

Genocide is a crime on a different scale to all other crimes against humanity, and it implies an intention to completely exterminate the chosen group; genocide is therefore the greatest of the crimes against humankind. The massacres that transpired in Rwanda less than four years ago possess every quality attributed to the ramifications of genocide. There, in the clearest case of genocide since Hitler, a vast slaughter occurred which claimed the lives of more than 800,000 Rwandans. This genocide is probably the greatest and gravest crime against humanity in the second half of the twentieth-century; and no group whether foreign or indigenous executed enough force to prevent this from occurring. The United States stood by and watched the horrific events unfold. The Clinton administration, facing what was the clearest case of genocide in 50 years, responded by downplaying the crisis diplomatically and impeding effective intervention by U.N. forces to stop the killing. A great crime against humanity did exist through the individual tortures, rapes, and slaughters of the Rwandans; but, hidden in all of the turmoil and rage, was the crime of passivity and evasion in the United States' response towards all of the crimes and suffering. One million Rwandan civilians were left for dead, but that could have been significantly reduced with the initial intervention and aid of the U.S. government.

Rwanda has been subjected to a number of historical events that have led up to their genocide. After World War I, they were put under Belgian Trusteeship that imposed a rigid plan of racial classification, dividing the Rwandans into three distinct groups: the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. The Hutu composed of about 84 percent of the total population in Rwanda, while the Tutsi was 15 percent, and the Twa represented a meager 1- percent of the population. The Belgians' racist ideals provided a framework for the social classes that would exist in Rwanda. The Tutsi were deemed superior in all aspects in respect to the Hutus and Twa due to their facial features and manner in which they lived and presented themselves. "Their racialization of the political reality was exploited" (McCullum 3). According to the Belgians, they possessed a politeness and greater intelligence that surpassed the levels that were inherent among the other tribes. The "whiteness," including facial features, behavioral tendencies, and personality, reflected many characteristics of the white race (Vassal 8). The Belgians presented them with an opportunity for education and a Christian upbringing. It was this intervention that sowed the seeds for the future resentment among the clans. Disgruntled by their new low-level social status, resentment began to grow amongst the Hutu clan towards the Tutsi.

In 1959, social tensions erupted between the Hutus and the Tutsi, and the Hutu revolution was born. Since the extremely small numbers limited the Twa's power, they refrained from any serious involvement in this social revolution (McCullum 3). The Belgians were already beginning to support the aspirations of the Hutu for a greater role in the country's affairs, believing that a minority rule was unsustainable. The Belgians then imposed a plan to replace the Tutsi chiefs with Hutu. The Tutsi loathed their loss of power, while the Hutu acted with aggression after inheriting their newfound sense of power and domination. Many of the new Hutu mayors used their power to persecute the Tutsi, thousands of whom were forced to abandon their homes and flee abroad to neighboring countries. These refugees formed militias in these countries that they fled to in hope of reinstating their power. The Tutsi refugees would often organize raids against the Hutu government. Their intentions were to "create enormous tensions among the Hutu peasants" (McCullum 6). However, the Hutu responded to these actions by executing the Tutsi that still lived in Rwanda.

According to the video *Forsaken Cries*, in 1990, a civil war broke out between the Tutsi refugees and the Hutu extremists. From Uganda, they invaded northern Rwanda and fought for four years. The Rwandan president, Juvenal Habyarimana sought help from the Belgian government but was turned down; instead the Belgian government pressured them to negotiating a peace agreement with the rebel Tutsi army. President Habyarimana granted a UN peacekeeping force to enter the country to help resolve the trauma that ensued across his country. This force could help bring the country back from its current chaotic state; however, the UN was reluctant in providing aid at this time. While returning from another peace negotiation, President Habyarimana's plane was shot down by Hutu extremists fearing that the Tutsi would have gotten the best of them. With the entire country in chaos, this act was exactly what the Hutu needed to launch the genocide (Jorgensen 95).

"Within an hour of the crash of Habyarimana's plane, selective assassination of opposition politicians began in the streets of Kigali, the capital of Rwanda" (McCullum 22). The Hutu began the genocide by slaughtering all who opposed their ideologies, including many Hutu political leaders. The militia established checkpoints all over Rwanda. Their methodology of killings was very simple; ID cards were checked if it said of Hutu descent, then you were spared, if it said of Tutsi descent then you were killed on the spot (Triumph). Churches in the past have been regarded as religious sanctuaries where one could be protected; however, the Hutu used these as death traps where they could murder mass numbers of people. "Those in danger did their best to flee, but the killers respected no sanctuary; militiamen sought out victims in churches and in hospital wards" (Vassal 37). People were ritualistically mutilated and babies were thrown against rocks. Women were raped, tortured, and burned alive, and their children were slaughtered beside them. This genocide in Rwanda almost completely wiped out the Tutsi population. From the months of April until July 133,000 Tutsi were left alive after 800,000 were brutally killed. Up to 10,000 Tutsi were killed everyday (Forsaken). The genocide finally came to a halt when the Rwandese Patriotic Front or RPF rebels defeated the militias and Hutu army, and took control of the country in July 1994, but the tragedy that shook Rwanda did not end when the genocide was over (Jorgensen 102). The wounds will last for generations; and the events that ensued will be historically revered as one of the most horrific crimes against humanity that has taken place on our soil.

