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## The Rwandan Genocide and Western Media: French, British, and American Press Coverage of the Genocide between April and July of 1994

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THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE AND WESTERN MEDIA: FRENCH, BRITISH, AND  
AMERICAN PRESS COVERAGE OF THE GENOCIDE BETWEEN APRIL AND JULY 1994

By

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2010

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
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in the College of Arts and Humanities  
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## ABSTRACT

The Rwandan Genocide occurred between April and July of 1994. Within those four months, approximately a million Tutsi were brutally murdered by the Hutu in an effort to cleanse the country of a Tutsi presence. The genocide was the culmination of decades of unrest between the two groups created from Western influence under colonialism and post-colonial relationships. The international response to the genocide was scarce. While international intervention waned, the international media kept the genocide relevant in its publications. This thesis examines print media sources from the United States, Britain, and France. This thesis argues that the reporting of the genocide exacerbated larger issues concerning the relationship between the West and Africa. The journalists perpetuated Western superiority over Africa by utilizing racism to preserve colonial ideologies and stereotypes of Africans. In turn, this inherent Western racism complicated the implementation of human rights legislation that would have helped save Tutsi lives. This thesis places the Rwandan genocide, through the reports of Western media, into the larger historiographic context of the Western African dichotomy.

For my mother, who never wavered in her support and admiration.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mother, Mary Tyrrell, who supported me throughout this project and never let me forget the pride I afforded her. I would also like to thank my father, Raymond Tyrrell. His memory always drove me to strive to my full potential.

I would like to express sincere gratitude to my committee members, who made this project possible and for their knowledge and guidance throughout my entire journey. Special recognition goes to my thesis chair, Dr. Ezekiel Walker, for his unwavering support, continued excitement of my research, and his guidance to those moments of clarity, when it all finally fell together. I would also like to thank Dr. Amelia Lyons for making me a better writer and a better historian though out the years; and Dr. Richard Crepeau for his excellent comments, especially during the formative stages of my thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank Zachary Morgan and Michael Brooks for their support and insight in this project, and embarking on this long journey together.

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## INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

On the evening of 6 April 1994, unknown perpetrators shot down the plane carrying the president of Rwanda, Juvenal Habyarimana, over Kigali, the capital of the country. In the following four months, between April and July of 1994, roughly 800,000 to one million innocent people lost their lives.<sup>1</sup> This was not a sporadic outburst of violence, it did not stem from one plane crash. Rather, the Hutu majority had previously organized and planned attacks on the Tutsi in an effort to eradicate all Tutsi presence from the country. Within those four months, bands of Hutu extremists systematically hunted and murdered Tutsi civilians. These Hutu soldiers forced other Hutu to turn against neighbors, friends, and often times their own family, in an effort to cleanse the *inyenzi*<sup>2</sup> problem within Rwanda. And when fellow Hutu refused to partake in the violence, or sought to help the Tutsi victims, the Hutu militias tortured and murdered them. The situation in Rwanda during the summer of 1994 rose to the level of genocide.<sup>3</sup>

Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire, commander of the UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda during the time of the genocide described Rwanda as “a stinking nightmare of rotting corpses, a nightmare we all had to negotiate every day.”<sup>4</sup> The hundred day genocide which took place was atrocious and, at times, unfathomable. But what makes the Rwandan genocide even more horrific was that it took place in view of the international community. The perpetrators of the torture and killing did not hide their actions behind walls or in forests; the violence took place on the streets and in neighborhoods. The violence took place in view of journalists and

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<sup>1</sup> Estimates vary. The estimates here are taken from Linda Melvern’s *A People Betrayed* and Daniela Krosiak’s *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*.

<sup>2</sup> A Kinyarwanda word meaning “cockroach” used by the Hutu to describe the Tutsi.

<sup>3</sup> In this work, the term genocide reflects the scholarly works used as a basis for this analysis. My understanding of the term genocide is largely based on Raphael Lemkin’s definition of the term. See Samantha Power, “*A Problem from Hell*”: *America and the Age of Genocide* 42-45.

<sup>4</sup> Dallaire, Romeo. *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, 1.

television news crews. The small contingent of UN peacekeepers that remained in the country throughout the four months reported daily to the United Nations and world powers. Yet, the international leadership made little to no effort to end the killing, often getting too bogged down in bureaucratic misgivings and personal agendas. Humanity failed Rwanda during the summer of 1994, and the consequences of that failure came at the costs of human life.

### ***The Media and the International Community***

The Rwandan genocide is unique in the sense that it was not hidden out of the sight of the international community. The genocide took place in the streets of Rwanda, in villages and at roadblocks. And the media was present during the entire genocide. News crews broadcasted the violence to television screens around the world. All major countries featured news articles and news programming during the duration of the genocide. Print media covered the genocide daily in the West. This media coverage made the inaction of the international community even more appalling. The most powerful countries in the world knew the severity of the situation, and still did not take the appropriate actions to help the victims.

This analysis focuses on the press from France, Great Britain, and the United States. I chose these three countries because they represent major players on the world stage and all three hold permanent places on the Security Council of the United Nations. These countries had the power to provide relief in Rwanda, but, unfortunately, became hindrances rather than help. Another important reason these countries are focused on is their former position as colonial powers. All three countries previously held territories and controlled countries, especially in Africa, throughout the past two centuries. All three believed in the exportability of their

respective cultures and societal structures.<sup>5</sup> France, the US, and Britain all played an important role in the development of Africa both under colonialism and in the years following decolonization.

This thesis focuses on one major daily paper and one weekly periodical from each of the three countries. From France, I chose, *Le Monde*, a daily left-wing paper published in Paris, and *L'Express*, a Parisian weekly periodical that tends to be right wing. Both French periodicals have high circulation within France, and have counterparts in other countries. From the United States, I chose *The New York Times*, a daily paper of record that is the second highest circulated newspaper within the country, and *Time*, a weekly magazine published in New York that is the most highly circulated news magazine worldwide. The two British periodicals chosen were, *The Times*, a traditionally moderate daily paper published in London, and *The Economist*, an English-language weekly periodical published in London that claims to take an editorial stance on social and economic liberalism.

While all of these press sources shared the genocide to the world, to think of them as monolithic is troublesome. Even to think of a singular country's press media being cohesive is problematic. These sources differ in political affiliation, national influence, and targeted objectives. Just like their countries of origin, the reporters of these selected sources, had different understandings of Rwanda and vendettas concerning intervention and international responsibility. In a study of media, the exclusivity of each media source is important.

This thesis does not argue against the distinctiveness of the sources, but it does argue that among that uniqueness, larger commonalities arose. The reporters did not always agree on distinct issues concerning the genocide. Their views on intervention varied throughout the four

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<sup>5</sup> Newsome, David D. *The Imperial Mantle: The United States, Decolonization, and the Third World*. Indiana University Press, 2001, 30-36.

months as well as their stances on the actions of other world powers and how to accurately define the situation in Rwanda. But, spanning all three countries, the press perpetuated larger themes. The press from all three countries exacerbated the legacies of colonialism and the complications of human rights legislation.

But the reporters went further than that. In the reporting of the Rwandan genocide, the reporters highlighted the troublesome relationship between the West and Africa. Hundreds of years of Western exploration and colonialism of the African continent created a system of Western superiority over Africans. Historically, the Western “image” of Africa is a fictive one. The West sees Africans as backward, non-industrialized, and destitute. Essentially, Africans are non-European.<sup>6</sup> This influenced and continues to influence the West’s perceptions and interpretations of African conflict and construction of Africans themselves. And, in a Western world that rebukes racism, the press coverage during the Rwandan genocide came to perpetuate racial stereotypes created by this dichotomy. While the Western media outright acknowledged the West’s influence and liability for the genocide, they also made the genocide the fault of the Rwandans ostensibly because of underlying racial inferiorities. The reporters separated themselves from the colonial ideologies unequivocally, yet perpetuated the racism they claimed to reject.

This inherent racism ingrained within Western reporters complicated the issues of intervention and culpability concerning adherence to human rights legislation. Rwandans were victims ostensibly because of their innate inferiority yet also connaturally perpetrators of their own genocide. For the reporters, this made application of human rights legislation nearly impossible to discern. In turn, this led the media to shift the focus away from Rwanda itself and

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<sup>6</sup> Nwaubani, Ebere. *The United States and Decolonization in West Africa 1950-1960*. New York: University of Rochester Press, 2001, 50.

use the genocide as a scapegoat for denunciation of international world powers and the United Nations as a whole. The innocent victims of the genocide got lost in the media shuffle of castigation of international foreign policy concerning human rights violations.

### ***Historiography***

Though the Rwandan genocide is less than twenty years old, the amount of literature on the subject is extensive. Scholars began writing on the genocide immediately after it ended. There was a need for the international community to come to terms with what had just happened but more importantly what they just let happen. In the past two decades, the work published has come from many different facets of the scholarly world. Historians, journalists, political scientists, and anthropologists, have published works regarding the genocide. Out of this work, the historiography of the genocide has a few discernable trends.

One major trend that developed in the historiography was how colonial rule created the condition for the genocide. Within this trend of the historiography, historians such as Frederick Cooper,<sup>7</sup> Gerard Prunier,<sup>8</sup> and Mamhood Mamdani<sup>9</sup> argue that European colonialism created the relationship between the Hutu and the Tutsi. Belgian rule of Rwanda institutionalized a hierarchical system, creating Tutsi superiority over the Hutu majority. This solidification of societal roles led to the inherency of tension between the two groups, resulting in genocide in 1994. Another major trend in the historiography of the genocide is the history of the memory and commemoration of the genocide. Many works, such as those from journalist Philip Gourevitch<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Cooper, Frederick. *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Prunier, Gerard. *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Mamdani, Mamhood. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Gourevitch, Philip. *We Wish To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998.

and Jennie Burent,<sup>11</sup> use interviews and testimonies to portray the genocide from a personal level. The third major trend focuses on culpability. This trend questions and blames the international community for their actions and inactions during the genocide. Historians such as Alain Destexhe<sup>12</sup> and Linda Melvern,<sup>13</sup> focus on the role of the West and their lack of intervention and refusal to acknowledge the situation as genocide. Other historians, such as Daniela Krosiak<sup>14</sup> and Samantha Power,<sup>15</sup> provide critical studies into specific Western countries and their relationships to the genocide.

These three trends -the colonial influence, memory and commemoration, and culpability- run throughout the historiography of the Rwandan genocide. While media is used by many of the authors as a minor part of their individual arguments, there has not been an in-depth analysis of the media's perceptions. This thesis is intended to fill this gap by examining the reporting of the Rwandan Genocide by the media in France, Britain, and the United States in order to show how the reporters appropriated the language of Rwanda's colonial past and the provisions of modern day human rights legislation to make sense of the genocide to an incredulous public. This thesis will argue that the reporters not only embodied Rwanda's colonial legacy, as they crafted their narrative in the context of the "other," but they also used that legacy to apportion blame and assign responsibility for non-intervention in Rwanda. And, in so doing, the reporters became embroiled in interpreting confusing human rights legislation to the international community. Ultimately, the reporting suggests that instead of taking action against the perpetrators of the

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<sup>11</sup> Burent, Jennie E. *Genocide Lives in Us: Women, Memory, and Silence in Rwanda*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Destexhe, Alain. *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, Translated by Alison Marschner. New York: New York University Press, 1995.

<sup>13</sup> In both, Melvern, Linda. *A People Betrayed: The role of the West in Rwanda's genocide*. London: Zed Books, 2000. And Melvern, Linda. *Conspiracy to Murder: Planning the Rwandan Genocide*. London: Verso, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Krosiak, Daniela. *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Power, Samantha. *"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide.*" New York: Basic Books, 2002.

Rwandan Genocide, Britain, France and the United States, in varying degrees, were more preoccupied with blaming each other, and the United Nations.

But, this thesis will also contribute to the historiography in a larger way. This thesis integrates the Rwandan genocide in the larger context of the Western world. This thesis argues that the reporting of the genocide exemplified the larger issues concerning racism and the legacies of colonialism coming from the West. In turn, this inherent Western racism complicated the ability and willingness for Western intervention during the genocide. This thesis adds to the historiography by demonstrating how the genocide itself was more than just a product of European colonialism; the lack of intervention was also a product of the legacy of Western racism toward Africans. While individual Western nations had their own personal relationships with Rwanda, the media sources studied proved that monolithic Western views were overarching concerning the Rwandan genocide.

### ***Chapter Breakdown***

This thesis will break down into three different chapters, each analyzing a different aspect of the news media from France, Britain, and the United States. The first chapter will focus on how colonialism and neocolonialism shaped the media's outlook on the Rwandan genocide. This chapter will show how Rwanda's colonial legacy created the conditions that engendered the genocide, and how the media used these legacies to interpret the events of the genocide. This chapter contends that the language of colonialism is not only entrenched in Western culture but also conditioned how reporters presented the genocide to the international community. I argue that the reporters perpetuated colonial ideologies and language, therefore becoming part of the larger colonial narrative and reinforcing the dichotomy between the West and Africa.

