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for Global Justice

*International Decision-Making
in the
Age of Genocide:
Rwanda 1990-1994*

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International Decision-Making in the Age of Genocide: Rwanda 1990-1994

Conference in The Hague, June 1 – June 3, 2014

Executive Summary



Former peacemakers, peacekeepers and peace monitors from more than a dozen countries, as well as the United Nations, gathered in The Hague from June 1 to June 3, 2014, for the first multi-institutional examination of the Rwandan genocide involving the major international players. Participants included the architects of the 1993 Arusha peace agreement, the leadership of the UN peacekeeping force known as UNAMIR, and four former members of the UN Security Council, as well as senior US, French, Belgian and Rwandan officials.

Over the course of the four working sessions, and numerous informal meetings, conference participants focused on the breakdown in the accords and the failure of the international community to either prevent the genocide or protect hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians once the mass killing started in April 1994. Although they disagreed on the exact chain of events that led to the genocide, participants gained valuable insights into each other's thinking as well as some major institutional disconnects. Peacekeepers complained of unrealistic deadlines imposed by the negotiators of the peace agreements. The peacemakers pointed to delays by the United Nations in implementing the accords. Security Council members cited the lack of real-time intelligence from Rwanda and a lack of communication with the UN Secretariat.

Differences of approach were apparent not only *between* different governments and international institutions but *within* the same institution. The discussions revealed many examples of internal and external turf battles that made it difficult for the United Nations and national governments to develop coherent policies on Rwanda, both before and after the onset of the genocide. Differences in national policy were compounded by disagreements about the mandate given to UNAMIR by the Security Council, budgetary constraints, and the political fallout from the killings of US and Pakistani peacekeepers in Somalia in 1993.

Insights that emerged over the course of the 2 ½ day conference included the following:

- The negotiation and implementation phases of the Arusha peace accords were out of sync with each other. There should be much greater coordination between peacemakers and peace implementers.
- Ordinary Rwandans were poorly informed about the diplomatic negotiations in Arusha, and became easy prey for demagogues and extremists. Civil society should have been more closely involved in the peace process.
- The United States, France, Belgium and other key international players did not develop a common policy on Rwanda that could have prevented the genocide. There should have been greater reliance on regional bodies, such as the African Union.
- Implementation of the 1993 Arusha peace agreement was hampered by differences between Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and the UNAMIR force commander. Greater attention should be paid to such appointments in the future to ensure a smooth working relationship between the two officials and selection of the best personnel available.
- The international community staked everything on the success of the Arusha peace agreement, and did not develop a backup plan. Decision-makers should prepare for the worst case scenario as well as the best case scenario, and display greater tactical flexibility when circumstances change.

Introduction

Former peacemakers, peacekeepers, and peace monitors from more than a dozen countries, as well as the United Nations, gathered in The Hague from June 1 to June 3, 2014, to discuss international decision-making before and during the Rwandan genocide. There were 40 people gathered around the conference table, including former members of the United Nations Security Council, the leadership of UNAMIR, diplomats stationed in Kigali, the architects of the Arusha peace accords, NGO representatives, journalists and scholars. (See annex for full participation list and agenda.) Over the course of four working sessions and numerous informal encounters, participants exchanged experiences and viewpoints, and drew lessons for the future.

The conference was modeled on the “critical oral history” methodology developed by the National Security Archive of George Washington University, previously used to study such events as the Cuban missile crisis, the Vietnam War, and the end of the Cold War. It was co-sponsored by the Simon-Skjoldt Center for Prevention of Genocide of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and The Hague Institute for Global Justice, in cooperation with the National Security Archive.

By general consensus, the conference succeeded in bringing together a large group of very diverse actors for the first multi-institutional examination of the Rwandan genocide. Participants were exposed to a wide range of different viewpoints and historical interpretations. In the words of Linda Melvern, author of numerous books on the genocide, this was “the first time in twenty years that an open debate was held among some of those who had taken part in decision-making” over Rwanda.¹ The Belgian scholar and Rwanda expert, Filip Reyntjens, remarked on the “unique lineup” of attendees gathered around the conference table. “This is never going to happen again,” he told conference participants, assembled at The Hague Institute for Global Justice. “We will never be again in the same room, so I think we need to seize this opportunity.” [Reyntjens, Conference Transcript, page T1-2].²

During the working sessions of the conference, participants discussed the negotiation, implementation, and eventual breakdown of the Arusha peace agreement. Signed on August 4, 1993, the peace agreement included a set of five accords, or protocols, negotiated between the Rwandan government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front in Arusha, Tanzania, between July 1992 and July 1993. The peace agreement was designed to put an end to a three-year Rwandan Civil War triggered by the October 1990 invasion of Rwanda by the Uganda-based RPF. The rebel movement was composed primarily of Tutsi exiles who had been forced out of Rwanda during waves of anti-Tutsi violence fomented or tolerated by successive

¹ Email to organizers, June 15, 2014.

² Subsequent references to the Conference transcript (published as an annex to this report) will be in the following format: Reyntjens, T1-2. (T1 referring to Day 1 of the transcript, and T2 referring to Day 2 of the transcript)

Hutu-dominated governments. In addition to a military ceasefire, the accords provided for the sharing of political power and the integration of the rebels into the Rwandan army and police.

Conference participants grappled with a historical conundrum articulated in an exchange that occurred at the very beginning of the conference. The former Belgian ambassador to Rwanda, Johan Swinnen, drew attention to the “critical mass of moderate forces” both inside and outside Rwanda who were in favor of “peace, reconciliation, and internal reforms.” [Swinnen, T1-6]. According to Swinnen, the strategy of the international community was to support these moderate forces. “We became believers,” Swinnen recalled. “We truly believed in the success of the peace process and the success of the democratization process.” The ambassador’s comments provoked an immediate question from a Rwandan human rights activist and survivor of the genocide, Monique Mujawamariya. If support for the Arusha accords was so widespread, Mujawamariya asked, how come “all these positive forces were not given the support necessary to prevail? What was lacking? And what about the destabilizing forces, which were present on all sides? Why were they allowed to supplant the positive forces?” [Mujawamariya, T1-7].

Two days of debate proved insufficient to answer this central question about the dynamics of the most horrifying genocide since World War II—and perhaps it can never be authoritatively answered. As participants noted, there will always be differences of interpretation over the chain of events that led to the genocide and the role played by the international community. Nevertheless, our discussions shed new light on some startling institutional disconnects and failings that contributed to the unraveling of the Arusha accords.

By assembling many of the key players together in the same room, many of them for the first time, we were able to re-examine a series of key moments when international action might have made a significant difference. Accustomed to operating within the framework of their own institutions, participants were able to gain valuable insights into each other’s thinking. It became clear from the conversation that there was little coordination between the key players. Peacekeepers complained of unrealistic deadlines imposed by the architects of the Arusha accords and lack of support from the Security Council. The peacemakers pointed to delays by the United Nations in implementing the accords. Security Council members talked about the lack of real-time intelligence from Rwanda, a lack of communication with the UN Secretariat, and the political constraints imposed by their own government.

Differences of approach were apparent not only *between* different governments and international institutions, but *within* the same institution. There was a lack of communication between the UN Security Council and UN Secretariat, and also within the Secretariat, between the office of the Secretary-General and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The commander of the UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda, General Roméo Dallaire of Canada, and his civilian superior,

Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh of Cameroon, were frequently at odds. Diplomats involved in the Arusha peace negotiations had a different set of priorities to their colleagues in Kigali.

The arrangement of the conference room—with four members of the UN Security Council lined up on one side, opposite the architects of the Arusha accords on the other, with the peacekeepers in between, and French and Rwandan officials opposite—facilitated a series of illuminating conversations.



The following summary of our discussions is designed to identify the highlights of the conference and the principal insights that emerged. It is divided into four parts: (1) Policy disconnects, (2) Implementation failings, (3) Mysteries and controversies, and (4) Lessons.

1. Policy disconnects

If a consistent theme emerged from our two days of meetings, it was that the term “international community” is a misnomer, at least as applied to Rwanda during the critical years 1990-1994. While many governments and international institutions voiced support for the Arusha peace process, this apparent unity of purpose concealed some deep-seated differences. A geopolitical order that had been frozen in place for more than four decades during the Cold War was suddenly in flux.

Declassified French documents show that President Mitterrand viewed the Rwandan conflict at least partly through the prism of French-speaking versus English-speaking Africa. In the opinion of Mitterrand and his senior aides, Anglophone Uganda was actively supporting regime change to Francophone Rwanda. "The Ugandan Tutsis are moving to conquer Rwanda, it's worrying," Mitterrand told a cabinet meeting in January 1991. "We are at the edge of the English-speaking front...It's not normal that the Tutsi minority wants to impose its rule over the Hutu majority." [French cabinet meeting, January 23, 1991, Conference briefing book 1-35].³

According to Jean-Christophe Belliard, the French observer at Arusha, there was a "certain division of labor" at the peace negotiations, with France and the United States "pushing" their respective clients to agree to a compromise. France provided political and military support to the government of Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana, whereas the United States, Belgium, and Britain attempted to wield influence over the Uganda-backed Rwandan Patriotic Front. In an ideal world, the Great Powers would have imposed their will on the belligerents. In the case of Rwanda, this did not happen. "We were more divided than we are nowadays," said Belliard, who now serves as director of African Affairs at the French foreign ministry. "Within the P-3 [western permanent members of the UN Security Council], there was France and there were the other two [the US and the UK]." [Belliard, T1-26].

