting in this period is entirely in line with the findings of the 2001 report by the charity VSO, *Live Aid Legacy*. The main conclusion of the report was headed “starving children with flies in their eyes” and found that “the British public strongly associate the developing world with doom-laden images of famine, disaster and western-aid ... these images are still top of our minds and maintain a powerful grip on the British psyche”.²⁴ It was these doom-laden images of starving children that were to dominate the coverage of Rwanda in late July. The coverage started with stories of families

²⁰ Anon, “Devastated Rwanda,” *The Times*, 20 July 1994. Inigo Gilmore, “World Agencies Helpless as Refugees Pour out of Rwanda,” *The Times*, 20 July 1994.

²¹ Anon, “Leading Article: The Hell of Reproach that is Goma,” *The Guardian*, 23 July 1994, p.24.

²² Anon, “Exodus of Lost Tribe,” *Daily Mail*, 20 July 1994, p.12.

²³ Shaw, “Historical Frames,” p.359.

²⁴ VSO, “The Live Aid Legacy: The Developing World Through British Eyes – A Research Report,” 2001, p.3.

separated in the flow of refugees; one article in *The Independent* was fairly typical of the heart wrenching stories that journalists were witnessing in Goma and choosing to report:

Children ran screaming in terror, tears pouring down their cheeks. Women desperately cried out the names of the children they had lost in the pandemonium ... A man wandered hopelessly in the crowd with a piece of paper mounted on a stick. It gave his name and said: 'Reward of 500 Rwandan francs offered for anyone who finds my eight-year-old son, Gashore.'²⁵

This was one of the few occasions that a journalist actually quoted a Rwandan's name in their article; whilst coverage of the genocide had been completely depersonalised, the reporting of the refugee crisis was certainly becoming more human. The focus on the dead and the dying though soon took over. Two articles from the *Daily Mail* were fairly representative: "[M]ore than 100 lay dead in the dust. One baby slept beside the bloodstained body of her mother ... Starving survivors scratched among the bodies for single grains of maize or lentils;"²⁶ and "One young boy had a baby strapped to his back who was clearly close to death. A flicker of life appeared in the infant's eyes after a Red Cross nurse went along the row of seven children, slowly pouring water into their mouths."²⁷ The outbreak of cholera in the camps only heightened this lack of balance in the reporting. For example, one article in *The Independent* ran "Out of a refugee population of 1 million [a cholera epidemic] would mean 5,000 to 10,000 deaths within days. Cholera can kill in hours. One refugee family said their son died within two hours of falling ill,"²⁸ - there was no mention that the average *daily* death toll during the genocide had exceeded 10,000. This reporting, that time and time again centred on the suffering of the children, heightened the empathy readers felt for the Hutu refugees and reinforced the status of Hutu as victims. Only a handful of times did the press recall, or try to explain, the horror of the genocide in which many of the Hutu, children included, had participated.

²⁵ Anon, "Mayhem as Rwandans Stampede into Zaire," *The Independent*, 18 July 1994, p.9.

²⁶ Anon, "100,000 in Death Run from Rwandan Haven," *The Daily Mail*, 19 July 1994, p.11.

²⁷ Anon, "Exodus of Lost Tribe," *The Daily Mail*, 20 July 1994, p.12.

²⁸ Guy Dinmore, "Cholera Fear for Rwanda Refugees," *The Independent*, 21 July 1994, p.13.

Television coverage was not much different. A study by the Glasgow Media Group focuses specifically on the portrayal of the refugee crisis on television in late July.²⁹ The study shows that television reports of Central Africa in July were almost double what they had been in April and May at the peak of the genocide. More significantly the study notes, that whilst a lack of context in the coverage of wars and humanitarian crises is not unusual, there was an almost *complete* failure of the television news to contextualise and explain this particular crisis; it concludes:

The media were drawn to the images of chaos and death in Goma, which were so compelling for their audiences, but there was much less coverage of what had caused the exodus to Goma and what had happened to Rwanda's Tutsi people ... Many British viewers – who had no previous knowledge of Central Africa – saw little or nothing of the genocide, but were given very extensive coverage of the refugee crisis.³⁰

Drawing on personal experience, George Alagiah, the first BBC journalist to report from Goma, reaches similar conclusions. He recalls working 18 hour days in order to “feed the beast that is the newsroom on a headline story” and of deliberating whether to present the “exodus as primarily a humanitarian or political problem”,³¹ he opted for humanitarian. Unlike most in the media however, Alagiah publicly admits that he “lost the plot” when from 20 July he began for a week to concentrate on the risk of cholera in the camps. For at least a week in the print media and on television, Alagiah says, “the genocide was forgotten, and cholera became the story. That was all the newsroom wanted to know about. How were they treating it? How did it spread? What could Britain do to help?”³² Like the newspapers, television news gave the impression of Hutu as victims without much regard for the recent past.

It was of course easier for the British public to understand and empathise with a refugee crisis; as McNulty argues, “This was something that the western reader could

²⁹ Philo *et al.*, “The Media and the Rwanda Crisis”.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.226.

³¹ Alagiah, *Passage to Africa*, pp.123-5.

³² *Ibid.*, p.127.

understand: a massive disaster, dying children, western aid needed, make a donation.”³³ The coverage of the refugee crisis did indeed very quickly include calls for western aid and for public donations. Whilst the media had been fairly quiet in calling for a response to the genocide this was not the case once the crisis reached Goma. Greg Philo however, records that in the six days to 21 July the British television news contained 28 references which were critical of the western relief effort, far in excess of the number seen during the genocide.³⁴ The press for the first time reported calls from Labour and the Liberal Democrats for Britain to do something and both Malcolm Rifkind and Baroness Chalker found themselves having to defend the government’s response. Chalker informed journalists that Britain had offered support to Operation Turquoise³⁵ and was providing financial aid and Rifkind told the press “Britain could ‘hold its head high’ over its contributions to alleviate the suffering.”³⁶ Newspaper coverage was the same, with all the majors now calling for more to be done and most providing readers with details on how to donate. On 22 July *The Daily Record* even announced on its front page that ten pence would be donated to the crisis for every copy of the paper sold. Whilst the same could not have been said of the genocide, the press was unanimous in calling for a response to the refugee crisis from the international community, including Britain; as *The Independent* suggested “The moral imperative to help is clear”.³⁷ The first stages of the CNN effect, “Television images of atrocities → journalists and opinion leaders criticise government policy in the media”³⁸ were now evident.

Declining Interest – Media Coverage in August

The cholera epidemic, however, proved to be short lived, as in fact did the media’s interest in Rwanda. Whereas *The Guardian* ran 28 articles about Rwanda in the week ended 31 July, there were only nine in the week ended 21 August. The crisis was replaced on the front page by stories of more domestic interest: British athletes failing drugs tests at the

³³ McNulty, “Media Ethnicization and the International Response,” p.280.

³⁴ Philo *et al.*, “The Media and the Rwanda Crisis,” p.217.

³⁵ Chris McGreal, “Rwandan Refugee Crisis Deepens,” *The Guardian*, 19 July 1994, p.12.

³⁶ Anon, “Exodus of Lost Tribe,” *The Daily Mail*, 20 July 1994, p.12.

³⁷ Anon, “Leading Article: Rwanda’s Moral Call on the West,” 23 July 1994, p.10.

³⁸ Jakobsen, “National Interest, Humanitarianism or CNN,” p.206.

Commonwealth Games, threats of a strike by train-drivers and fresh calls for an IRA ceasefire. Even the fear in mid-August of a second wave of refugees, following the departure of Operation Turquoise, did not re-spark media interest; this story, like most foreign news stories, had run its natural course and moved first to the inside pages, before slowly vanishing from the press almost completely.

The deployment of British and American troops was reported and briefly dominated newspaper coverage of Rwanda in early August. As the BBC's Mark Doyle recalls, the MOD and Pentagon were both keen to get positive coverage of the deployment: "The US and British army media relations staff promptly announced to the world, in keeping with the usual image of western troops arriving in Africa, that they had 'taken control' of the airport ... the airport had been in the control of the RPF for weeks".³⁹ Lt. Colonel Mike Wharmby, the commander of the British troops sent to Rwanda, similarly notes that "All countries that get involved in this sort of mission want to get maximum credit out of it. I received some criticism from superiors for not getting more media coverage of what we were doing," before continuing "but there were no journalists for me to speak to – there was no-one there."⁴⁰ Wharmby's point is borne out by the fact that whilst there were some 500 journalists in Goma, newspaper by-lines suggest that throughout July and August less than a dozen British journalists reported from Rwanda itself, and even then some of those, including *The Guardian's* Lindsey Hilsum and Greg McGreal, relocated to Goma once the refugee crisis developed. The similarities in coverage across the various newspapers demonstrates that most of the coverage of the work of British troops was in fact not firsthand reporting but instead relied on MOD press releases, mostly from Whitehall. As Richard Keeble would suggest, this is common in foreign affairs reporting, the elite (in this case the MOD) were now directing the story.⁴¹

³⁹ Doyle, "Reporting the Genocide," p.155.

⁴⁰ Author's interview with Lt Colonel Mike Wharmby, 13 September 2010.

⁴¹ Keeble, *The Newspaper Handbook*, p.52.

Criticism of the western response also continued in this period. Comments such as this from one reader's letter to *The Scotsman* were not unusual:

[pleas for action are] likely to fall on deaf ears in Whitehall where anything other than the deployment of rhetoric, and token parcels of administrative troops and aid, conflicts with current policy objectives ... Now, [the government] drags its feet over Rwanda, only giving ground when shamed into doing so by international example and opinion.⁴²

The Guardian's description of the British and US deployments as "worthy but piecemeal ... enfeebled by the absence of a unified political and humanitarian mandate," similarly reflected a fairly common media opinion.⁴³ The media debate about how the international community and the press should have responded to the crisis also broke out amongst columnists. Richard Dowden, in *The Independent*, and Simon Jenkins, in *The Times*, for example disagreed over how the international community should respond to the growing risk of violence in neighbouring Burundi. Whilst Dowden called for western aid and "tough action to protect democracy",⁴⁴ Jenkins noted that it was in fact western interference that led to the genocide in Rwanda in the first place, rather than needing western input "[Burundians] must chart their own course to heaven or hell".⁴⁵ Germaine Greer also provoked numerous responses from journalists when she accused the media of "wrong-headed analysis," manipulating the story in an effort for a good picture or a Pulitzer Prize and of fickleness "when the dying stops".⁴⁶ She was certainly correct with this last point. The British press had suddenly begun to debate Rwanda in a way that it never had throughout the four months of killing; it was a debate though that was short lived and came too late to stimulate a government response.

⁴² Colin Campbell, "Letters," *The Scotsman*, 15 August 1994.

⁴³ Anon, "Leading Article: Peacekeeping on a Shoestring," *The Guardian*, 1 August 1994, p.19.

⁴⁴ Richard Dowden, "How to End Africa's Bloodshed," *The Independent*, 17 August 1994, p.14.

⁴⁵ Simon Jenkins, "Africa's Fate is its Own," *The Times*, 17 August 1994.

⁴⁶ Germaine Greer, "Media Duty Begins When the Dying Stops," *The Guardian*, 8 August 1994, p.18.

Parliament

Whilst it would be misleading to claim that Rwanda was a major issue in either the Commons or the Lords in July,⁴⁷ it was, however, debated orally more than it had been previously and it did receive more attention than Bosnia in late June and into July.⁴⁸ The crisis was raised at questions to the Foreign Secretary, questions to the Secretary of State for Defence and Prime Minister's questions, as well as in the House of Lords. Despite, or possibly because of, this level of debate, the Labour front bench continued to be refused permission from the Speaker "on an almost daily basis" to demand a formal statement on Rwanda from the government.⁴⁹ During these first three weeks of July the nature of the parliamentary discussion also changed slightly; like the media, there was a noticeable increase in MPs now calling for more to be done in response to the crisis.

The parliamentary debate can be split in to two separate categories: first calls for the UN response to be speeded up; and, secondly suggestions that the UK itself should be responding more robustly. In respect of the UN mission the dominant view in the Commons continued to be that the UN had prime responsibility for the crisis. There was however clear frustration that despite the approval of UNAMIR II, nothing seemed to be happening in terms of troop deployment. Tony Worthington (Labour MP for Clydebank) asked on 20 July for example, "what are the principal causes of the further delay in the deployment of UN troops in Rwanda?" In his next questions he answered himself by suggesting that inefficiency and lack of resources at the UN were to blame.⁵⁰ A week earlier Jack Cunningham, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, had similarly asked:

The United Nations agreed a force for Rwanda, but did not agree its deployment. Now that its deployment has been agreed, we are told that it has been held up because of lack of logistical support from western countries. Why is further delay occurring? ... We want to know from Foreign Office

⁴⁷ Parliament went into summer recess on 21 July and therefore there was no debate in August.

⁴⁸ Hansard records 46 mentions of Bosnia in June 1994 and 60 in July; against 101 and 88 for Rwanda in the same periods.

⁴⁹ Labour Party Archives. Minutes of meeting of the Shadow Cabinet, 20 July 1994.

⁵⁰ Hansard. HC Deb, 20 July 1994, vol.247, col.233w.

Ministers whether it is lack of capability or lack of political will that is preventing the United Nations from getting its act together.⁵¹

Implicit in this question was the suggestion that the government should be providing more logistical support than the 50 trucks already offered. In fact in the same debate Worthington made Labour's point explicit "Surely the Minister realises that 50 trucks are wholly inadequate as supplementary logistical support."⁵² Some Conservative MPs made it clear however, that they believed responsibility lay with countries with closer links to Rwanda than the UK; Peter Luff (Con, Worcester) for example:

Does he [the Secretary of State for Defence] also understand that, against the background of the many demands on British forces around the world, there is general support for the view that Francophone countries should take prime responsibility for the situation in Rwanda?⁵³

However, even Luff accepted that the UK could possibly provide limited specialist military assets if they were necessary to alleviate the suffering in Rwanda.

The second aspect of the debate, suggestions that Britain should be more involved in the response to the crisis, was less evident and generally fell into three categories: Britain should provide more logistical support; Britain should press for those committing genocide to be punished; and, Britain, through NGOs, should provide aid to Rwanda. Labour continued to press the government on the issue of logistical support; Worthington alone asked questions on five occasions on logistics in this three week period. In terms of calls for justice these came from both Houses and were led by the Liberal Democrats. In the Commons, Simon Hughes (Lib Dem, Southwark) asked "Given the [UN's] finding that genocide has been perpetrated in Rwanda, can [the Foreign Secretary] assure the House that all responsible for it will speedily be brought to justice by the relevant international authorities?"⁵⁴ In the Lords, Hughes' colleague, Lord Avebury went further by suggesting

⁵¹ Hansard. HC Deb, 13 July 1994, vol.246, col.971.

⁵² Hansard. HC Deb, 13 July 1994, vol.246, col.971.

⁵³ Hansard. HC Deb, 19 July 1994, vol.247, col.168.

⁵⁴ Hansard. HC Deb, 13 July 1994, vol.246, col.970.

the government call upon the UN to invoke the Genocide Convention to punish those responsible for the genocide.⁵⁵

However, it was the final area of aid to Rwanda and Rwandan refugees that received most cross bench support. Andrew Rowe (Con, Mid-Kent) for example called for assurances from the ODA that NGOs working in Zaire would receive “every possible assistance as quickly as possible”.⁵⁶ It was, however, noticeably, Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs who seemed most attentive to the refugee crisis. Simon Hughes recalled the government’s donations to other crises before calling for money for Rwanda to be “forthcoming”;⁵⁷ Paddy Ashdown (Leader of the Liberal Democrats) on 19 July used the opportunity of PMQs to ask about Rwanda;⁵⁸ and Labour’s Tom Clarke reminded the government that tens of thousands of lives were at risk in Zaire and that “humanitarian intervention on a massive scale is now absolutely necessary”.⁵⁹ In correspondence with the Foreign Secretary, Jack Cunningham repeated these calls, writing “I urge the British government to take the lead in actively and generously supporting the humanitarian effort”.⁶⁰ The number of questions relating to the refugee crisis or the cholera outbreak however is indicative of how MPs generally interpreted the overall Rwandan crisis; parliament, like the media, emphasised the refugee crisis over the genocide. As one MP suggested, MPs thought the response needed to be through aid, rather than focussed on trying to solve the region’s political problems.⁶¹

The Government’s Military Response

In the same way that media and parliamentary debate picked up in July, consideration of Rwanda also increased within government – as we will see there is limited evidence that the latter was a result of the former. The government’s response was to both

⁵⁵ Hansard. HL Deb, 21 July 1994, vol.557, col.43w.