The second chapter argues that the reporters, as an ingrained product of the legacies of colonialism, used the genocide to allot blame and accredit responsibility to France, Britain, the United States, and the United Nations. This chapter examines why the media from certain countries felt more of a responsibility to intervene, such as France, but also why others decided to remain uninvolved, such as the case of the United States. This chapter also focuses heavily on the United Nations as a whole entity. The media from all three countries used the United Nations as a source of blame in order to shift individual responsibility onto the larger collective body. I argue that the reporters focused on allocating blame and responsibility, overshadowing reporting the actual abomination of the genocide, because they did not fully understand the situation in Rwanda.

The third and final chapter focuses on the medias' use of language, most importantly, the use of the word 'genocide.' This chapter opines that the term 'genocide' comes along with obligation of the international community to intervene based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This chapter breaks the media down into two categories, one that was not afraid to use the term and the other that shied away from calling the situation in Rwanda by that name. This chapter argues that the interaction between these two stances of the media represents the larger problems with human rights theory and interpretation of international human rights legislation. This final chapter demonstrates the challenges the international community faced with the Rwandan genocide through analyzing those complexities on the smaller scale of the media.

## CHAPTER ONE: THE COLONIAL LEGACY OF GENOCIDE

The genocide in Rwanda had its roots in European colonialism. Colonialism shaped relations between the Hutu and the Tutsi and solidified a system of distrust and animosity between the two groups. The reporting of the genocide in France, Britain, and the United States recognized the effects of colonialism in Rwanda. Reporters used the colonial legacy of the country to help make sense of what was going on during the genocide. Reporters also used Rwanda's colonial legacy to place blame and demand that European countries that once ruled Rwanda intervene. But, the media also utilized the colonial history of Rwanda to attack and criticize former European colonizers and their colonial relationship with Rwanda, as well as their neo-colonial relationship that formed after decolonization.

The media did not just present a colonial history of Rwanda; it focused heavily on the mutual antagonism between the Hutu and the Tutsi that dated back to the period of Belgian colonialism. The reporters themselves also became a part of the colonial narrative. The reports from Western news media reinforced colonial ideologies and the idea of "otherness" through their word choice and descriptions. The reporting takes on the "us versus them" mentality<sup>16</sup> in which the West dominates Africa and the rest of the Third World. It is reminiscent of what Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler describe as the need for the "otherness" of the colonized person to be defined and maintained.<sup>17</sup> The three Western countries analyzed all played a role in colonialism and that experience caused a "unique coherence and a special cultural centrality."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxiii

<sup>17</sup> Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxii

The reporters of the genocide were part of this larger colonial narrative, whether they were consciously aware of it or not. The reporters perpetuated the racism that they claimed to reject.

Colonial legacies refers to the byproducts of colonialism left over from the colonial period. Historian Frederick Cooper explains that the separation between what is considered “colonial” and “post-colonial” cannot be thought of as a definitive break. When colonialism officially ended, institutions and ideologies remained in place even as the colonizer left. New African governments simply inherited colonial enactments and conceptions with no significant change.<sup>19</sup> Here, these “legacies” are in part a continuation of colonial constructs, most importantly in this analysis, the continuation of racial separation of the Hutu and the Tutsi established under Belgian rule.

Within post-colonial Rwanda, the racialization of the Hutu and the Tutsi did not end when the Belgians left. Historian Mamhood Mamdani argues that racialization between the two groups was much more than an intellectual construct. Under colonial rule, racialization and separation became institutionalized.<sup>20</sup> The Belgians created economic, political, and social differences that remained in post-colonial Rwanda. The laws set in place by the Belgians in order to solidify Hutu and Tutsi differences survived and continued to spark racial tensions between the Hutu and the Tutsi after Rwanda gained independence. It is this legacy, the legacy of institutionalized racism left from Belgian colonization, which fuels the argument presented here.

Another important issue essential to this argument is the role of neo-colonialism. Kwame Nkrumah, former leader of Ghana and its predecessor state the Gold Coast, states that neo-colonialism represents imperialism in its “final and perhaps most dangerous state.” In essence, neo-colonialism suggests that the State is theoretically independent and maintains all of the

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<sup>19</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 87.

benefits of international sovereignty. But, in reality, the State's economic system and consequently its political policies are actually controlled from the outside.<sup>21</sup> Neo-colonial powers thereby control governments and regimes through monetary support. Therefore these powers continue to maintain control over governments and regimes since they require economic help in order to keep the country going. In most cases of neo-colonialism, the power in control of the State is usually the former colonial ruler of the area. For Rwanda, however, this is not the case.

Rwanda's main source of outside economic assistance was not from their former colonizer, Belgium, but rather from France. This neo-colonial aid and economic support from France caused many issues when genocide broke out in 1994 and put France in a very precarious place on the world stage. Historian Daniela Krosiak examines the French role in Rwanda in her work and illustrates how the French controlled the Rwandan government by making economic aid available only through democratization.<sup>22</sup> The promise of French aid molded how Rwanda grew out of colonization. The neo-colonialism of Rwanda by the French is essential to this argument and in understanding the dynamic between the Western world and Rwanda during the 1994 genocide.

### ***The Rise of European Colonialism and Colonial Legacy in Rwanda***

European thinkers throughout the nineteenth century perpetuated racial ideology through their writings and influenced the way that European society saw and understood the colonized. Early on, beginning in the eighteenth century, many European thinkers used physical differences to justify Western superiority. They argued that phrenology and physiognomy helped determine

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<sup>21</sup> Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, ix.

<sup>22</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 3.

self-worth and an individual's ability to be civilized. According to this model, many phrenologists concluded that Africans were innately uncivilizable due to undeveloped brain organs and therefore were considered "savages."<sup>23</sup> Explorers and cartographers on the African continent perpetuated these views through their stories and writings in order to justify the manipulation of Africans to achieve their goals and get what they wanted.<sup>24</sup> This early form of separation and idea of uncivilizability continued into the nineteenth century with the rise of colonialism and helped perpetuate European domination of Africa.

The rise of the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the rise of eugenics, and improvements in technology in parts of Europe and America created a gap between industrialized Europe and the colonial world, especially Africa. Historian Michael Adas claimed "African cultures were merely manifestations of the vast gap in evolutionary development that separated 'civilized' Europe from 'savage' Africa"<sup>25</sup> during the time that Europe was industrializing. Adas states that travelers' accounts of the "rude and primitive" tools of Africans reminiscent of the Stone Age in comparison to the new technology surfacing in Europe coincided with the beliefs of the time that Africa was indeed "primitive and savage."<sup>26</sup> Europeans at the time believed that they were millennia ahead of Africans due to reports from those Europeans that worked within Africa or had contact with the continent. At that time, this vast difference technologically between Europeans and Africans helped perpetuate the idea of Africans being savage. European superiority dictated that Africans were their "savage inferiors."

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<sup>23</sup> Staum, *Labeling People*, 63.

<sup>24</sup> Staum, *Labeling People*, 188.

<sup>25</sup> Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 164.

<sup>26</sup> Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 164

As technology and scientific discovery spread throughout the European continent, colonial administrators began to use this as a basis for comparison.<sup>27</sup> Scientific achievement replaced physical difference when it came to racial theory.<sup>28</sup> Because Africans were not as technologically or scientifically advanced at the time, they were thereby inferior and justifiably in a position to be dominated by advanced Europe. Stories and writings from the mid-nineteenth century helped spread racial ideology throughout the Western world and cemented European racial attitudes. Even today, these “often corrupted and vulgarized, invariably oversimplified and sensationalized . . . ideas have played a major role from the nineteenth century to the present in shaping popular attitudes in Europe and North America toward African and Asian peoples and cultures.”<sup>29</sup> The reports from France, Britain, and the United States during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 reflect these centuries’ old views and demonstrate how Western ideology and theory still play a prominent role in Western thought today when it comes to the African continent.

The British and French have a long and well-known history of imperialism throughout Africa and the rest of the world that lasted for centuries. But, often times, the United States is not referred to as an imperial power among conversations of colonialism. Yet, this thesis uses the United States as an avenue to examine Western colonialism concerning Rwanda. With the acquisition of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines after the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States officially became a colonial power. It was the first time in American history that the United States did not seek to make newly obtained territory into states. Acquiring foreign

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<sup>27</sup> Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 144.

<sup>28</sup> Staum, *Labeling People*, 87.

<sup>29</sup> Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 153.

colonies, the United States expanded the idea of Manifest Destiny past just the North American continent.<sup>30</sup>

But concerning Africa, the United States played a different type of imperial role. At the end of World War II, American diplomacy became focused on maneuvering for power in the new international system. The reconfiguration of Africa coincided with the United States' emergence as a superpower; therefore, the United States needed to be a part of the African continent. This need to expand interest into Africa also coincided with the formulation of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States needed to have some sort of influence in Africa in order to legitimize international power.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the United States took a minimalistic approach to Africa, but still sought to have enough influence in order to remain relevant on the world stage. But doing that was not easy in practice. Officially, the United States sought to reform rather than preserve minority regimes, yet, American political process did just that, complicating the American position within the continent. Racial problems in the United States at home muddled the situation even more, with the end of the Jim Crow era and the emanation of the civil rights movement.<sup>32</sup> But the United States still remained influential toward new African governments and emerging power structures, even if they did not play as large of a role as Britain and France, therefore constituting them as a colonial power for the purpose of this thesis. And, like Britain and France, racial prejudices heavily influenced perceptions of Africa by the United States that extended into 1994 and the Rwandan genocide.

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<sup>30</sup> Manifest Destiny refers to the 19<sup>th</sup> century American belief that settlers were destined to expand throughout the North American continent.

<sup>31</sup> Nwaubani, *The United States and Decolonization in West Africa 1950-1960*, 31.

<sup>32</sup> Newsome, David D. *The Imperial Mantle*, 159.

In order to understand how colonial legacy played into the reporting of the genocide, it is necessary to focus on the colonial history of Rwanda and the role it played in the relationship between the Hutu and the Tutsi. When the first explorers reached Rwanda, they were surprised to find that the people of the country appeared homogeneous; they shared the same language,<sup>33</sup> the same religion,<sup>34</sup> and had no distinct segregations in society even though the population divided itself into three groups. Prior to colonization, in the late nineteenth century, ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ appear to have little political significance; they were merely identifiers.<sup>35</sup> These identities in pre-colonial Rwanda were fluid. Larger factors played into political identity in pre-colonial Rwanda, such as language, kin groups, and marriage. Culture influenced political identity.<sup>36</sup> But political identity in pre-colonial Rwanda did not equate to polarized identities that occurred under colonial rule.

The economic community of pre-colonial Rwanda is an example of how colonialism helped define and divide the Hutu and the Tutsi. One notion of the pre-colonial economic structure of Rwanda was that the Hutu were agriculturalists and the Tutsi were pastoralists. Essentially, Tutsi brought cattle to Rwanda when they settled. But, Mamhood Mamdani refutes that notion of separation. According to him, both Hutu and Tutsi carried out agricultural and pastoral activities in most regions. And many Hutu owned and raised cattle before the arrival of the Tutsi. Mamdani warns that by dividing the pre-colonial Hutu and Tutsi along such strict lines

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<sup>33</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 5.

<sup>34</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Newbury, Catharine, *The Cohesion of Oppression*, 10.

<sup>36</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 51-56. Mamdani argues that the Hutu and the Tutsi both derived from the same language, though they had different names. Also, during pre-colonial Rwanda, cohabitation and marriage changed a person from one identifier to another. For instance, the child of a Tutsi father, is a Tutsi even if the mother is a Hutu. The Hutu and the Tutsi also recognized patrilineal kin groups, eighteen major clans in total. which included Hutu and Tutsi, and the Twa.

demonstrates “a division *enforced* through the medium of political power rather than the timeless preoccupation of two separate groups of people.”<sup>37</sup>

The pre-colonial power structure of Rwanda was quite intricate on the eve of European rule. While basically feudal, there was a central administrative system that consisted of four levels: province, district, hill, and neighborhood.<sup>38</sup> The Germans were the first Europeans to come to Rwanda and established colonial rule after the Colonial Conference in Berlin in the mid 1880s. Arriving in 1892, they came at a very crucial time in Rwanda’s pre-colonial history.<sup>39</sup> The king had just died, and there was no clear heir to the throne. The Rwandans manipulated the Germans easily in the fight for the throne that ensued as soon as they got there.<sup>40</sup> They established a policy of indirect rule that supported the Rwandan chiefs, which helped deepen their faithfulness to the Germans.<sup>41</sup> With this policy of indirect rule, the Germans began the colonial influence on the Hutu and Tutsi relationship. According to historian Rene Lemarchand, “in Rwanda the very success of indirect rule reinforced the absolutism of the monarchy, and hence the hegemony of the ruling caste.”<sup>42</sup> The Rwandan monarchy, now with German support, continued pre-colonial policies that annexed the Hutu principalities and increased chiefly power of the Tutsi.<sup>43</sup> While German rule may have inaugurated the artificial divisions of Hutu and Tutsi identification, their rule was short-lived.