According to Jean-Marie Ndagijimana, who served as Rwandan ambassador to France during the pre-genocide period, French support for Habyarimana was counter-balanced by Ugandan support for the RPF. "People say that his [Habyarimana's] regime would have collapsed without the support of France, but you can say the same thing about the RPF. Without support from abroad, the RPF would not have managed to come back after October 1990." [Ndagijimana, T1-33].

The differences in national policy were compounded by budgetary constraints, with western governments (particularly the United States government) seeking to reduce the amount spent on international peacekeeping. The result was a peace process based on the lowest common denominator, whatever could be agreed on at the lowest possible cost. In addition, Rwanda was only one of many issues demanding the attention of western policy-makers, and relatively low on the list of international priorities. As the Rwandan crisis came to a head in 1993-94, US officials were much more focused on the fallout from the peacekeeping fiasco in Somalia (where 18 US Army Rangers were killed following an ambush on October 3-4, 1993), while French officials were preoccupied with events in the former Yugoslavia.

In the words of Mitterrand chief of staff and former foreign policy advisor Hubert Védrine:

³ Subsequent references to the Conference briefing books will be in the following format: BB1-35.

When we try to reconstruct what happened in Paris, Brussels, London, Washington, and New York, let us not forget that people were managing a series of simultaneous problems, and were unable to focus on a single subject, as this symposium is able to do. That is never the way it is. This famous “international community” is an invention. If it really existed, it would act in a preventive fashion more often...Had this imaginary international community existed, it would have acted in the Yugoslav case, after the death of Tito, ten years earlier. But that is not the way things happen. [Védrine, T1-88].

Even more damaging than the inability of the international community to speak with one voice on Rwanda, according to Védrine, was the lack of an “international system” that could sort through the conflicting interests and “impose the Arusha accords on the participants.” [Védrine, T1-87]. The dysfunctional nature of the “international system” was reflected at multiple levels, in numerous different ways.

Peacemakers vs Peacekeepers

One of the starkest policy disconnects over Rwanda became apparent right at the start of our conference when the former UNAMIR Force Commander was asked to describe the challenges of implementing the August 1993 Arusha accords. General Dallaire told us that he was immediately confronted with a series of “impossible milestones” negotiated by the warring parties with little or no input from the UN. According to Dallaire, the unrealistic timetable for the implementation of the Arusha agreements (notably a 37-day deadline for the creation of a “Broad-Based Transitional Government” and a two-year deadline for “democratic elections”) had the effect of exacerbating tensions on the ground.

It is one thing to negotiate [a peace agreement], another to end up with something you can actually implement. I gather that the diplomats felt they had to conclude a peace agreement in order to stabilize the situation in the country. One of the tools they created to ensure this would happen was to create these incredible milestones, including having [international peacekeeping] forces on the ground and the Broad-Based Transitional Government set up by September 10, and so on...There was no way we could meet these deadlines. To me, this is a major dysfunctional situation which I expect diplomats to try to figure out, rather than simply write something down and hope for the best. [Dallaire, T1-26, 27].

Dallaire’s comments drew an immediate response from Ami Mpungwe, a senior Tanzanian diplomat who served as facilitator for the Arusha-based peace negotiations between 1992 and 1993. According to Mpungwe, the negotiators of the Arusha accords were “worried that the UN bureaucratic processes might not be in sync with the timelines we had established.” [Mpungwe, T1-11]. Realizing that this could be a problem, the peacemakers sent messages to the UN Secretary-General urging him to send a reconnaissance mission to Rwanda while the negotiations were

still going on. But the UN “refused to start the implementation process until we got a full agreement.” [Mpungwe, T1-35].

Nigeria’s representative on the UN Security Council, Ambassador Ibrahim Gambari, said “it was a huge mistake...to ask the UN to implement an agreement with which it was not closely associated.” [Gambari, T1-42]. Citing the example of Liberia and Sierra Leone, he said the Arusha facilitators should have taken responsibility for implementing the agreements by themselves, with the assistance of regional bodies. “To wait for the UN implementation of such agreement is not advisable, in my view,” said Gambari. “When you look at Mali, at the Central African Republic, it is when Africans themselves put boots on the ground, and show some commitment, that the international community tends to follow.” [Gambari, T1-42, 43]. In response, Mpungwe said the Arusha negotiators had involved the Organization of African Unity in the peace process. But he agreed that the OAU “should have remained focused on Rwanda after we handed the issue over to the UN. There was too much trust in the UN.” [Mpungwe, T1-44].

As events turned out, implementation of the Arusha accords was largely divorced from the negotiating process. The United Nations operated according to its own timetable, which had little in common with the diplomatic timetable negotiated in Arusha. The size and capability of the UN peacekeeping force was determined by budgetary constraints rather than actual requirements. (See Section 2 below)

The diplomats who negotiated the Arusha accords had every incentive to promote the agreements as an unvarnished success story that would put an end to a hugely destructive civil war. “The Arusha Agreements were presented to us as if they were a piece of gold,” recalled Ambassador Colin Keating, New Zealand’s representative on the Security Council. At the same time, said Keating, the Security Council failed “to do appropriate due diligence about the quality of the advice” that it was receiving. “There is always the need to accentuate the positive in these kinds of negotiations. You have to sell the product, you have to believe in it, and you have to hope it will hold. Sadly, in a percentage of cases, that does not work.” [Keating, T1-53, 54].

An uninvolved public

Several participants in our conference highlighted a disconnect between the diplomatic process in Tanzania and the political process back home in Rwanda. As they shuttled back and forth between Arusha, Kigali and Mulindi [headquarters of the RPF], the diplomats and politicians inhabited three very different worlds. The diplomatic negotiations were frequently out of sync with events unfolding on the ground. At other times, according to James Gasana, Rwandan defense minister from 1992 to 1993, the peace negotiations became a substitute for a political dialogue that should have taken place inside Rwanda itself. “The internal dialogue that should

have taken place in Rwanda even before the diplomatic process, or at the same time as the process, did not take place. It was shifted to Arusha.” [Gasana, T1-16, 17].

Joyce Leader, who was assigned to observe the Arusha negotiations as US deputy chief of mission in Kigali, echoed Gasana’s diagnosis. “The democratization dialogue moved to Arusha,” she told us. “There were even divisions between the diplomatic corps in Kigali and the ‘shadow’ diplomatic corps in Arusha...In Arusha, the diplomats were supporting the process, trying to encourage a diplomatic solution, a compromise that would bring an agreement. In Kigali, they were still working within the framework of the political parties that were there. There was a different perspective.” [Leader, T1-22].

One consequence of this dual-track political process was that ordinary Rwandans were badly informed about the peace negotiations in Arusha and felt little sense of ownership. In Gasana’s estimation, “the views of Rwandan civil society were not represented in Arusha.” [Gasana, T1-17]. André Guichaoua, a French sociologist who spent 20 years working in Rwanda, said that the establishment of a “multi-party government” in Rwanda in 1992 became a substitute for true civic involvement. “For ordinary people, this was the first element of political despair. During the months that followed, everybody divided up the ministries, the state enterprises. There was no popular control. The population understood that they were dealing not with democrats, but with people from the former one-party system, who were establishing similar parties under different names. None of this reflected the desires or aspirations of ordinary people.” [Guichaoua, T1-69].

Another Arusha observer, Ambassador Swinnen of Belgium, said that the peace accords were poorly explained. “Radio Rwanda described the Arusha Accords in monotonous and insipid tones. I pleaded with the government to use more attractive, persuasive language to convince the political forces that were becoming radicalized to support the Arusha Accords. Unfortunately, the international community failed in this effort.” [Swinnen, T1-6].

The failure to involve Rwandan civil society in the peace process, combined with the lack of a serious public education effort, had damaging consequences. Ordinary Rwandans became prey for demagogues and extremist political parties who fanned deep-seated fears of the Hutu majority once again being dominated by the Tutsi minority (as had happened during the Belgian colonial period). “Very little information [about the Arusha negotiations] was being given to the Rwandan population,” said Venuste Nshimiyimana, a reporter for the BBC African service, who earlier served as UN information officer in Rwanda. “Occasionally you could hear a report filed by a Radio Rwanda correspondent about the signing of a protocol. But that was not enough...We did not explain properly to Rwandans that these negotiations were being carried out between Rwandans seeking a lasting peace between Rwandans.” According to Nshimiyimana, the information vacuum made it possible for Hutu Power extremists “to work in a very fertile field.” [Nshimiyimana, T1-51, 52].