⁵⁶ Hansard. HC Deb, 18 July 1994, vol.247, col.16.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Hansard. HC Deb, 19 July 1994, vol.247, col.172.

⁵⁹ Hansard. HC Deb, 18 July 1994, vol.247, col.16.

⁶⁰ FCO. Letter from Jack Cunningham MP to the Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd MP, 20 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁶¹ Confidential interview with author.

offer aid to Rwanda and to authorise the deployment of British troops. The deployment would become known as Operation Gabriel and British troops would, at their peak, make up the second largest contingent within UNAMIR, with some 600 troops deployed out of UNAMIR's total strength of just over 5,000. The troops were to prove essential to the UN mission in that they provided services, logistical and engineering, which UNAMIR did not at the time have access to; as the FCO recognised, the British soldiers "filled in the gap until UN contractors [Brown & Root] were able to come on line".⁶²

The decision in principle to deploy troops was taken on 28 July, and the formal directive issued three days later.⁶³ The first troops deployed on 1 August. The exact chronology of the decision making process, however, is slightly unclear. UNAMIR II had been approved by the Security Council on 16 May; at that stage the UK, and other western states, were asked what *equipment* they could provide. On 18 May the UN Secretary General made requests for *troops* to African states only.⁶⁴ The UN had still not requested the British government provide troops by 15 June, when the offer of the 50 Bedford trucks was made.⁶⁵ The first mention of a UN request for British troops, in the documents made available to the author under FoI, appeared a month later in a letter from Douglas Hurd's private secretary to the Malcolm Rifkind's secretary, at the MOD. It was dated 12 July and read:

There has been no response to the UN Secretary General's request for logistical support, so the UN propose to award a contract to the US contractors, Brown and Root ... The Foreign Secretary proposes that, in response to the UN's request, the UK should offer a REME [Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers] company and workshop to UNAMIR for about 8-10 weeks to cover the gap before the UN contractors are brought in.⁶⁶

⁶² US State Dept, "More on British Troops and Aid to Rwanda," Cable from US Embassy London to State Dept Washington, 1 August 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁶³ MOD. Written correspondence with the author in response to a FoI request.

⁶⁴ UN, "Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations During the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda," 15 December 1999, p.26.

⁶⁵ Hansard. HC Deb, 15 June 1994, vol.244, c.594w.

⁶⁶ FCO. Letter from J. Smith, FCO, to John Pitt-Brooke, MOD, "UNAMIR in Rwanda," 12 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

The eventual deployment would, however, be quite different from the company of REME soldiers (about 120 men) proposed at this stage. Noticeably the MOD did not initially support Hurd's proposal. A week later however, whilst the Foreign Secretary himself was also suggesting that "the REME idea should be shelved" as "life has now moved on", it was agreed by both the MOD and FCO that a military official, posing as a civilian, should accompany Baroness Chalker on her visit to the region departing on 24 July.⁶⁷ In less than a fortnight the government's position had moved from not wanting to send troops to actively considering and planning for deployment.

At the same time as Chalker departed for Uganda on Sunday 24 July, the Current Operations Group met at the MOD. Chaired by Rear Admiral Brian Goodson, (Assistant Chief of Defence Staff) and attended by Brigadier Simon Pack (Director of Defence Commitments - Middle East and Africa) and Glyne Evans (Head of UN Department at FCO), the group met to "develop an outline list of military options for the provision of assistance in Rwanda".⁶⁸ The fact that the committee met on a Sunday is an indication that the plan to deploy British troops was really picking up momentum, suggesting it had support at senior levels. It is also noteworthy that part of this particular minute has been redacted "as it contains information supplied by the Security Services";⁶⁹ demonstrating that MI6 did show some interest in the crisis, though at what stage and how much remains uncertain. The group concluded that a recommendation should be made to the Chief of Defence Staff that British troops be deployed to Rwanda with a stipulated date for withdrawal. This recommendation was then discussed at a meeting between the Chief of Defence Staff and Malcolm Rifkind at 08.00 on Monday 25 July, where it was agreed that, pending a formal request from the FCO, the MOD would approve the deployment of troops.⁷⁰ Lt. Col. Mike Wharmby, who would command the British element, was informed of the possible

⁶⁷ MOD, "Meeting with the Foreign Secretary: Rwanda and Haiti," 20 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁶⁸ MOD, Minute of meeting of Current Operations Group, 24 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁶⁹ MOD, written correspondence with the author in response to a FoI request.

⁷⁰ MOD, Minute of a meeting on 25 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

deployment at 13.30 that day.⁷¹ On 27 July, following discussions with the UN and reports back from a Colonel Joscelyne, who had accompanied Chalker to Rwanda, Glyne Evans wrote to the Foreign Secretary advising that the “UN are enthusiastic about a possible British offer to UNAMIR. We now need to make a formal response”.⁷² The following day, 28 July, the Foreign Secretary received approval from the Cabinet subcommittee on Overseas Policy and Defence, to make the formal offer to the UN;⁷³ the first British troops deployed in Rwanda just three days later.

The Evolution of the Decision

As this chronology shows, the decision to deploy troops evolved very quickly. The government moved from a position of not considering any form of troop deployment in late June, to a decision to deploy over 600 just four weeks later. It is also apparent that the FCO’s initial request to the MOD was rejected; demonstrating as Graham Allison suggests, that government is not one unified entity, but instead “a conglomerate of semi-feudal, loosely aligned organisations, each with a substantial life of its own”.⁷⁴ To understand how this decision evolved, we need then to look separately at the two government departments involved.

The Foreign Office

From the FCO’s perspective the key question is why ministers and officials moved from not supporting, or even considering, a British deployment to then suggesting one on 12 July – why did they move from being an almost passive bystander to suggesting humanitarian intervention? A clear understanding of why the position changed would after all go a long way to explaining the general question of what motivates humanitarian intervention. Unfortunately the answer to this question is not wholly clear. Despite

⁷¹ Author’s interview with Lt. Col. Mike Wharmby, 13 September 2010.

⁷² FCO, Letter from Glyne Evans to Foreign Secretary, 27 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁷³ Members of the subcommittee were: the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary (Douglas Hurd), President of the Board of Trade (Michael Heseltine), Chancellor of the Exchequer (Ken Clarke), Defence Secretary (Malcolm Rifkind) and Attorney General (Nicholas Lyell).

⁷⁴ Allison, *Essence of Decision Making*, p.67.

numerous freedom of information requests by the author, none of the documents released to date fully explain this shift, underlining Paul Williams' claim that the foreign policy making "process remains among the most secret in government",⁷⁵ or alternatively suggesting not all decisions are fully documented. However, it is possible to piece together some relevant points from interviews and the documents that have been made available.

The first point of note is that the decision seems to have been made in the FCO without serious recourse to its subsidiary organisation the Overseas Development Administration. In 1994 the ODA was an agency of the FCO rather than an independent department in its own right, as it would become in 1997 under Labour. The ODA, under Baroness Chalker, was generally responsible for sub-Saharan Africa, with the exception of South Africa; the FCO, however, retained responsibility for British relations with the UN including all peace keeping missions. Given its interest in, and knowledge of, Africa, one would expect the ODA to have been seriously consulted about the decision to send troops to Rwanda; however, this does not appear to have been the case. The report by the Joint Evaluation of the Emergency Assistance to Rwanda Committee for example records that "On 25 July, the Head of the Emergency Aid Department in the ODA informed his counterpart at the OFDA [Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance] in Washington that the UK was *not planning* to send a military contingent to Rwanda" (emphasis added).⁷⁶ Given the close military links between the US and UK it seems unlikely that this demonstrates a deliberate reluctance to share information with the Americans. Therefore whilst it might not be a surprise that an ODA official, albeit a fairly senior one, was not aware that that very morning the Secretary of State for Defence had approved the mission the claim that the UK was not even *planning* to send troops suggests a remoteness from the discussions that had already taken place within the FCO and MOD. As further evidence of the ODA's lack of involvement, a telegram of 22 July from Hannay in New York to Baroness Chalker includes a paragraph that begins "Separately we have received an informal request [from the UN

⁷⁵ Paul Williams, "Whose Making UK Foreign Policy?" *International Affairs* vol.80, no.5 (2004), p.909.

⁷⁶ JEEAR, "International Response to Conflict: Volume III," p.67.

Secretariat] to examine the possibility of making available to UNAMIR a company sized REME unit.”⁷⁷ It would seem odd for Hannay to inform Chalker of this a whole ten days after Douglas Hurd had written to Malcolm Rifkind about the UN request, unless Chalker had not up to this point been involved in the decision. Despite this evidence Chalker does suggest that she did try to influence some sort of response; as she recalls “I kept saying privately in the Foreign Office ‘Can’t we do something, they are mad with killing’”.⁷⁸ It seems though that the decision to recommend sending troops to Rwanda was ultimately made in the FCO proper, and therefore presumably by Douglas Hurd, rather than in the ODA.

The second point of note is that despite the arguments of proponents of the CNN effect in this case the media does not appear to have been a major influence on FCO thinking. Clearly, politicians and FCO officials will have been aware of the media coverage and it was against this backdrop of media coverage that decisions were taken, however it does not seem that there was one particular news story that triggered the decision to send troops. A review of the ITN archive, for example, shows that there was only one story on Rwanda on the ITV news in the week prior to Douglas Hurd’s 12 July letter.⁷⁹ Whilst it has not been possible for the author to confirm coverage on the BBC news, the research by Georgina Holmes on *Newsnight’s* coverage of the genocide suggests that Rwanda was covered on the programme on 4 July (when in fact Hurd was in Geneva)⁸⁰ and then next on 15 July; both would seem unlikely to have influenced Hurd’s decision to write to his colleague at the MOD on the 12th.⁸¹ BBC’s *Panorama* programme on 27 June had been a half hour special report by Fergal Keane on Rwanda;⁸² but whilst this programme was to eventually win the prestigious Royal Television International Current Affairs Award it received no contemporary newspaper coverage and it would again seem hard to draw a

⁷⁷ FCO. Telegram from UK Mission to UN in New York to FCO for attention of Lady Chalker, “Rwanda: Provision of Logistical Support,” 22 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁷⁸ Author’s interview with Baroness Chalker, 18 August 2010.

⁷⁹ ITN Archive, “Rwanda: French Forces Establish a Haven,” 6 July 1994. Accessed at www.itnsource.com.

⁸⁰ Michael Binyon, “Fears Grow that Bosnia will Slip Back into War,” *The Times*, 5 July 1994.

⁸¹ Holmes, “Did Newsnight Miss the Story?” pp.191-2.

⁸² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/3585473.stm>. Accessed 17 April 2011.

direct line from this programme to Hurd's letter written over two weeks later. Nor is there anything of particular note in the print media in the week preceding Hurd's letter to Rifkind. There was then no obvious trigger media story that outraged politicians into action.

What triggered this policy shift at the FCO then is not entirely certain. In response to the author's question why was there a change of heart about sending troops, Malcolm Rifkind (himself Secretary of Defence and therefore not necessarily intimate with the thought process within the FCO) replied "It was not so much a change of heart, but by that time the full horrors had become evident ... When it became clear that it was not just killing but genocide there was a realisation that we should do something to assist."⁸³ He continued that if there was to be a major initiative it was likely that the UK, given what the Conservative Party called "[Britain's] unique place in the world's affairs",⁸⁴ would not have wanted to be outside of that, "We would probably have looked to be involved in a major initiative in some way."⁸⁵ Whilst Hurd regularly suggested that the UK was "not volunteering to be an international policeman"⁸⁶ Rifkind's comment, supported somewhat by the internal Conservative Party campaign guide for the 1994 European and local elections, suggests that the British government felt their position as a permanent member of the Security Council, as a prominent member of NATO and as a leading industrial nation, gave them some responsibility to be part of major international interventions. Whilst this is to some extent contradicted by the UK's refusal to become involved in Operation Turquoise (though this can be explained by suspicion of French motives), it does suggest that the FCO's decision to support intervention was less altruistic and more about meeting international expectations. David Hannay makes a similar point when he claims "we actively encouraged African nations to contribute troops [to UNAMIR], but how would this have looked if we offered nothing – we had to do something ourselves."⁸⁷

⁸³ Author's interviews with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 March 2010.

⁸⁴ Cooke, *The Campaign Guide 1994*, p.v.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Douglas Hurd, Speech to the Conservative Central Council Meeting, The Royal Hall, Harrogate, 5 March 1993. Conservative Party Archive, Oxford.

⁸⁷ Author's interview with Sir David Hannay, 23 April 2010.

The 12 July letter may simply then have been triggered by a direct request from the UN for British troops; although there is no direct evidence of this, it is feasible given a Security Council Presidential statement issued on 14 July that called “upon Member States to provide the necessary contributions in order to ensure the deployment of the expanded UNAMIR in the immediate future.”⁸⁸ The view within the FCO that the UK ought to be involved in major humanitarian interventions and the evident difficulty in finding troops may then have been the catalyst for Hurd to write his letter to Rifkind. If so, it was less moral obligation to help needy Rwandans that influenced decision making and more a belief that the UK, as a key member of the international community had a responsibility to be involved in the international response when it was asked.

The Ministry Of Defence

Whilst the change in policy happened in the FCO around 12 July, it was not until 24 July that the MOD moved to a position of supporting the deployment having originally dismissed the suggestion 10 days earlier. First of all we must acknowledge that the bureaucratic nature of government meant the MOD was unlikely to have considered a deployment to Rwanda before it was approached by the FCO. Both Rifkind and William Hague, both of whom have experience as Foreign Secretary, agree that the FCO, not the MOD, takes the lead on any decision to offer British troops to UN missions.⁸⁹ The BBC documentary which charted the deployment of British troops to Angola in 1995 also demonstrates that when it comes to UN missions the MOD responds to the FCO rather than leading or even anticipating the offer of troops.⁹⁰ It therefore seems reasonably certain that no-one at the MOD, at least at a senior level, had seriously considered sending British troops to Rwanda until the Foreign Secretary’s proposal of 12 July was received.

In a MOD minute responding to this first proposal a number of practical and political arguments against the deployment were listed. The practical objections included

⁸⁸ S/PRST/1994/34, 14 July 1994.

⁸⁹ Author’s interviews with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 March 2010 and William Hague, 10 July 2009.

⁹⁰ “Mission Angola,” *Defence of the Realm*, BBC Television, 29 August 1996.

the fact that the deployment of a self-supporting REME company, once force protection and logistical support were factored in, would be much larger in terms of military personnel than the Foreign Secretary envisaged; that the REME was already overly committed; and that it would take so long for equipment to arrive in Rwanda that it would make the mission useless.⁹¹ It suggested, “The gravity of the situation in Rwanda is quite clear. It is also true that a suitable contingent of technicians could do a very useful job in maintaining vehicles ... It does not, however, follow that it is necessarily for the UK to fill this breach.”⁹² The minute continued that Britain was already shouldering a heavy burden on other UN missions and that there were other countries with closer links to the region currently less committed than the UK – at the time the UK was providing 3,668 of the UN’s 73,210 deployed peacekeepers, making the UK the fourth largest troop contributor after Pakistan, India and France (3,240 were deployed in Bosnia, 413 in Cyprus and 15 in Kuwait).⁹³ A draft letter accompanying the minute, meant for Rifkind to send to the Foreign Secretary, therefore ended “The Secretary of State has to conclude, with regret, that he cannot accept the Foreign Secretary’s proposal”. In the final version sent to Hurd on 19 July this closing sentence was softened to “The Defence Secretary sees significant problems with the Foreign Secretary’s proposal.”⁹⁴ Despite the softening, this was a fairly serious disagreement at the heart of government and, as Thomas Weiss and Cindy Collins suggest, such institutionalism demonstrates how intervention does not automatically follow even when it is the preferred option of the political decision makers, in this case the FCO.⁹⁵ It also demonstrates how cost/benefit analysis does feature significantly in bystander decision making; at this stage the MOD deemed the cost of intervention to be too high and to justify their decision MOD officials listed numerous reasons why intervention was not possible; many of these reasons remained unchanged just days later when the MOD reversed its decision.

⁹¹ MOD. Minute on Rwanda written by C. Gordon, 18 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ UN, “Summary of Contribution to Peacekeeping Operations by Countries as of 31 July 1994.” Available at http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml, accessed 25 May 2012.

⁹⁴ MOD. Letter from Private Secretary to Malcolm Rifkind to FCO, 19 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁹⁵ Weiss and Collins, “Politics of Militarised Humanitarian Intervention,” p.367.