The First World War ended the short German rule in Rwanda; Belgian troops entered the country on 6 May 1916.<sup>44</sup> Under Belgian rule, racialization became an institutional construct.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 51.

<sup>38</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 23-25.

<sup>41</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 62.

<sup>43</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 25.

<sup>44</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 19.

The Belgians saw the Tutsi as the superior race in Rwanda because of their “European-like” features. Prejudice became deeply rooted in administrative policy.<sup>46</sup> In 1926, the Belgians “streamlined” the structure of local government and the power of the chiefs shifted to local authorities. The system of joint power, where Hutu and Tutsi shared equal responsibility, was abolished. Power was given to a single agent, which happened to almost always be a Tutsi.<sup>47</sup> By the end of Belgian rule, in 1959, forty-three out of forty-five chiefs were Tutsi.<sup>48</sup>

To have better control, the Belgians established race education. Western style schools opened under the Belgians that taught that Tutsi were racially superior. Schools also became segregated. The schools admitted both Hutu and Tutsi children but the level of education given to each group was drastically different. Tutsi children received standard European education in French while the Hutu children received an inferior education. The point of the Hutu education was to merely prepare them for manual labor and to indoctrinate them to believe that common citizenship was not meant for the Hutu even if they were educated.<sup>49</sup> The legacy of colonial education was still evident during the time of the genocide. Belgian author, Omer Marchal noted in 1994, “the majority of the Tutsi could read, but did not want to vote. The Hutu would all have liked to vote, but only a minority could read.” He blamed this on the fact that Hutu parents found school to be useless while Tutsi parents pushed their children to pursue a good education.<sup>50</sup>

While the Belgians fully enforced Tutsi supremacy, how to determine who was Hutu and who was Tutsi was still difficult. Because of this, the Belgians decided in 1933 to instate identity

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<sup>45</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 87.

<sup>46</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 21.

<sup>47</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 90.

<sup>48</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 27.

<sup>49</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 89-90.

<sup>50</sup> Destexhe, Alain, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, 41.

cards and a national census.<sup>51</sup> Ironically, the Belgians themselves had to systematize a definition of what was Hutu and what was Tutsi. Physically, the Hutu and the Tutsi varied. But even physical aspects changed from region to region and person to person. Finally, the 1933-34 census identified the Tutsi as separate from the Hutu according to a ten-cow rule: whoever owned ten or more cows was classified as a Tutsi. Hutu and Tutsi identities became legal after that census, and everyone was given an identity card.<sup>52</sup> The installment of identity cards in the 1930s had a direct impact on the genocide six decades later. Identity cards helped the Hutu militias identify Tutsi at roadblocks during the genocide.<sup>53</sup>

Belgian rule in Rwanda established Hutu and Tutsi identity and these identities continued until the end of Belgian rule in 1962. The Tutsi now equated power and the Hutu, subject.<sup>54</sup> While Rwanda was not devoid of tensions between the two groups before the arrival of Europeans, no trace of violence based purely upon ethnic lines appeared between Hutu and Tutsi in pre-colonial history.<sup>55</sup> Violent conflict did not usually pit Hutu against Tutsi, but rather rival kingdoms that consisted of both groups of people.<sup>56</sup> The Belgians destroyed the complex and integrated pre-colonial society and in its place placed a regimented and segregated European-made society that instilled values within Rwandans that would affect their relationships with each other throughout the rest of the twentieth century.

The Second World War brought change to Rwanda as it did for much of Africa. The democratization of post-war Europe also affected Rwanda. Europe exported the idea of majority rule rather than elite rule to Rwanda and it spread throughout the country. This new rule

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<sup>51</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 22.

<sup>52</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 99-101.

<sup>53</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 22.

<sup>54</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 101.

<sup>55</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 39.

<sup>56</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 8.

supported Hutu power since they constituted the majority of the country. The Belgians, with pressure from the UN, began to realize that their old ways of ruling, with the Tutsi minority, were outdated and Hutu public life began to slowly improve.<sup>57</sup> Throughout the 1950s, the Hutu created political parties and attempted to garner more support from the Belgians and the Church, both inside Rwanda and from the international community.<sup>58</sup> Hutus rallied around the idea that Tutsi invaders enslaved the Hutu and stole power from them as they overran the country.<sup>59</sup> In 1957, the Hutu created the “Hutu Manifesto” that blamed the Tutsi for monopolizing land, power, and education.<sup>60</sup> The tension continually built throughout the end of the decade between the now powerful Hutu and the cast aside Tutsi.

Finally the powder keg exploded. The trigger was an alleged assault on a Hutu sub-chief by a Tutsi in November 1959. By the end of 1964, thousands were dead, and over 300,000 had fled Rwanda and were refugees in neighboring countries. In 1960, the PARMEHUTU, the largest Hutu political party, won their first election, and abolished the monarchy. The Hutu Revolution was complete.<sup>61</sup> During this whole process, the Belgians supported the Tutsi minority, yet the Hutu revolution would not have happened so smoothly without Belgian help and support. Lemarchand states “The Hutu revolution was a long and painful experience, which may no have succeeded without the auxiliary support extended by the Belgian administration to the insurgents.”<sup>62</sup> The revolution not only left the political identities created under colonialism in

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<sup>57</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 24.

<sup>58</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 47.

<sup>59</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 13. Also see Mamdani’s discussion of the native versus settler in Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 9-14.

<sup>60</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 8.

<sup>61</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 25-26.

<sup>62</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 95.

place but reinforced them. It was due to the colonial impetus and the solidification of identity that the Hutu felt repressed enough to launch a major and violent revolution.<sup>63</sup>

Rwanda was officially granted independence on 1 July 1962.<sup>64</sup> While many Rwandans sought independence from colonial rule, many Tutsi feared that, as the minority, they might be threatened by the Hutu majority, the victors of the elections. The Hutu, on the other hand, feared that the Tutsi were conspiring against the Hutu to try and take back power by ignoring free elections.<sup>65</sup> Directly after the Hutu took control of the country following independence a period of calm took place. But the ethnic question became more acute during the early 1970s under President Kayibanda. The Kayibanda regime installed quotas that limited jobs and education to the Tutsi. Competition for those elusive spots exacerbated racial tension throughout the country until Juvenal Habyarimana overthrew Kayibanda in 1973.<sup>66</sup>

After Kayibanda, Rwandans and the outside world saw Habyarimana as a moderate leader.<sup>67</sup> While Habyarimana brought peace and stability to the country, his iron-fisted rule cannot be over looked. Outside of the communist world, Rwanda was probably the most controlled state in the world. Habyarimana's regime was no doubt totalitarian; where the state required everyone to carry ID cards in order to strictly regulate travel.<sup>68</sup> The peace and stability did not mean complete ideological liberation of the Tutsi. Tutsi still faced racial discrimination and legal exclusion, but, for the most part, everyday life for the Tutsi was quite tolerable.<sup>69</sup> It was

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<sup>63</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 104-105.

<sup>64</sup> Kroslak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 26.

<sup>65</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 8.

<sup>66</sup> Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, 45.

<sup>67</sup> Kroslak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 29.

<sup>68</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 25.

<sup>69</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 76.

clear, however, that the “ethnic distortions” installed by the Belgians and the Germans were “seemingly enshrined in the psyche of Rwanda.”<sup>70</sup>

During Habyarimana’s rule, he tried to open Rwanda to the outside world both politically and economically. From 1979 forward, he participated in the Franco-African summits and cofounded the Economic Community of the Great Lakes, or the CEPGL.<sup>71</sup> France became one of the closest foreign allies to the Habyarimana regime and Rwanda became part of the Francophone world. Slowly, France replaced Belgium as the largest foreign supporter of Rwanda. French president Francois Mitterand and Juvenal Habyarimana even considered each other personal friends.<sup>72</sup> The close relationship between the two leaders however, masked the neo-colonial, dependent relationship between France and Rwanda. To be sure, France continued to use socio-economic, political, and military aid to maintain influence and control, thus contributing to the outbreak of the violence that alimented in the genocide.

The 1990 civil war that ended in the genocide of 1994, discussed in the introduction, built itself upon this long, intricate history of Rwanda. Years of European racial indoctrination and involvement resulted in the death of nearly a million innocent Tutsi and moderate Hutu within a period of only four months. The news media from the United States, Great Britain, and France all use this colonial legacy in their reports of the genocide.

### ***The Colonial Legacy and Western Perceptions of Africa***

The reporters in France, Britain, and the United States all used the colonial and neo-colonial legacies of Rwanda and Africa during the time of the genocide in order to help the public understand why the civil war and genocide were taking place. The media focused on

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<sup>70</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 30.

<sup>71</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 28.

<sup>72</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 24.

Belgium and France mostly, due to their colonial and neo-colonial relationships with Rwanda. The news media mainly used the Belgian colonial legacy to explain the hatred between the Hutu and the Tutsi. The real criticism of the Belgians by the media came only after the Belgians withdrew from Rwanda shortly after the genocide started. The news media always justified their withdrawal, though they were one of the most likely candidates to give aid within their former colony, because of their loss of men in the first week of the genocide.<sup>73</sup>

The Belgian colonial influence is mentioned in the media from all three countries as the reason for the violence between the Hutu and the Tutsi. Rwanda was the “case study in what happens to a former colony when suppressed tribal rivalries are released into a power vacuum.”<sup>74</sup> *The New York Times* mentions the Belgian colonial influence as early as 9 April,<sup>75</sup> and an article from 11 July goes more in depth by describing the Belgians classification system and their implementation of identity cards.<sup>76</sup> It is stressed that these identity cards put in place under colonial rule were still in use during the time of the genocide and were helping many Hutu militia identify, and thus kill, Tutsi.<sup>77</sup> For reporters of *Time*, “the legacy of Belgian rule all but guaranteed the violence that has erupted.”<sup>78</sup> *The Economist* reports also acknowledged that “Ethnic and political hostility are inseparably entwined in Rwanda’s history”<sup>79</sup> due to Belgian influence. The Belgian colonial influence perpetuated the violence that took place in 1994 according to the news media.

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<sup>73</sup> 11 Belgian peacekeepers were killed on April 7 during combat. Their deaths angered the Belgian government on the context that no one had come to the aide of the men. The Belgians used their deaths as an excuse to discontinue their humanitarian aide mission and withdrawal all Belgian personnel. See Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 125-126

<sup>74</sup> Nancy Gibbs, “Why?”, *Time Magazine*, May 16, 1994.

<sup>75</sup> Jerry Gray, “Two Nations joined by common history of genocide,” *The New York Times*, April 9, 1994.

<sup>76</sup> Raymond Bonners, “In Once Peaceful Village, Roots of Rwanda Violence,” *The New York Times*, July 11, 1994.

<sup>77</sup> See Mamdani’s description of the use of ID cards during the genocide, *When Victim’s Become Killers*, 221-225

<sup>78</sup> Nancy Gibbs, “Why?”, *Time Magazine*, May 16, 1994.

<sup>79</sup> “The bleeding of Rwanda,” *The Economist*, April 16, 1994.

The press used the institutional racialization of Rwanda by the Belgians to demonstrate the legacy of Belgian colonialism. On 18 June, *The Times* told readers that the Hutu were able to get ordinary citizens to kill their neighbors because “racial ideology is almost certainly what transformed the crisis into full-scale genocide.”<sup>80</sup> The French media also understood that “racial hatred was developed, distilled by those who wanted power or to conquer,”<sup>81</sup> and established that the country’s colonial history and racialization by Europeans caused it to be a “powder-keg.”<sup>82</sup> In essence, the news media recognized that “the otherness of colonized persons was neither inherent nor stable; his or her difference had to be defined and maintained.”<sup>83</sup> The history of Belgian colonial rule in Rwanda is used as the primary context of the problem between the Hutu and the Tutsi and gave understanding to why the killing is going on.

The news media used racial reasoning in an attempt to understand how Europe viewed its former colonial territory. Former colonial powers were not coming to the aid of Rwanda and this “intensifies suspicion that the white West’s refusal to come to the aid of black Africa is racist”<sup>84</sup> according to American journalist Marguerite Michaels. A 7 May article from *The Economist* uses race to understand why there was no intervention happening by former colonial powers. “The world did not want to know. Rwanda was too difficult, too remote, too black.”<sup>85</sup> The American media criticized the British racial reasoning for not getting involved. “Rwandans are thousands of miles away. Nobody you know has ever been on holiday to Rwanda. And Rwandans don’t look like us.”<sup>86</sup> The French media took the racial aspect to a visual level as well. Many cartoons appearing in *Le Monde* featured dark black people in traditional African garb, barefoot with

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<sup>80</sup> Alex de Waal, “Rwanda Genocide took four years to plan,” *The Times*, June 18, 1994.

<sup>81</sup> “Le devoir d’agir” *Le Monde*, April 15, 1994.

<sup>82</sup> “Rwanda-Burundi: la poudrière,” *Le Monde*, April 8, 1994.

<sup>83</sup> Stoler and Cooper. “Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda.” *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, 7.