The principal Hutu extremist party, the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic [CDR], gained members rapidly in 1993, in part by portraying itself as the only political party opposed to the peace process. The CDR was excluded from the Transitional National Assembly under the terms of the January 1993 Power-Sharing protocol, which required political parties to “avoid engaging in sectarian practices and in any form of violence.”⁴ Several conference participants suggested it was a mistake to deny the CDR a role in Rwanda’s new institutions. Former defense minister Gasana noted that “if people are left out of the peace process, and cannot be integrated into it, they will become a major destabilizing factor.” [Gasana, T1-19, 20]. Belliard referred to the “political intelligence” of South African leader Nelson Mandela in including his National Party opponents in the transition process in South Africa. “You make peace with your enemies, not with your friends,” Belliard noted. “I think it is worth posing the question what might have happened if the CDR had been associated with the Accords.” [Belliard, T1-25].

Ambassador Swinnen said that the issue of whether to include the CDR “in the affairs of the country” was discussed “at great length” by western diplomats in Kigali. They finally concluded that it would be better to involve the extremist party in “the dynamic of peace and reform” rather than exclude them completely. As a result, on March 28, 1994, less than two weeks before the start of the genocide, they issued a joint declaration stating that “all political parties authorized in Rwanda” (a formula that included the CDR) should be represented in the transitional National Assembly.⁵

The chief RPF negotiator at Arusha, Patrick Mazimhaka, disagreed sharply with the suggestion that it was possible to include the CDR in the transition arrangements. He recalled that the party “rejected negotiations of any form or shape with the RPF.” [Mazimhaka, T1-29]. General Dallaire described the CDR as “a front for a lot of the subversive activities that were going on in the country,” including the creation of militia groups that went on to play a leading role in the genocide. [Dallaire, T1-40]. Dallaire said he could “never understand” why the diplomats made a belated attempt to seat a CDR member in the transitional national assembly in March 1994, on the eve of the genocide. “I just did not see why all of a sudden we threw them [the CDR] into the exercise when everything else was going up in smoke.” [Dallaire, T1-29].⁶ Dallaire later said that he was “aghast” at the diplomatic maneuver, which took place during his absence from Rwanda, and “entered into heated discussions with the SRSG” on the matter upon his return to Kigali. According to Dallaire, the move to

⁴ Article 61 of the Power-Sharing protocol required political parties “to support the peace process and to avoid engaging in sectarian practices and in any form of violence” as “a pre-requisite for their participation in the Transitional National Assembly.”

⁵ The text of the March 28 Declaration is contained in Booh-Booh, “Efforts to Install the Transitional Institutions,” Outgoing Code Cable MIR-672, March 28, 1994, available [here](#).

⁶ US diplomats were in favor of allowing CDR representation in the transitional assembly in order to overcome a political impasse that had been blocking the creation of transitional institutions. See US embassy [Kigali cable 01319](#), March 25, 1994.

include the CDR in the transitional assembly was greeted with dismay by Rwanda's pro-democracy politicians.⁷

Differences over the UN mandate

The dispatch of a United Nations peacekeeping force to Rwanda, to be known as UNAMIR, was formally approved under UN Security Council Resolution 872 on October 5, 1993. At the insistence of the United States, the Council was required to approve extension of the mandate "beyond the initial 90 days", based on whether or not "substantive progress" had been made toward implementing the Arusha agreements. It was a classic "Chapter VI mandate," meaning that UN troops would be dispatched to monitor a peace agreement already in place, rather than enforcing an agreement on the warring parties under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

The limited nature of the mandate posed an immediate problem for General Dallaire because it made no mention of the protection of civilians. Anxious to avoid a situation in which crimes against humanity were committed under the nose of UN peacekeepers, he drafted his own, more expansive, Rules of Engagement that he described as Chapter "VI Plus." [Dallaire, T1-94]. Modeled on similar Rules of Engagement previously adopted for Cambodia, Paragraph 17 of the UNAMIR Force Commander's Operational Directive No. 2 dated November 19, 1993, stated:

There may also be ethnically or politically motivated criminal acts committed during this mandate which will morally and legally require UNAMIR to use all available means to halt them. Examples are executions, attacks on displaced persons or refugees, ethnic riots, attacks on demobilized soldiers, etc. During such occasions, UNAMIR military personnel will follow the ROD outlined in this directive, in support of UNCIVPOL and local authorities or in their absence, UNAMIR will take the necessary action to prevent any crime against humanity. [Dallaire, BB2-74].

Dallaire sent his draft Rules of Engagement to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations [DPKO] at UN headquarters in New York but did not receive an immediate reply. The limits on his authority became apparent in January 1994 after he received a tip from an informer that weapons were being stockpiled in Kigali for distribution to Hutu extremists. Dallaire wanted to mount an "offensive operation" to confiscate the weapon caches, which were in violation of the Arusha accords, but was ordered to stand down by his superiors in New York. "I ultimately got a response that I was not authorized [to use force]," Dallaire recalled.⁸ [Dallaire, T1-98].

⁷ E-mail communications to organizers, February 23, 2015 and March 27, 2015.

⁸ See Annan to Booh-Booh/Dallaire, UNAMIR 100, January 11, 1994, which states that DPKO "cannot agree to the operation contemplated" by Dallaire "as it clearly goes beyond the mandate entrusted to UNAMIR under resolution 872." See BB 2-75 to 2-78 for exchange between Dallaire and DPKO. The

The official who drafted the January 11, 1994 response to Dallaire was Iqbal Riza, then serving as deputy to UN Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Kofi Annan. Riza told the conference that DPKO discussed Dallaire's proposed Rules of Engagement "very, very intensively." He said it was "very clear" that the UN mandate for Rwanda "did not authorize even deterrent actions [by UNAMIR]," and ruled out the use of force, with the exception of "self-defense." Riza explained that the murders of UN peacekeepers in Somalia (both American and Pakistani) was "very much in our minds." He added that UN officials in New York were "very, very worried" about a similar situation developing in Rwanda "where some armed action would be taken by UNAMIR, and they would be overwhelmed." [Riza, T1-101].

It was not only General Dallaire who felt that the mandate given to UN peacekeepers in Rwanda was disconnected from the situation on the ground. When Belgian foreign minister Willy Claes visited Rwanda in February 1994, he concluded that there was a likelihood of "a new bloodbath" unless the mandate was strengthened. A top Claes aide, Lode Willems, warned that UNAMIR was unable to maintain public order "under its current mandate" and faced a "serious credibility problem." [BB 2-90] But the Belgian appeal for a broader mandate and/or more robust rules of engagement was brushed aside by the UN Secretariat and permanent members of the Security Council. The objections ranged from financial ("The United States never wanted more than 500 men for UNAMIR"), to military ("It is too dangerous, the United Nations never has as much power as the parties") to political ("If the United Nations uses force, it takes a side (is no longer neutral)"). [BB 2-91].

Former UN ambassadors who participated in the conference differed sharply over whether the Security Council should have been asked to sign off on UNAMIR's Rules of Engagement. New Zealand ambassador Colin Keating, who served as president of the Council during the early genocide period, recalled that the Council had approved "ambiguous language" about "contributing to a weapons free zone in Kigali." He said that Council members should have been much more closely involved in the debate on whether or not UNAMIR had the right "to use military power to maintain security" in Rwanda. [Keating, T2-7]. British permanent representative Sir David [now Lord] Hannay said that "negotiating rules of engagement" went way beyond the Security Council's authority. "There is no peacekeeping operation in which that has ever happened, nor could there be. The military will not negotiate rules of engagement in that way. It would have been a complete conversation stopper if we had tried to do so in the Council." [Hannay, T2-9].

order to UNAMIR "not to fire until fired upon" was confirmed by Riza to Dallaire in a telephone conversation on the morning of April 7, 1994. [BB 2-112].

Dysfunctional institutions

Our discussions unearthed numerous examples of lack of coordination not only *between* institutions and governments, but *within* institutions and governments. The syndrome of “the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing” was particularly evident at the United Nations in New York. Former DPKO official Iqbal Riza cited the lack of communication between different floors of the 39-floor United Nations Secretariat overlooking Manhattan’s East River. He referred frequently to decisions taken in the Secretary-General’s suite of offices “on the 38th floor,” bypassing the Department of Peacekeeping Operations [DPKO], one floor below. According to Riza, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali insisted that all communications with the Security Council be handled by his assistant, Chinmaya Gharekhan. This administrative structure made it impossible for DPKO to report directly to the Security Council on day-to-day developments in Rwanda, including Dallaire’s January 11, 1994 cable requesting authority to carry out weapons raids in Kigali. “We could not do it [inform the Council] without clearance, without the 38th floor who already had that very alarming cable. So we were stymied,” Riza recalled. [Riza, T1-127].

Ambassador Hannay described the Secretary-General’s refusal to allow senior officials from DPKO to brief the Security Council as “a completely disastrous decision. I remonstrated with him [Boutros-Ghali] at the time. The result was that he agreed that Ambassador Gharekhan should come and brief us, but that was not frankly a substitute. That was one removed, Gharekhan was not the person who was responsible for directing the peacekeeping operation.” [Hannay, T1-106]. A further complication, according to Hannay, was the Secretary-General was frequently traveling, which made it more difficult to contact him. “Because we had this very centralized system, this meant (Iqbal Riza will be able to confirm this or not) that DPKO was inhibited from coming forward with anything,” [Hannay, T2-11].