With the plan rejected, Hurd and Rifkind met face to face that night to discuss both Rwanda and Haiti. The record of the meeting recalls Rifkind as having said that the proposed mission to Rwanda “would be controversial, it would put pressure on our own resources, and it would not be all that relevant to the problem as it now stood. We should only proceed if it were clearly seen to be in our national interest”.⁹⁶ Things would have to change for the MOD to alter their position. Two things, however, did change between 19 and 24 July and these meant that the MOD suddenly could support the proposed mission.

The first, made clear at the meeting of the Current Operations Group on 24 July, was that “[in the last week the] climate for an offer of help had improved, due to a change in the security situation in Rwanda.”⁹⁷ The change in security situation referred to was the RPF’s declaration of a ceasefire on 18 July following what they believed to be victory in the war. Prior to this western militaries saw the situation on the ground as too risky. A CIA briefing paper, for example, as late as 14 July stated “We believe that the military capabilities of the RPF and rogue Hutu military units could potentially pose serious threats to air operations in to Kigali.”⁹⁸ Following the downing of President Habyarimana’s plane it was of course known that at least one side in the war had access to anti-aircraft weapons and the RPF had publicly made it clear that they would consider the UN, or other western countries, legitimate targets if they were believed to be siding with the Hutu government. With a ceasefire in place and the Hutu army and militias having crossed into Zaire as well as the French forces stabilising the southwest of the country the situation had changed; Rwanda suddenly appeared a relatively safe environment into which peacekeepers could be deployed. This removed the fear within the MOD of being “sucked into someone else’s war”.⁹⁹ The effective victory of the RPF had two other consequences. First it meant the re-opening of Kigali airport, thereby removing one of the logistical problems that the MOD had foreseen in the note of 19 July. It also meant that the Pentagon’s objections to becoming involved in

⁹⁶ MOD. Minute of meeting with the Foreign Secretary, 20 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁹⁷ MOD. Minutes of the meeting of the Current Operations Group, 24 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

⁹⁸ CIA Briefing Paper, 14 July 1994. Accessed at www.foia.cia.gov

⁹⁹ Author’s interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 March 2010.

Rwanda reduced. Whilst US troops would not deploy into Rwanda in any large numbers (the US Operation Support Hope operated in Zaire, outside of UN control) the US was now willing to authorise flights into Kigali; as Operation Gabriel would be dependent on US airlift capability this was an enabling factor for the British mission.¹⁰⁰ The suggestion that bystander intervention becomes more likely when the perceived costs of intervention are lower seems in this case to be accurate.

The second change was that there was now said to be political will within the British government to support some form of deployment; or as it was worded in one MOD letter “there is a growing political imperative”; whether the MOD felt this was being driven by parliament, the media, public opinion or the government is not made clear.¹⁰¹ However, at the meeting of the Current Operations Group this factor was described as “The Government require a visible and actual presence in area.”¹⁰² Rifkind also spelled this out to the Chief of Defence Staff, “Presentational gestures were not on the agenda”.¹⁰³ If the British government was going to authorise the deployment of troops, which by 24 July seemed likely, it was to be a meaningful deployment focussed on providing UNAMIR with the resources that it most needed. From where this “political will” was emanating is not clear; presumably given the MOD had refused the FCO’s request to authorise troops on 12 July it had to be coming from somewhere other than just the FCO. Although there is not yet publically available evidence to confirm this, nor in fact anything in his autobiography or subsequent biographies which all remain quiet about Rwanda, one can perhaps assume that Prime Minister John Major was now suggesting that some form of British involvement was desirable. Writing generally about how government works, Williams, Kavanagh, Seldon and Coles all dismiss the idea that such pressure would have come from anywhere else in government, other than possibly the Overseas Policy and Defence sub-committee of the

¹⁰⁰ DiPrizio, *Armed Humanitarians*, p.69.

¹⁰¹ MOD. Letter from Malcolm Rifkind’s Private Secretary to FCO, 25 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹⁰² MOD. Minutes of the meeting of the Current Operations Group, 24 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹⁰³ MOD. Minutes of a meeting between Malcolm Rifkind and Chief of Defence Staff, 25 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

Cabinet, which the Prime Minister himself chaired.¹⁰⁴ As has been the case in numerous interventions, there seems a high likelihood that the involvement of the political leader contributed to the decision to intervene.

Operation Gabriel – Financing, Make Up and Orders

Once the decision had been made to deploy Gabriel, much of the FCO's attention shifted towards the practicalities of funding the mission. As both Rifkind's military secretary, Commander Timothy Laurence, and Douglas Hurd suggested in a BBC documentary aired in 1996, agreeing the funding of peacekeeping missions and winning the support of the Treasury was typically the hardest part of deploying troops.¹⁰⁵ This appears to have been no different in 1994; the difficulty is highlighted in an internal FCO document:

I need hardly say that the FCO has no financial provision for this and, if the UN are not to pay within this financial year, we would have to put a case to the Chief Secretary [of the Treasury] for access to the Reserve. We are very far from being able to take his agreement for granted.¹⁰⁶

There was in the case of Rwanda a potential issue regarding the UN reimbursing Britain's costs meaning that a drawdown of the government reserve may have been needed - by July the funds authorised by the Security Council and assigned to UNAMIR back in April had been exhausted. The cost of withdrawing the bulk of the force, and then resupplying Dallaire's rump headquarters by air, meant that UNAMIR's budget was fully spent.¹⁰⁷ Cost and bureaucratic inertia again risked stalling British involvement even though it now had the support of the FCO and the MOD. In New York, Hannay therefore pressed the UN Secretariat to schedule an emergency meeting of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to authorise an additional contingency to cover UNAMIR's costs from July through to September. He also suggested the FCO contact other governments,

¹⁰⁴ Williams, "Who's Making UK Foreign Policy?" p.918. Coles, *Making Foreign Policy*, p.92. Kavanagh & Seldon, *The Powers Behind the Prime Minister*, (London: HarperCollins, 1999), p.202.

¹⁰⁵ "Mission Angola," *Defence of the Realm*, BBC Television, 29 August 1996.

¹⁰⁶ FCO. Internal memorandum sent to Resource and Finance Department, undated. Released to author under FoI.

¹⁰⁷ FCO. Telegram from UK Mission to UN New York to FCO London, "UNAMIR: Budget," 17 August 1994. Released to author under FoI.

particularly France, the US and Belgium, to encourage support for such an extension.¹⁰⁸ Without such authority it would not be possible for the UN to authorise reimbursement of the UK for the costs of Operation Gabriel. This extension was eventually given, in what Hannay described as a very poorly attended meeting. Whilst the funding negotiations do not seem to have slowed down the deployment of troops it was not until late September that the UN finally agreed to the reimbursement of British costs. The UN only approved the British funding claim after the FCO had submitted justification of why money was needed for rations (the supplies available in Rwanda did not provide sufficient calories), why there was a need for replacement uniforms (no laundry facilities were available in theatre until the British sent a mobile bath unit) and why the force would need petrol (whilst diesel was available in Rwanda the British ambulances used petrol).¹⁰⁹

Whilst the UN considered the reimbursement, Gabriel was funded from the Treasury's emergency reserve – something that officials at the Treasury did not seem overly happy about as one internal note records: “I’m afraid the Chancellor agreed to a Reserve claim at Cabinet. Good start to our campaign!!”¹¹⁰ Having seen the Chancellor agree to fund the British deployment, in what appears to have been a bit of a shock to officials, the Treasury was quick to determine whether this could be included in Britain's official aid figures. The Treasury wrote to the ODA a number of times questioning why if the mission had predominantly humanitarian aims the cost could not be included in the aid figures; from the Treasury perspective this was particularly relevant as the government had set an annual target for aid. They were also conscious of “securing proper credit in international circles” for the effort that it was making.¹¹¹ As would probably be expected, officials at the Treasury were keen for some return on what they saw as their investment in Operation Gabriel.

Funding agreed, if somewhat begrudgingly, the British force that ultimately deployed to Rwanda was far in excess of the REME company that had initially been

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ FCO. Letter to Kofi Annan from FCO, “UK Participation in UNAMIR,” 1 September 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹¹⁰ Treasury. Internal memorandum, “Rwanda: British Contribution,” 28 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹¹¹ Treasury. Letters from Treasury to ODA, 9 August 1994 and 16 August 1994. Released to author under FoI.

envisaged by Hurd back at the start of July. Instead it consisted not only of a REME contingent, but also of engineers, medics, logistics specialists, signallers, headquarters staff and a platoon of infantry. This force seems to have been built up in response to a UN wish list; General Dallaire recalls meeting Baroness Chalker in Uganda in the last week of July during her visit to the region:

I met up with her at Kilometre 64, and we carried on northward, crossing into Uganda at the Gatuna bridge, while I pointedly explained why we needed the promised British trucks, engineers, maintenance platoon, field hospital, small headquarters and UNMOs [United Nations Military Observers]. She sent the colonel who was travelling with her to do a recce in Kigali and told him to forward a list of our needs to the British Ministry of Defence.¹¹²

This real need for logistical support was noted by other British officials who visited the region. As one senior FCO official who visited UNAMIR in late July recalled, “by that time UNAMIR only had one operational armoured vehicle and was required to somehow transport vehicles back to Uganda for even the simplest repairs, including punctures.”¹¹³

Given the requirement for a full range of logistical and support resources the force that deployed to Rwanda was drawn from a range of units, both army and Royal Air Force. Table 2 shows troop numbers by unit over the period of the deployment.

Table 2: British troops deployed to Rwanda, 1994

Unit:	Troop Numbers:			
	13 Aug	13 Sep	13 Oct	13 Nov
10 Airborne Workshop, REME	98	196	182	171
9 Parachute Squadron, Royal Engineers	84	150	144	122
23 Parachute Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps	88	160	157	149
29 Movement Control Regiment, Royal Logistics Corps (RLC)	6	6	6	19
30 Signals Regiment, Royal Corp of Signals	33	30	29	29
UK Mobile Movements Squadron, RAF	27	10	8	8
91 Squadron, 9 Supply Regiment, RLC				
160 Provost Company, Royal Military Police				
A Company 2 Battalion, Princess of Wales Royal Regiment	-	45	44	35
Others	-	9	6	6
Total	327	606	576	539

Source: MOD. Released to author under Freedom of Information

¹¹² Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, p.486.

¹¹³ Confidential interview with author, 27 November 2011.

Whilst compared to the 5,000 British troops deployed to northern Iraq in 1991 or the 3,000 British troops in Bosnia in 1994, a deployment of 600 troops may not seem that significant, but it was at the time in fact the single largest contribution of troops by a western nation to a UN mission other than UNPROFOR in Yugoslavia. By comparison Australia sent 313 medics to Rwanda, Canada 367 soldiers and Austria 16 military observers. Other western nations including Italy, Ireland, Germany, Holland, Norway, New Zealand (whose representative at the Security Council had argued for a more robust response), Portugal, Spain and Sweden sent no troops.¹¹⁴ The British however, were clearly not willing to offer Dallaire everything he wanted. On 23 August, the UN “urgently” requested a military helicopter unit to provide additional logistic support and assist in airborne surveillance and reconnaissance; the request was rejected without serious consideration.¹¹⁵

The forces, which within UNAMIR were known as BRITFOR, were commanded by Lt. Colonel Mike Wharmby, who in 1994 was the Commanding Officer of the Combat Service Support Battalion, part of 5 Airborne Brigade, the UK’s out of area rapid response brigade. Whilst US troops, deployed into Zaire at a similar time to Gabriel, remained outside of the UN infrastructure, Wharmby’s orders were very much to fit into UNAMIR. The British troops, unlike the Americans, wore the UN blue beret and the directive issued to Wharmby stated “You are to carry out the tasks given to you by the Force Commander UNAMIR ... BRITFOR will deploy in accordance with the Force Commander UNAMIR’s orders. BRITFOR will provide engineering, maintenance, repair and medical support to UNAMIR”¹¹⁶ Wharmby’s orders continued to include more specific tasks that each element of the force was to achieve. In terms of the Royal Engineer element, they were to “repair and drill wells for the provision of water; open 2 routes north of Kigali as directed; repair roads, bridges etc; be prepared to clear mines”.¹¹⁷ Whilst there was a mine clearing capacity

¹¹⁴ UN. “Summary of Contribution to Peacekeeping Operations by Countries as of 30 September 1994.” Available at http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml, accessed 25 May 2012.

¹¹⁵ FCO. Telegram from UK Mission to UN New York to FCO London, 23 August 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹¹⁶ MOD. “Operation Gabriel – Directive to Commander British Forces UNAMIR,” 31 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

within the force it was not to be used for general mine clearance, but only where mines or booby traps impacted on BRITFOR's capability to achieve its mission. The REME workshop was to provide "repair and recovery" support to UNAMIR, prioritising first BRITFOR's own vehicles, secondly the 50 "UK gifted 4 Tonne vehicles" and then other UN vehicles. The field ambulance unit was directed to establish treatment centres ready to give medical treatment both to UN personnel and returning Rwandan refugees.

Wharmby recalls that during his briefings two things were made quite clear to him by senior officers. First, that the British deployment was to be a humanitarian deployment and that the specialists under his command must not be used for other roles, such as general peacekeeping.¹¹⁸ Although there was a platoon of infantry forming part of the Gabriel force, this was to be used purely as protection for the other British troops, particularly the medics, rather than as a peacekeeping force; peacekeeping was to be left to other contingents, such as the Ghanaians and the Ethiopians. The rules of engagement (RoE) under which Gabriel acted also made this clear; whilst the British troops were authorised to "carry personal weapons (pistols, rifles and light machine guns)" these were to be carried unloaded and were only to be used in self defence and after a verbal warning had been given (in French and English – troops were provided with phonetic instructions on how to issue the French warnings) and warning shots fired into the air.¹¹⁹ However, Wharmby does admit that whilst on paper these rules seemed quite clear in practice that was not quite the case:

The RoE did cause us some confusion and we did have a number of discussions over the satellite phone late into the night. Essentially we were there for humanitarian reasons and not to intervene. If people under our protection were attacked, for example if they were in one of our medical facilities and that came under attack, we would have been justified to use lethal force. But if we saw someone being attacked in a field as we were driving down the road, we would not. It would at the end of the day be up to the individual soldier to justify their actions. We were never there to intervene, we were there to defend ourselves and fulfil our humanitarian mission.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Author's interview with Lt. Col. Mike Wharmby, 13 September 2010.

¹¹⁹ MOD. "Operation Gabriel – Directive to Commander British Forces UNAMIR," 31 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹²⁰ Author's interview with Lt. Col. Mike Wharmby, 13 September 2010.

Secondly, as noted above, it was made clear to Wharmby that he was to fall under the tactical command of General Dallaire, commander of UNAMIR. However, even this was not as clear cut as the order may have seemed:

There was some uncertainty amongst the UN staff. This was partly because of the French Operation Turquoise and partly because of the US mission. Also they had seen the Belgians fly into Rwanda and assume command of their units that were supposed to be part of UNAMIR. Amongst Dallaire's staff there was an institutional uncertainty and suspicion about national missions and national control. I'm not sure that Dallaire ever recognised that we were fully his.¹²¹

Operation Gabriel in Rwanda

Ironically, when the order was given to deploy British troops, Wharmby and his soldiers were on exercise on Salisbury Plain. The format of the exercise was that the brigade had deployed on a UN Chapter VII mission in Africa and was keeping the peace in a border dispute between the "Hutu" and "Tutu"; Wharmby believes any such similarity to the mission in Rwanda was purely coincidental.¹²² It did however, mean that the units were already assembled and equipped to deploy relatively quickly. The first elements of Operation Gabriel, 50 men, deployed on the morning of 1 August, many of them initially having to put up with tented accommodation due to war damage across Kigali.¹²³ Whilst it was hoped that the remaining troops and the associated heavy equipment would deploy very soon after, this was in fact delayed due to "transportation difficulties".¹²⁴ The particular difficulty being that despite the US government agreeing with the UN Secretariat that they would make a C5 transport plane available to the British, no C5 had actually arrived in the UK. Whether this was due to further deliberate delays by the US military, genuine technical faults with the plane or because the US Air Force was giving priority to assisting the deployment of the Ethiopian battalion joining UNAMIR is not clear. The impact, though,

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Lt. Mike Whittle, "10 Airborne Workshop Deploys to Rwanda," *Craftsman* (the journal of the REME), September 1994, p.69

¹²⁴ US State Dept, "UK Rwanda Assistance," Cable from US Embassy London to State Dept. Washington, 3 August 1994. Released to author under FoI.

was that the deployment of the British mission temporarily stalled until 5 August. Operation Gabriel was considered operational by 17 August and was fully deployed by the 21st. At this stage the bulk of the force was deployed in Kigali; the field ambulance unit (178 men in total) was deployed in Byumba (near the border with Uganda) and the engineers (44 men) were in Kitabi (in the southwest).