<sup>84</sup> Marguerite Michaels, “Sorry, Wrong Country,” *Time Magazine*, June 6, 1994.

<sup>85</sup> “Wretched Rwanda,” *The Economist*, May 7, 1994.

<sup>86</sup> Stephen Kinzer, “European Leaders Reluctant to Send Troops to Rwanda,” *The New York Times*, May 25, 1994.

lavish beaded jewelry and babies on their hips while the European in the cartoon was almost always in uniform. The over exaggeration of race in cartoons shows that the racial profiling from colonialism still remains in the psyche of the Western reporters.

The European colonial legacy in Africa is multi-faceted within the media. The first way the media uses European colonialism is to criticize Europe for the lack of intervention and their initial withdrawal when they had played such a large role in the formation of present day Africa. Many leaders in the peacekeeping mission in place in Rwanda when the genocide broke out were surprised that the “ex-colonial white countries” would pull out their troops in the time of most need.<sup>87</sup> The news media followed suit. A 25 May article from *The New York Times* shows that “former colonial powers are no longer willing to intervene quickly in African lands.”<sup>88</sup> *Time* continues the criticism of former colonial powers “that used to intervene regularly have devolved responsibility.”<sup>89</sup> Often times the media explained that it was easier and more convenient for the West to “blame the ‘old demons of Rwanda’”<sup>90</sup> than take responsibility for their creation.

The news media also justified this lack of intervention with the notion that Africa did not and could not adapt to the Western model of democracy. And because of this, “Africa, in general, and the unfortunate nation of Rwanda, has beggared Western experience and imagination.”<sup>91</sup> Frederick Cooper explains this inability to democratize as a result of the distortions that came out of decolonization. African nations became “gatekeeper states”<sup>92</sup> which had to balance internal problems with corruption and forming new governments with “the interface of national and world economies.”<sup>93</sup> “It [the violence in Rwanda] is another signal to

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<sup>87</sup> Powers, “*A Problem from Hell*,” 367.

<sup>88</sup> Stephen Kinzer, “European Leaders Reluctant to Send Troops to Rwanda,” *The New York Times*, May 25, 1994.

<sup>89</sup> Marguerite Michaels, “Sorry, Wrong Country,” *Time Magazine*, June 6, 1994.

<sup>90</sup> Vincent Hugué, “Rwanda: la mort crie victoire,” *L’Express*, June 9, 1994.

<sup>91</sup> David Van Bierna, “Exodus from Rwanda,” *Time Magazine*, July 25, 1994.

<sup>92</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 5.

<sup>93</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 141.

the West that we cannot push democracy faster than it can be assimilated.”<sup>94</sup> The inability of most African states, including Rwanda, to adapt to Western democracy in the years following decolonization became a platform that the media used to understand the relationship between the West and Rwanda.

Also, the media used the history of democratization in Rwanda to contextualize what led to violence. “In the frenzy of democratization in Africa that gripped the continent, it included a revision of the Constitution, the recognition of fourteen political parties, liberalization of the press, the creation of the new national army and the formation of a broad-based government (that is to say including the Tutsi minority).”<sup>95</sup> And because of this difference between African nations and the West, these problems with Rwanda’s inability to efficiently employ the Western model, Rwanda is portrayed as “small, poor, and globally insignificant”<sup>96</sup> and shown as a country that has “never been strategically significant in world politics.”<sup>97</sup> The news media used the failure of Rwandan democratization and assimilation to Western politics, as is so with much of the rest of Africa, after decolonization to demonstrate why former colonial powers did not willingly jump to the aid of Rwanda when the violence broke out.

A reason for this came from the idea that Rwanda is a product of the fate of Africa<sup>98</sup> and “maybe we consider ethnic massacres as part of the order of things.”<sup>99</sup> Many times the reporters over exaggerate the reality of the genocide with the idea that Africa is doomed to violence. Frederick Cooper offers the idea that Africa only has “two possible fates” the first being

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<sup>94</sup> Clifton R. Wharton Jr., “The Nightmare in Central Africa,” *The New York Times*, April 9, 1994.

<sup>95</sup> Jean Lesieur, “Qui arrêtera le massacre?” *L’Express*, June 23, 1994.

<sup>96</sup> Elaine Sciolino, “For West, Rwanda is not with the Political Candle,” *The New York Times*, April 15, 1994.

<sup>97</sup> Donatella Lorch, “The Massacres in Rwanda: Hope is Also a Victim,” *The New York Times*, April 21, 1994.

<sup>98</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 2.

<sup>99</sup> “Une gigantesque chasse a l’homme au Rwanda” *Le Monde*, April 27, 1994.

“dissolving into ‘tribal’ or ‘ethnic’ violence.”<sup>100</sup> An article in *L'Express* questions the lack of concern for Rwanda early on due to the pretext that “monstrous Africa, after all, is condemned and doomed to indifference.”<sup>101</sup> Africa is seen as a “rudderless continent, staved of democracy and stifled by war and misrule.”<sup>102</sup> In a 15 June article, *The New York Times* describes Rwanda as “a semantic sponge to crimes against humanity.”<sup>103</sup> An article in *The Times* describes the situation in Rwanda as “a case of that classic African equilibrium: internal chaos balanced by external philanthropy.”<sup>104</sup> Because Rwanda is doomed to violence, a legacy left over from decolonization, the media seemed to suggest that the West devolved responsibility of intervention because Rwanda is simply a product of its own fate.

The Western understanding of Rwanda and its place in world politics can also be seen in how the media framed the genocide within the context of other events going on in the world. Often times, the Rwandan genocide took a backseat to the situation in Bosnia. The day after President Habyarimana’s plane was shot down, the President of Tanzania described Rwanda as “a Bosnia on our doorstep.”<sup>105</sup> Bosnia’s location in Europe and echoes of the Holocaust caused the situation to take front-page news.<sup>106</sup> Tiny Rwanda would not “blow Central Africa apart- as the Balkans might Eastern Europe.”<sup>107</sup> This media focus on Bosnia demonstrates the racial aspect of the press coverage. Bosnia is European, while Rwanda is African. The focus on Bosnia further racialized the media because the reporters focused more on Europeans than Africans.

Also during the genocide, the headlines revolved around another African nation. On 27 April 1994, South Africa elected Nelson Mandela president after spending twenty-seven years in

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<sup>100</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 2.

<sup>101</sup> Christian Hoche, “Silence, on assassine!” *L'Express*, May 19, 1994.

<sup>102</sup> “South Africa’s Near Abroad,” *The Times*, June 20, 1994.

<sup>103</sup> “Shameful Dawdling in Rwanda,” *The New York Times*, June 15, 1994.

<sup>104</sup> Simon Jenks, “Leave Rwanda Alone,” *The Times*, July 20, 1994.

<sup>105</sup> James Bone, “Presidents’ deaths raise UN fears of Tribal Violence,” *The Times*, April 7, 1994.

<sup>106</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 174.

<sup>107</sup> “Wretched Rwanda,” *The Economist*, May 7, 1994.

prison under the system of apartheid. It was the first time in the history of the country that the South African government permitted black South Africans to vote.<sup>108</sup> The media praised South Africa, a former British colony, and used these positive events to contrast with the genocide in Rwanda. Rwanda and South Africa became juxtaposed in Western media.

### ***The Legacy of the French Relationship and Neo-colonialism***

After 1962, France maintained an active role on the African continent, as did a majority of the former colonial powers. The fall of colonialism gave way to the rise of neo-colonialism in which former colonial powers tried to transfer the reins of government to “neocolonial regimes” in order to maintain power and control in Africa.<sup>109</sup> France was quick to jump in and become a neo-colonial power. They especially favored Francophone Africa to counter the rise of the Anglo-American influence. Rwanda was among these African countries. France sought to achieve its goal for continued influence in Rwanda, and the rest of Africa, through cultural, economic, and military strategy. France declared verbally and in practice that it was willing to intervene both militarily and diplomatically throughout African nations to protect its neo-colonial interests.<sup>110</sup> And Rwanda was no exception.

A large source of criticism of the genocide by the media concerned France and its relationship with Rwanda. Throughout the Fifth Republic, France continued an “activist Africa policy” in which France sought to forge strategic, economic, and political ties between both former colonies and other African countries that were outside the French influence during colonialism.<sup>111</sup> According to Gerald Prunier, France had always “seen itself as a large hen

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<sup>108</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 1.

<sup>109</sup> Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa*, 1.

<sup>110</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 71.

<sup>111</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 59.

followed by a docile brood of little black chicks.”<sup>112</sup> In the years leading up to the genocide, France was the only Western country to maintain significant military presence in Rwanda, a far greater presence than that of the United States or the United Kingdom.<sup>113</sup> This military presence helped train and fund African troops and supply weapons and arms to African militias. France poured millions of Francs into the Rwandan military. Between 1975 and 1990, the French spent FF 5 million on the Rwandan military, and when the war with the RPF broke out in 1990, the French spent another FF 5 million between 1990 and 1993 alone.<sup>114</sup> In the case of Rwanda, this French training and access to arms became useful for the Hutu during the genocide.

The close relationship with the Habyarimana regime sheds light on why the French put so much money and effort into the Rwandan military, especially after the RPF invasion in 1990. Part of France’s neo-colonial relationship with Rwanda centered on forming diplomatic relationships and friendships with African leaders in order to maintain stability and control.<sup>115</sup> This included Rwandan president, Juvenal Habyarimana. Habyarimana knew that having a close relationship with France secured his power and position. The French helped the regime maintain its power through political, economic, and financial support. Following the RPF invasion, France tripled its financial support to the country in order to maintain Habyarimana’s power and stabilize the regime.<sup>116</sup>

The French relationship with the Habyarimana regime was immediately criticized at the beginning of the genocide by the media. France “in propping up the Rwandan regime for so long...bears part of the blame for the current bloodbath.”<sup>117</sup> On 9 April, just three days after

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<sup>112</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 103.

<sup>113</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 70.

<sup>114</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 126.

<sup>115</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 99.

<sup>116</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 101-102.

<sup>117</sup> Frank Smyth, “French Guns, Rwandan Blood,” *The New York Times*, April 14, 1994.

Habyarimana's plane crashed, a contingent of French soldiers deployed to Kigali in order to evacuate French ambassadors but also high-ranking Rwandan officials, all of which were Hutu, including the Habyarimana family. They were flown to Paris and given a safe haven.<sup>118</sup> This evacuation garnered extreme criticism from the international community and the media, including the media from France. "However – and this is what makes this complaint particularly embarrassing – some accomplices of crimes, were evacuated by the French army and were on our territory a few weeks ago."<sup>119</sup> The media also criticized this action by relating it to how the French see themselves in the grand scheme of international human rights. "The 'homeland of human rights,' has more fervor to smuggle the first plane of relatives of Habyarimana than to save the personnel – Tutsi- from the embassy in Kigali... Under an unusual 'republican tradition', France hosts, at a great expense, the entourage of the deceased."<sup>120</sup>

Throughout the genocide, France appeared to stand with the other Western countries when it came to getting involved. They did not get directly involved until mid-June under Operation Turquoise. But, when France's reputation was in danger, they changed their outlook.<sup>121</sup> Much of the criticism from the media concerning France's past relationship with Rwanda came with the beginning of Operation Turquoise. "Operation Turquoise has saved some lives, but it is also shielding some of the most notorious ringleaders of the massacres."<sup>122</sup> During Operation Turquoise, France constantly pledged its neutrality to the situation despite their previous relationship with the Hutu regime. "Paris says its objective is to halt genocide, not to take sides in tribal violence."<sup>123</sup> Yet, the media did not let anyone forget that France originally

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<sup>118</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 141.

<sup>119</sup> Eric Conan, "Une plainte embarrassante," *L'Express* June 30, 1994.

<sup>120</sup> Vincent Hugué, "Rwanda: la mort crie victoire," *L'Express*, June 9, 1994.

<sup>121</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 107.

<sup>122</sup> "Rwandan Rescue," *The Times*, July 23, 1994.

<sup>123</sup> Marlise Simons, "France is Sending Force to Rwanda to help Civilians," *The New York Times*, June 23, 1994.

supported the murderers. “It was France that rushed in combat troops [in 1990] and artillery to help the government.”<sup>124</sup> Indeed, the media continually emphasized, “France, which once supported the Government, insists that it had no military or political objectives.”<sup>125</sup> An article in *The Times* quoted the French Defense Minister François Leotard, replying to scrutiny that Operation Turquoise was “to prevent the murder of civilians. This has nothing to do with imperialism.”<sup>126</sup> But the media, from all three countries continually question the French role in Rwanda under the precedence that they can “hardly claim to be neutral”<sup>127</sup> due to their long relationship with the Hutu regime.