Ambassador Keating cited an August 1993 report by Bacre Ndiaye, special rapporteur for the United Nations Human Rights Commission that described mass atrocities against the Tutsi minority in Rwanda, as an example of a communications failure. The report, which discussed the possibility of genocide, attracted little attention and was not distributed to Security Council members. “If we had known what we now know,” Keating told conference participants, “I am sure we would have all come to the conclusion that a Chapter VI mandate and 2,600 soldiers was simply not good enough for the job.” [Keating, T1-54].

The dysfunctional nature of the United Nations system extended to the field operation in Rwanda, where the Force Commander [General Dallaire] and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General [Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh] were often at loggerheads. General Henry Anyidoho, a Ghanaian who served as Dallaire’s deputy in Rwanda, said that “lack of coherence” in the leadership of the Rwandan peacekeeping mission caused “major problems.” He spoke of a “crisis situation” developing for UNAMIR “where the Force Commander and the Head of Mission, the

Special Representative of the Secretary-General, were not communicating properly.” [Anyidoho, T1-124]. Several conference participants (including Riza, Hannay, and Anyidoho) put the blame for the strained Force Commander-SRSG relationship on Booh-Booh, who did not receive an invitation to the conference. Ambassador Swinnen “found it a little bit uncomfortable that we put one of the protagonists [Booh-Booh] on trial in the presence of his antagonist.” [Swinnen, T2-94].⁹

Internal turf battles also made it difficult for national governments to develop coherent policies on Rwanda, both before and after the onset of the genocide. General Dallaire said he was often confused about who was “running the show in France,” citing differences between the French defense ministry and foreign ministry. [Dallaire, T1-76]. Hubert Védrine reminded conference participants that French parliamentary elections of March 1993 resulted in a political arrangement known as “*cohabitation*” that divided power between a left-wing president [Mitterrand] and a right-wing Prime Minister [Edouard Balladur] and foreign minister [Alain Juppé]. [Védrine, T1-63]. According to other French insiders, *cohabitation* made it difficult to react quickly when the massacres began. In a memorandum dated May 5, 1994, Dominique Pin, a Mitterrand advisor on Africa, complained that the conservative government was “culpably apathetic” on Rwanda. “The speeches were: we retreat back home,” Pin noted. “I am personally convinced that if there had been no cohabitation, we would have acted otherwise and avoided the massacres.” [BB 4-13].

Similar political and bureaucratic divisions were visible in the United States, where the Pentagon resisted even modest State Department attempts to get more closely involved in Rwanda. “The DoD [Department of Defense] did not want to spend money,” recalled Prudence Bushnell, who was in charge of day-to-day policy on Rwanda as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of African Affairs at the State Department. According to Bushnell, the State Department had to rely on the efforts of a foreign government in order to prevail in the bureaucratic turf battle with the Pentagon over authorization of a peace mission for Rwanda.

*I used to call them the “no-where, no-how, no-way, and not with our toys, boys”
....The only reason that we got into Rwanda was because the French twisted our
arm in Somalia...We in the Africa Bureau were thrilled that the French were more
successful in our interagency process than the Department of State or USAID.*

⁹ In a subsequent communication to the organizers, Dallaire referenced a February 25, 1994 Belgian foreign ministry cable to New York that stated that “Booh-Booh seems to have lost his local credibility.” [BB 2-90]. He also cited a 1997 report by the Belgian Senate, which concluded that the SRSG did not meet his responsibilities. According to the Senate report, the SRSG was “totally passive after April 6. As a consequence, General Dallaire, the Force Commander was obliged to also occupy himself with the political aspects of the UNAMIR mission, the military aspect having being relegated to second place.” A former foreign minister of Cameroon, Booh-Booh wrote a 2006 book titled *Le Patron de Dallaire Parle: revelations sur les dérives d'un général de l'ONU au Rwanda*, that was sharply critical of the Force Commander.

[Opponents of US involvement in Rwanda] *found every excuse whatsoever to make the mandate as limited in time and in manpower as possible. Boy oh boy, did the shooting down of the [Habyarimana] plane on April 6 and the withdrawal of the Belgians give us the excuse we needed to pull the plug. It was an unfortunate period in my government's history.* [Bushnell, T2-29].

2. Arusha implementation failings

Signed on August 4, 1993, the Arusha peace accords envisaged a political power-sharing arrangement between President Habyarimana and his allies, the “moderate Hutu” internal opposition, and the Rwandan Patriotic Front. In addition to establishing a transitional government and national assembly, the Arusha peace accords envisaged a unified Rwandan army (with a 60-40 split between government forces and the RPF) and officer corps (50-50 split). The accords also provided for the return of an estimated 550,000 Rwandan refugees in Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania, who fled Rwanda during successive waves of anti-Tutsi violence from 1959 onwards.¹⁰

Conference participants disagreed on whether the Arusha agreements were a “house of cards,” in the phrase of the American expert Michael Barnett, or the only reasonable solution to Rwanda’s political problems. “To put it uncharitably, it sounds like the diplomats were handing a ticking time bomb off to the UN,” Barnett noted. “This was not an agreement that was going to be workable in any realistic setting given the gross limitations of the UN.” [Barnett, T1-36].

Tanzanian facilitator Ami Mpungwe took the opposite view. He pointed out that Arusha succeeded, at least temporarily, in putting an end to “two years of serious war.” “We achieved a ceasefire agreement that was maintained by a small force of fifty African monitors,” he said, referring to the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda [UNAMUR]. “We also had a mechanism for monitoring violations. Things were moving. This was not a house of cards. We were not just ‘believers,’ sticking around to be seen to be busy.” [Mpungwe, T1-43]. In the view of the UK representative to the UN, David Hannay, the alternative to Arusha was to “let the RPF just take over by military means. The UN does not do that sort of thing.” [Hannay, T2-12].

Whether or not the Arusha agreements were inherently flawed, as some speakers maintained, there was broad agreement that they were badly implemented. Problems identified by conference participants included inadequate peacekeeping resources, intelligence failures, and the lack of a Plan B.

¹⁰ For overview of Rwandan refugee situation, see State Department “Refugee Fact Sheet,” March 1994, BB 2-93.

Inadequate resources

UNAMIR was under-resourced from the very beginning. During an initial reconnaissance mission to Rwanda in August 1993, Dallaire recommended a force of around 8,000 troops. "In DPKO we beat this down to about 5,000 or 5,500," recalled Iqbal Riza. [Riza, T2-32]. The final figure for UNAMIR authorized by the UN Security Council in October 1993 was 2,548 troops. "I was instructed that this mission had to be on the cheap," recalled Dallaire. "The Americans had not paid [their UN dues], there was no money, and nobody was particularly interested in the mission to start with." [Dallaire, T1-50]. Pru Bushnell confirmed that the US was "trying to get PKOs out of Africa, not create peacekeeping operations in Africa." The result, Bushnell said, was that "UNAMIR was almost dead on arrival." [Bushnell, T2-28].

The lack of resources available to UNAMIR became even more critical after the genocide got underway on April 7 following the Habyarimana assassination. Instead of strengthening UNAMIR, the UN Security Council gutted it almost entirely, reducing the authorized level of the peacekeeping force on April 21, 1994, to "270 military personnel," supported by civilian staff. This decision caused consternation among the remaining peacekeepers. "We simply could not understand what was happening in New York," recalled General Anyidoho. "It was as if the mission was being abandoned. The normal practice is that if you are in an emergency situation, and you come under pressure, you are reinforced...We were totally confused. It was against all our military thinking, all the lessons we were taught. We did not know what to do." [Anyidoho, T2-16].

Intelligence failures

As a United Nations peacekeeping force, UNAMIR was barred from having its own intelligence service. General Dallaire drew a distinction between the gathering of "information," which was regarded as legitimate under the UN mandate, and the gathering of "intelligence," which would have been perceived as a violation of UNAMIR's neutral status. He acknowledged that when he arrived in Rwanda on October 22, 1993, he "did not have a firm grip on the political maneuvering" taking place behind the scenes. "We were working fairly blind at that time." [Dallaire, T1-41, 42]. Dallaire said that he got "information" from various sources, including one of his own officers, "who was going out with the President's daughter," but "this was not intelligence, collated, verifiable information." [Dallaire, T1-134]. There was no system for analyzing the information that trickled into UNAMIR headquarters.

Intelligence failures were evident at all levels, not only UNAMIR. The complexities of Rwandan politics were lost on many of the foreign diplomats and politicians who helped negotiate the Arusha accords. One of the best informed western diplomats in Kigali, US deputy chief of mission Joyce Leader, acknowledged that she underestimated the importance of the "North-South divide" in the Rwandan government delegation to the peace talks. [Leader, T1-21]. As she later came to

understand, several different power struggles were taking place in Rwanda simultaneously, not simply Hutus versus Tutsis, but also within the majority Hutu community. (President Habyarimana represented a group of Hutus from the northern town of Ruhengeri who had seized power in 1973 from Hutus based in southern Rwanda.)