The speed of the deployment and more significantly the reconnaissance, which was completed in less than 36 hours, though were in some ways to limit the effectiveness of the deployment for the first weeks. For example, the first detachment arrived in Rwanda without adequate vehicles, which severely hampered their ability to move around Kigali let alone the country as a whole. There was also a lack of clarity over the role of the fairly substantial medical contingent; namely whether they were there to treat UN personnel or refugees. This resulted in the medics lacking medicines suitable for treating the local population who would make up most of their patients throughout the three month deployment; as one army medic recalls “we had to beg, borrow and steal” equipment and medicine from NGOs nearby, including ironically a consignment of machetes shipped to the country by one Irish NGO.¹²⁵

Once in theatre, much of Gabriel’s work was aligned with the general FCO belief that “the key to tackling the humanitarian crisis lies in creating conditions within Rwanda which will attract refugees and displaced persons back to the homes.”¹²⁶ In fact the mission statement drawn up by the Commanding Officer of 23 Parachute Field Ambulance was initially “to provide humanitarian assistance in northwest Rwanda in order to encourage refugees to return to the country from Zaire”.¹²⁷ In line with this statement, the unit reopened the abandoned hospital at Ruhengeri in the northwest of Rwanda, which was on the route home for many refugees.¹²⁸ The operation of this hospital also demonstrates how the army and NGOs worked together in Rwanda; whilst the army doctors provided the

¹²⁵ Confidential interview with Royal Army Medical Corp officer. 4 May 2012.

¹²⁶ Treasury, “Rwanda: British Contingent,” Letter from FCO to Treasury, 2 August 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹²⁷ Lt. Col. A Hawley, “Rwanda 1994: A Study of Medical Support in Military Humanitarian Operations,” *Journal of Royal Army Medical Corps*, no. 143, 1997, p.79

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.77

health care at Ruhengeri, distribution of food and water was managed by a British NGO. After ten days of operating Ruhengeri hospital, the field ambulance unit was moved south as part of Dallaire's plan to prevent a further exodus of refugees following the planned withdrawal of the French Operation Turquoise troops. Once relocated to the south of the country the unit split into eight mobile treatment sections. The mobile teams, each made up of a doctor and six paramedics, travelled daily to the camps for internally displaced persons, providing immediate aid and also, hopefully, encouraging people to remain in Rwanda where they were receiving care. Wharmby sees the medics' performance in the southwest as a key achievement of Operation Gabriel:

Our presence fixed several hundred thousand people in the region in what would have been an exodus once the French withdrew – so this prevented the situation in Zaire worsening. Our presence drew NGOs in and they were able to provide water and food. So the medics kept people in the region.¹²⁹

Meanwhile the Royal Engineer detachment was heavily involved in road repair and the provision of clean water. In Gatuna the main bridge linking Uganda and Rwanda had been destroyed in the fighting and replaced by tree trunks covered in earth; not surprisingly this was collapsing under the weight of traffic. To ensure the continued flow of aid from Uganda the tree trunk bridge was replaced by the Engineers. In Kitabi a reverse osmosis plant was set up to provide clean water to the British field hospital. In the towns of Mukarange, Manuyagiro, Gikore, Shangasha and Bushara water pumps or storage tanks, damaged during the war, were repaired; this alone had a massive impact on public health reducing the risk of both cholera and dysentery. And in Kigali the Engineers cleared roads of unexploded ordinance and reinstated the refuse tip in order to remove major health hazards from the city.

Overall, during the three months that Gabriel was deployed 132,605 medical treatments were given, 95,453 children vaccinated against meningitis and measles, 5.4 million litres of clean water produced, 98 culverts repaired, 12 bridges built, 3,308 mines

¹²⁹ Author's interview with Lt. Col. Mike Wharmby. 13 September 2010.

and unexploded ordnance made safe, 467 vehicles repaired, 1,500 tonnes of aid delivered, 20,000 refugees transported home and five orphanages refurbished.¹³⁰ Additionally, British soldiers worked in Dallaire's headquarters, providing communications across the country and also logistical support to various other UN contingents and NGOs. In addition to the official taskings, the British troops also voluntarily assisted in the reconstruction of Rwanda. For example, the units based in Kigali helped rebuild the Missionaries of Charity Orphanage where 300 children were being cared for. The troops rebuilt the walls, refitted the electrics and repaired the water supply and sanitation. The wives and families of those serving in Rwanda also became involved in a fundraising appeal, which was used to buy cooking, cleaning and kitchen equipment for the orphanage and also paid for a new play area to be built.¹³¹

The Aid Community's Response

Given the close relationship between the Overseas Development Administration and NGOs in this period and the fact that much of the ODA's aid funding was channelled through British NGOs it is appropriate here to explore the response of both together. Whilst Operation Gabriel was essentially a military, and perhaps the UK's most visible, response, the ODA was fairly heavily involved in addressing the humanitarian crisis both in Rwanda and in neighbouring countries. For example, on 16 July three chartered planes left the UK carrying aid for refugees in Zaire. The first, a huge Antonov 124, carried 11 trucks; the other two carried 80 tons of plastic sheeting, tents and blankets for use in the growing refugee camps.¹³² The ODA continued to fund the hire of two of these planes for the UNHCR to use for a period of one month. Additionally, ODA logistics experts travelled to Zaire to assist UN staff with the distribution of aid and the team that had been managing the airport in Mwanza (Tanzania) also redeployed to Goma in response to the new crisis there. This team remained at Goma for at least three weeks, until they were eventually replaced by

¹³⁰ Lt. Col. A Hawley, "Rwanda 1994," p.78

¹³¹ MOD. Army News Release 124/94, 30 August 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹³² US State Dept, "UK Increases Humanitarian Aid to Rwanda," Cable from US Embassy London to State Dept. Washington, 15 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

US military handling teams. After a brief respite, the team was then reassigned to work at Kigali airport. At the request of UNHCR, a second ODA airfield cargo handling team was also deployed to Entebbe (Uganda) in late July.

However, by mid August the ODA increasingly believed that the best solution to the crisis was for the refugees to return to Rwanda and British aid was refocused towards this aim. The US Ambassador to London reported a conversation he had with Baroness Chalker around this time:

[she said] she had visited many refugee camps throughout the world but had never seen anything as horrendous as the Rwandan refugee camps at Goma. It was 'like the middle ages' with thousands of bodies wrapped in blankets left along the roads. She returned to London even more determined to take action to encourage refugees to return to Rwanda.¹³³

Consequently, the British bilateral aid effort shifted its focus to Kigali, rather than Goma, in an attempt to improve conditions there so as to encourage refugees to return home. Chalker also remained conscious of the potential for the refugee situation to worsen once the French Operation Turquoise withdrew from southwest Rwanda at the end of August. Therefore, as well as the redeployment of British troops to this region, £3.5 million of ODA funding was targeted at supporting NGO and UN programs there.¹³⁴

The ODA were clear however that they did not intend to become involved in long-term reconstruction or development work in Rwanda.¹³⁵ Instead its activities were concentrated on three broad areas: encouraging reconciliation through the use of mass media, mainly radio (broadcasting equipment was purchased from the BBC to assist with this); providing a kick start to the economy; and, supporting the new administration's structure and systems. In terms of the third area an ODA assessment team, for example, recognised that the Rwandan Minister of Health was working out of a hotel room with no

¹³³ US State Dept. "Ambassador's Courtesy Call on Minister for Overseas Development," Cable from US Embassy London to State Dept. Washington, 19 August 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹³⁴ US State Dept. "British Aid for Rwandan Refugee Crisis," Cable from US Embassy London to State Dept. Washington, 17 August 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

equipment or transportation. £120,000 of ODA aid was therefore channelled into purchasing office equipment and vehicles for the minister.¹³⁶

On 27 July, Peter Burton, head of the disaster unit in the ODA, informed contacts at the US Embassy in London that UK aid to Rwanda at this stage stood at £18 million bilaterally, as well as £22 million of assistance being channelled through EU programs.¹³⁷ During her visit to Rwanda on 29 July, Baroness Chalker announced a further £10 million of aid, bringing the total British contribution to £50 million since the beginning of April. By the end of August, this had increased by a further £10 million to £60 million. It was not until the end of September that the ODA concluded that the emergency crisis was over in Rwanda and therefore the provision of aid could be wound down. As ODA officials told American diplomats “[the] ODA has no plans at this point to engage in rehabilitation programs since it has never had a country program in Rwanda”¹³⁸ All told the UK would be the fourth largest donor to the crisis in Rwanda, behind the US, EU (to which the UK was again one of the largest contributors) and Japan.¹³⁹

In terms of NGOs, whilst media coverage may not have influenced the FCO in an obvious or clear way, it certainly seems to have influenced public opinion and therefore the NGO response. The head of the charity Feed the Children for example recalled “By early July our supporters were calling to say what were we doing? We are responsive to the wishes and intentions of our supporters. We don’t want to let them down”.¹⁴⁰ What ensued was what can be called the “Scramble for Rwanda”, as hundreds of aid workers flocked to the region, mainly Zaire. The JEEAR report on NGOs records that over 100 turned up to “help” in Goma.¹⁴¹ Nicholas Stockton describes Goma as being “awash with the modern symbols of international aid: T-shirts, car stickers and flags”. With so many NGOs in Goma, he continues, they “all clamoured for television coverage and made claims about what could

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ US State Dept. “Britain Increases Rwandan Aid,” Cable from US Embassy London to State Dept. Washington, 27 July 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹³⁸ US State Dept. “Britain Winding Down Emergency Aid to Rwanda,” Cable from US Embassy London to State Dept. Washington, 29 September 1994. Released to author under FoI.

¹³⁹ JEEAR, “The International Response to Conflict, Vol. III,” p.25.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Hilsum, “Reporting Rwanda,” p.178.

¹⁴¹ JEEAR, “International Response to Conflict, Vol. III.”

be achieved, some of which were indeed outrageous”.¹⁴² Careful not to miss an opportunity for publicity Oxfam had their name painted six foot high on water tanks in one refugee camp and ensured they were used as a backdrop for television reports. CARE UK acknowledges that they “had never received media coverage like that before”.¹⁴³

The conspicuous presence of NGOs combined with ongoing and sympathetic media coverage appears to have influenced public donations to the aid campaigns. The level of donations to the Disasters Emergency Committee seems to demonstrate this influence of media coverage; donations peaked in August at £5.1 million, the height of the Goma crisis, followed by May at £1.8 million, the height of the refugee crisis in Tanzania. By November, when media coverage was negligible, donations had reduced to £0.3 million.¹⁴⁴ Similarly John Grain, who logged credit card donations to Oxfam noted that donations “mirrored almost exactly the ebbs and flows of TV and tabloid coverage of Rwanda: May 1,000 calls, June 134, July 6,000 (the largest ever response to an appeal in a month), August 2,500, September 100.”¹⁴⁵ As Feed the Children were also to recall, after some weeks the media lost interest in Rwanda and “the money dried up immediately. It was like turning off a tap”.¹⁴⁶ It seems then that donations closely correlated with press coverage, but are also an indication that claims of the public’s compassion fatigue in the early 1990s are overstated. The public were more than willing to help the sick and the hungry if not the victims of genocide. Once the media lost interest though so did the public.

Given the fairly substantial funding channelled through them by the ODA on top of the generosity of the public, British NGOs were able to play a significant role in the humanitarian relief both in Rwanda and also in neighbouring countries. The following is a description of just some of the activities performed by British NGOs. In July, fearing the imminent flow of refugees, Oxfam used £400,000 of its own reserve funds to preposition

¹⁴² Stockton, “In Defence of Humanitarianism,” p.358.

¹⁴³ Hilsum, “Reporting Rwanda,” p.182.

¹⁴⁴ JEEAR, “The International Response to Conflict, Vol. III,” p.116.

¹⁴⁵ Hilsum, “Reporting Rwanda,” p.176.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.178.

water pumps and pipes in Goma. Whilst this was only sufficient to provide water to 50,000 people, and therefore quite inadequate in terms of the eventual exodus of refugees to Goma, it did provide emergency relief in the first few days until more equipment could be shipped over from the UK and therefore potentially averted many deaths.¹⁴⁷ Also in Goma, ActionAid responded to the difficulties of digging toilets in the volcanic rock by shipping heavy plant from Scotland and operating this in the camps. Seeing the overload of agencies in Goma, Save the Children UK decided to operate just in Rwanda and developed a role in two very specific areas. Firstly, it worked with UNICEF to support the Ministry of Family and Rehabilitation in Rwanda with regards to protecting women's rights; traditionally women were not able to own land in Rwanda and therefore the death of their husbands in the genocide led to many women having their claim to property questioned. Secondly, Save the Children took the lead role in reuniting parents and children separated during the genocide and refugee exoduses. Save the Children also provided training to Rwandans so this work could be carried on once their involvement reduced.¹⁴⁸

Despite the good and well intentioned efforts of the NGOs, their role has been held up for criticism in a number of ways. The first is a debate about whether NGOs were right to be offering assistance to people involved in the genocide, particularly elements of FAR that had fled to Zaire. It has been suggested, particularly by the new Rwandan government and the organisation African Rights, that providing aid in Goma was morally wrong, given what FAR and the Interahamwe had done in Rwanda. However, as CARE UK articulated "Our remit is to provide humanitarian assistance. That is what we do."¹⁴⁹ Or as Nicholas Stockton of Oxfam was later to suggest, to do anything other than feed the refugees would have in itself been a breach of human rights and would have effectively constituted the vengeful punishment of the Hutu masses, many of whom were not involved in the genocide, without trial.¹⁵⁰ In fact it is clear that many NGO workers did not even have to consider this debate. Many who travelled to Goma were not aware that they were providing aid to the

¹⁴⁷ JEEAR, "The International Response to Conflict, Vol. III," p.70.

¹⁴⁸ JEEAR, "International Response to Conflict, Vol. IV," pp.62-3.

¹⁴⁹ Middleton and O'Keefe, *Disaster and Development*, p.115.

¹⁵⁰ Stockton, "In Defence of Humanitarianism," p.355.

perpetrators of genocide; a large proportion of aid workers, like the wider public, believed those in Goma were actually the victims of the violence.¹⁵¹ As Storey highlights, this ignorance of the political dimensions of the crisis meant that many aid workers gave misleading and misinformed interviews to the media. Media coverage of comments by one aid worker, for example, about how his daily routine began at 5.30 each morning and involved helping Hutu who faced the dilemma of remaining in the refugee camp and risking cholera, or returning to Rwanda and the prospect of a revenge killing at the hands of the Tutsi army, simply added to the British public's difficulty in understanding the crisis.¹⁵²

A second debate that emerged after the immediate crisis had elapsed was whether NGOs had overly focused on Goma to the detriment of relief in Rwanda itself. As Andy Storey highlights, in 1994 only "35.3 per cent of all aid had been allocated for use within Rwanda ... By September 1995, 20 times more aid had gone to refugees outside the country than to support refugee resettlement within Rwanda."¹⁵³ Much of this is blamed on the NGOs' need for media coverage to increase public awareness of their actions and thereby stimulate donations. In an ironic vicious circle, which is repeated in most humanitarian emergencies, journalists were in Goma because that is where the NGOs were and the NGOs were there because that is where the journalists were; each depended on the other. Certainly the impact of NGOs focusing so heavily on Goma, and continuing to provide aid to all, was to prolong the insecurity in the region. As long as NGOs from Britain and other western countries continued to operate in Goma the FAR and Interahamwe continued to be fed and clothed and were able to continue launching attacks on Rwanda. As the NGO Save the Children UK also argued, the availability of aid in Goma deterred ordinary Hutu refugees from returning home, something that the British government considered key if the crisis was to be solved.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Storey, "Non-neutral Humanitarianism," p.389.

¹⁵² Anon, "After 25 Wars, I've Never Had a More Disgusting Day," *The Herald*, 30 July 1994, p.4.

¹⁵³ Storey, "Non-Neutral Humanitarianism," p.386.

¹⁵⁴ Hilsum, "Reporting Rwanda," p.177.