Although the Hutu extremists facilitated their onslaught of power upon the Tutsi, the countries that watched this horrific tragedy unfold also played a key role in the savagery of this genocide. They stood by silently while more than a million people were brutally murdered. The United States sought to play down this affair by instructing its officials to use the phrase, "acts of genocide," rather than acknowledging that a deliberate policy of genocide was being implemented. "The alleged reason for this word-play was the US government feared that acknowledging this would oblige it to undertake more vigorous action under the UN's Convention on Genocide" (Vassal 43). David Rawson, U.S. ambassador to Rwanda, for example, stated that "as a responsible government, you don't just go around hollering 'genocide.' You say that acts of genocide may have occurred and they need to be investigated." The administration equivocated from implementing this identification from May until mid-June, when congressional outrage and a rash of critical articles in the press forced Secretary of State Warren Christopher to finally invoke the term (Douglas).

After the genocide had escalated, and foreign intervention was vital, President Clinton agreed to sign a document entitled PDD 25, Presidential Decision Directive. This document aims to limit U.S. military involvement in international peacekeeping operations, not only in Rwanda, but also in peacekeeping affairs worldwide (Triumph). Decision Directive 25 (PDD 25) required that for U.S. participation, A U.N. mission must be a response to threats to international peace and security, must advance American interests at acceptable risk, and must have adequate command

and control procedures and an exit strategy" (Burkhalter 20). The directive was in marked contrast to Bill Clinton's campaign vision of U.N. operations.

During the 1992 presidential campaign, candidate Clinton expressed strong support for international operations to shield threatened countries from foreign invasion, to provide humanitarian assistance and protection for civilians in civil war, and to combat terrorism and drug trafficking. Indeed, Clinton even called for development of a U.N. "rapid deployment" force to respond quickly to such situations. Yet after 16 months in office, Clinton's plan was the embodiment of what Rep. David Obey (D-WI) called the American people's hope for "zero degree of involvement and zero degree of risk and zero degree of pain and confusion (Wolf ). Clinton used this word play as a medium through which he can emphasize his interest in foreign affairs and conflicts. However in 1992, he forgot to mention that he is only interested in affairs that serve a domestic importance to the United States. This human rights disaster, according to Clinton, does not classify.

Over the following weeks and months, U.S. parsimony and insistence on the utmost caution impeded the dispatch of UN troops to Rwanda. In fact, all the troops involved were African, and the U.S. financial commitment amounted merely to a contribution to the UN peacekeeping budget. In the first place, the U.S. refusal to commit its own troops to the effort reduced the prestige of the mission and discouraged troop-contributing nations who would have been eager to join an American-led effort (Burkhalter 26). This action of the U.S. revealed their inertia towards the disaster. They stood passively behind the scenes donating a small monetary supplement to the cause, instead of aggressively using force to end the disaster quickly.

By Mid-May, when the genocide had reached a climax, the United States further displayed its passivity by stalling on its commitment to provide equipment for the force. Troops were theoretically available from Ghana, Senegal, Ethiopia, and other nations. But only the rich countries had the resources to equip them, and the process of settling on appropriate equipment, and on what the United States would pay, took months. According to congressional staff, Ghana's "outrageous" request included demands for tanks, helicopters, and howitzers (Burkhalter 31). The American response was to quarrel over costs with the U.N. bureaucracy and to stall in making military items available.

A mission involving a rescue and a total termination of genocidal activities had been constructed, but needed the assistance of 50 armored vehicles. On May 19, 1994, the UN asked for the compliance by the US, but there were arguments over the costs of such measures and the rescue mission had been delayed once again (Triumph). The Pentagon and the United Nations reportedly negotiated for weeks over such details as whether to buy tank-like (tracked) or wheeled vehicles, and whether the United Nations should buy or lease the vehicles. Even when the negotiations were in the final phase, the administration had "taken no steps to refurbish...or move the APCs from their bases in Germany" because "Pentagon regulations stipulate that no steps to carry out a contract can be taken until a lease is signed, and the White House never pressed to waive the restrictions (Gordon ). Over a million lives were taken as the United States debated expenditures that may have ultimately ended the genocide.

Finally, despite U. S. recalcitrance and after considerable delay, the secretary general seemed to have cobbled together an agreement to dispatch 4,000 troops. But then suddenly, Ambassador Albright insisted on a more modest plan-only 850 troops and observers to prepare the ground for a full force to follow at some unspecified date. Only on June 8, 1994, did the Security Council give the final authorization to a deployment that had been accorded the "utmost urgency" on April 29, 1994 (Omaar 4). During this time span of less than five weeks, more than 300,000 Tutsi had already been murdered.