As the western power with most at stake in Rwanda, France had the most sophisticated foreign intelligence gathering operation in the country. (The United States closed many of its CIA stations in Africa for budgetary reasons following the end of the Cold War, according to a former US intelligence official.) French diplomats expressed concern, as early as October 1990, that the RPF invasion could trigger massacres that would result in the “physical elimination of Tutsis in the interior of the country, 500,000 to 700,000 people,” by the Hutu majority. [BB1-32]. Nevertheless, the former director of African affairs at the French foreign ministry, Jean-Marc Rochereau de La Sabliere, acknowledged that French intelligence services did not provide the government with “sufficient intelligence about Hutu extremists and the links between these people and the Habyarimana entourage.” De La Sabliere said the French government also “underestimated the determination of the RPF” to secure a total military victory in Rwanda. [de La Sabliere, T1-83, 84].

No Plan B

A cherished military axiom (attributed to Helmuth von Moltke) is that “no plan survives contact with the enemy.” Political leaders, like generals, must preserve strategic flexibility to respond to unexpected crises and events. Our conference discussions suggested that, in the case of Rwanda, the mythical “international community” failed to develop contingency plans for what to do if the peace process broke down. Everything was predicated on the success of the Arusha accords, which were viewed as a “make-or-break” solution to the crisis. “I remembered often hearing amongst diplomats in Kigali concerning the Arusha Accords, *ça passé ou ça casse*, meaning the accords will be passed or everything will break down,” said Collette Braeckman, a journalist for the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir*. “In hindsight, I wonder if it was a bit irresponsible to say *ça passé ou ça casse* because it broke down and we saw the price that resulted.” [Braeckman, T1-48].

In the event, just about everything that could go wrong with the smooth implementation of the peace plan did go wrong. Melchior Ndadaye, the first democratically-elected president of Burundi, and country’s first Hutu president, was assassinated on October 21, 1993, the day before General Dallaire arrived in Kigali to take up his post as commander of UNAMIR. The Ndadaye murder by officers from Burundi’s Tutsi-dominated army triggered attacks by Hutu militias against Tutsi civilians and retaliatory attacks against Hutu civilians by the armed forces. More than 100,000 people were killed during these massacres and counter-massacres, and 700,000 Burundians fled the country. The arrival of half a million Burundian refugees in southern Rwanda was profoundly destabilizing. In the opinion of former

Rwandan ambassador to Paris Ndagijimana, the two countries function “like connecting vases. When something important happens in Burundi, it reproduces itself almost automatically a few months later in Rwanda...the Ndadaye assassination was more or less the destruction of the Arusha Accords.” [Ndagijimana, T1-32].

Other external shocks to the peace process included the events in Somalia in early October 1993 which “had an appalling effect on everyone’s reaction to Rwanda,” according to David Hannay. “Why did practically no African countries volunteer to send troops to Rwanda? Because some of them, the ones who were prepared to send troops anywhere, had got them in Somalia and were worrying a great deal about what happened when an operation started to collapse.” [Hannay, T1-107].

The Somalia fiasco put further pressure on the Clinton administration to reassess its entire approach to peacekeeping operations, according to former State Department official John Shattuck. The new peacekeeping doctrine was enshrined in Presidential Decision Directive 25, which “required a tremendous amount of scrutiny to be applied to virtually any multilateral peacekeeping operation.” The directive established stringent conditions for future peacekeeping operations, including a clear “threat to international security” and the advance of “US interests”. Shattuck believes that PDD-25 gave a kind of “green light” to the planners of the Rwandan genocide. “It effectively told the *genocidaires*, “The United States is not going to be engaging.” [Shattuck, T2-22].

In the meantime, Rwandan politics was becoming even more polarized. Joyce Leader, the former US deputy chief of mission in Kigali, warned as early as August 1992 that “internal insecurity has increased in parallel with each significant step forward in the democratization and peace process” and “we can anticipate a new wave of internal insecurity, in some form or another, as peace talks proceed.” [Leader, BB 1-55]. Dark forces released by the push for “democracy” and “free speech” included hate radio and the growth of extremist militia groups. The hate radio station known as Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines, or RTLM, was established in July 1993, as a direct response by Hutu hardliners to the Arusha accords.

Former Rwandan defense minister Gasana attributed the political polarization to Rwandan politics in part to a military offensive by the RPF in February 1993, creating hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons, a fertile recruiting ground for Hutu extremists. [Gasana, T1-58]. RPF negotiator Mazimhaka rejected this explanation. He cited statements by Habyarimana and his allies that raised doubts about their sincerity in implementing the peace accords. Mazimhaka noted that President Habyarimana compared the Arusha protocols to “pieces of paper” in a November 1992 speech, while a senior official of the president’s MRND party, Léon Mugesera, suggested sending the minority Tutsi population back “home” to Ethiopia via the Nyabarongo river. [Mazimhaka, T1-59].

Lack of Flexibility

Conference discussions provided several examples of international actions and analysis lagging behind fast-moving events on the ground. Don Webster, the lead international prosecutor in the trial of Rwandan paramilitary leaders, noted that the political situation in Rwanda had become very unstable by January 1994. On January 9, paramilitary groups known as the Interahamwe prevented the swearing in of the “broad-based” transitional government and national assembly established by the Arusha accords. Webster wondered why there was not a clearer “response on the part of international actors in Rwanda” to the “massive and very public violence” on the streets of Kigali. [Webster, T1-99].

Other participants noted that the standard international response to unwelcome developments was to double down on the peace agreement. “We kept supporting Arusha, all of us, even when it was collapsing before our eyes,” said Ambassador Gambari, who joined the Security Council in January 1994. [Gambari, T1-108]. The Czech representative on the Council, Karel Kovanda, noted that the Arusha agreements continued to be “a sacred cow” long after the resumption of fighting. “Even during the genocide, Arusha was invoked by the RPF and by us in the Security Council as the basis for getting out of the mess.” According to Kovanda, it was not until late May 1994, nearly two months into the genocide, that his delegation “started questioning” the rationale for this policy. [Kovanda, T1-45].

Several speakers acknowledged that the Security Council failed to adapt to changing circumstances, particularly after the start of the genocide on April 6. Instead of devising a new strategy tailored to the startling upsurge in violence, the international community attempted to resuscitate a peace agreement that had irretrievably broken down. In the words of David Hannay, the UN Security Council “needs to become more flexible. We discussed the endless reiteration of ceasefire calls, the calls to return to the Arusha agreement, failing to take account of the changing nature of the problem as events unfolded. There was a lack of flexibility there that is pretty frightening.” [Hannay, T2-79].

Rwandan human rights activist Mujawamariya compared the Arusha accords to a “tricycle” that lost a couple of its wheels. She noted that Habyarimana’s ruling MRND party and the Rwandan army were riven by internal dissent, and no longer functioning as effective institutions. This meant that the Arusha agreements had ceased to function as “a tricycle”, or “even a bicycle. If you do not take time to readjust your vehicle and make it functional, you cannot cycle with it. This never happened, meaning that Rwanda was never able to get out of the torture, the drama.” [Mujawamariya, T2-66].

Ambassador Gambari made a similar point:

It is one of the most inexplicable things that we kept hanging onto this straw—a ceasefire, the Arusha Accords—when the facts on the ground no longer supported

it. Part of the reason was that UNAMIR was based on Chapter VI [of the UN Charter]. The presumption was that there was a peace to be kept and an agreement to implement. The raison d'être behind UNAMIR was that there was a peace accord, the Arusha agreement. We were kept hoping against hope that the accord would work. [Gambari, T2-66].

In retrospect, there may have been a brief window of opportunity to halt the genocide in its tracks between the shutdown of the Habyarimana plane on April 6 and April 12, when Hutu hardliners consolidated their control over the interim Rwandan government. General Dallaire described an “impasse on the ground” between Rwandan government forces and the RPF. “The RPF said they did not want a ceasefire until the government forces stopped the slaughtering. And the government forces kept saying they could not stop the slaughtering because they were too busy fighting with the RPF.” [Dallaire, T2-16]. According to Dallaire, the deadlock might have been broken by a stronger “outside capability,” but this option was never seriously considered. More than a thousand elite foreign troops were mobilized to evacuate foreigners from Rwanda after April 6.¹¹ Dallaire said that he asked Belgian and French commanders to “modify their orders to let me establish a force that would stop the massacres of threatened people, particularly in Kigali. The answer was a categorical ‘No.’” [Dallaire, T1-76].¹²

French presidential advisor Hubert Védrine said he was unaware of Dallaire’s proposal. “Nobody thought of pooling all these available forces, even outside of a UN mandate, to do something in a unilateral fashion. With hindsight, perhaps we can say that this was a huge pity. Since there were troops in place, they could certainly have acted. But it seems to me that nobody requested this, and nobody envisaged it, at the time.” [Védrine, T1-78].

