



Rwanda crisis (1994)



HSC

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Introduction

On the 6th of April 1994, the airplane carrying the Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana was shot down, killing him, the Hutu President of Burundi, Cyprien Ntaryamira, and the rest of the passengers. This incident sparked the most vicious genocide of the late 20th century.



The almost centuries of segregation and conflict between the Hutus and Tutsis have finally erupted. Hutu militant groups organized themselves and ordered the mass killing of all Tutsis of Rwanda and politicians who called for cooperation between the two sides. This led to a veritable bloodbath. The Rwandan Genocide, also called the genocide against the Tutsi, is one of the worst in human history. It stands as a stark testament to the catastrophic consequences of unchecked ethnic tensions, political failures, and international indifference. As the world witnessed the systematic extermination of nearly a million Rwandans within a mere 100 days, questions arose about the root causes, the complicity of the international community, and the enduring impact on the survivors and the nation as a whole.

At present, a solution needs to be found to stop the killings and to rehabilitate the country post-conflict. Peace and prosperity need to return to Rwanda, and it is up to the Security Council to ensure it.

Definition of Key Terms

Ceasefire

A military truce or an agreement to stop fighting for a period, potentially indefinitely. Ceasefires are different from other peace agreements such as armistices, in the manner that a ceasefire may not be permanent whilst an armistice is the mutual agreement of parties in an armed conflict to entirely refrain from hostilities permanently. Both may be binding.

Genocide

According to the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, genocide can be defined as the following:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- 1) *Killing members of the group;*
- 2) *Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;*
- 3) *Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;*
- 4) *Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;*
- 5) *Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.*

Hutu and the Tutsi

The Hutu and Tutsi were originally two social classes in the Rwandan society before the colonization by the German empire in the 1890s. They are very similar genetically, culturally, and linguistically, but their divide is often attributed to social status society, originally, Hutu is thought to have meant peasant, while Tutsi meant noble, therefore defining their status in Rwandan society. The Tutsi therefore had access to better living conditions, which led them to be taller, healthier, and have a lighter skin tone than the working Hutu. When the Germans arrived, they identified the two social groups into races and enforced their rule via the Tutsi minority, whom they saw as superior, which paved the way for segregation and a clear division in the country.

Interhamwe and Impuzamugambi

The Interhamwe and the Impuzamugambi were militia groups formed by the Rwandan government around 1990 to support the police and the army. They consisted mostly of young men and these men believed they had a goal as the meanings of these names were “those who stand together” and “those who have the same goal”. During the genocide, these groups were responsible for a lot of deaths.

Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was the opposition party of the Hutu-dominated Rwandan government during the genocide and the years before it. The RPF finally stopped the genocide by taking over the country in July 1994. The RPF consisted mainly of Tutsi and was formed in Uganda, where a majority of the Tutsi fled to.

Twa

Twa was the third social class in Rwanda and could be differentiated by the Hutu and the Tutsi. They made up the smallest part of the population with a mere 1%. Even though the separation between the Hutu and the Tutsi was flexible, the separation of the Twa was far more rigid.

UNAMIR

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda was a peace mission from the United Nations Security Council formed on the 5th of October 1993. Their mission was to make sure the Arusha Accords were implemented correctly, which was meant to end the civil war. Even though they helped the RPF in July 1994 with the invasion of Rwanda, the mission is often seen as a big failure.

General Overview

German East-Africa (Colonisation) 1885-1924

On November 15 1884 during the Berlin Conference, the territory of Rwanda was assigned to Germany as part of German East Africa. Under German rule, the existing hierarchy remained intact: Tutsi chiefs maintained order over the majority made up of Hutu lower classes. Tutsis generally occupied the higher strata in the social system and the Hutus were the lower. However, social mobility was possible, a Hutu who acquired a large number of cattle or other wealth could be assimilated into the Tutsi group and impoverished Tutsi would be regarded as Hutu. A clan system also functioned, with the Tutsi clan (known as the Nyinginya) being the most powerful.