One consequence of France’s prior relationship with Rwanda that the media focused on is how the Hutu and the Tutsi understood that relationship themselves. As Operation Turquoise began, many Rwandans held conflicting views of the role that the French sought to play once in the country. As the French entered the country, they found that “Rwandans have their own ideas on what the paratroopers should do.”<sup>128</sup> Yet, throughout the country, the French tricolor flag flew and walls and storefronts read “Vive la France.”<sup>129</sup> There was a difference in Tutsi perception of the French according to the news media between the RPF and Tutsi civilians. The RPF did not trust the French due to their history of Hutu support. “The Tutsi rebels of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), masters of two-thirds of the country vehemently reject any intrusion of France, guilty in their eyes to have armed and trained the Hutu murderers.”<sup>130</sup> They see the French as an object of suspicion. The media continually reiterated that Paul Kagame, head of the RPF, saw

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<sup>124</sup> Frank Smyth, “French Guns, Rwandan Blood,” *The New York Times*, April 14, 1994.

<sup>125</sup> Marlise Simons, “French Troops Enter Rwanda Aid Mission,” *The New York Times*, June 24, 1994.

<sup>126</sup> Sam Kiley, “Rwandan rebels condemn plan for exclusion from French ‘safe zone,’” *The Times*, July 6, 1994.

<sup>127</sup> “France’s Killing Fields,” *The Times*, July 6, 1994.

<sup>128</sup> Raymond Bonners, “Rwandan Enemies Struggle to Define French Role,” *The New York Times*, June 27, 1994.

<sup>129</sup> Raymond Bonners, “Rwandan Enemies Struggle to Define French Role,” *The New York Times*, June 27, 1994.

<sup>130</sup> Vincent Hugué, “France: operation rachat,” *L’Express*, June 23, 1994.

French intervention as an attack on the RPF and its mission<sup>131</sup> and as “a colonial exercise.”<sup>132</sup> Also, the RPF’s opinion of the French fell into a larger theme of decolonization. Edward Said shows how post-imperialism formed a cultural discourse of suspicion among formerly colonized people.<sup>133</sup> It is a distrust of the West overall, on top of France’s former relationship with Rwanda, that drove the RPF and other Rwandans to fear French, and European, intervention and aid.

But, in contrast with the RPF, many Tutsi saw the French as their saviors and protectors. “The French paratroopers seemed like saviors to the 3000 Tutsi men, women and children.”<sup>134</sup> An article in *L’Express* depicts Tutsi children singing upon French arrival, “France brings us peace. Machetes and stakes can no longer kill.”<sup>135</sup> This contrast between the leaders of the RPF and the ordinary Tutsi citizen demonstrates a contrast in ideological perception between political and everyday life within Rwanda. Those in charge understood the significance of the French relationship with the Hutu and how that affected the relationship between the two groups. Meanwhile, the average Tutsi citizen did not understand this significance. A *New York Times* article acknowledges this identity problem carried over from colonization in a 27 June article. “Many villagers interviewed at the refugee camp after the massacre said they had never known who was a Tutsi and who was a Hutu.”<sup>136</sup> This ideological difference demonstrates how colonial legacy still played a role in Rwanda years after decolonization.

On the other hand, the media showed how the Hutu, at least in the beginning, saw the French as saviors to their cause. They believed that they were there to aid the Hutu militias and

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<sup>131</sup> “The French in Rwanda,” *The Economist*, July 2, 1994.

<sup>132</sup> Sam Kiley, “Rwandan rebels seize capital and second city,” *The Times*, July 5, 1994.

<sup>133</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 194.

<sup>134</sup> Raymond Bonners, “Rwandan Enemies Struggle to Define French Role,” *The New York Times*, June 27, 1994.

<sup>135</sup> Vincent Huguex, “Les oublies de Bisesero,” *L’Express*, June 30, 1994.

<sup>136</sup> Raymond Bonners, “Rwandan Enemies Struggle to Define French Role,” *The New York Times*, June 27, 1994.

fight against the RPF, as they had previously four years ago. As the French arrived in Rwanda in late June, under Operation Turquoise, “delighted Hutu” welcomed the French by “wearing tricolor headbands...flying the French flag.”<sup>137</sup> The media shows how the Hutu believed that the French were there in order to help them fight the RPF like that had done before.

“France sees itself as a world power. And its main field of action is Africa, where it has an important role to play because of long standing tradition – especially in French speaking Africa.”<sup>138</sup> Much of French policy in Africa during this time came from a desire to maintain French status in international politics, but also as part of the Fashoda syndrome.<sup>139</sup> France became a “friend to a continent that is home to four times as many French-speakers as France.”<sup>140</sup> France’s “obsession with preserving the reach of the French language”<sup>141</sup> became the driving force in French African policy. The Fashoda syndrome played a role throughout France’s relationship with Rwanda. The invasion of the rebels from Uganda, an Anglophone nation, in 1990, at the beginning of the civil war, represented Anglo-Saxon influence spreading to a Francophone nation. The French saw the invasion as an attack on their influence within Africa.<sup>142</sup> During this time, “it was France that rushed in combat troops, mortars, and artillery to help the Government.”<sup>143</sup> Four years later, during the genocide, many reporters warn against “underestimating the Fashoda syndrome”<sup>144</sup> as to why the French finally intervened in Rwanda.

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<sup>137</sup> “French Paratroopers,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 1994.

<sup>138</sup> “France’s Rwanda Connection,” *The New York Times*, July 3, 1994.

<sup>139</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 62. The Fashoda syndrome refers to the incident at Fashoda in the Anglo-French rivalry where British troops forced the French to withdraw from a fort in Sudan in 1898. This event helped fuel the rivalry, and strengthened French need to maintain French influence in Africa. Today, the Anglo-French rivalry does not just focus on the United Kingdom, but also includes the French desire to stop Americanization and United States influence on the African continent.

<sup>140</sup> “Who Will Save Rwanda?” *The Economist*, June 25, 1994.

<sup>141</sup> “Rwanda Francais,” *The Times*, June 23, 1994.

<sup>142</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 106.

<sup>143</sup> Frank Smyth, “French Guns, Rwandan Blood,” *The New York Times*, April 14, 1994.

<sup>144</sup> Vincent Hugeux, “Rwanda: la mort crie victoire.” *L’Express*, June 9, 1994.

The media focused on how the Fashoda syndrome played a large role in how France dedicated itself to Rwanda, both before the genocide and during Operation Turquoise. The British media was very vocal about the effect that Fashoda played on the French. An article in *The Economist* described the importance of French cooperation with the RPF in the history of French relations with the country since Rwanda was a “country that they have long feared would fall into the sphere of its English-speaking neighbors.”<sup>145</sup> The colonial history of Britain and France still affected their relationship during the genocide and it is evident through media portrayal of how their long history dictates how one country sees the other.

The media from all three countries used the colonial and neo-colonial legacies, concerning the Belgians and the French, in many different ways in order to paint a picture of what was happening in Rwanda during the four months of genocide. But colonial legacy played another role within the media as well. The reporters and the newspapers also become part of the colonial narrative in the discussion of Rwanda and the West.

### ***The Colonial Legacy on the West***

Colonialism and its legacy played a large role in the media by helping the reporters make sense of the genocide, whether over exaggerated or not, for the common public. But, the reporters use colonial legacy in another way in their reporting. The reporters became a part of the colonial narrative with their word choice and descriptions of the genocide. Over time, the imperial experience gained by Britain, France, and America shaped ideas about African culture within Western discourse.<sup>146</sup> And this is evident in the reporting of the genocide. The Western reporters demonstrated legacies of colonialism and European racial ideology by asserting

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<sup>145</sup> “Zone of Influence: Rwanda,” *The Economist*, July 9, 1994.

<sup>146</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxii.

Western dominance over black Africa, in this case Rwanda, in their articles by their word choice and subtle descriptions of the small African nation.

To be sure, the colonial powers put in place a racial discourse of superior versus inferior in order to maintain control.<sup>147</sup> Race became a major vehicle to establish European dominance over black Africa. Racism was necessary in establishing principles of innate and inherent superiority.<sup>148</sup> And racial discourse is apparent within the reporting of the genocide by Western reporters, even so many years after decolonization and African independence.

In many instances, the media referred to Rwandans as “savages.” A 20 May *Le Monde* report refers to a Rwandan as a “savage,”<sup>149</sup> while a 9 April *The Times* article says that many English think that Rwandans are “savages.”<sup>150</sup> The American news media also falls prey to the use of racial discourse. A 14 July *New York Times* article states “Rwanda’s torment underscores the difficulty of stopping savage conflict.”<sup>151</sup> By making the Rwandan into a savage, the Western media holds true to the discourse of colonialism and European domination over Africa. By using this word, the reporters become intertwined with this discourse and perpetuate Western notions of superiority over Africa.

Two other colonial discourses can be seen throughout the reporting of the genocide. The first is the sexual discourse of colonialism. Some scholars have begun the investigation into how colonialism affects sexuality and vice versa. This area of scholarship came in the wake of the cultural turn in historiography. The media’s use of sexualized language perpetuated the notion of Western dominance. A 28 June *The Times* article states that “France’s Operation Turquoise

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<sup>147</sup> Stoler and Cooper, “Between Metropole and Colony,” 7.

<sup>148</sup> Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*, 150.

<sup>149</sup> Pierre Laine, “Pour un pays brisé.” *Le Monde*, May 20, 1994.

<sup>150</sup> James Bone, “Thousands dead in Rwandan civil war,” *The Times*, April 9, 1994.

<sup>151</sup> “France Helps in Rwanda – So Far,” *The New York Times*, July 14, 1994.

yesterday, penetrated deep into Central Rwanda.”<sup>152</sup> France’s penetration into the country exerts Western dominance over the African nation. *The Times* continues the sexual discourse in an article a few days later. In describing the safe zones that the French set up under Operation Turquoise, there was “no penetration by armed units.”<sup>153</sup> The use of the word “penetration,” especially by the British news media, is significant to their colonial legacy. British reporters show how former colonial powers have the ability to “penetrate” or regulate “penetration” within an African nation even now that that nation is sovereign.

The discourse of paternalism is also prevalent throughout the media. A 9 April article in *The Times* talks about how peacekeepers “cannot cure Rwanda’s blood frenzy.”<sup>154</sup> By using the word “cure,” the reporter shows that there is something wrong with Rwanda, something that needs to be cured, essentially by the West. Later, *The Times* featured an article that describes how the Hutu captives are being “reeducated.”<sup>155</sup> Here, there is a need, for the West, to educate Rwandans. This need for reeducation demonstrates again, how the Western world dominates Africa and maintains superiority.

The reporters also demonstrate how colonial legacy plays a role on them by misrepresenting the relationship between the Hutu and the Tutsi. Because they are Africans, they have always been doomed to violence and tensions. The best way this is exemplified is the reporters’ portrayal of the genocide as a product of long-term conflict between the Hutu and the Tutsi. Mahmood Mamdani, among other historians, argues that under colonialism, Hutu and Tutsi emerged as state-enforced political identities. Before the arrival of Europeans, no strong

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<sup>152</sup> “Hutu villagers cheer French,” *The Times*, June 28, 1994.

<sup>153</sup> Sam Kiley, “Rwandan rebels seize capital and second city,” *The Times*, July 5, 1994.

<sup>154</sup> James Bone, “Thousands dead in Rwandan civil war,” *The Times*, April 9, 1994

<sup>155</sup> Mark Fritz, “Rwandan mother of six tells how she killed neighbours’ children,” *The Times*, May 16, 1994.

examples of violence between the two groups existed.<sup>156</sup> The media describe the problems between the Hutu and Tutsi as rooted in “centuries old domination.”<sup>157</sup> They were “rooted in centuries old feuds between Rwanda’s majority Hutu and minority Tutsi ethnic groups.”<sup>158</sup> This over exaggeration of the relationship between the Hutu and the Tutsi shows how the reporters are a product of the larger discourse of African turmoil.

### ***Conclusion***

The use of Rwanda’s colonial history helped the media make sense of the genocide and violence that was taking place in Rwanda in 1994. The discussions of the Belgian colonial legacy and the French neo-colonial legacy demonstrate how the West is integrated into the violence. The news media also put the situation in Rwanda into the context of the larger discourses of colonial and neocolonial Africa, mainly the fate of Africa and the problems with democracy on the continent.

But, the news media and the reporters themselves also fall prey to colonial legacies. The reporters from all three countries are a part of the larger discourse of colonialism, whether they meant to be or not. They perpetuated the legacies of Western dominance over African nations by their word choices and verbal images of Rwandans and the situation in Rwanda. The Western colonial legacy is ingrained within them and the reporters continue the ideas of Western superiority through their reporting on the Rwandan genocide. The news reports from the time of the genocide use colonialism in order to portray the genocide to the public, but they also use those colonial legacies in order to make sense of the genocide within the Western world.

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<sup>156</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 73.

<sup>157</sup> “Genocide in Rwanda,” *The Economist*, May 21, 1994.

<sup>158</sup> “Tribes Battle for Rwandan Capital, New Massacres Reported,” *The New York Times*, April 16, 1994.

Ultimately, the reporters of the genocide preserved the racism and dominance that they tended to denounce.