Several participants pointed to a failure of imagination on the part of senior policy-makers as a significant factor in the Rwandan tragedy. While there were numerous warnings of an upsurge in violence in the event of a breakdown in the Arusha accords, nobody imagined the scale of the horror as it actually unfolded. In the words of Karel Kovanda, “people just did not understand the nature of the beast...What was going on in Rwanda was so far outside the normal scope of a diplomat’s experiences that it was hard to fathom...This is why it took us [on the UN Security Council] so long to employ the word genocide, even though the NGOs had been employing it for quite a while already before we started using it ourselves.” [Kovanda, T2-27].

¹¹ In addition to 2,539 UNAMIR peacekeepers, foreign troops in and around Rwanda during the crucial period April 6-12 included: 24 French military advisors stationed in Kigali, 610 French troops and 500-700 Belgian troops deployed to Kigali for the evacuation of their citizens, and 280 US Marines deployed to Burundi to help with the evacuation of Americans.

¹² In his book, *Shake Hands with the Devil*, (page 289), Dallaire states that he informed an unnamed advisor to Boutros-Ghali on April 10 that “if I had four thousand effective troops, I could stop the killing.”

The first recorded use of the term “genocide” by an international official to describe events in Rwanda following the Habyarimana assassination occurred on April 9, 1994. The chief delegate of the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), Philippe Gaillard, used the expression in a conversation with the Swiss journalist Jean-Philippe Ceppi on the basis of reports that he was receiving from all over the country. According to Ceppi, Gaillard “received the order from Geneva to speak very freely to the media, a new practice for the Red Cross.” [Ceppi, T2-42]. Ceppi subsequently used the word in an April 11 dispatch for *Libération*. [Ceppi, T2-43; BB 2-135]. But it was not until April 25 that UN Security Council members were first briefed on “genocide” in Rwanda by the Secretary-General of Médecins Sans Frontières after the violence spread to southern Rwanda and the town of Butare. [BB 5-97].

3. Mysteries and controversies

Conference participants disagreed sharply on some key issues, notably the interacting roles of France, the Habyarimana government, and the Rwandan Patriotic Front. Such disagreements were scarcely surprising, given the diverse background of the conference participants and the wide range of views that were represented at the table. We heard differing interpretations about why the Arusha agreements failed, and the extent to which the various political actors were committed to the success of the peace process, as opposed to retaining or grabbing power.

The afternoon session on the first day of the conference (Session II) was dominated by a discussion about French policy toward Rwanda, particularly in the period leading up to the genocide. Hubert Védrine said that French support for Habyarimana was combined with “very strong political pressure...to reach a political compromise” with the internal and external opposition. He said that, from March 1993 onwards, Mitterrand began to think about how France would “disengage” from Rwanda. [Védrine, T1-66]. Citing his own notes from a March 3, 1993 French cabinet meeting, Védrine quoted Mitterrand as saying, “We must get out [of Rwanda], but only through the United Nations.” [BB 1-106]. Védrine recalled Mitterrand’s dismayed reaction on April 6, 1994, following the assassination of Habyarimana. “It is terrible,” he quoted the president as saying. “They are going to massacre each other. Everything we have done since 1990 has been destroyed.” [Védrine, T1-67].

Faustin Kagamé, senior media advisor to Rwandan president Paul Kagame, disputed Védrine’s claim that French assistance to the Rwandan military was always “conditional” on support for the peace and democratization process. [Kagamé, T1-80]. Rwandan Senator Jean Damascène Bizimana cited documents submitted to a French parliamentary commission reporting that French military assistance to Rwanda reached a level of 116 million francs in 1980, 190 million francs in 1990, and 122 million francs in 1992. Bizimana said that these figures showed that France

“increased its military and technical aid” during “the period of peace negotiations, a period when massacres were going on.” [Bizimana, T1-91, 92]. The director of African Affairs at the French foreign ministry, Ambassador de La Sabliere, said that no further French arms sales to Rwanda were authorized after August 1993, when the Arusha agreements were signed. “The arms exports diminished very rapidly, then they became non-lethal.” [de La Sabliere, T1-83].

Controversy also surrounded the role played by the RPF, and whether the rebel movement was ever willing to agree to free elections in Rwanda, given its identification with the minority Tutsi population. Filip Reyntjens, a former Belgian human rights activist and author of several books on Rwanda, said it was a “major mistake” to see the Rwandan conflict “in terms of good guys and bad guys. This is a story of bad guys, period.” [Reyntjens, T2-76]. Michael Barnett, an American political scientist assigned to the US mission to the United Nations during the genocide, warned against equating the “crimes” of the two sides, which could be used as an excuse for doing nothing. “What I hear you saying is...that there are bad guys wherever you look and, as a consequence, there is moral equivalence and the international community, or the United States, is off the hook.” [Barnett, T2-76].

One of the major unresolved mysteries from the genocide period concerns the shootdown of the Habyarimana plane, the incident that provided the immediate trigger for the genocide. Ambassador Swinnen noted that there had been several investigations into the incident, including two French inquiries and a Rwandan government inquiry, but no widely accepted conclusions. “I think we should be indignant about the fact that the international community, twenty years later, has still not commissioned an official international inquiry to answer the question: who was responsible for this attack?” [Swinnen, T2-93].

There was general agreement that the withdrawal of most UN peacekeepers from Rwanda at the very start of the genocide was “a disastrous decision [with] horrendous consequences,” in the phrase of Nigeria’s UN envoy, Ibrahim Gambari. [Gambari, T2-18]. The departure of the most capable UNAMIR units, led by the Belgians, gave extremist Hutu militia a free rein in the capital Kigali. An estimated 500,000 to one million Rwandans, predominantly Tutsis, were murdered over the next three months in organized killing sprees that spread from Kigali to other parts of Rwanda. Johan Swinnen and Joyce Leader both described desperate appeals from moderate Hutu military officers, calling for international intervention to end the killing. [Swinnen, T2-46; Leader T2-50]. In an April 12, 1994 cable, Leader quoted a senior Rwandan army officer, Colonel Leonidas Rusatira, as saying that the “killing surpassed all imagination, with whole families being decimated” but that it “would not be difficult for French and Belgian troops to gain control of the situation.” [BB 2-142].

We heard differing accounts of why and how the UN Security Council adopted its controversial Resolution 912 on April 21, 1994, reducing UNAMIR from 2,400 troops to a rump force of 270 troops. According to Ambassador Hannay, the Council

simply legitimized earlier decisions by the Belgian and Bangladeshi governments to withdraw their national contingents. [Hannay, T2-14]. Former Council President Colin Keating disputed Hannay's version. "The only reason why [the authorized level] went to 270 was because this was the one figure which the United States team in New York would accept. I know because I was the one who was negotiating with them. That was their bottom line." [Keating, T2-30]. General Anyidoho pointed out that more than 800 Ghanaian peacekeepers remained in Rwanda, despite the withdrawal of 440 Belgians and 942 Bangladeshis. [Anyidoho, T2-15].

A declassified document obtained by conference organizers under the US Freedom of Information Act shows that the Clinton administration favored an almost complete withdrawal of UNAMIR from Rwanda as soon as the evacuation of foreign nationals had been completed. In an April 12, 1994 cable, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, said that Washington should consider "taking the lead in the Security Council to authorize the evacuation of the bulk of UNAMIR, while leaving behind a skeletal staff that might be able to facilitate a cease-fire and any future political negotiations." [BB 5-20]. On the same day, Belgium foreign minister Claes informed UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali in Bonn that his government had decided to withdraw its troops from Rwanda "at the earliest possible date." [BB 5-22].¹³

Several participants mentioned RPF opposition to a strengthening in the UNAMIR mandate to allow the force to engage "in a combat role." An RPF statement dated April 30, 1994 insisted that the "time for UN intervention is long past" since the genocide was "almost completed" and a "UN intervention at this stage can no longer serve any useful purpose."¹⁴ According to former State Department official David Scheffer, the RPF position bolstered the arguments of Pentagon officials who were opposed to military intervention of any kind in Rwanda. "It provided the basis for cynical remarks at the policy table, which do not always come through in the published documents." [Scheffer, T2-88].

A former RPF representative in the United States, Ambassador Charles Murigande, said the April 30 letter reflected frustration over the passivity of the international community. "When the genocide started, instead of reinforcing UNAMIR, the international community decided to withdraw almost all of UNAMIR. We felt abandoned. Almost a whole month goes by, people are dying daily by the thousands, and then we see a proposal for the reinforcement of UNAMIR. We interpreted this proposal as a desire to do everything possible to save a government that had just committed genocide." [Murigande, T2-86].

¹³ See Mark Landler, "[Declassified UN Cables reveal turning point in Rwanda crisis of 1994](#)," New York Times, June 3, 2014.

¹⁴ Full text of the RPF April 30, 1994 statement is available [here](#). The statement was signed by Gerald Gahima and Claude Dusaidi on behalf of the RPF leadership. See also cable from New Zealand mission to UN, C04272/NYK, April 8, 1994, BB 5-8.