Could More Have Been Done? Other Peacekeeping Missions

Again, to address the issue of responsibility, we return to the question of whether the UK could have done more in Rwanda. Having already addressed what more could have been done in the months preceding the genocide and also what capacity the military had to respond during the genocide, here the question is addressed by comparison to other peacekeeping operations. Since the end of the Cold War the British military has been involved in various interventions, by comparing the response to the Rwandan crisis to some of these it may be possible to determine whether the response to Rwanda was unusual. Three interventions are considered here; firstly two interventions that are generally considered to have been successful Operation Provide Comfort (Iraq, 1991) and Operation Unified Protector (Libya, 2011), and then thirdly the rather less successful intervention in Bosnia in the early 1990s. These three are all interventions in which the UK played a leading role, both diplomatically and in terms of resourcing, and all also took place during periods of Conservative government after the end of the Cold War. Like Rwanda, all also involved civil war (though in the case of Iraq limited to only one region of the country) evolving into a significant humanitarian crisis.

Operation Provide Comfort

The Iraqi defeat in the first Gulf War in 1991 was followed by an unsuccessful Kurdish rebellion against Saddam Hussein. Hussein's response was to brutally repress the uprising, forcing thousands of Kurds to flee their homes to the mountainous border region of Iraq and Turkey. Within weeks one million refugees were just managing to survive on the border, but a shortage of food, water and shelter was creating a humanitarian crisis that the Red Cross described as a "public health catastrophe of immense proportions".¹⁵⁵

At the end of March the French and Turkish governments sponsored a joint UN Security Council Resolution (688) which "insist[ed] that Iraq allow immediate access by

¹⁵⁵ Frances Williams, "Crisis in the Gulf: Epidemics Loom as Temperature Rises," *The Independent*, 6 April 1991, p.8.

international humanitarian organisations to all those in need” and “appeal[ed] to all Member States and to all humanitarian organisations to contribute to these humanitarian relief efforts”.¹⁵⁶ The Resolution did not call for, or even appear to permit, military intervention. At this point the narrative becomes slightly confused. Popular opinion has it that John Major decided that a more robust, military led, intervention was required to alleviate the suffering allegedly after having been “appalled by what he saw and read in the weekend media”¹⁵⁷ apparently whilst putting on his socks.¹⁵⁸ The Sunday papers had certainly all dedicated a great deal of space to the Kurdish crisis, which *The Observer* described on its front page as “a belt of misery along the Turkish border”.¹⁵⁹ John Major himself, however, suggests that he was already aware of the crisis and had raised the Kurdish issue at Cabinet a week earlier; this seems to be borne out by the fact that Baroness Chalker and the ODA were already coordinating aid drops to the refugees before the Sunday papers went to press.¹⁶⁰ Either way, on 8 April at a routine European Council meeting, Major presented a plan to establish safe havens in northern Iraq to provide protection to Kurds and to encourage them to return home. Both Major and Hurd’s autobiographies suggest that this idea emanated not from the FCO but directly from the Prime Minister; Anthony Seldon likewise quotes Major as having told his closest advisers “Of course the Foreign Office won’t like it”.¹⁶¹ With French and German support obtained the safe haven idea was presented to President Bush as a European plan. Bush’s initial response was to reject the suggestion, “he [allegedly] did not want one single soldier or airman shoved into a civil war in Iraq that has been going on for ages.”¹⁶² However, just three days later, following a visit to the region by Secretary of State James Baker, Bush not only announced his support for the plan but claimed it as his own.

On 16 April, coalition troops crossed into northern Iraq. Their mission, as described to parliament by then Secretary of State for Defence Tom King, was threefold: stop the

¹⁵⁶ UNSCR 688, 5 April 1991.

¹⁵⁷ Seldon, *Major*, p.161.

¹⁵⁸ Ammon, “Global Television,” p.103.

¹⁵⁹ Julie Flint, “Britain Joins Airdrop to Refugees,” *The Observer*, 7 April 1991, p.1.

¹⁶⁰ Major, *The Autobiography*, p.242.

¹⁶¹ Seldon, *Major*, p.162.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p.163.

immediate suffering, encourage the Kurds to move from camps in the mountains to more sustainable camps in the valleys, and to encourage Kurds ultimately to return home.¹⁶³ The force, under American command, included paratroopers from USA, France and Spain; infantry from USA and Luxembourg; marines from USA, Britain and the Netherlands; and, special-forces from USA and Italy.¹⁶⁴ Operation Provide Comfort would eventually number more than 20,000 allied troops.¹⁶⁵ The British element, known as Operation Haven, included the bulk of 3 Commando Brigade, made up of two Royal Marine Commando units, a battery of Royal Artillery (six guns), as well as helicopters, RAF planes and various support units. In total about 5,000 men.¹⁶⁶

Prima facie the response to the Kurdish crisis is rather damning evidence against the failure to respond sooner in Rwanda; Provide Comfort demonstrates the international community's ability to deploy large numbers of troops, into a potentially hostile situation, in an incredibly short period of time. Major General Robin Ross, who commanded Operation Haven, for example records that Iraqi forces in the region were "overwhelmed" by the scale of the coalition force.¹⁶⁷ Provide Comfort also demonstrates a willingness to deploy troops without explicit UN approval and in the face of traditional claims of sovereignty. Despite Resolution 688, military intervention had not actually been approved by the Security Council. The US, France and the UK, Adam Roberts argues, knew there was little chance of Russia or China agreeing to the intervention and therefore did not ask for such authority.¹⁶⁸ The operation was therefore a NATO mission justified on the grounds of "overwhelming humanitarian need" and claiming to be "consistent with Resolution 688".¹⁶⁹ Provide Comfort was also different from previous peacekeeping missions in that it was not neutral. The mission was launched very much to protect the Kurds from the Iraqi military, hence the

¹⁶³ Hansard. HC Deb, 18 April 1991, vol.189, col.571-83

¹⁶⁴ Lt. Col. John P. Cavanaugh, "Operation Provide Comfort: A Model for Future NATO Operations," A School of Advanced Military Studies Report, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1992, p.16.

¹⁶⁵ Ronald Brown, *Humanitarian Operations in Northern Iraq 1991: With Marines in Operation Provide Comfort* (History and Museums Division, US Marine Corp, 1995), p.7.

¹⁶⁶ Robin Ross, "Some Early Lessons from Operation Haven," *RUSI Journal* 136 (1991), p.19.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p.20.

¹⁶⁸ Roberts, "The UN and Humanitarian Intervention," p.84.

¹⁶⁹ Jakobsen, "National Interest, Humanitarianism or CNN?" p.208.

composition of the force, which included attack aircraft and artillery, neither of which are much use for relieving humanitarian suffering.¹⁷⁰

Why then were international leaders willing to respond so forcefully in Iraq? Firstly, there was a better understanding of the Kurdish crisis at senior levels of government. Seldon for example suggests Major did see the media coverage of the crisis himself and was genuinely responding to the suffering that he saw on the television.¹⁷¹ Baroness Chalker also suggests that the government's understanding of what was happening in Iraq was quite different from the crisis in Rwanda. In an interview with the author, she highlighted the presence of the large Kurdish population in the UK (many of whom held a protest at the US Embassy in London calling Hussein's response genocide and demanding international support of the uprising), combined with media coverage and information coming from Turkey, as having had an impact on the decision to intervene.¹⁷²

Secondly looking at the ability to intervene, from a British perspective Provide Comfort shows that the government believed they were incapable of mounting such an operation unilaterally. Major knew "this was too big and costly an exercise for the British alone" and therefore accepted "we would need American and European support."¹⁷³ Major therefore deliberately courted France and Germany before approaching the Americans. General Ross also suggests that the success of the mission depended on the presence of US planes and also a force of sufficient size to intimidate the Iraqi forces.¹⁷⁴ Alone the UK could not have provided this and as such a unilateral British response in both Iraq and Rwanda would have been considered unrealistic. In practical terms there was another significant difference between Rwanda and Provide Comfort in that the latter was launched from Turkey which had the infrastructure capable of supporting such a mission. Rwanda in 1994 on the other hand had no petrol and nowhere near enough aviation fuel. The recent

¹⁷⁰ Hansard. HC Deb, 18 April 1991, vol.189, col.571-83

¹⁷¹ Seldon, *Major*, p.162.

¹⁷² Author's interviews with Baroness Chalker, 18 August 2010 and Sir Malcolm Rifkin, 22 March 2010.

¹⁷³ Major, *The Autobiography*, p.242.

¹⁷⁴ Ross, "Some Early Lessons," p.23.

end of the Gulf War, and the fact that the US Air Force had existing facilities at Incirlik airbase in Turkey, also meant that some military assets were prepositioned for use in the mission, which was not the case in Rwanda – in 1994 only France had soldiers based in Central Africa. These various factors meant that, unlike a possible intervention in Rwanda, the Kurdish mission was expected to have a high chance of success. The various militaries were confident given the recent defeat of Iraqi forces in the Gulf War and the size and composition of the force.

The final point to note is that in Iraq there was a national interest argument to support intervention and there was political will. Piers Robinson suggests that the intervention was not motivated by morality but by the desire to come to aid of Turkey, a NATO ally, who faced an unprecedented refugee crisis. President Bush's discussions with President Ozal of Turkey lend strong support to this argument, Robinson argues.¹⁷⁵ In fact, both the NATO mission and Resolution 688 were justified on the grounds, not of moral obligation, but out of the need to maintain international peace and security. In terms of Major's support, Seldon also argues that despite what he saw on the television, perhaps the most significant motivation was the desire to appear statesmanlike, something his advisers deemed necessary so soon after becoming Prime Minister.¹⁷⁶ The intervention then was driven not by moral obligation but by realist foreign policy; as we have seen the realist argument in support of intervention in Rwanda was less strong.

Operation Unified Protector

Twenty years after Provide Comfort, in February 2011 an initially peaceful protest against another dictatorial ruler, Colonel Gaddafi of Libya, was forcefully put down by his army. Over the next weeks the protests spread and the number of civilians killed by the Libyan army and police increased. As the government's repression intensified, the protestors came together to form a rebel army and the country degenerated into open civil

¹⁷⁵ Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, p.71.

¹⁷⁶ Seldon, *Major*, p.162.

war. In response the Security Council issued a resolution expressing “grave concern” over the situation in the country and imposing an arms embargo.¹⁷⁷ After the situation further deteriorated, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1973 on 17 March. The resolution condemned the “gross and systematic violation of human rights, including arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture and summary executions.” It also authorized member states to use “all necessary measures” to protect Libyan civilians.¹⁷⁸ In response to Resolution 1973 NATO, led largely by the UK and France, agreed to enforce the arms embargo, to enforce a no-fly zone and ultimately to use NATO aircraft to forcefully protect civilians at risk from attack by the Libyan military. This mission was codenamed Operation Unified Protector.

In total, NATO planes flew more than 26,000 sorties over Libya, an average of 120 per day. 40 per cent of these were strike sorties against military targets, which damaged or destroyed approximately 6,000 targets. At its peak, Unified Protector involved more than 8,000 servicemen, 21 NATO ships in the Mediterranean and more than 250 aircrafts.¹⁷⁹ At no point were ground troops officially deployed into Libya; however, the British media did speculate that the SAS were deployed to act as forward air controllers and to advise the rebel army.¹⁸⁰ In addition to this possible SAS role, the Royal Navy deployed 16 vessels at various times to the mission. British frigates formed part of the blockade enforcing the arms embargo and were also involved in evacuating western civilians trapped in Libya; two nuclear powered submarines launched missiles against land targets within Libya; and the helicopter carrier HMS Ocean was used as base for the army’s Apache attack helicopters which were used across Libya. The RAF was also involved; Tornado and Typhoon jets, relocated to Italy, attacked Libyan ground units and other aircraft provided logistical and intelligence support to the overall mission.

¹⁷⁷ UNSCR 1970, 26 February 2011.

¹⁷⁸ UNSCR 1973, 17 March 2011.

¹⁷⁹ NATO, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_71652.htm, accessed on 21 April 2012.

¹⁸⁰ For example, Kim Sengupta, “Initial Assault on Gaddafi Stronghold Falters,” *Independent on Sunday*, 11 September 2011, p.8.

Again the deployment to Libya seems to demonstrate the west, and Britain's, ability to intervene in response to humanitarian emergencies at short notice. It is, like Provide Comfort, also an example of quite partisan intervention launched without the invitation of the host nation. Whilst the mission's objective was the relief of human suffering this was achieved by attacking and destroying military assets being used against the population. What then, if anything, differentiated Libya and Rwanda in the minds of decision makers?

Drawing on Krosiak's factors for assigning responsibility there were at least two distinct differences between Rwanda and Libya. Firstly there was an understanding of what was happening in Libya and more significantly this knowledge was interpreted quite differently in the two crises. Whilst Libya, like Rwanda, was in the midst of a civil war, it was a war in which the west easily discerned a good side and a bad side; the rebels were seen to be fighting for democracy, Gaddafi, on the other hand, was described by *The Times* as "mad ... murderous and evil".¹⁸¹ So whilst the civil war in Rwanda was reported in the media and understood by politicians to be an ancient tribal war, the war in Libya was described by Prime Minister David Cameron as a war for democracy and as a war to overthrow a leader that had inflicted "murderous attacks"¹⁸² on his own people and, through the sponsorship of terrorism, the world. The rhetoric of FCO ministers speaking about the two crises reflects this fundamental difference in interpretation of the crises and explains why intervention was deemed appropriate in one case and not the other; for William Hague the war in Libya was an opportunity that "gave Libyan people a chance to determine their own future"¹⁸³ for Mark Lennox-Boyd the war in Rwanda was nothing more than a "a tragic civil war".¹⁸⁴ The crisis in Libya, unlike the genocide in Rwanda, was also understood by the UK, France and NATO to be a threat to western national interests. A speech by the Prime Minister, David Cameron, shows this:

¹⁸¹ Hugo Rifkind, "There is no Case – Yet – for any Form of Liberal Intervention," *The Times*, 4 March 2011.

¹⁸² David Cameron press conference, London, 29 March 2011. Accessed at <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-at-london-conference-on-libya/> on 21 April 2012.

¹⁸³ William Hague press conference, London, 31 March 2011. Accessed at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=Speech&id=576187382> on 21 April 2012.

¹⁸⁴ Hansard. HC Deb, 9 May 1994, vol.243, c.28w.

Let me remind everyone just why this matters to all of us ... This is a regime that for years supported terrorism around the world and was implicated in the biggest mass murder ever on British soil, the Lockerbie bombing ... and if we don't sort out the current problems the risk is again of a failed pariah state festering on Europe's southern border, threatening our security, pushing people across the Mediterranean and creating a more dangerous and uncertain world for Britain and all our allies.¹⁸⁵

There was a genuine belief, amongst both western and Arab leaders, that continued violence in Libya would lead to a breakdown of international peace and security in both the Mediterranean region and the wider world. There was then a fundamental difference in western knowledge and understanding of the two crises that made intervention, to maintain international order as well as to ease the humanitarian suffering, more likely in Libya.

Secondly, in terms of ability to respond, it is easy to highlight once again the relative logistical ease of intervening in Libya compared to Rwanda; NATO was able to launch planes and helicopters both from air bases in Italy and also aircraft carriers in the Mediterranean. The nature of the Libyan conflict also meant that intervention by air alone had a reasonable chance of success; NATO aircraft could target Gaddafi's tanks, artillery and other armoured vehicles and therefore, as Prime Minister David Cameron put it, "stop tanks rolling into Benghazi ... [and] prevent a bloodbath".¹⁸⁶ As Secretary of Defence Liam Fox suggested, these targeted strikes were seen as being able to reduce Gaddafi's forces' "capacity to kill their own civilians."¹⁸⁷ The geography of the uprising also meant that NATO could fairly easily differentiate between government and rebel forces and keep collateral civilian damage to a minimum. In Rwanda, the fact that the genocide was perpetrated in towns door-to-door using machetes and hand grenades meant that air intervention alone would not have been effective; as *The Independent* suggested of Libya "hitting tanks in the open is meat and drink to coalition aircraft, but firing into cities is much more difficult".¹⁸⁸ Whereas air intervention was effective in Libya, stopping the genocide in

¹⁸⁵ David Cameron press conference, Brussels, 11 March 2011. Accessed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJ0rdaPBFb8> on 21 April 2012.

¹⁸⁶ HC Deb, 21 March 2011, vol.525, col.703.

¹⁸⁷ Thomas Harding, "RAF Tornados Destroy 40 Ammunition Bunkers," *Daily Telegraph*, 31 March 2011, p.9.

¹⁸⁸ Brian Brady, "How Effective Have the Coalition Air Strikes Been?" *The Independent*, 3 April 2011, p.12.