Belgian Mandate 1924-1945

During the First World War, Germany lost its possession of Rwanda and Belgium gained control of this region, which was then called Ruanda-Urundi. This is when the real segregation between the two tribes started. The Belgians treated both tribes very differently resulting in the classification of two ethnic groups. Both the Germans and the Belgians ruled mainly indirectly through Tutsi kings. This already shows the advantage the Tutsi were given. The colonialists developed the so-called Hamitic hypothesis or myth, which held that the Tutsi and everything humanly superior in Central Africa came from ancient Egypt or Abyssinia. The Europeans regarded Hutu and Twa (about 3% of the population) as inferior to Tutsi. Sixty years of such prejudicial fabrications inflated Tutsi egos inordinately and crushed Hutu feelings, which led to an aggressively resentful inferiority complex. However, before the Belgian colonization, these three tribes lived in relative harmony. People moved between categories and intermarriage was not uncommon. This all came to an end when the Belgians introduced identity cards distinguishing Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. From now on the tensions between the groups were focused on race. The “ethnicity” of an individual was based solely on the “ethnicity” of their father and never their mother. This practice had drastic consequences such as the firm attachment of a sub-national identity to all Rwandans and thereby rigidly dividing them into categories, which, for many people, carried a history of dominance-subordination, superiority-inferiority, and exploitation-suffering.

First revolution November 1959

Throughout the colonial era, the minority Tutsi (14%) were favoured over the Hutus (85%). They were given privileges and Western-style education, while the Hutus were the oppressed masses. In November 1959, a pro-Hutu party led a revolt that resulted in bloody ethnic clashes. The Hutus rebelled against the Belgian colonial power and the Tutsi elite. By 1963, these and other Hutu attacks had resulted in thousands of Tutsi deaths and the flight of about 130,000 Tutsi to the neighbouring countries of Burundi, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Uganda. Most of the things the Tutsi left behind, including land and cattle, were immediately claimed by land-hungry Hutu.

Rwanda becomes independent

The Hutu uprising from 1959 to 1961 signified the end of Tutsi domination and the sharpening of ethnic tensions. Under UN supervision a national election was held in 1961. Gregoire Kayibanda (an author of the “Hutu Manifesto”) became Rwanda’s President-designated. In 1962, the

monarchy was abolished and a republic was announced and on 1 July 1962, Rwanda was officially declared independent. On September 18, 1962, Rwanda was also admitted as a UN member state. In the meantime, the Tutsi gained control over Burundi, and supported by the Tutsi-dominated government the Tutsi began launching rather unsuccessful attacks into Rwanda. Ten such attacks occurred between 1962 and 1967, each leading to retaliatory killings of large numbers of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda and creating new waves of refugees. In 1973 Kayibanda's authority was overruled by Juvénal Habyarimana, another Hutu. He set up a one-party state and took control in a bloodless coup. A policy of ethnic quotas was entrenched in all public service employment, causing disapproval of Habyarimana by his people. By the end of the 1980's almost one-half million Rwandans have become refugees in neighbouring countries. They continued to call on their legal right to return to Rwanda, but Habyarimana refused to allow their return. He kept arguing that Rwanda was already too crowded and that there was no place for more Tutsi refugees.

Tutsi refugees in Uganda, together with some Hutu refugees, formed the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) in 1988 as a military and political movement. Their aims were the repatriation of Rwandan exiles and the reformation of the Rwandan government, including shared power. The RPF began attacks on Rwanda which usually failed. On 1 October 1990, the RPF launched a major attack with a force of over 7,000 fighters. All this fighting led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. The consequence of this was even more oppression by the Rwandan government of the Tutsi. Because of the recent call for freedom of the press, the media and radio were filled with propaganda against the Tutsi.

The Arusha Accords

After months of negotiations, seeing that the Rwandan economy was a mess, the Hutu-dominated government led by Habyarimana and the RPF finally signed a series of agreements, the Arusha Accords, in the Tanzanian town of Arusha on the 4th of August in 1993. These agreements called for a power-sharing government with the Tutsi, the allowance of the return of Tutsi refugees to Rwanda, and the integration of Tutsi into the armed forces. The Arusha Peace Agreements appeared to be signalling the end of the civil war.