There was a difference of opinion among participants over the importance of using the term “genocide” to describe the ethnically-based mass killing that took place in Rwanda. Czech UN Ambassador Karel Kovanda noted that “if you identify something as genocide, you have to do something about it. If you do not do anything about it, you are violating the Genocide Convention as well.” [Kovanda, T2-27].¹⁵ The UN Security Council first used the term in an official document in a draft resolution introduced by Kovanda on April 28, but the word was dropped in the final resolution, at the insistence of non-aligned countries (including Rwanda). [Riza, T2-102]. Former State Department official David Scheffer expressed concern that debates over the “genocide” expression could delay an effective response. “Why? Because of the legal analysis it invites, which delays and obfuscates what actually needs to be done by policy makers.” Scheffer said he preferred the term “atrocious crimes” which was a way of signaling policy makers that they needed “to respond very effectively to what we know are crimes of high magnitude...What begins as a crime against humanity may ultimately be determined to be a genocide. Who knows? But we have to have a response.” [Scheffer, T2-88].

4. Lessons from Rwanda

The final session of the conference was devoted to summarizing the lessons of the Rwanda genocide. Participants differed in their interpretation of key events, but there was a common understanding that international institutions like the United Nations and individual member states failed Rwanda both before and during the genocide. Some of the most pertinent lessons to be drawn from the Rwanda tragedy had already been mentioned in earlier sessions, including:

- There should be much greater coordination between peacemakers and peace implementers. [Dallaire, Mpungwe, Keating]
- Civil society should be involved in the peace process. Public education is vital. [Mujawamariya, Nshimiyimana, Leader, Swinnen, Guichaoua]
- Much more can be achieved if Big Powers are acting in concert, rather than at cross purposes with each other. [Védrine, Belliard]
- Greater attention should be paid to the selection of key leaders of international peacekeeping missions. [Ould Abdullah, Anyidoho, Hannay, Riza]
- Have a plan B. Prepare for the worst case scenario as well as the best case scenario. [Kovanda, Gambari]

¹⁵ Signed in Paris on December 9, 1948, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines “genocide” as acts of mass violence against “a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group” committed “with intent to destroy, in whole or in part” the group. [Article 2 of Genocide Convention].

- Adapt your strategy to changing circumstances. Display tactical flexibility. There was broad consensus that the international community failed to adapt quickly enough to the collapse of the Arusha agreements. [Hannay, Dallaire]
- Rely on regional organizations, such as the African Union, in addition to the UN and the P-5. [Gambari, Mazimhaka]

While acknowledging that some progress has been made in correcting the flaws in the international system that became apparent in 1994, participants agreed that much more needs to be done to prevent future mass atrocities and genocides. Several participants referred to recommendations contained in the August 2000 Report by the Panel on UN Peacekeeping Operations chaired by Under-Secretary-General Lakhdar Brahimi. Created in the aftermath of the Rwanda and Srebrenica tragedies, the Brahimi commission identified many shortcomings in the work of the UN Security Council and Secretariat. Specific suggestions for improvement included clear and achievable peacekeeping mandates, more robust rules of engagement, better funding for peacekeeping operations, a greater reliance on regional organizations such as the African Union, improvements in mission leadership, more effective public information policies, and a rapid deployment capability.

Former Security Council members noted that some of the Brahimi recommendations have been carried out while others remain unfulfilled. The former UK representative, Lord Hannay, said that there had been “huge steps forward between 1994 and today.” He cited, in particular, improved coordination with the African Union and other regional bodies, and the development of a “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine, displacing “the original UN charter provision that you do not intervene in the internal affairs of Member States.” On the other hand, Hannay also noted that “Responsibility to Protect” was “very contentious.” “Advocates of R2P need to explain it better, make it more user friendly, less a recipe for military intervention, more an instrument of prevention,” Hannay said. [Hannay, T2-78].

Ambassador de La Sabliere, who served as France’s representative on the Security Council at the time R2P was being negotiated in 2005, agreed that the doctrine was “a great advance” but noted that it did not have universal support. “After what happened in Libya, we are seeing a bit of a brake on the application of this principle,” said de La Sabliere, referring to the use of international air power to overthrow the Gaddafi regime in 2011. [de La Sabliere, T2-83]. De La Sabliere said that there had been “no progress” at all on the development of a UN rapid deployment force. “The United Nations system is not equipped to respond to an emergency.” Former UN Assistant Secretary-General Riza said that a rapid deployment force had been “a dream” of the UN for fifty years. “We know we are never going to get it.” [Riza, T1-55].

The former Nigerian representative, Ibrahim Gambari, said that Rwanda showed that the UN Secretariat was too much under the control of the “big boys,” meaning

the permanent five members of the UN Security Council. Gambari said that the African Union had decided to “set aside the principle of noninterference in the affairs of Member States, particularly when it comes to genocide” and were gradually “developing a rapid deployment capability.” The Nigerian ambassador said that Africans were beginning to understand that they “have to rely primarily on themselves in responding to massive violations of human rights and genocide.” [Gambari, T2-70, 71].

Former RPF Vice-Chairman Mazimhaka agreed that cooperation between the UN and the African Union was essential if future genocides were to be prevented. He said there could have been a different outcome in Rwanda had a joint UN-AU rapid reaction force been available in 1994. “Today there are such forces doing good things. Most interesting for me is to the Central African Republic where the French army and the Rwandese army are working closely together to try to save the situation in Bangui. So nothing is taboo.” [Mazimhaka, T2-85].

According to Ambassador Ould Abdallah, the Secretary-General’s special representative in Burundi in 1993-94, there has been “some progress” in the screening and briefing of special representatives and force commanders but “this needs to be a top priority. More attention must be given to the selection of Force Commanders and SRSGs by the Secretary-General and the Security Council.” [Ould Abdallah, T2-95]. Ambassador Hannay said that, in the case of Rwanda, there was “pretty overwhelming evidence” that the SRSG was “a liability and made practically no contribution” while the Force Commander was “very good.” He added that the UN “has still not mastered the art of choosing a good team who work together, a Special Representative and a Force Commander. They need some more structured system for choosing these people.” [Hannay, T2-79].

US participants said that the horrifying example of inaction in Rwanda encouraged the Clinton administration to be “more proactive” elsewhere, including Haiti and Kosovo. David Scheffer, a former aide to US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright, said that PDD-25 was amended to include a stipulation known as the “inaction clause,” requiring policy-makers to consider the consequences of doing nothing.¹⁶ In the case of Haiti and Kosovo, Scheffer noted, “that was the criterion that liberated us to be more proactive than we were in Rwanda...We made some terrible mistakes, but we did take away lessons that we applied in later years.” [Scheffer, T2-90].

Former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy and Human Rights John Shattuck agreed that the Rwanda tragedy set the stage for a more positive outcome in Haiti in September 2004. He recalled briefing President Clinton about attacks on civilians

¹⁶ Scheffer is referencing Paragraph G of Annex I of the declassified version of PDD-25, available [here](#). Among “Factors to be Considered in Voting on UN Peace Operations Resolutions,” the annex lists the following: “The political, economic and humanitarian consequences of inaction by the international community have been weighed and are considered unacceptable.”

being carried out by Haitian paramilitary forces. According to Shattuck, Clinton responded as follows: “That looks like Rwanda. We are not going to let that happen again.” [Shattuck, T2-23, 24].

Several participants concluded that good intentions can sometimes produce harmful consequences. US diplomat Joyce Leader mentioned “very profound disruptions in societies” caused by “changes in power relationships” resulting from western democracy promotion efforts. “I have come to the conclusion that we need to acknowledge the link between violence and promotion of change [by the international community], or democracy and peace in the case of Rwanda. We should acknowledge the negative consequences that result in some cases from the promotion of democratization.” [Leader, T2-92]. Ambassador Swinnen said that democracy was “an important value but every country understands democracy in its own way.” Westerners should “stop giving Africans the idea that they make us happy by organizing elections.” [Swinnen, T2-94].

By contrast, Swinnen said, respect for human rights was a “universal priority without distinction of ideology, national interests, or geopolitical considerations.” UN human rights official Bacre Ndiaye agreed that international human rights standards should be “universally applied.” He said there was no reason why “Rwandan citizens, whatever their ethnic group or political affiliation or social origin, should not have the same fundamental rights as all other citizens of the world.” He called for the creation of an international Committee on the Prevention of Genocide and UN Special Rapporteur on Genocide Prevention, as recommended by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in a January 1994 speech in Stockholm. [Ndiaye, T2-99].¹⁷ Neither recommendation has been implemented so far.

According to several participants, the Rwanda tragedy demonstrated the need for a vigorous international human rights movement with sufficient political clout to bring pressure on western governments to prevent crimes against humanity. Organizations like Human Rights Watch and Médecins Sans Frontières mounted major public education campaigns in the case, but the results were disappointing.

After witnessing the early atrocities in Kigali, Doctor Jean-Hervé Bradol of Médecins Sans Frontières also lobbied the French and US governments to intervene to halt the genocide. Bradol said that MSF noticed a “change in the rhetoric of French officials” by the beginning of June, almost two months into the genocide. At a private meeting with MSF officials on June 14, President Mitterrand described the interim Rwandan government as “a gang of assassins”. Bradol also traveled to Washington to try to persuade the Clinton administration “to give some of their armored personnel carriers from Somalia to UNAMIR, to make it possible to evacuate the wounded across the front lines.” Because of bureaucratic obstacles, the APCs did not arrive in time to be useful. [Bradol, T2-73].