Rwanda would have, as Alan Kuperman explains, required thousands of troops on the ground.¹⁸⁹ This was something that the international community, US President Obama especially, rejected out of hand in the case of Libya;¹⁹⁰ in fact the UN Resolution, as David Cameron said, “absolutely and specifically rule[d] out” ground troops.¹⁹¹ However, even without the use of ground troops intervention in Libya was considered achievable, and therefore as Piers Jakobsen would suggest, was more likely than intervention in Rwanda.¹⁹²

A third factor of note, which Latane and Darley would perhaps suggest is explained by their experiments into bystander intervention,¹⁹³ is the fact that the NATO intervention came in response to widespread international calls for western intervention. As well as UN support for intervention there were calls from the Arab League and its members for something to be done in Libya. Unlike in Rwanda, the international community said that Libya was an emergency that required a bystander response and indeed David Cameron drew on this international support on numerous occasions including when he announced the initial use of British aircraft above Libya.¹⁹⁴ In an interview with the author, Foreign Secretary William Hague suggested that this international support was a significant factor in the UK’s decision to support intervention.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, he continued, at the time of the interview the debate about a possible role for the UN in Syria, where in 2011 and 2012 in a similar way to Libya the government attacked its own citizens, was being shaped by the absence of support for intervention there; without these calls from regional powers, he suggested, intervention was less likely. Notably, during the genocide phase of the Rwandan crisis such international support was absent.

¹⁸⁹ Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, p.87.

¹⁹⁰ Hala Jaber, “Battle for Benghazi,” *The Sunday Times*, 20 March 2011.

¹⁹¹ HC Deb, 21 March 2011, vol.525, col.703.

¹⁹² Jakobsen, “National Interest, Humanitarian or CNN,” p.212.

¹⁹³ Latane and Darley, “Group Inhibition of Bystander Intervention in Emergencies,” pp.215-221.

¹⁹⁴ David Cameron’s Statement on Libya, 19 March 2011. Accessed at www.number10.gov on 5 June 2012.

¹⁹⁵ Author’s interview with William Hague, 9 September 2011.

Bosnia

The civil war in Bosnia was contemporary to the crisis in Rwanda and therefore significant when considering the response to the genocide. This significance is heightened by UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali's suggestion that the international community was quick to respond to the rich man's war in Bosnia but were willing to stand by and watch thousands of Africans be killed in Rwanda.¹⁹⁶ However, whilst at its peak UNPROFOR, the UN's mission to Croatia and Bosnia, would number nearly 39,000 men, it is also noteworthy that the debate on how to respond to the crisis tore the international community apart; there was no consensus on how, or even whether, to respond. Boutros-Ghali's claim also ignores the fact that the UN only deployed a peacekeeping mission to Bosnia, and its neighbour Croatia, in February 1992, nearly a full year after war had broken out. Indeed troops were sent to Croatia only after a ceasefire had been agreed and in 1992 Murrack Goulding, at the time head of UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, did not support the intervention in Bosnia as the war there was on-going.¹⁹⁷ Far from being quick, the response to the crisis was slow, often under resourced and in many cases reacted to terrible events on the ground, such as the mortar bombing of the Sarajevo market, rather than being proactive.

British involvement in the mission certainly also appears to have been less than enthusiastic; David Reynolds in fact suggests that the Major government initially "resolutely opposed military intervention".¹⁹⁸ Douglas Hurd notes that the Cabinet and indeed the House of Commons generally were "sceptical of the need for even the limited intervention we undertook".¹⁹⁹ Seldon makes similar claims, noting that when Cabinet discussed the deployment of British troops in August 1992 "Deep reservations were expressed about troops getting sucked irrevocably into the area; this time the British were citing American

¹⁹⁶ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, 31 December 1992, Sarajevo; quoted in Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, (New York: Modern Library, 1999), p.174.

¹⁹⁷ Rieff, "The Illusions of Peacekeeping," p.1.

¹⁹⁸ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, p.290.

¹⁹⁹ Hurd, *Memoirs*, pp.492.

analogies, this time Vietnam.”²⁰⁰ Despite the reservations, Britain “reluctantly” sent a 300 man field hospital unit in April 1992 and then five months later a battle group (around 2,400 men) to protect aid convoys.²⁰¹ Over the next couple of years British troop numbers would steadily increase; growing eventually to a brigade size deployment which included heavy artillery, Challenger tanks and RAF support.

Why then if there was such reticence did the Major government agree to send British troops to Bosnia? Hurd makes it clear that it was not out of belief that Yugoslavia was of “huge importance to British interest” or that the conflict would explode into some pan-European war.²⁰² Nor was British involvement intended in any way to stop the war through active involvement; Major believed that the war was a result of ancient hatreds and intervention would not bring an end to the violence; there was no way, he believed, at this stage that the British should take sides.²⁰³ As Adam Lebor rather critically suggests Britain and France sent troops not because they wanted to go to war, but precisely because they did not want to; the small humanitarian force, he suggests, was an “alibi for not taking more robust action”.²⁰⁴ All troops could achieve, Major believed, was some alleviation of the humanitarian crisis by providing protection to the aid convoys. In fact in 1992 it seems that Britain simply did the minimum that was expected of them by other European governments. The French government believed that the EU had to intervene and should do this without US support; similarly the German government called for intervention, but made it clear that for historical reasons they could not send troops. Hurd recognised this pressure and records in his memoirs that in September 1991 he warned the prime minister that the UK “could not exclude absolutely and for ever the deployment of British troops in Yugoslavia.”²⁰⁵ The European pressure made British involvement inevitable for Hurd; as Lawrence Freedman

²⁰⁰ Seldon, *Major*, p.306.

²⁰¹ Hurd, *Memoirs*, pp.499-502.

²⁰² Hurd, *Memoirs*, p.490.

²⁰³ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled*, p.291.

²⁰⁴ Lebor, *Complicity with Evil*, p.32.

²⁰⁵ Hurd, *Memoirs*, p.494.

would suggest, ignoring Bosnia would simply not have been consistent with Hurd and Major's desire for the UK to be seen as "a full and responsible member of the EU".²⁰⁶

As Mary Kaldor argues, the hesitancy in committing troops and then the international community's failure to deploy enough troops though meant that the humanitarian relief effort was far from effective.²⁰⁷ The UN force, despite the presence of armoured units, artillery and air support, was unable to provide protection to the population of Sarajevo, to prevent the massacre of thousands of Muslim men at Srebrenica, or even to ensure the distribution of aid supplies as it was mandated to. Despite designating a number of cities as safe havens the UN's timidity meant that the violence, ethnic cleansing and war continued. The French and British governments were so concerned about the risks to their troops on the ground that many, if not most, of the objectives could not be achieved. As would also happen in Rwanda, and as Michael Barnett explains, the "obligation to protect the lives of peacekeepers ... overrode the needs of those who were the victims of genocide".²⁰⁸ This timidity became so prevalent that in 1995 General Janvier, the head of the UN mission in Yugoslavia, issued guidelines that made it explicit that "the execution of the mandate is secondary to the security of UN personnel".²⁰⁹ As David Rieff wrote in his book *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*, "Wasn't it incongruous that UN soldiers and UNHCR convoy drivers risked, sometimes lost, their lives to bring in food to isolated areas, but steadfastly refused to silence the guns that were causing the emergency."²¹⁰ To actually use troops to stop, or to stand in between the warring armies, was simply considered too high risk and was never seriously considered. By clinging to the concept of impartiality in the war and so desperately trying to avoid casualties, the peacekeepers were, as David Reiff suggests, "consigned to the role of a eunuch at the orgy".²¹¹

²⁰⁶ Freedman, "Defence Policy," p.278.

²⁰⁷ Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, pp.61-7.

²⁰⁸ Barnett, "The UN Security Council," pp.560-1.

²⁰⁹ Lebor, *Complicity with Evil*, p.98.

²¹⁰ Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p.140.

²¹¹ Rieff, "The Illusions of Peacekeeping," p.11.

To suggest that Rwanda was ignored whilst a successful peacekeeping mission took place in Yugoslavia does not seem fair or accurate. In the early 1990s, the west begrudgingly deployed troops (the US did not send troops until 1995) and then they were sent in numbers that were incapable of achieving their objectives with a mandate that did nothing other than allow them to protect aid convoys. Two incidents demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the UN peacekeepers; the first only resulted in one death, the second in over 8,000. In January 1993 the Vice President of Bosnia was being transported in the back of a French armoured personnel carrier that was stopped at a Serb roadblock. Under pressure, the French colonel commanding the small convoy allowed it to be searched; the Serbs discovered the Vice President and shot him. The French troops stood by and watched this happen.²¹² In the second incident, following the fall of Srebrenica to Serb forces in July 1995, 8,000 Muslim men and boys were separated and executed in nearby woods; Dutch soldiers had watched the men be led away powerless to intervene.

Rwanda – Could More Have Been Done?

These three missions are all potential evidence that the international community, and the UK in particular, could have done more in Rwanda. Provide Comfort provides proof that a sizeable military force can be deployed quickly and rapidly alleviate humanitarian suffering. Libya is a demonstration that the international community can, when it wants, intervene proactively on one side in civil war. And Bosnia is evidence that in 1994 Britain was, however reluctantly, ready to commit peacekeeping troops into a hostile environment, and indeed incur casualties.

However, there are key differences. In Provide Comfort there was the infrastructure to support a mission in neighbouring Turkey; there was better understanding in the west of what was happening in Iraq; there was national interest at stake; and there was political will to do something being led by national leaders. But most significantly, Iraq, unlike Rwanda,

²¹² Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p.151.

was not by the time of the intervention a full scale civil war. In Iraq the victims and the aggressor were obvious; in Rwanda the west simply saw tribal violence with victims and aggressors on both sides. Similarly in Libya, intervention was practically easier; again there was a national interest and there was political will to do something. And although there was a civil war in Libya, it was one where the two sides could be clearly differentiated and support for the rebels fighting for democracy against the dictatorial leader easily justified. Finally, Bosnia is not proof that the UN gave preference to the protection of white men over black. It is a demonstration of the UN, and Europe's, reticence in the early 1990s to become involved in peacekeeping; their reticence to put their own troops at risk; their reticence to support one side over another in a complicated civil war; and their inability to offer security to those they claimed to protect.

The three cases though also give us some indication of why no intervention force could be found until it was too late to save so many Tutsi civilians. Firstly, in terms of understanding of the crises, whilst Libya and Iraq demonstrate that the international community is willing to intervene on behalf of one side, Bosnia shows that this is the case only when the west can identify or sympathise with that side or is already opposed to the other. The war in Rwanda, where the west, other than France, had no particular sympathy with either side, was more akin to the situation in Bosnia than that in Libya or Iraq. Supporting the argument of proponents of the theory of realist foreign policy, in these three cases intervention was justified on the grounds of national interest, though defined differently in each case; there was no perceived national interest in Rwanda. These other examples also show the importance of high level knowledge of crises and support for intervention. In Iraq and Libya where the prime ministers were personally supportive, the missions were better resourced and more successful than the Bosnia example where Major was reluctant to become involved. We know of Rwanda, that Major and Hurd showed little interest in the crisis until July. In terms of ability to intervene, the examples, demonstrate the importance of policy makers' view on likelihood of success. Libya and Iraq were

considered achievable and received support. Bosnia and Rwanda were complicated and policy makers tried to ignore the two crises; as Barnett puts it, the “UN and member states [have a desire] to pick winners and to avoid failures”.²¹³ None of these factors excuse Britain’s decision to not do more in Rwanda sooner, but they do go some way to explaining the decision.

Summary

July and August were the months during which the British government moved from being an ignorant or disinterested bystander to an active participant in the relief of the humanitarian crisis. The combination of aid and military resources meant that overall the UK became one of the largest contributors to the Rwanda relief effort; though, like most of the international community this aid did not arrive in the country until the civil war, and genocide, had ended – hence, Adam Robert’s claim of too little, too late. Whilst the argument that the UK did eventually do more than most other countries, is not enough to appease the critics, such as Linda Melvern or General Dallaire, it is true. The British government, British NGOs and the British public responded to the humanitarian crisis in a way that other countries simply did not. But this does not absolve the UK of criticism. The media in particular were responsible for a gross misunderstanding of what was happening in Rwanda; the focus on Goma and cholera without the historical perspective of the genocide was an insult to the memory of the nearly one million Tutsi that had been murdered during the genocide. The media led the public and NGOs to focus on Goma whilst the situation in Rwanda itself received little attention. Of course overall it can be argued that the UK did too little too late, but the truth that cannot be ignored is that the government, NGOs and public did something eventually that saved thousands of lives.

²¹³ Barnett, “Indifference at the UN,” p.569.

CONCLUSION

We started this discussion of Britain and Rwanda with a quote from Tony Blair; speaking of humanitarian crises he wrote “If we know and we fail to act, we are responsible. [In April 1994] Rwanda erupted in genocide. We knew. We failed to act. We were responsible.”¹ Having now explored the evidence, do these claims about Britain’s culpability hold true? This final conclusion returns to the questions of what Britain knew of the 1994 crisis; how the UK responded and whether more could have been done; and finally considers whether the UK should be held responsible for the crisis.

Did Britain Know?

In the years and months leading up to April 1994, if you looked hard enough, there were signs of impending genocide. In Kigali Edward Clay, Britain’s High Commissioner in Uganda, for example, saw for himself the build up of soldiers, the arming of militias and heard stories of murders. In New York, reports from Romeo Dallaire recorded the increasingly volatile atmosphere in Rwanda (the British contingent at the UN may or may not have seen this) and the Secretariat produced reports highlighting the human rights abuses. In Washington, US intelligence agencies predicted massive loss of life should civil war resume, again these may have been seen by the British. And in the UK, NGOs, such as Amnesty International, wrote to members about the increasingly common murder of civilians in Rwanda and called for the UN’s response to be stepped up. For historians looking back at that period, such as Alison Des Forges, there is ample evidence of the impending slaughter.²

However, simply listing these signs oversimplifies the complexity of foreign policy making; although the signs are now obvious they were anything but obvious in 1994. As

¹ Tony Blair, *A Journey*, p.61.

² Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell The Story*, pp.143-72.

John Coles suggests “so often exhaustive accounts, written well after the event, fall into the trap of hindsight and fail to take account of the other pressures on policy makers”.³ Authors that catalogue the various indicators and then conclude that the British government *must* have known about the threat of genocide ignore a fundamental fact - government is a disjointed bureaucracy. As Graham Allison demonstrates “information does not pass from the tentacle to the top of the organisation instantaneously. Facts can be ‘in the system’ without being available to the head of the organisation”.⁴ Maybe, for example, a British official at the UN’s New York headquarters did see Dallaire’s infamous Genocide Fax, but David Hannay insists that he did not; a senior official at the FCO’s UN department insists they did not; and it is almost a certainty that Douglas Hurd, the man who had the capacity to actually respond to the fax’s contents, did not. Authors, like Des Forges, also underplay the fact that these discreet pieces of information, many of which were nothing more than rumour, fell onto the desks of officials with a thousand other priorities, more focussed on existing crises than hypothetical ones. And finally they ignore the fact that this information was being reviewed by people with no experience of spotting genocide and, in the case of the FCO, with almost no knowledge of Rwanda.

Even when genocide did begin this was not immediately obvious in London. The official UN report into Rwanda concludes “the persistent attempts to view the situation in Kigali after the death of the President as one where the cease-fire had broken down ... rather than one of genocide ... was a costly error of judgement”,⁵ it is one though, that in the case of the UK at least, can be understood. The British government, unlike the US, France, Belgium and China, did not have officials in Rwanda in April 1994; the FCO was unable to communicate with the honorary consul in Kigali because phone lines had been destroyed; and the nearest High Commission, in Kampala, was unable to report on what was happening in neighbouring Rwanda because the border was closed and fighting made the northern route

³ Coles, *Making Foreign Policy*, p.124.

⁴ Allison, *Essence of Decision*, p.120.

⁵ Ingvar Carlsson *et al*, “Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations During the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda,” New York: United Nations, 1999, p.41.

into the country unsafe. In April 1994 the government had no first hand intelligence coming directly from Rwanda; London's intelligence instead came from other countries, the UN Secretariat and the media, none of which in early April were able to give an accurate indication of what was happening in Rwanda.

With no access to direct intelligence for the first few weeks of genocide, government ministers knew of Rwanda only what they read in the newspapers like everyone else.⁶ Significantly this reporting, which in the absence of other sources had the potential to shape both the government and public's understanding of the crisis, was "appallingly misleading".⁷ The British media failed to identify the killings as anything other than anarchic and a resumption of the civil war for at least the first three weeks of genocide. The BBC's Mark Doyle for example accepts that "during the first few days, I, like others, got the story terribly wrong".⁸ Instead of reporting the systematic murder of civilians, the media spoke about "tribal warfare", "anarchy" and "chaos". It, of course, cannot be denied that reporting from Rwanda was hard; *The Independent's* Richard Dowden, for instance, recalls the practical difficulties, dangers and expense of getting into the country, of travelling around and of filing reports with editors back in London.⁹ These factors, combined with the fact that the presidential election in South Africa was diverting the media's attention away from Central Africa, do explain, but not necessarily excuse, why the press got it so wrong. The effect though of this inaccurate coverage was that people in the UK fundamentally misunderstood what was happening in Rwanda until at least early May.