The United States avoided the conflict in every aspect imaginable. They were unwilling to give monetary aid or assistance by means of physical force. The United States watched in silence as the Hutu destroyed the balance of society in Rwanda. However, if physical action was the deterrent of their response, then the U.S. could have reacted to the threats in many different ways. One of the most useful contributions the administration might have made would have been to jam the extremist Rwandan radio broadcasts that played such an enormous role in whipping up terror and ethnic killing from April through June. Moreover, the radio broadcasts were the means by which the extremist militia, who carried out most of the killings, received their orders from the military high command and political party leaders (Burkhalter 36). "Pentagon experts have informed me that the Defense Department possesses the capacity to jam such broadcasts and could have done so at any point during the genocide" (Burkhalter 37). Yet, even as messages were aired urging Rwandan Hutus to kill all Tutsi to ethnically cleanse and recleanse areas to be sure that all children had been killed, the Clinton administration took no action. Yet it appears that neither the State Department nor the NSC pursued the idea seriously, and the Pentagon discouraged serious inquiry into it by making it sound as if it were a technical impossibility. In any event, the Clinton administration, through its inaction on the radio broadcasts, failed to take the one action that, in retrospect, might have done the most to save Rwandan lives.

After the genocide had come to an end, the United States was able to help contribute to the project UNAMIR (United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda) as it reestablished itself to help bring the country back to order. The United States was the major donor for this project. The U.S. has provided \$850 million in humanitarian aid to this region since 1993 (US Support). Clinton says, "We saved hundreds of thousands of peoples lives who were refugees, children who might have died from dehydration and disease for example" (Interview). Several thousand U.S. soldiers were deployed in Zaire and Rwanda itself in late July to break the back of a massive cholera epidemic and to provide food, water, medicine, and shelter to refugees and displaced people. Top Clinton officials visited the refugee havens, and humanitarian issues there were a visible priority for the White House, the State Department, and the Pentagon (Burkhalter 40). Clinton inadvertently illustrates the United States' methodology behind their assistance. He remarks on the lives that were saved after the genocide had already come to an end. After the United States' passive display, this humane act was the redeemer executed to help bring back dignity to a country that neglected another in a trivial time of suffering. The time, effort, and money spent to aid the country of Rwanda after the genocide could have been effectively used as an immediate mean to end the problem.

Since the genocide in Rwanda has occurred, The United States has expressed their sympathy by becoming an active participant in the International War Crimes Tribunal. The Tribunal serves a critical purpose, not just to punish genocide in Rwanda, but to deter genocide in Burundi and elsewhere. The United States has been the strongest supporter of the Rwanda Tribunal (US Support). This post-genocide action is an obvious implication that the United States has learned from its mistake, but is this act of redemption enough to satisfy the bloodletting that ensued during the crisis?

The United States did respond to the Rwanda genocide, but they did so in a manner that would not bring forth any danger to the individuals participating in this revival. The history of U.S. policy toward Rwanda during the genocide reveals that the disaster was not an important concern of the President or of the upper echelons of the State Department. It was treated, not as a human rights disaster requiring urgent response, but as a peacekeeping headache to be avoided (Muravchik 4). The obvious question is, why was this the Clinton administration's response to the clearest case of genocide since the Holocaust? We saved American lives and avoided

conflicts that may have erupted into diplomatic disorder. During the crisis, we reacted to the problems of the United States, and those countries that are suffering on a domestic level. The mass murders in Rwanda existed in our eyes as a crime against human rights and nothing more. The United States had no domestic ties with Rwanda; thus we did not feel the need to embark upon a defense mission that might put a few American lives in jeopardy. However, fact still remains that one million lives were lost in less than one hundred days, and even the slightest amount of intervention may have had an enormous impact on the reduction of casualties. The United States has stated its determinant to bring forth an end to such an occurrence, but it was reluctant in proving its intentions. The United States stood and watched one million human beings die before their eyes. On March 25, 1998, President Bill Clinton stated,

"The international community, together with nations in Africa, must bear its share of responsibility for this tragedy as well. We did not act quickly enough after the killing began. We should not have allowed the refugee camps to become safe havens for the killers. We did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide. We cannot change the past." (Clinton)

President Clinton had finally admitted to the crimes that United States had committed by passively reacting to the atrocities against humanity. They avoided a rescue mission until all forms had danger had been cleared, until there was no threat of force. A few thousand soldiers could have been the deciding factor in the life or death of one million innocent lives. Was our retreat worth the consequences? Even though the United States could not be accused of physically killing any of the Rwandan civilians, their passive reaction to the Rwandan cries created the opportunity for this mass genocide.