## CHAPTER TWO: HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

All three countries, France, Britain, and the United States, played a large role in colonialism and still continue to influence the development of formerly colonized countries. But these three countries also played a large role in another important development in the twentieth century. In the wake of the Nazi Holocaust, the cry of “Never Again”<sup>159</sup> spread throughout the world. With the fall of Hitler’s Nazi regime in 1945 and the liberation of Occupied territory, Allied forces unveiled to the world the horrors of what had taken place in Nazi ruled Europe during World War II. In the end, the Nazis exterminated six million Jews and five million Poles, Communists, Roma, and other “undesirables” within a matter of years.<sup>160</sup> The world was in shock. Something needed to be done to make sure that something of this magnitude would never happen again. And from that, the modern human rights movement was born.

Defining what constitutes a human right is not easy, nor consistent. Essentially, human rights are rights held by individuals simply because they are part of the human species. Everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, or economic background, share them equally.<sup>161</sup> But there has always been controversy with such a simple definition. While, some say that human rights are universal, others argue that rights are a Western invention, created in order to export a culture’s notions and impose them upon other cultures.<sup>162</sup> The world has defined and redefined human rights within contexts of political need, moral imperative, and local context throughout their long history.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> The phrase “Never Again” originated with the Jewish Defense League after World War II in a response to the horrors of the Holocaust and the promise to never again let it happen again

<sup>160</sup> Powers, “*A Problem from Hell*,” 47.

<sup>161</sup> Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, 3.

<sup>162</sup> Edmundson, *An Introduction to Rights*, 3.

<sup>163</sup> Iriye, Akira and Petra Goedde, “Introduction: Human Rights as History”, 3.

Such a complex understanding of human rights makes understanding the violations of human rights complicated and ambiguous as well. Lynn Hunt states that: “the process had and has an undeniable circularity to it: you know the meaning of human rights because you feel distressed when they are violated.”<sup>164</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states multiple offenses on human rights. The document defines the problems with slavery, torture, and arbitrary arrest or exile against the institution of human rights among thirty other articles worth of potential violations. The problem comes with how to deal with those violations. It is easy to look at a situation and say that human rights, the right to liberty and freedom, was violated, but there is a problem of how to adequately deal with those people or groups.

The debate between cultural relativism and universality complicates human rights heavily. Princeton University defines cultural relativism as the principle that an individual’s beliefs and activities should be understood by others in terms of that individual's own culture.<sup>165</sup> This contrasts with the Universalist approach to human rights that promotes human rights as a universal entitlement. The problem with cultural relativism in human rights legislation and implementation is that many nations and leaders have abused the concept. Cultural relativism is a “recurrent product of a historical failure to promote universal rights discourse in practice, rather than a legitimate alternative to the comprehensive vision offered by a universal stand on justice.”<sup>166</sup>

Cultural relativism became a way for Third World dictators and tyrannical governments to justify murder, torture, and abuse within their sovereign nations.<sup>167</sup> This complicates how the United Nations and the international community decide and justify getting involved in certain

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<sup>164</sup> Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 214.

<sup>165</sup> Definition from the Princeton University website.

<sup>166</sup> Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, 11.

<sup>167</sup> Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of Human Rights*, 143.

circumstances, especially concerning the Third World. And concerning the Rwandan genocide, cultural relativism played a large role due to how the West understood the situation in Rwanda and their ability to interpret the situation correctly.

Cultural relativism made the genocide in Rwanda difficult for the West to understand and interpret. But racial legacies of colonialism and the inert perpetuation of Western dominance over Africa complicated matters even more. While the reporters sought to understand how human rights legislation and implementation should be applied to Rwanda, often times, they also turned made the genocide into the fault of the Rwandans themselves. The reporters maintained Western ideals that delineated the genocide as a product of the natural order of things for African nations. This perceived ineptness of Africa to dissolve into unrest influenced the reporters as they sought to involve the genocide into international human rights policy.

This chapter will analyze how human rights responsibility was a complex phenomenon during the genocide. Much like colonial legacies, human rights played a role in how the media understood and interpreted who needed to intervene in Rwanda. But, also like the legacies from colonialism, human rights legislation and protection during the Rwandan genocide was not clear-cut and was highly contested between the media of the different countries. France, Britain, and the United States role as protectors of human rights became tangled with their past experiences and self-appropriated subjectivities.

### ***The Birth of the Modern Human Rights Movement***

The Western world was not new to the principles of human rights. In fact, some historians claim that examples of human rights date back to ancient times, articulated by poets,

philosophers, and politicians.<sup>168</sup> Human rights first became prominent during the Enlightenment. Philosophers and thinkers began to question both the Church and ancient Greek and Roman authorities; world order began to be understood differently, thanks to scientific progress and the wars of the Reformation. New discoveries opened the world to a better understanding of human consciousness and developed secular and universal laws, rather than religious teachings and supernatural explanations of human phenomenon.<sup>169</sup>

A pioneer of human rights during the Enlightenment was English philosopher John Locke. He began the argument that an individual had the right to choose religion; that right did not belong to the State. His call for a greater separation between Church and State opened a new chapter in the struggle for religious freedom and freedom of opinion.<sup>170</sup> Locke also argued, “the autonomous male entering into a social compact with other such individuals was the only possible foundation of legitimate authority.”<sup>171</sup> For Locke, humans had natural rights and those revolved around “‘reciprocal’ liberty, ‘not a state of license.’”<sup>172</sup> Locke allowed that people would consent to monarchical government but it would be irrational to submit to absolute arbitrary power. It would be impossible to consent to it because absolute arbitrary power could not convey to another what they do not rightfully possess.<sup>173</sup>

Two countries took those teachings from revolutionaries like Locke and used them to revolutionize their governments and societies. In the eighteenth century, France and the United States became sovereign states. In mid-June 1776, Thomas Jefferson wrote, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator

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<sup>168</sup> Normand, *Human Rights at the UN*, 10.

<sup>169</sup> Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, 70.

<sup>170</sup> Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, 78.

<sup>171</sup> Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 60.

<sup>172</sup> Edmundson, *An Introduction to Rights*, 28.

<sup>173</sup> Edmundson, *An Introduction to Rights*, 29.

with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.” Jefferson, with this one sentence, turned the United States Declaration of Independence into a long-lasting proclamation of human rights.<sup>174</sup> Thirteen years later, the French, during their own revolution, adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen that stated, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”<sup>175</sup> While these two documents became the foundation for human rights understanding throughout the next two centuries, they faced the same contradictions encountered by modern day human rights legislation. When the language of human rights emerged during this time, that language lacked a clear definition of rights.<sup>176</sup>

Ambiguity of human rights continued into post World War II legislation as well. On 10 December 1948, a majority of states adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in a night session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Declaration was the culmination of three years worth of negotiation and debate about how to implement a system to protect the rights of people around the world. The UN proclaimed that the Declaration was a “common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations.” Only the communist bloc, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia withheld their endorsement.<sup>177</sup> This Declaration was a drastic change from the human rights politics of the eighteenth century; now the nation-state held responsibility for protecting the rights of their citizens.<sup>178</sup>

The problem with this new human rights legislation, much like the legislation from the eighteenth century, was paradoxes. Even for the creators of the legislation, a solid definition of human rights was hard to pinpoint. “The human rights paradigm is resilient; one of its

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<sup>174</sup> Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 15.

<sup>175</sup> Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 17.

<sup>176</sup> Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 25.

<sup>177</sup> Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights*, 1.

<sup>178</sup> Hoffmann, “Genealogies of Human Rights,” 2.

remarkable characteristics is the capacity to mean different things to different people while retaining overall ideological coherence.”<sup>179</sup> While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights solidified the protection of human rights, a huge difference remained between policy and practice. While clean and organized, the Declaration contains many ambiguities in wording, especially concerning concepts such as freedom and self-determination. It also lacks any provision on how to enforce rights.<sup>180</sup> “Human rights are easier to endorse than enforce.”<sup>181</sup> Since 1945, political need and relevant context defined and redefined human rights.<sup>182</sup>

The problems with human rights legislation and implementation did not just stop with that document. A changing world order and the relationship between the Western world and the former African and Asian colonies shaped how the international community viewed their place in the human rights entity. It also created an ideological tension, which is still ever present, between the Western world and the newly sovereign nations. “The politics of anticolonialism both advanced and obstructed the progress of international human rights.”<sup>183</sup> One of the biggest components of decolonization was the move toward self-determination by colonized peoples.<sup>184</sup> Newly independent countries attempted to find their place in the world order and to legitimize their recently found sovereignty. When the UN drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Africa and other colonized countries had no representation or input since, at that point, they were only colonies.<sup>185</sup> African and Asian countries joined forces with each other to solidify their independence movements. The first major stride toward this non-aligned movement was the Bandung Conference that took place in 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia, during the beginning of the

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<sup>179</sup> Normand, *Human Rights at the UN*, 6.

<sup>180</sup> Iriye and Goedde, “Introduction: Human Rights as History,” 5.

<sup>181</sup> Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 208

<sup>182</sup> Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 6.

<sup>183</sup> Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of Human Rights*, 6.

<sup>184</sup> Cooper, *Africa Since 1940*, 66.

<sup>185</sup> Eckert, “African Nationalists and Human Rights, 1940s-1970s,” 294.

Cold War. Six independent African nations joined with almost all of Asia to create a human rights agenda for decolonized states.<sup>186</sup>

This coming together of decolonized states, at first, alarmed the West. The West was afraid of the creation of an anti-Western bloc and this new group might align with communism under the platforms of racial solidarity and anticolonialism.<sup>187</sup> But as long as the West was able to maintain control in the UN, they were open to whatever the newly independent countries wanted.<sup>188</sup> The West also played a paradoxical role when it came to human rights protection and decolonization. During this time, Western countries, mainly France and Great Britain, promoted human rights while simultaneously putting down uprisings for independence in their colonies.<sup>189</sup>

Sovereignty and the right to self-determination mainly concerned former colonized states in the beginning. But that shifted over time. Slowly, the newly formed nations shifted toward authoritarian control. The Proclamation of Tehran, given during the Tehran Conference in 1968, set forth a hierarchy of rights that favored radical delegations and leaders. The state's rights gained primacy over the rights of the individual.<sup>190</sup> This example not only shows how rights are fluid, but also demonstrates the complexities of the relationship between the West and the Third World. Essentially, at Tehran, the Third World "outgunned" the states of the West and did not outwardly oppose this new application of rights.<sup>191</sup> While cultural relativism remained ever present, Tehran and the new human rights order that came out of it strengthened the theory. The paradigm of human rights shifted from universalism to cultural relativism at least until the end of the Cold War.

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<sup>186</sup> Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of Human Rights*, 13.

<sup>187</sup> Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of Human Rights*, 17.

<sup>188</sup> Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of Human Rights*, 71.

<sup>189</sup> Hoffmann, "Genealogies of Human Rights," 16.

<sup>190</sup> Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of Human Rights*, 100.

<sup>191</sup> Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of Human Rights*, 106.

Ironically, the West championed cultural relativism in the beginning. In the early 1950s, in order to maintain control over their colonies, many Western powers argued for an exemption clause for their overseas territories, which they argued on the basis of cultural difference.<sup>192</sup> Once states gained their independence, the West went back to support for universality. And by the 1970s, Third World countries dismissed civil and political rights as Western; universality was deemed imperialist.<sup>193</sup> And by the 1990s, many African and Asian countries codified cultural relativism as their official ideology.<sup>194</sup>

Cultural relativism created a huge gap between the Western world that promoted universality and those authoritarian countries in the Third World that championed relativism. Current human rights debates show that African countries held different priorities when it came to what needed to be protected. African notions of human rights tended to be more concerned with the collective rather than the individual. Also, African notions of human rights formed a hierarchy, where civil and political rights are not realized as long as social and economic rights remain rudimentary.<sup>195</sup> Cultural relativism were human rights and the difference in Western and Third World thinking continues to cause problems. “The concept that relativists champion in terms of respect for the Third World cultures had ended up providing a powerful excuse for those who murder, torture, and abuse Third World people.”<sup>196</sup> Problems between the Western World and the Third World on human rights after decolonization show the complexity of protecting ideas. Human rights are hard to protect when there is no common agreement on what rights need to be protected.

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<sup>192</sup> Iriye, “Introduction,” 10.

<sup>193</sup> Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of Human Rights*, 137.

<sup>194</sup> Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of Human Rights*, 141.

<sup>195</sup> Eckert, “African Nationalists and Human Rights, 1940s-1970s,” 284.

<sup>196</sup> Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of Human Rights*, 143.

The end of the Cold War drastically changed human rights policy because “human rights cannot be separated from political, economic, or cultural globalization.”<sup>197</sup> The new surge in information technology made human rights promotion easier and faster. Many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) now offered websites that allow people to help fight the cause in a few keystrokes. The role of the press became important in the human rights movement because of the ability to move information quickly.<sup>198</sup> But technology also widened the gap between rich and poor countries that further strained the relationship between the West and the Third World.<sup>199</sup> This gap caused the West to seem “more omnipresent” which led to a more forceful resistance by nationalists and those that favor cultural relativism.<sup>200</sup>

Human rights legislation has not followed an easy course since its implementation in 1946. Globalization brought changes and criticism to the UN and the rest of the Western World. The 1990s saw the first global effort to enforce human rights when the UN set up courts to deal with war criminals from Yugoslavia and Rwanda. These courts led to the creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 1998.<sup>201</sup> But, the 1990s also became a “decade of international apology politics.”<sup>202</sup> Countries around the world began to offer official apologies for past atrocities committed in order to reaffirm the legitimacy of their efforts to protect human rights. But even with the outpouring of apologetic sympathy towards past wrongdoings, only five years after the Berlin Wall fell, the international community, that had recently reaffirmed protection of human rights, watched the Rwandan genocide happen.