¹⁷ See Kofi Annan, Keynote Address to the Stockholm International Forum on Preventing Genocide, January 26, 1994, available [here](#).

Following her escape from Kigali on April 12, Monique Mujawamariya became a key player in the efforts by Human Rights Watch to inform the US government and American public opinion about events in Rwanda. Together with the organization's Rwanda expert, Alison des Forges, Mujawamariya made the rounds of senior officials in Washington, including National Security Advisor Anthony Lake. Mujawamariya summed up her talks in Washington by citing a conversation with a leading African-American Congressman, who told her: "Americans do not have friends, Americans have interests, and there are no interests in Rwanda that could justify coffins full of Marines as we saw in Somalia." [Mujawamariya, T2-65].

The importance of leadership

In addition to lessons learned albeit incompletely implemented, the twentieth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide offered conference participants the opportunity to reflect on the importance of leadership and individual responsibility. The Rwanda tragedy demonstrated that even modest actions by institutions or individuals could make a difference. Mujawamariya credited Massachusetts senator Edward Kennedy with saving her children through a well-timed phone call to the Rwandan ambassador in Washington. [Mujawamariya, T2-64]. According to a study by Human Rights Watch, the much-reduced force of less than 1,000 UNAMIR peacekeepers was able to protect more than 20,000 Rwandans, who might otherwise have been killed." Dallaire established this protection in response to the overwhelming needs on the spot, not as a result of orders from New York," the HRW study noted.¹⁸ "In an emergency situation, my feeling is that either you take responsibility or you resign," said Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Bujumbura, who helped avert mass killings in Burundi following the second assassination of a Burundian president in less than six months.¹⁹ [Ould Abdallah, T1-111].

"I believe that individual human beings can make a difference... but we are not going to make a difference unless we speak up," said Ambassador Prudence Bushnell, who called Colonel Théoneste Bagosora and other senior Rwandan officials during the genocide to urge them to halt the killings. Bushnell drew a distinction between "management" of a crisis, which "means doing things right", and "leadership" during a crisis, which "means doing the right thing." Bushnell said that members of the United Nations Security Council needed to be "held accountable" for their actions. "The non-transparent way in which we did business as governments, and in the Security Council, is behind us," Bushnell said. [Bushnell, T2-90, 91].

¹⁸ Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 630.

¹⁹ Burundi president Cyprien Ntaryamira was killed in the same plane crash on April 6, 1994, as Rwandan President Habyarimana. Ntaryamira became president of Burundi on February 5, 1994, following the assassination of Melchior Ndadaye on October 21, 1994.

It seems appropriate that the final word in this report should go to a survivor of the Rwanda genocide, Monique Mujawamariya, who cited absence of leadership at different levels as a primary cause of her country's tragedy. She also alluded to President Clinton's March 1998 "apology" to Rwandan genocide victims in which he stated that "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 the speed with which you were being engulfed by this unimaginable terror."

I no longer believe in the international community. It is like a mythical dragon which everyone fears but which does not actually exist. No one knows what it does. However, I do believe in great powers. They certainly exist. I believe it was the great powers who abandoned Rwanda. Why did the great powers abandon Rwanda? Because the officials who could have done something to make sure that great powers would be involved did not do anything. There is a kind of professionalism without soul, without sensibility. People sitting in offices cease to be human. These officials did not transmit the information to all those important offices in the United Nations, and therefore the information did not circulate. Because the information did not circulate, no decision could be taken. Everybody thought that each person in his own corner had the power to draw conclusions without consulting others. I think this is what sentenced Rwanda. [Mujawamariya, T2-65].

Annex 1

Conference Agenda

Sunday, June 1

Dinner

- Informal discussion.

Monday, June 2: Failure to Prevent

9:30 am – 12:30 pm: Working Session 1

“Peacemakers and Peacekeepers: The Promise and Perils of Arusha, 1990-1993”

- Background to Arusha, e.g. Mitterrand’s La Baule speech, June 6, 1990; introduction of multi-party system; RPF invasion of October 1, 1990
- Political negotiations (July 1992-January 1993)
- Massacres of Tutsi and RPF offensive of February 8, 1993
- Military negotiations in Arusha, signing of Arusha agreements, August 1993
- Conversation between “Peacemakers” and “Peacekeepers”

2:00pm – 5:00 pm: Working Session 2

“The Failed Peace: October 1993-April 1994”

- UNSC vote to authorize peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, October 5, 1993
- Assassination of Burundi president Melchior Ndadaye (October 21, 1993) and the arrival of UNAMIR in Kigali
- Jean-Pierre warning, January 10, 1994
- Belgian call for a strengthening of UNAMIR, February 25, 1994
- Shoot down of Habyarimana plane, killing of Belgian peacekeepers, and beginning of the genocide, April 6-11, 1994

Tuesday, June 3: Failure to Prevent

9:30 am – 12:30 pm: Working Session 3

“Inside the UN Security Council, April -July 1994”

- What did we know and when did we know it?
- The UNAMIR withdrawal decision, April 11-21, 1994
- Debating the “G-word”, April 21-May 5, 1994
- Ending the genocide, May 15-July 18, 1994
- Operation Turquoise and the victory of the RPF
- Unresolved mysteries and controversies

2:00 pm – 5:00 pm: Working Session 4

“Lessons from Rwanda”

Annex 2

Conference Participants

(Unless otherwise stated, positions are those held in 1990-1994)

- Major-General **Henry Anyidoho**, Deputy UNAMIR Force commander
- **Michael Barnett**, Political Officer at US Mission to United Nations
- **Jean-Christophe Belliard**, French observer in Arusha, currently director of African Affairs at the French Foreign Ministry
- Dr. **Jean Damascène Bizimana**, Rwandan senator, 2014
- Dr. **Jean-Hervé Bradol**, Médecins sans Frontières representative in Rwanda
- **Colette Braeckman**, Africa specialist for Belgian newspaper Le Soir.
- **Prudence Bushnell**, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the US State Department
- **Jean-Philippe Ceppi**, reporter for Libération and Swiss radio
- Lieutenant-General **Roméo Dallaire**, UNAMIR Force Commander
- **Jean-Marc Rochereau de La Sabliere**, director of Africa Bureau at French foreign ministry
- **Ibrahim Gambari**, Nigerian representative on the UN Security Council, and President of the Council in May 1994.
- Dr. **James Gasana**, Minister of Defense of Rwanda, 1992-1993.
- **André Guichaoua**, French sociologist and author
- Lord **David Hannay**, UK permanent representative on the UN Security Council.
- **Faustin Kagamé**, communications advisor to Rwandan President Paul Kagame, 2014
- **Colin Keating**, New Zealand representative on the UN Security Council, and President of the Council in April 1994
- **Karel Kovanda**, Czech representative on the UN Security Council, and President of the Council in January 1994
- **Joyce Leader**, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Kigali
- **Patrick Mazimhaka**, Vice-Chairman of the Rwandan Patriotic Front
- **Linda Melvern**, British investigative journalist and author
- **Edward Mortimer**, Chief Program Advisor to the Salzburg Global Seminar 2014
- **Ami Mpunge**, Tanzanian facilitator to the Arusha peace process
- **Monique Mujawamariya**, Rwandan human rights activist
- **Charles Murigande**, Washington representative of the Rwandan Patriotic Front
- **Jean-Marie Vianney Ndagijimana**, Rwandan ambassador to Paris
- **Bacre Ndiaye**, Special UN Rapporteur
- **Venuste Nshimiyimana**, UNAMIR press office.
- **Ahmedou Ould Abdallah**, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Burundi

- **Filip Reyntjens**, Belgian scholar and author
- **Iqbal Riza**, Assistant Secretary-General in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the UN
- **David Scheffer**, senior advisor to US Representative to the UN, Madeleine Albright
- **John Shattuck**, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
- **Johan Swinnen**, Belgian ambassador to Rwanda
- **Hubert Védrine**, Secretary-General of the French presidency
- **Don Webster**, lead prosecutor, International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, 1999-2012.

Conference Staff

- **Michael Abramowitz**, Director of the Levine Institute for Holocaust Education, US Holocaust Memorial Museum
- **Mark Bailey**, Special Assistant to the President at The Hague Institute for Global Justice
- **Tom Blanton**, Director of the National Security Archive
- **Michael Dobbs**, Senior Advisor to the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum
- **Nadia Ficara**, Director of Donor Travel Programs and the VIP Speakers Bureau at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum
- **Cameron Hudson**, Director of the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum
- **Marie-Laure Poiré**, Manager for Events and Communications at The Hague Institute for Global Justice
- **Kristin Scalzo**, Research Assistant at the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum
- **Emily Willard**, Research Associate at the National Security Archive
- **Abiodun Williams**, President of The Hague Institute for Global Justice