Whilst looking at intelligence, it is also necessary to briefly revisit the question of Britain's relationship with the RPF. Hazel Cameron and Wayne Marsden both suggest that the RPF's 1990 invasion of Rwanda was made with full knowledge and approval of the British intelligence services and the RPF subsequently benefited from British aid,¹⁰ but there

⁶ Author's interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 March 2010.

⁷ JEEAR, "The International Response to Conflict and Genocide, Vol. II," p.47.

⁸ Doyle, "Reporting the Genocide," p.145.

⁹ Dowden, *Africa*, pp.243-7.

¹⁰ Cameron, "Britain's Hidden Role," p.18. Marsden, *Genocide and Covert Operations*, pp.111-6.

is, at the time of writing, no credible evidence or sensible motive for either claim. Whilst it cannot be categorically disproved that individuals within either MI6 or the FCO were aware of the invasion plans and possibly assisted the RPF, there is plenty of evidence to show that contact between the RPF and the British was minimal, low level and never constituted official support of the rebels.

The absence of intelligence sources and the inaccurate press coverage meant that the British government, like other countries many of whom had much closer links with the country, was not aware that the events in Rwanda constituted genocide until early May, by which time over three quarters of those that would ultimately be killed were already dead.¹¹ Whilst there is evidence, obvious now, that suggests the genocide could have been predicted or identified for what it really was sooner, the reality is this was not fully recognised at the time. In London, the government was no more likely have to foreseen the Rwandan genocide than they were to have foreseen the Nazi Holocaust following Kristallnacht.

Did Britain Fail to Act?

Blair's suggestion that the government failed to act has to be addressed by separating the crisis into two distinct phases. From early April to the end of July the British government did indeed do little to ease the tragedy unfolding in Rwanda; but by August British troops were deployed and aid had been significantly ramped up. Having now explored the British response over a number of months we look at how the policy of non-intervention followed by active intervention can be explained and secondly whether more could have been done.

Non-Intervention Explained

The British decision to not intervene has simply been explained as lack of national interest. There was nothing General Dallaire, for example, claims in Rwanda "that impinged

¹¹ Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, p.122.

on [the British government's] narrowly defined national interests ... not geographically, strategically or economically"¹² or as Anne Mackintosh less bluntly suggests "Unlike Kuwait, [Rwanda] does not produce oil and was of no consequence to the influential members of the UN Security Council"¹³. However, such an argument fails to address the obvious question of why the UK did eventually intervene – if there had been no national interest in May, still none existed in August when the UK did intervene. Despite the suggestions of authors such as Aidan Hehir that intervention in distant lands is typically motivated by national interest,¹⁴ in the case of Rwanda there must have been factors others than lack of strictly defined national interest that prevented the UK from doing more sooner.

Foreign Policy Ideology

Certainly the government's initial failure to respond fitted into the dominant Conservative foreign policy ideology of the time. Despite the end of the Cold War and the growing school of liberalism, Conservative foreign policy remained, as the historian Michael Clarke suggests, distinctly realist in this period.¹⁵ A response to any humanitarian crisis grounded simply on moral obligation was therefore highly unlikely; as Douglas Hurd has suggested "My view is that there is and there should be a moral part of British foreign policy, but in deciding what to do you have to account for reality."¹⁶ The mere existence of genocide was not enough to demand a response. The Conservative government of 1994 just did not ideologically believe that humanitarian intervention was a moral obligation; this is demonstrated not only by the response to Rwanda but also by the determination to stay out of Bosnia. Combined with a belief that foreign policy should be focused on promoting national interest and an inherent belief in the primacy of sovereignty (breached only briefly during Operation Provide Comfort), there was also a general view within the party that intervention would do more harm than good.¹⁷ For Leonie Murray this is partially explained

¹² Dallaire *et al.*, "The Major Powers on Trial," p.875.

¹³ Mackintosh, "Rwanda: Beyond 'Ethnic Conflict'," p.465.

¹⁴ Hehir, *Humanitarian Intervention: An Introduction*, p.62.

¹⁵ Clarke, *British External Policy Making*, p.4.

¹⁶ "Values," *Getting Our Way*, BBC Television, 22 February 2010.

¹⁷ Author's interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 March 2010.

by the fact that the Conservative government of 1994 was still a product of the Cold War; the liberalist foreign policy, shaped by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the associated peace dividend, that Clinton brought to the US in 1993, she argues only reached the UK in 1997 when Tony Blair became prime minister.¹⁸ Until that point the government remained resolutely realist.

Additional to this, the government retained a belief in the idea of spheres of influence; as a Francophone country with historic links to Belgium, Rwanda did not fall into a British sphere and was therefore someone else's problem. As late as mid July, for example, the MOD acknowledged the need for the UN's efforts in Rwanda to be stepped up, but did not conclude that this necessarily meant British involvement. This view also permeated the House of Commons, where MPs from across the House agreed that something should be done, but very few suggested that this actually meant a British response. In this respect Britain's failure to intervene sooner can be partially explained by its colonial past; for example, whilst one MP recalled being contacted by constituents who had lived in Sierra Leone and Sudan urging him to call for a response to the violence in those countries he recalled no such correspondence relating to Rwanda, there were after all no constituents with a link to tiny Rwanda.¹⁹

The Media and the CNN Effect

In 1996 Nicholas Soames, at the time a Minister at the MOD, suggested that media coverage had played an important role in putting Rwanda on the political agenda and influencing the government's decision to send British troops:

In the Rwanda deployment there had been such a build up of what is quite rightly called the Kate Adie factor, where night after night scenes of appalling suffering and misery are brought into your living room and people rightly in this country feel that they would like to make a contribution to the relieving of suffering and we did.²⁰

¹⁸ Murray, *Clinton, Peacekeeping and Humanitarianism*, p.58.

¹⁹ Confidential interview with author.

²⁰ "Mission Angola," *Defence of the Realm*, BBC Television, 29 August 1996.

Yet whilst television images and newspaper reports from the very start of the crisis showed the atrocities, there was no government response in the first three months; there would then seem to be contradictory evidence of the significance of the so-called CNN effect.

Widespread reports of civil war, chaos and anarchy filled the early reporting of the crisis; indeed the media coverage significantly shaped the early understanding of the crisis and influenced the decision, taken by governments across the world, to not intervene sooner. As Alan Kuperman argues “early reports indicated that the Tutsi rebels were winning the civil war ... which contradicted any notion of the Tutsi as victims.”²¹ As Royce Ammon suggests, in April this style of reporting meant there was little empathy for the suffering being experienced by Rwandan civilians, there were, he says, no “good people to whom bad things were happening ... no innocents in hell”.²² The reporting was, as Peter Dahlgren suggests is common of the media’s portrayal of Africa, “devoid of social, political and historical context” and consequently the media consumer was left with a belief of Rwanda’s people, again common of reporting Africa, that “That’s just the way they are”.²³ As Robinson suggests “[this] distance framing ... implicitly supported a policy of non-intervention”.²⁴ As long as the media concentrated on the civil war, and drew on clichés of tribal savagery, calls for the government to respond, a critical element of the CNN effect, never materialised. It also meant that the British government, which, as we have seen, drew on the media as an important source of intelligence on Rwanda, failed to recognise the true nature of the events on the ground until it was too late; Nicholas Soames’ “Kate Adie moment” certainly did not occur whilst Tutsi civilians were being murdered by their Hutu neighbours.

²¹ Kuperman, “How the Media Missed the Rwanda Genocide,” p.256.

²² Ammon, *Global Television and The Shaping of World Politics*, p.127.

²³ Dahlgren, “The Third World of TV News,” p.53.

²⁴ Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, p.115.

Race

Boutros Boutros-Ghali and others have suggested that the response to Rwanda was shaped by race;²⁵ whilst the west was quick to respond to the contemporary crisis in white Yugoslavia, the argument goes, nothing was done about the crisis in black Africa. Whilst no-one in government would admit that the response to the two crises was shaped purely by the colour of the victims' skin it can be seen that racial stereotyping, if not actual racism, influenced decision making.

However, one must first acknowledge that comparisons to Bosnia do not particularly help in this debate. It is true that Europe responded more robustly to the war in the former Yugoslavia; but as we have seen the response was neither quick, universally acknowledged as right, nor especially successful. It is true that Bosnia received more attention in parliament and media than Rwanda, but as Michael Clarke argues "parliament is not concerned with what is important but what is controversial";²⁶ the absence of public debate is not in itself an indication of racism. And whilst this argument may not satisfy liberals, who see no distinction between proximate suffering and that on the other side of the world, it cannot be denied that the crisis in Yugoslavia posed a greater threat to European and British national interests than did the crisis in Rwanda; a response to the Yugoslavian crisis was therefore more likely regardless of colour or race.

That said the initial, racially stereotyped depiction of the Rwandan violence as ancient, tribal warfare influenced Britain and the world's decision not to intervene in the first weeks of the genocide. As Myers *et al* point out in their study of American media the "press depiction of Bosnia's war is that it is a logical and considered outcome of historical events. Rwanda's war is simply centuries old tribal savagery".²⁷ The press was significantly more likely to describe Rwanda as "savage" or as experiencing "an orgy of bloodletting" than they

²⁵ Murray, *Clinton, Peacekeeping and Humanitarianism*, p.138. Shaw, "Historical Frames and the Politics of Humanitarian Intervention," p.365.

²⁶ Clarke, *British External Policy Making*, p.116.

²⁷ Myers *et al*, "The Inscription of Difference," p.36.

were to describe Bosnia in such terms. This could not fail but to shape understanding of the crisis. It was not so much the fact that Rwandans were black that led to hesitancy in responding to their crisis, but the long established western view that this is what Africans did. As Philip Gourevitch has suggested, the popular view in the west is that Africans “die of miserable things” and there is nothing the west can do to stop that.²⁸ That Rwanda fell into this established framing and led people to write to newspapers with comments such as “why not let them get on with settling their differences in their own traditional way”²⁹ is a demonstration that long established views of Africa and Africans influenced the response. Harold Isaacs’ argument that “race or color (sic) does not often appear as the central or single most critical factor in conflicts affecting international relations”³⁰ is probably true generally and certainly of Rwanda. It was not the fact that the victims were black that delayed intervention, but the fact that the tragedy was being played out in remote Central Africa between two “tribes” certainly meant clichés as old as the west’s relationship with the “dark continent” influenced decision making and delayed the international response.

Fighting the Last War - The Impact of Somalia

Recalling the memory of Somalia, US National Security Adviser Tony Lake suggested “Rwanda was a casualty of chronology”³¹ and whilst any explanation of the US’s failure to respond sooner to the genocide cannot escape consideration of the deaths of US Rangers in Mogadishu in 1993, it does not seem that this event influenced British decision making quite as markedly. For Malcolm Rifkind Somalia was not a significant influence in the government’s hesitancy to intervene³² and whilst it would not be true to say that the Somalia analogy was never raised in British newspaper coverage, it is true that such analogies were infrequent and lacked force. It must also be acknowledged that Britain had experienced its own Somalia in Bosnia. By April 1994 six British soldiers had been killed

²⁸ Quoted in Dawes, *That the World May Know*, p.23.

²⁹ D. Smith, “Tribal Feuds,” *The Scotsman*, 7 July 1994.

³⁰ Isaacs, “Color in World Affairs,” p.237.

³¹ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence*, p.60.

³² Author’s interview with Sir Malcolm Rifkind, 22 March 2010.

serving in Bosnia and on 16 April a Sea Harrier was shot down over the country; despite these incidents, there were no widespread calls for British troops to be withdrawn from the Balkans and in fact troops numbers increased after the Harrier incident. Arguably, years of violence in Northern Ireland made the British public and government less sensitive to the deaths of soldiers than their American cousins.

But whilst the events of 3 October 1993 might not have materially affected decision making in London, they did shape David Hannay's thinking at the UN. Hannay was acutely aware, through his frequent contact with Madeleine Albright, that the US did not support intervention in Rwanda. He was therefore conscious that, in the face of inevitable US opposition, to argue for a robust response was pointless. US reluctance to become involved in Rwanda therefore influenced British behaviour at the Security Council; for example, in late April Hannay dismissed arguing for the reinforcement of UNAMIR – the US would have vetoed the suggestion – instead he argued for and received support to only partially withdraw UNAMIR and in the process demonstratively altered US policy. In this respect, the scar of Somalia did influence the British response in that the government, aware of US sensitivities, felt unable to support the more robust response some other members of the Security Council sought. Jared Cohen's suggests in his study of the US response "The US role in the collective failure is essential to understanding why many of the world's great powers and the UN did not attempt to stop the genocide."³³ Britain appears to have been one of those great powers that Cohen had in mind.

Lessons from the Field of Psychology

Some of the psychology theories discussed in Chapter One also add to the understanding of the delay in intervening. Latane and Darley's flow chart of bystanders' decision making process, for example, demonstrates that there is only one path that leads to bystander intervention; they must notice the incident, must interpret it as an emergency and

³³ Cohen, *One Hundred Days of Silence*, p.3.

then assume personal responsibility to act.³⁴ It is not apathy, they argue, that leads to non-intervention, but a genuine misinterpretation of the situation. In the case of the UK and Rwanda we can see that at each junction of this decision path the FCO went down the path of non-intervention: Rwanda fell outside of the FCO's usual sphere of interest and therefore little attention was paid to the country during the civil war period; when the genocide did break out the FCO initially failed to recognise it as an emergency and instead interpreted the deaths as part of a civil war; finally when it was recognised that genocide was happening the FCO failed to take responsibility, instead they argued it was for Africa or France to do something. The fact that other bystanders, including the British media and the US, were reaching the same conclusions at each stage, as Latane and Darley would also hypothesize, convinced the government that they were pursuing the right course.

Schwartz's theory of defensive redefinition also goes some way to explaining the government, media and public's response toward the genocide. The horrific images and stories in the press could not help but alert people to the horrors occurring in Rwanda, but there were still only isolated calls for intervention. By defining the crisis as civil war, rather than the humanitarian emergency it actually was, people and politicians in the UK became convinced that there was nothing that could be done, that the victims were responsible for their own fate or that it was for someone else to intervene (the UN or other African states).

Intervention Explained

Whilst it is fairly easy to understand why the British government did not initially respond to the genocide, the explanation of why in July they offered troops to serve in UNAMIR II is less clear.

The Media and the CNN Effect (2)

Whilst the inaccurate media reporting of April and May delayed the response to the crisis, it is not apparent that the distinct shift in media coverage, once the Goma refugee

³⁴ Latane and Darley, "Social Determinants of Bystander Intervention in Emergencies," pp.14-5.

crises unfolded, actually triggered government intervention. Compared to the coverage of the genocide which had been patchy and inaccurate, coverage of the refugee crises was almost blanket. The framing of the refugee story was also markedly different from that of the violence in Rwanda itself; suddenly the media portrayed ordinary Rwandans as victims, rather than willing participants in tribal warfare. The framing of the refugees in a more empathetic way, and clear suggestions that something could be done to alleviate their suffering, led for the first time for obvious calls for action from both the press and the public. But Myers' conclusion that "only when Rwanda became identifiable within the media frame for Africa of starving children, mothers and flies did the Clinton Administration finally act"³⁵ places too much emphasis on the media's role. In the UK, at least, it does not appear to have been the media that led the government to shift towards a policy of intervention.

For starters, the FCO of the early 1990s was not an organisation that was susceptible to media pressure. Whilst it is typical of the political elite to deny the influence of the media on decision making, throughout his time as Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd repeatedly and assertively dismissed the role of media in foreign policy; for example, in one article he wrote "there is nothing new in mass rape, the shooting of civilians, in war crimes ... What is new is that a selection of these tragedies is now visible";³⁶ in another speech on Bosnia he stated that the government would not be propelled into action "simply because of day-to-day pressure of the media".³⁷ The FCO was adamant that it would not be forced unwillingly into actions just for the sake of good media coverage. This is arguably quite the opposite of the US government, who assembled the world's media in Goma to witness a US funded air-drop of aid that was later revealed to have contained ski mittens and gruyere cheese!³⁸ In stark contrast to Britain's response to the Kurdish crisis, which is often explained by John Major's reaction to media coverage of the refugees, there is no suggestion in the case of Rwanda that

³⁵ Myers *et al*, "The Inscription of Indifference," p.42.