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<sup>197</sup> Iriye, *The Human Rights Revolution*, 14.

<sup>198</sup> Neier, *The International Human Rights Movement*, 4.

<sup>199</sup> Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, 246.

<sup>200</sup> Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, 257.

<sup>201</sup> Iriye, *The Human Rights Revolution*, 13.

<sup>202</sup> Snyder, “Principles Overwhelming Tanks: Human Rights and the End of the Cold War,” 311.

### ***Responsibility***

Since 1946, the international community has held a moral responsibility, bound by a signed document, to protect against human rights violations. But, in 1994, the outside world failed Rwanda when it came to upholding that responsibility. The media recognized this failure almost immediately after the genocide broke out. The media criticized the international community on their lack of intervention and lack of desire to protect human life. And when one country finally did directly intervene in Rwanda, the media celebrated that intervention. The media held the international community responsible for protecting human life and adhering to their moral responsibility, even though upholding that responsibility is complex.

### ***International Responsibility***

“But for European groups, which will protect the Tutsi minority?”<sup>203</sup> That question appeared 21 April 1994 in *L'Express*, almost three weeks after the genocide began. The international community played an important role in the genocide in Rwanda. It is a role known for inaction rather than action. Rwanda gained sympathy from the international community but also a “firm pledge to stay away.”<sup>204</sup> Historians of the genocide repeatedly blame the international community for taking a backseat to the genocide and ignoring the need for intervention. The media from France, Britain, and the United States all recognized that the international community had responsibility, under the Declaration of Human Rights, to protect the Tutsi from humanitarian violations.

The outbreak of violence following the plane crash on 6 April 1994 should not have come as a surprise to the international community. Historians of the genocide argue that the international community and the United Nations knew prior to 6 April that the Hutu had already

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<sup>203</sup> Christian Hoche, “Rwanda: Les Raisons d’un Massacre,” *L'Express*, April 21, 1994.

<sup>204</sup> Elaine Sciolino, “For West, Rwanda is not Worth the Political Candle,” *The New York Times*, April 15, 1994.

planned the massacres and executions of the Tutsi. Between 8 and 17 April 1993, Waly Bacre Ndiaye, the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions of the Commission for Human Rights visited Rwanda and concluded that “serious human rights violations were taking place and that there was a risk of genocide.”<sup>205</sup> Ndiaye later commented that, with the attention actually given to the report, he might as well have thrown it into the sea.<sup>206</sup> In January 1994, a United States government intelligence analyst stated that if conflict restarted in Rwanda, “the worst case scenario would involve one-half million people dying.”<sup>207</sup> And during that same time, the “Genocide Cable” written by Major-General Romeo Dallaire notified the United Nations that the Rwandan government was training *Interahamwe* in camps to kill Tutsi quickly. This cable went to all major Western countries, yet all chose to ignore the signs it presented.<sup>208</sup>

These reports and cables were sent to the United Nations and the rest of the international community while Hutu extremists armed for a massive extermination, right in front of the world. UN peacekeepers in the country, prior to the genocide, commented that the Hutu government created major weapons stockpiles around Kigali. The militia expanded as well. Invoices and bank statements show that the Rwandan government made deals with many Western nations to acquire mass amounts of machetes and other agricultural tools. The government purchased these weapons in 1993 from Western donors under contracts that they would “not be used for military or paramilitary purposes.”<sup>209</sup> A CIA report from 1993 found that almost four million tons of small arms were transferred to Rwanda from Poland, via Belgium.<sup>210</sup> At the beginning of the

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<sup>205</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 92.

<sup>206</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 57.

<sup>207</sup> Power, “*A Problem from Hell*,” 338.

<sup>208</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 93-94.

<sup>209</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 65.

<sup>210</sup> Power, “*A Problem from Hell*,” 338.

genocide, the Hutu distributed an estimated eighty five million tons of munitions throughout the country.

When the violence erupted in April, the international community looked on in disbelief because they felt unable to act even though the Western world did have knowledge of impending violence within Rwanda. In the first few weeks of the genocide, the media recognized that there was a lack of actual action because the international community did not actually know how to get involved; the situation was too incomprehensible to begin to know how to engage. A 23 July article from *The Economist* stated “The disaster that has overtaken Rwanda is too big to comprehend. But, that does not excuse inaction.”<sup>211</sup> Rwanda was a “crucible full of explosives that nations watching from a comfortable distance have no idea how to handle.”<sup>212</sup> An article in *The New York Times*, appearing just a week after the violence began, explained that the fighting was just too intense within Rwanda and the international community could do little to stop the violence.<sup>213</sup> And after an effort was made to evacuate citizens of other countries, a *Time* article stated that “the Western troops could barely manage to protect their own countrymen” and therefore did not have the resources to cope with the Rwandans.<sup>214</sup>

The media highly criticized the removal of expatriates and juxtaposed it with the horror of the situation with the Tutsi. “The killings take place casually, under the noses of UN, French, and Belgian troops, within the range of television cameras, and just yards away from expatriates being evacuated.”<sup>215</sup> This juxtaposition became a criticism of the international community but also an example of the severity of the violence going on. “But while they loaded Europeans on to

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<sup>211</sup> “Helpless,” *The Economist*, July 23, 1994.

<sup>212</sup> Nancy Gibbs, “Why?”, *Time Magazine*, May 16, 1994.

<sup>213</sup> Donatella Lorch, “UN in Rwanda Says it is Powerless to Halt Violence,” *The New York Times*, April 15.

<sup>214</sup> Marguerite Michaels, “Streets of Slaughter,” *Time Magazine*, April 25, 1994.

<sup>215</sup> Catherine Bond, “Rebels advance as Kigali slaughter goes on,” *The Times*, April 12, 1994.

planes bound for the airport, Rwandan corpses piled up along the routes.”<sup>216</sup> The media’s criticism of the removal of foreign personnel showed that the main priority for the international community was their citizens, not the protection of Rwandan lives.

As the genocide went on, the media became adamantly more critical of the lack of international intervention. An 18 June article in *The Economist* made the lack of effort an embarrassment to the international community. The article explains that the African world had come to the aid of Rwanda whereas the “rich world, to its shame, has not.” The article continues by explaining the preposterousness of not even being able to effectively supply arms to the UN forces within the country. A 18 June article from *The Economist* stated “This is pathetic: It is impossible to believe that an over-armed world, if it had the will, couldn’t find ready-to-use armoured cars to spare, and get them to Rwanda quickly.”<sup>217</sup> Desperation and anxiousness came from the French press as well. “The Rwandan tragedy is not a tragedy of Africa, or at least not only, but first and foremost, it is the bloodiest conflict of the late century, for which the duty to intervene fell on humanity.”<sup>218</sup> And the media emphasized how humanity failed to take charge of their responsibility.

The international community had a responsibility to intervene in Rwanda and protect human life, and the Western media recognized that fact. When one country finally did stand up and intervene, the media offered praise and admiration.

### *The Case of France*

Throughout the four months of genocide, the media remained critical of the international community as a whole for their lack of intervention. But, the media from one major country

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<sup>216</sup> “The Bleeding of Rwanda,” *The Economist*, April 16, 1994.

<sup>217</sup> “Men without shells,” *The Economist*, June 18, 1994.

<sup>218</sup> Marie Claude-Decamps, “La responsabilite de tous” *Le Monde*, July 2, 1994.

celebrated their personal responsibility amid a world that shunned their own. The French media celebrated French efforts in Rwanda and held their moral responsibility in high regard, especially when compared to their Western counterparts. France has a long reputation of universalism when it comes to Africa. Their relationship with Africa, both during colonialism and after decolonization, kept the French involved in the continent and the French took on the role and reputation as protectors of the continent.

France's position as a protector of human rights is highlighted throughout the articles in the French press. Many times, the media framed France as a paternal figure to Rwanda. France had to "maintain its commitments and its responsibilities"<sup>219</sup> because of their stance on human rights violations. Operation Turquoise was a "mission entrusted to them."<sup>220</sup> The media highlights the reaction of Rwandans when the French arrive. "And the kids sing in Kinyarwanda, an unexpected serenade, 'France brings us peace. Machetes and stakes can no longer kill.'"<sup>221</sup> A headline in *Le Monde* from June 26 following the start of Operation Turquoise reads, "Jubilation among Hutus, relief among Tutsis."<sup>222</sup> Again, this suggests that France brings relief with them to all people; therefore promoting France as a protector that is able to bring peace to the country.

The French media's celebratory reporting of France has a lot to do with how France saw their place in the international community, as a leader of the effort to protect human rights. In an article in *Le Monde*, Alain Juppe, French Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, made the statement, "In any case, I feel that once again, our country takes its responsibilities and – if you allow me this excess of immodesty – gives example."<sup>223</sup> In another article in *Le Monde* this

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<sup>219</sup> Christian Hoche and Jean Lesieur, "Le Dernier Baroud de Mitterand L'Africain," *L'Express*, July 7, 1994.

<sup>220</sup> Christian Hoche, "Le feu chez les voisins," *L'Express*, July 21, 1994.

<sup>221</sup> Vincent Hugué, "Les oublies de Bisesero," *L'Express*, June 30, 1994.

<sup>222</sup> Jene Helene, "Liesse chez les Hutus, soulagement chez les Tutsis." *Le Monde*, June 26, 1994.

<sup>223</sup> Marie-Pierre Subtil, "Mille a deux mille soldats française pourraient participer a l'operation humanitaire," *Le Monde*, June 19, 1994.

theme is shown again. “France is in a close relationship with Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to study the contributions of the international community to the normalization of the situation.”<sup>224</sup> By reiterating France’s position in the international community, the French media celebrated their responsibility to intervene within Rwanda.

Within the first two months of the genocide, international action in Rwanda was practically non-existent. It was not until Operation Turquoise that the Western world became directly involved in the country. And while the French media highly celebrated their country’s efforts, the international media also offered praise to France, at least at the beginning of the mission. The American media paid homage to the French for intervention by making the French seem like the most humane of the Western world. A *New York Times* report states that the French needed to intervene because “their stomachs could not stand it anymore” and that it “should embarrass Americans” because they have not followed the French lead.<sup>225</sup> And as the Operation continued, *The New York Times* continued to praise the French effort. “Grant France this much credit for its armed intervention into the genocidal civil war” when there was an “inability of Washington and the United Nations.”<sup>226</sup>

The British media also offered praise to the French in spite of the tensions that come along with the Anglo-French dichotomy. Through the criticism, which mainly revolved around the French relationship with the Habyarimana regime and the Hutu, the British media still recognized that “the French have done more than anyone else to stop the slaughter.”<sup>227</sup> And like the American news media, the British media used French initiative to criticize their own lack of action. An article in *The Times* highlights a quote from a French corporal in Rwanda. “The

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<sup>224</sup> “Les rebelles du FPR excluent l’éventualité d’un cessez-le-feu.” *Le Monde*, May 5, 1994.

<sup>225</sup> A.M. Rosenthal, “Pay the Money, Sam,” *The New York Times*, July 1, 1994.

<sup>226</sup> “France Helps in Rwanda – So Far,” *The New York Times*, July 14, 1994.

<sup>227</sup> “Zone of Influence: Rwanda,” *The Economist*, July 9, 1994.

British know nothing about food and everything about war. Our history teaches us to view them with respect in this manner but we cannot respect people who will not come and stand by our side when we are sent on a mission to save lives.”<sup>228</sup> The British media, much more than the American media, does highly criticize the French and Operation Turquoise, but still, the media recognizes that the French had at least made an effort at intervention.

The Western news media recognized that the international community had a responsibility to intervene in Rwanda. France finally took hold of that responsibility and made an effort at intervention with Operation Turquoise. The media portrayal of international responsibility demonstrates that the Western world knew that something needed to be done. It was a moral responsibility for the international community to stop humanitarian violations, but still, the West did little to nothing. Recognition of responsibility by the media took a turn in the media towards placing blame on others, and in one case, on their home governments, and mostly on the United Nations. This turn in the media represents the complications of interpreting human rights legislation.

### ***Blame***

A common trend throughout the media of all three countries was the theme of blame. The media, at many times, took to identifying the faults of Western governments in their inaction. This is especially true of the United States. The United States was the most vocal in rejecting intervention and seeking to prevent others in aid efforts. But most of the blame from the media was put on the United Nations as a whole. The media criticism of the United Nations and the ability to place the blame on the collective, helped individual countries pass on their responsibility concerning Rwanda onto the larger entity.

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<sup>228</sup> Sam Kiley, “Rwandan rebels seize capital and second city,” *The Times*, July 5, 1994.