However, this moment only marked a new chapter. Since The Arusha Accords meant a great setback for the Hutu and the Hutu elitists, many of them were not too happy about them. Within days, a new radio station appeared, Milles Collines, filled once again with anti-Tutsi and this time also anti-Accords propaganda. Preparations in Rwanda continued. Although these so-called preparations are often argued, they are worth the mention. From 1990 Rwanda consistently

imported more machetes, razor blades, and other things that could be used as weapons into the country. The government also started training the Hutu youth in combat, declaring both of these things as “civil defence”. Moreover, the Rwandan government, in particular the Hutu Power leaders, started organizing militia as support for the police and the army. They were called the “interhamwe” (meaning those who stand together) and the Impuzamugambi (meaning “those who have the same goal”). With these additions and also even more importation of munition and grenades the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) expanded quickly. On October 5th, 1993, the UN Security Council established the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) with a mandate encompassing peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and general support for the peace process. Their goal was to see how the Arusha Accords would be implemented. Some 2,500 UN military personnel were deployed to Kigali. From the outset, however, the will to achieve and sustain peace was subverted by some of the Rwandan political parties participating in the Agreement. With the ensuing delays in its implementation, violations of human rights became more widespread and the security situation deteriorated. Later, evidence demonstrated irrefutably that extremist elements of the Hutu majority while talking about peace were planning a campaign to exterminate Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

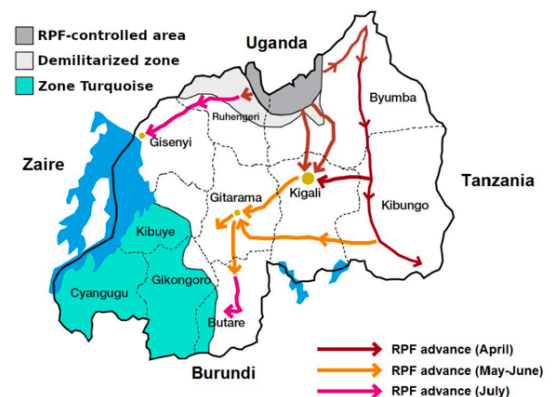
April 6, 1994, the genocide begins

On April 6, 1994, as Habyarimana’s presidential plane neared the Kigali Airport on his return from Dar-es-Salam, it was struck by a missile and plunged to earth, killing the president of Rwanda, the president of Burundi and all aboard. The Akazu used their Hutu nationalist radio station to call upon the Hutu militias to round up and kill Tutsis. The codeword was “cut the tall trees”.

Within an hour, members of the Interhamwe had set up roadblocks. Every passing vehicle would be asked for their identity card. All who identified as either Tutsi, members of opposition parties, or human rights activists were murdered on the spot. Radio Mille Collines blamed the RPF and a contingent of UN soldiers for Habyarimana’s death and urged revenge against the Tutsi. The Presidential Guard began killing Tutsi civilians in Ramera, a section of Kigali near the airport. On the 7th of April, the Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana and 10 Belgian peacekeepers assigned to protect her were brutally murdered by Rwandan government soldiers in an attack on her home. Other moderate Hutu leaders were similarly assassinated. After the massacre of its troops, Belgium withdrew the rest of its force. This was the start of weeks of systematic and intense massacres. On 21 April, after other countries asked to withdraw troops, the UNAMIR force reduced from an initial 2,165 to 270. The killings shocked the international community and were seen as acts of genocide. Over the course of the following 100 days, an estimated 800,000 to 1,000,000 Tutsis and moderate

Hutus were killed by extremist Hutus. An estimated 100,000 to 250,000 women were raped during the three months of genocide.

From the 22nd of June till the 19th of July, “Operation Turquoise” was in progress. This was an operation led by France and authorised by the UN Security Council meant to gain control of the entire Rwandan territory. Many French and African troops worked together with the RPF to invade Rwanda. The mission saved hundreds of civilians in South-West Rwanda but is also said to have allowed soldiers, officials, and militiamen involved in the genocide to flee Rwanda through the areas under their control. In other areas, killings continued until 4 July 1994 when the RPF took military control of the entire territory of Rwanda. This finally means the end of the genocide.



Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
20th of October 1924	Rwanda territory is placed under Belgian control
5th of November 1959	The first Hutu revolution
1st of July 1962	Rwanda gains independence
5th of July 1973	Coup by Juvénal Habyarimana
10th of June 1987	Rwandan Patriotic Front is formed
1st of October 1990	The RPF launches a major attack on Rwanda resulting in Tutsi hate and “civil defence” preparations
4th of August 1993	Arusha Accord was signed
6th of April 1994	The plane carrying Habyarimana gets shot down, this is the start of the Rwandan Genocide
19th of July 1994	RPF gains full control of Rwanda, end of the genocide

Major Parties Involved

Belgium

Belgium's involvement in the Rwandan Genocide could be seen as the start of the segregation in the country that eventually led to the genocide. From the moment Belgian colonialists entered Rwandan territory the relatively symbiotic lifestyle of the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa was forever changed. The introduction of identity cards seemed to establish a real "ethnic difference". The Belgians treated the Tutsi differently from the Hutus, favoring them in jobs, education, etc. The oppression of the Hutus eventually led to the uprising of the Hutu. Even though Rwanda was declared independent from Belgium before the horrible events of 1994, they could have done more if their foresight had been better. For example, the equipment of the 550 blue helmets sent to Rwanda by the UN would have been better.

France

The France government bears significant responsibility for enabling the genocide of April 1994. In the years before the massacre the France government supported Rwanda and the Rwandese President Habyarimana on many levels. Studies even show that the French president at the time, Francois Mitterrand, and his administration knew about the preparations for the genocide, yet they kept supporting it. France provided arms and military training to Habyarimana's militias, the Interahamwe and Impuzamugambi. It is widely believed that after the France army had taken back control of the country and marked the end of the genocide they allowed for Hutu powers and other people responsible for the genocide to flee and find refuge in other countries. Emmanuel Macron does see the role of his country in the genocide and has been seeking forgiveness for years.

United Nations

The United Nations was involved in this conflict from the start. From the moment Rwanda was admitted as a UN member state, this was in November 1962, the conflict was within their interest. Throughout the years prior to the genocide, the UN did show interest. They called upon the government of Rwanda and the RPF to respect the renewed ceasefire in March 1993, they helped negotiate during the formation of the Arusha Accords and they eventually started the peacekeeping mission UNAMIR. UNAMIR frequently sent out reports that warned of the heated environment and the possibility of serious conflict. However, when the real terrors occurred they had little to no power to intervene and stop the killings. The peacekeepers were ordered to not intervene until they

were attacked first and were handcuffed by their lack of power. The UN Security Council reduced the amount of peacekeepers in the area after the horrible deaths of the 10 Belgian soldiers. After the genocide, many reports show that the UN failed in the way it handled the conflict.

The United States of America

The United States of America wanted absolutely nothing to do with the killings in Rwanda. They watched as an entire population got wiped away. This had everything to do with their commitment to the civil war in Somalia seven months before, where 18 American soldiers were brutally killed.

Possible Solutions

Since many believe that the international community failed horribly during the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, this is where students could look for improvement. How could other countries have helped in foreseeing, preventing, and acting?

First of all, there could be clauses on the way the UN or other parties intervene in these kinds of situations. They could talk about interventions of any sort that could stop genocide. Think about supporting the FPR or sending peacekeepers. In the last case, there should also be thought about how to make these peacekeepers more effective in terms of military or diplomatic interventions. How could the UN and its bodies be of help?

Second of all, students need to think about raising awareness. Studies show that students in the younger generations have almost no knowledge about any modern-day genocide after the Second World War. Participants need to look into this matter.

Third of all, genocide does not just happen overnight. It is a matter that needs organisation and preparation. It is important to look at ways in which the UN can foresee these preparations and prevent any likewise events. We need to prevent armed conflicts and in case, this does happen civilians need to be protected. Perhaps we can try to make a commission that monitors within countries that could lead to genocide.

Further Reading

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