³⁶ Quoted in Seaton, "The New 'Ethnic' Wars," p.49.

³⁷ Quoted in Carruthers, *The Media at War*, p.214.

³⁸ Philo *et al*, "The Media and the Rwanda Crisis," p.224.

the media was significant in shifting policy. Interview responses suggest that the media played a relatively limited role in policy formulation; one MP said “there was no media lobby saying ‘this is the right response’”³⁹ and Baroness Chalker told the author that at no stage did she feel under pressure to respond to the genocide.⁴⁰ Nor is there any documentary evidence to support claims that media coverage triggered the decision to send British troops to Rwanda. Whilst it cannot be denied that the daily coverage of the refugee crisis may have brought the issue to ministers’ attention or even made them more sympathetic to the crisis, there is no real evidence, anecdotal, official or otherwise, that the media, contrary to the suggestion of the CNN effect hypothesis, changed government policy.

However, if the media coverage had little effect on government policy, it did certainly influence the public’s response. If as Wayne Wanta and Yu-Wei Hu argue “members of the public learn the relative importance of issues through the amount of coverage these issues receive in the news media”⁴¹ the pure volume of coverage of the refugee crises made it a more important issue for the public than the genocidal murder of 800,000 Tutsi. There is clear evidence that once the media coverage shifted to a more empathetic portrayal of refugees and began to suggest something *could*, rather than just should, be done the public’s response changed. For example, the clear correlation between volume of press coverage and contributions to aid agencies demonstrates the media’s significant role in moving the public from inactive bystanders to bystanders that intervene, or at least donate. In a study of US charitable giving, Drury and Olson found that for every lead article in *The New York Times* about a humanitarian crisis, public donations to relief efforts rose by approximately half million dollars;⁴² the same phenomenon seems to have been true in terms of Britain’s donations to Rwanda – the media coverage led the British public to donate and very generously so.

³⁹ Confidential interview with author.

⁴⁰ Author’s interview with Baroness Chalker, 18 August 2010.

⁴¹ Wanta & Yu-Wei, “The Agenda Setting Effects of International News,” p.250

⁴² A Drury and Richard Olson, “The Politics of Humanitarian Aid: US Foreign Disaster Assistance, 1964 -1995,” *The Journal of Politics* vol. 67, no.2 (2005), p.469.

Guilt

Suggestions, such as Alain Destexhe's,⁴³ that the international community, including the UK, responded so vigorously to the refugee crisis out of some collective sense of guilt for failing to halt the genocide do not adequately explain the shift in policy. Hans-Werner Bierhoff may have been correct to suggest "caused distress motivates compensation, which leads to more intervention than neutral witnessed distress";⁴⁴ but in the case of Rwanda there was no belief amongst the political elite that the distress of the refugees had been caused by the west – the refugees were seen as victims of civil war, of tribal savagery, even of a Biblical tragedy, but not as victims of western failure. Foreign policy makers, including John Major and Douglas Hurd, did not therefore feel they had anything to be guilty about. This absence of guilt is demonstrated by both Major and Hurd's failure to publically address their role in the crisis since 1994. Whilst President Clinton for example has expressed his regret at not having done more for Rwanda, Hurd wrote in his autobiography "It never occurred to us to send combatant troops to Rwanda to stop the killing. I record this as a bleak fact". He continues to suggest that Clinton's apology and claims that lessons have been learnt are unconvincing, concluding "We deceive ourselves with our own speeches."⁴⁵ These do not sound like the words of a man racked with guilt.

Chance of Success and Political Will

If neither the media nor feelings of guilt adequately explain the sudden British intervention, what we are left with is intervention motivated by the view that Britain could do something positive in Rwanda. First though it was necessary for the idea of intervention to be put on the political agenda; as Hurd records until July the UK had not even considered the idea of sending troops to Rwanda. It seems that rather than the media or public opinion putting Rwanda on the FCO's list of priorities, it was a request from the UN Secretary General. Whilst it is true that the UK had been involved in the authorisation of UNAMIR II,

⁴³ Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, pp.58-62.

⁴⁴ Bierhoff, *Prosocial Behaviour*, p.140.

⁴⁵ Hurd, *Memoirs*, pp.541-2.

until July the UK had only been asked to provide equipment and had responded positively by offering trucks. It was not until sometime in the first two weeks of July that the UN actually asked the UK to provide troops. Up to that point the FCO had been focussed on trying to encourage African nations to provide the bulk of the new UNAMIR II force. The new request from the UN made it clear that the UNAMIR II mission could not operate without western logistical support and therefore demanded consideration.

However, as we have seen even the idea of sending troops was initially rejected by the MOD. Peter Jakobsen's claim that "once [a conflict] has [been] placed on the agenda, the perceived chances of success become the principle factor determining whether an enforcement operation will take place"⁴⁶ seems to explain this initial reluctance. As long as the violence in Rwanda continued to be perceived as civil war it was widely held that nothing could be done to stop the killing, the risk to British troops would have been too great and the chances of actually stopping the "ancient tribal warfare" were minimal. In line with the findings of the psychologists Piliavin and Piliavin, the perceived cost of intervening in Rwanda did not justify the anticipated benefits; intervention was therefore rejected. It was only the RPF's declaration of a ceasefire that led the government to believe that a British mission could be successful – and safe (i.e. at a cost the government was willing to bear). The fact that Britain was now being asked to provide troops combined with the new perceived chance of success largely explains the decision to authorise Operation Gabriel; realism then trumped ideas of liberalism, altruism or moral obligation.

A second factor, that cannot yet be fully understood, is the role of the Prime Minister in the decision to send troops. What we do have is a tantalising suggestion in MOD documents of a change in political will in mid-July and also the recollection of Baroness Chalker that she spoke privately to John Major in late June or July.⁴⁷ Presumably in this conversation she would have urged Major to back intervention. Given the evidence of political leaders' direct involvement in the decision to deploy humanitarian missions – for

⁴⁶ Jakobsen, "National Interest, Humanitarianism or CNN," p.213.

⁴⁷ Author's interview with Baroness Chalker, 18 August 2010.

example, John Major in the case of northern Iraq, President Bush in the case of Somalia and Tony Blair in the case of Sierra Leone – one would expect Major to have been involved in the decision to deploy troops to Rwanda. At the moment we can only surmise at this, but the MOD documents suggest his input was an influence.

Could More Have Been Done?

Tony Blair claims that the government failed to act in Rwanda, yet the UK was ultimately the second largest contributor to UNAMIR II in terms of manpower⁴⁸ and was one of the leading donors of aid to the region following the genocide. The British government can rightly claim to have done more than most to relieve the suffering of Rwandans. But, Melvern and Williams largely dismiss the Major government's claims that "it was doing more [in Rwanda] than many states, with the inference that it was therefore somehow absolved of guilt for its policy".⁴⁹ For a permanent member of the UN Security Council to justify their response by comparison "to the lowest common denominator", they suggest, "is patently absurd". Was then the British response sufficient or could the UK have done more?

As we have seen, at various stages the UK had the capacity to respond more robustly to the crisis, as examples: Hannay could have supported Belgium requests for reinforcements for UNAMIR; British troops could have been sent sooner; more could have been done to evict Rwanda from the Security Council; when the response did finally come, more soldiers could have been sent (the troops were after all available) or more aid could have been donated. But as we have also seen, for various reasons at the time none of these options were deemed appropriate. The intelligence available to the UK suggested UNAMIR's manpower and mandate were appropriate; the military arguments against sending troops to intervene in the civil war were in the words of Hannay "quite

⁴⁸ The French (Operation Turquoise) and American (Operation Support Hope) deployments to the region were larger, but fell outside of the UNAMIR mission.

⁴⁹ Melvern and Williams, "Britannia Waived the Rules," p.15.

compelling”;⁵⁰ the suggestion of evicting Rwanda from the Security Council was considered unfeasible;⁵¹ the UN had not asked for more troops; and any extra donation of aid to Rwanda meant less for some other crisis.

The one thing we can say that Britain could have realistically done, without succumbing to hindsight or abandoning the dominant thinking of 1994, is to have deployed the 50 trucks donated to UNAMIR sooner. There seems to be no explanation other than bureaucratic delay for why it took so long for these vehicles to arrive in Rwanda. Whether their deployment sooner would have saved lives cannot be proved, but it is certain that whilst still parked in a barracks in Colchester the trucks were helping no-one. Any other suggestions of what more the UK could have done are based either on knowledge that the British government did not have available, or fully understand, in 1994; assumes limitless resources at the FCO; or simply goes against the dominant ideology of the Conservative government.

And despite Melvern and William’s condemnation of Britain’s failure to do more, one has to acknowledge what Britain did do in Rwanda. Yes the trucks came too late, but they were what the UN had asked for and were the logistical resources that the media and the Labour Party suggested the government should have offered. When the UK did finally provide troops it was on a scale far in excess of what the UN had requested in early July – the Secretariat asked for a REME company but ended up getting doctors, nurses, drivers, engineers, signallers, mine disposal experts and headquarters staff as well. In terms of aid, British money both from the government and the public, saved thousands of lives by providing refugees with clean water, food and shelter. In Rwanda, British money funded the re-establishment of government ministries and projects aimed at rebuilding society. Whilst this all came too late to save those killed during the genocide, it was not, as Tony Blair suggests, doing nothing.

⁵⁰ Hannay, *New World Disorder*, p.167.

⁵¹ Author’s interview with Sir David Hannay, 23 April 2010.

Was Britain Responsible?

As we have seen, Tony Blair is not alone in suggesting the UK must bear some responsibility for the crisis in Rwanda. Ingvar Carlsson, for example, condemns members of the Security Council for failing in their “responsibility to prevent and punish the crime of genocide”.⁵² Romeo Dallaire accuses the UK, United States and France of “shirking their legal and moral responsibilities”⁵³ in Rwanda, by failing to act sooner and Melvern suggests that having established a peacekeeping mission to Rwanda, the UN became “responsible” for the country’s future.⁵⁴

In the introduction we noted how Daniela Krosiak identifies three key factors which must be present if responsibility is to be assigned to a bystander; knowledge, involvement and capability:

How much did the bystander *know* about the preparation of the genocide or, during the genocide about its implementation? To what extent was the bystander *involved* with the genocidal regime prior to and throughout the atrocities? And what *capabilities* did the bystander have to intervene in some way, shape or form to prevent or suppress the genocide?⁵⁵

Applying these criteria to the UK and Rwanda we can say that Britain had very little knowledge about the preparation of the genocide and not until May did the government fully recognise that genocide was happening. In terms of involvement with the genocidal regime, there was no such direct involvement. Some authors have suggested that by authorising the withdrawal of UNAMIR in April and by failing to have Rwanda removed from the Security Council the UK gave tacit approval to the regime; but as we have seen the first action came before the UK recognised that genocide was happening and the second was not possible given almost certain opposition from China and Russia. Finally, in terms of capabilities, as noted above resources were available; 5 Airborne Brigade and various other infantry

⁵² Carlsson, “The UN Inadequacies,” p.844.

⁵³ Dallaire *et al*, “The Major Powers on Trial,” p.887.

⁵⁴ Melvern, “The Security Council: Behind the Scenes,” p.108.

⁵⁵ Krosiak, *The Responsibility of External Bystanders*, p.4.

battalions could have been sent to Rwanda once the genocide became known but would have been dependent on US airlift capacity.

The British government then can only be deemed to have any responsibility for the crisis from May onwards, before that date they did not have the intelligence available to pass Kroslak's first test. After that date the UK arguably had the capability to attempt to suppress the genocide but chose not to. But even that claim must be placed into the wider context. First for Britain to have intervened unilaterally would have been very difficult; without the support of the US Air Force the deployment of British troops any earlier than late July, i.e. before the ceasefire, would have been almost impossible. As the eventual Operation Gabriel deployment demonstrated, the speed at which the British could have deployed to Rwanda without American airlift capability would have been too slow to have made much of a difference. And as Alan Kuperman shows, by mid May it was already too late to save the majority of the Tutsi killed in the genocide; only around 150,000 would be killed between May 12 and the end of the genocide.⁵⁶ Obviously that is still a large number, but it would be a fiction to suggest the UK could have done much more to reduce the number of people who lost their lives in Rwanda. Britain's real capability to save many lives lost during the genocide was limited. Where the British did have the capability to save lives, during the refugee crises both in Tanzania and Zaire, the government and public did respond. The British knew little of the preparation for, or indeed the first weeks of, genocide; despite failing to censure the Hutu government more forcefully, Britain was not involved with the genocidal regime; and in reality the capacity to intervene unilaterally against the genocide was fairly low and the response to the refugee crisis was in excess of most other countries. Under this measure, we must conclude that the UK bears little responsibility for what happened in Rwanda.

Returning finally to Fritz Heider's model of levels of responsibility, the British government did not intend or foresee the consequences of their failure to act sooner. There

⁵⁶ Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention*, p124.

was no wilful complicity with the perpetrators of genocide; no one in the British government sat down and conspired to allow the events in Rwanda to happen, and no-one sat down in the media and set out to wilfully misreport the crisis. The British failure to respond quicker probably did lead to more deaths but these deaths were not *caused* by Britain's failure to respond. Tutsi died at the hands of their Hutu neighbours, high on drugs and jeered on by decades of propaganda, alone Britain could not have stopped this happening. As such on Heider's scale Britain can only be said to be at the level of association – the lowest level of responsibility.

Linda Melvern and Paul Williams, in one of the few articles specifically on the British response to the Rwandan genocide describe John Major's policy as "official indifference".⁵⁷ They continue:

The best that can be said for Britain's policy is that it rested on a tragically flawed interpretation of events on the ground and a desire not to jeopardise the future of UN peacekeeping ... A more accurate interpretation is that Britain's policy of indifference and non-intervention was justified with reference to a deliberately misconceived version of events in Rwanda and a wilful neglect of its obligations under the Genocide Convention.⁵⁸

Such claims though do not hold up to scrutiny. Yes Britain could have done more in Rwanda; to argue otherwise is to ignore Britain's place in the world as a member of the Security Council with a large and effective military, but a response would not have been anywhere near as easy or even as effective as some authors assume. But to argue that anyone in the UK wilfully sat back and let genocide happen is unfair and demonstrates an unrealistic expectation of how foreign policy works. It is a tragedy that so many people died in Rwanda but we can see why the UK did not respond sooner. As Howard Adelman correctly identifies, "decision makers were faced with often confusing signals, numerous competing demands for their attention and limitations on the resources at their disposal".⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Melvern and Williams, "Britannia Waived the Rules," p.2.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.22.

⁵⁹ Adelman, *Early Warning and Response*, p.295.

The mix of poor intelligence, inaccurate media reporting, competing demands elsewhere in the world, ideas of sphere of influence, racial stereotyping and the chronological accident of Somalia all combined to ensure that little was done in Rwanda until in reality it was too late. But these factor all combine to demonstrate Douglas Hurd was correct when he wrote, “The doctrine of humanitarian intervention will never be universal; it will always depend on time place and circumstance”.⁶⁰ For the people of Rwanda, time, place and circumstance just did not coincide.

⁶⁰ Hurd, *Memoirs*, p. 542.

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Anonymous	RAMC officer who served in Operation Gabriel.	4 May 2012
Anonymous	Senior official at FCO	27 Nov 2011
Chalker, Lynda (Baroness)	FCO Minister with responsibility for Africa	18 Aug 2010
Lennox-Boyd, Mark	FCO Minister	14 Feb 2010
Hague, William	Conservative MP in 1994 and Foreign Secretary from 2010.	10 Jul 2009 & 9 Sep 2011
Hannay, David (Lord)	UK's Permanent Representative to UN	23 Apr 2010
Mundell, David	Conservative MP	1 Oct 2010
Rifkind, Malcolm (Sir)	Secretary of State for Defence	22 Mar 2010
Wharmby, Mike (Brigadier)	Officer Commanding Operation Gabriel	13 Sep 2010
Worthington, Tony	Labour MP	9 Dec 2011

Written/ E-mail Correspondence

Name	Capacity in Which Contacted	Date
Farquhar, Andrew (Major General)	Commanding Office Green Howards in 1994	5 Oct 2011
Harvey, Nick	Conservative MP	11 May 2011
Lyell, Nicholas (Lord)	Attorney General in 1994	23 Apr 2010
Mayhew, Patrick (Lord)	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and member of Cabinet in 1994	10 Oct 2011
Smith, Andrew	Labour MP	16 May 2011
Thompson, Jeremy	Sky News correspondent	4 Oct 2011

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