This movement to place blame on the United Nations exemplifies how human rights legislation and implementation can be precarious. While all three countries signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and sit as permanent members of the UN Security Council, all three were willing to shift personal responsibility onto the collective. This leaves the question of who actually is responsible for interfering when human rights are being violated. By placing the blame on the collective, each country is able to leave their personal vendettas and relationships with Rwanda out of the picture. The responsibility of intervention falls on the UN as a whole, and single countries can absolve blame for inaction.

#### *The Case of the United States*

Just four days after President Habyarimana's plane was shot down, a *New York Times* article shows exactly how the United States would take a stance on Rwanda. "The President [Clinton] stressed to them the importance of doing everything possible to insure the safety of Americans, and doing whatever we could – which frankly isn't very much- to stabilize the situation in Rwanda."<sup>229</sup> Early on in the genocide, it was clear that the United States would be one of the more reluctant Western nations to get involved. And the Western media highly criticized the contentions held by the United States, both from abroad and from the American media as well.

The United States government held a special position when it came to the situation in Rwanda. Just the year before, the United States lost eighteen elite troops in Mogadishu under UN mandate on what had originally been deemed a peacekeeping mission.<sup>230</sup> Somalia was arguably

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<sup>229</sup> Robert Pear, "U.S. Envoy in Rwanda Decides on Overland Convoy to Evacuate Americans," *The New York Times*, April 10, 1994.

<sup>230</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 78.

“the greatest military humiliation for America since Vietnam.”<sup>231</sup> In the shadow of that event, the United States was far from willing to get directly involved once the situation in Rwanda began. “‘Anytime you mentioned peacekeeping in Africa,’ one US official remembers, ‘the crucifixes and garlic would come up on every door.’”<sup>232</sup> Even before the genocide broke out, the United States was wary of even acknowledging escalating violence within Rwanda. When the Defense Department’s African affairs bureau recommended that the Pentagon consider adding Rwanda-Burundi to the list of potential trouble spots, the reply was “Look, if something happens in Rwanda-Burundi, we don’t care. Take it off the list...Just make it go away.”<sup>233</sup> The media from all three countries, the United States included, criticized the Clinton administration’s hesitation to get involved in another African conflict even as the violence and death tolls grew in Rwanda.

The media from Europe continually criticized the United States for their lack of intervention and their desire to combat any UN intervention within Rwanda, especially the French press. In the first few weeks, the British media recognized the importance of the United States in achieving an involved international community. America did not need to be involved in every UN mission but their reluctance with Rwanda “encourages others to copy its unsupportive style.” And unfortunately “America is not among the committed governments.”<sup>234</sup> The French used Somalia to mock the United States’ precautions with involvement in Rwanda. The French media accentuated this fear by the US and used it to the advantage of promoting French initiative. “The United States, stung by their disappointment in Somalia (they lost 39 men), have vowed not to set foot there again.”<sup>235</sup> The *L’Express* journalists’ statistics on how many men

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<sup>231</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 78.

<sup>232</sup> Power, “*A Problem from Hell*,” 340.

<sup>233</sup> Power, “*A Problem from Hell*,” 342.

<sup>234</sup> April 30 “Shamed are the peacekeepers,” *The Economist*, April 30, 1994.

<sup>235</sup> Christian Hoche and Jean Lesieur, “Le Dernier Baroud de Mitterrand L’Africain,” *L’Express*, July 7, 1994.

were lost in Somalia make US fears seem invalid and a bit over exaggerated, considering they lost on thirty-nine men.

The United States went further than just refusing direct intervention of American troops. The United States government continually called for a reduction in UN support and intervention efforts. Immediately after President Habyarimana's plane crashed, the United States determined that there was no benefit of a peacekeeping mission. On 15 April, the Clinton administration told the Security Council that a peacekeeping effort served "no useful role" in the present situation.<sup>236</sup> Washington demanded the withdrawal of peacekeepers mandated by the UN and then refused to authorize UN reinforcements for deployment to Rwanda.<sup>237</sup> Even as the situation in Rwanda worsened, the United States still only pledged artillery and vehicles, but even those came with a cost to the UN.<sup>238</sup> Cooperation efforts of the United States concerning humanitarian intervention did not come easily. President Clinton knew that involving American troops in another bloody conflict in Africa could have deadly results, much like in Somalia, so once again, the United States stood on the sidelines.<sup>239</sup>

The French media vocalized their disdain for the actions of the United States when it came to cooperating with the UN. On 23 April, a report about how the UN planned to reduce presence to a strict minimum stated, "Washington suggests a total abandon."<sup>240</sup> *Le Monde* continued the criticism of the United States when it came to their relationship with UN humanitarian missions later in June. "The timidity of the US against the Rwandan tragedy is

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<sup>236</sup> Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 203.

<sup>237</sup> Power, "A Problem from Hell," 335.

<sup>238</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 196. At the time, the US had 48 APC's in Germany. But in order for the UN to use them, the US wanted a 4 millions dollar lease on them. The US, at that time, was more than a billion dollars in debt to the UN but being that it was the only offer they had coming from the US, the UN began efforts to move them to Rwanda immediately.

<sup>239</sup> Power, "A Problem from Hell," 335.

<sup>240</sup> "L'ONU réduit sa présence au strict minimum," *Le Monde*, April 23, 1994.

consistent with their political participation of the UN abroad.”<sup>241</sup> And later, when the French were committed to Operation Turquoise, the media continued to criticize how the US did not support any UN mandate. “France has committed difficult action in Rwanda. In any way she can oblige, in any way it is assured success. Europe, despite a few exceptions, have not followed, the US distant.”<sup>242</sup>

In turn, the British media remained mostly silent on their criticisms of the United States. British criticism focused more on the United Nations as a whole. The French criticisms of the US are deeply rooted in French ideology concerning the Anglo-French dichotomy. As Daniela Krosiak says, the Anglo-French relationship is not so much “turned against the United Kingdom” as it is a fear of “the undesirable spread of American influence on the African continent.”<sup>243</sup> This helps explain the French media attack on the United States and the fact that the media singled them out.

The international community, including the media, highly criticized the United States during the genocide. But the American media also offered criticism of their own country. But, when criticism of the United States and their unwillingness for involvement appeared in the media, the media always placed the United States within the larger context of the United Nations and the rest of the international community. “Given the fact that there is no political will, either in Washington or other capitals, to intervene, the American strategy is to keep expectations as low as possible.”<sup>244</sup> Comparing Washington to other capitals demonstrates how the American media grouped the actions of the United States with others in order to avoid direct criticism.

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<sup>241</sup> Alain Frachon, “Washington: un geste ‘audacieux’ mais ‘une solution imparfaite,’” *Le Monde*, June 26, 1994.

<sup>242</sup> “Pour une force d’action africaine.” *Le Monde*, July 5, 1994.

<sup>243</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 62.

<sup>244</sup> Elaine Sciolino, “For West, Rwandan is not worth the Political Candle,” *The New York Times*, April 15, 1994.

The memory of Somalia existed within the American media as well. “Somalia cooled the impulse to rescue innocent victims.”<sup>245</sup> When it came to Somalia, the media took its lead from the United States government. One of the strongest voices on relating Rwanda to Somalia was President Clinton. When asked about intervention into Rwanda, he replied, “Lesson number one is, don’t go into one of these things and say, as the US said when we started in Somalia, ‘Maybe we’ll be done in a month because it’s a humanitarian crisis’...Because there are almost always political problems and sometimes military conflicts, which bring about these crises.”<sup>246</sup> And the media followed suit with the president. “But to enter this conflict without a defined mission or a plausible military plan risks a repetition of the debacle in Somalia.”<sup>247</sup> *Time* also vocalized how Somalia affected the United States involvement in Rwanda. “The American appetite for such missions, even in cases of dire human need has been dulled by experiences like Somalia.”<sup>248</sup> The ghosts of Somalia trickled into the American media as well as the American government.

As the genocide progressed into June and July, the media began to recognize that the United States was at fault for some of the United Nations forebodings. An article of 15 June, described the United States as the United Nations’ “leading deadbeat.”<sup>249</sup> Two weeks later, in an opinion piece, the author described the United States by stating, “We are the richest country in the world. We are hanging around the UN bar, looking for a free drink and acting as if we are buying the rounds on the house.”<sup>250</sup> Even though the American media recognized that the United States hindered the United Nations, the media from the United States, as well as from France and

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<sup>245</sup> Elaine Sciolino, “For West, Rwandan is not worth the Political Candle,” *The New York Times*, April 15, 1994.

<sup>246</sup> Quote from Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 190.

<sup>247</sup> “Look Before Plunging into Rwanda,” *The New York Times*, May 18, 1994.

<sup>248</sup> “Kind Words, But Not Much More,” *Time Magazine*, May 16, 1994.

<sup>249</sup> “Shameful Dawdling on Rwanda,” *The New York Times*, June 15, 1994.

<sup>250</sup> A.M. Rosenthal, “Pay the Money Sam,” *The New York Times*, July 1, 1994.

Britain, placed most of the blame, and responsibility, on the collective for intervention, the United Nations.

### *The United Nations*

The media from France, Britain, and the United States all follow a similar trend in the reporting of the genocide. All three countries placed the largest blame on the United Nations for the situation in Rwanda. Although all three countries hold permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council, and therefore hold responsibility in the decisions of the United Nations, the media from all three countries turned the attention onto the United Nations as a whole when it came to action, or lack thereof, in Rwanda during the genocide. By focusing on the United Nations as a whole, the media was able to shift the blame away from their home countries and protect their image when it came to their responsibility of humanitarian intervention and the protection of human rights.

The United Nations committed to Rwanda before the genocide began, at least halfheartedly. In August 1993, the Habyarimana government and the RPF signed the Arusha Accords in Arusha, Tanzania. The Accords called to merge the Rwandan government and the RPF. It called for a transitional government and a merger of the two militaries. Some considered the Arusha Accords “one of the best deals negotiated in Africa.”<sup>251</sup> The United Nations became directly involved in Rwanda in 1993. On 5 October, the United Nations approved The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). The UN meant UNAMIR to be a minimalist peacekeeping mission despite the fact that the situation in Rwanda was growing more and more dangerous. UNAMIR was doomed from its inception. It was highly under financed due

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<sup>251</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 52.

to the demands of the cost conscious United States.<sup>252</sup> The mission was “run on a shoestring;” it was equipped with hand me down vehicles from the United Nations mission in Cambodia and when medical supplies ran out in March 1994, there was simply “no cash for resupply.”<sup>253</sup>

In the beginning on 1994, it was clear that the Arusha Accords were crumbling and UNAMIR was in trouble. The United States argued firmly for a complete abandon of UNAMIR. On 5 April 1994, the Security Council met to discuss the withdrawal or extension of the mission. Unless there was going to be complete adherence from both sides to the Arusha Accords, UNAMIR would be pulled out of the country.<sup>254</sup> But just a few hours later, the genocide had begun.

The media remained highly critical of the UNAMIR during the course of the genocide, especially with the reduction of the mission. “UNAMIR should instead have a clear mandate to stop the massacres, to disarm and to oppose all military forces which take hold of the civilian population as targets on the basis of kill lists established a long time ago.”<sup>255</sup> When UNAMIR should have been reinforced, the UN voted to reduce it. On 21 April 1994, the Security Council voted to drastically reduce UNAMIR and leave behind only a handful of UN peacekeepers that were left helpless in an impossible situation.<sup>256</sup> A *New York Times* article from April 22, just the day after the Security Council voted to reduce UNAMIR, stated “the symbolic force the Security Council may be about to authorize would be a thin veil over another massacre.”<sup>257</sup> And once the Security Council reduced UNAMIR, “there [was] now no effective international force for ending it.”<sup>258</sup> The British media vocalized criticism of the reduction of UNAMIR as well. “[UN

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<sup>252</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 44.

<sup>253</sup> Power, “*A Problem from Hell*,” 342.

<sup>254</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 113.

<sup>255</sup> “Le devoir d’agir” *Le Monde*, April 15, 1994.

<sup>256</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 52.

<sup>257</sup> Paul Lewis, “Security Council Votes to Cut Rwanda Peacekeeping Force,” *The New York Times*, April 22, 1994.

<sup>258</sup> “Look Before Plunging into Rwanda,” *The New York Times*, May 18, 1994.

Peacekeepers] stand by helplessly as the killing goes on. They have a limited mandate, and are only lightly armed; they cannot intervene in the fighting.”<sup>259</sup> A *Times* article described the situation as the “UN peacekeepers were merely on holiday.”<sup>260</sup> While UNAMIR and the reduction of it just when it was needed the most is highly criticized by the media, there is also a large criticism of the United Nations as a whole and their inability to be effective in humanitarian situations in general.

When the media mentioned intervention, they grouped responsibility under the United Nations as a whole. Rwanda is the “moral responsibility” for the United Nations.<sup>261</sup> And the criticisms of the United Nations, at times, are quite harsh. “As to the UN, who cares about its resolutions and its existence? It is just there, a pure formality, not to despair completely, to believe that maybe one day something to come out of it would not be totally useless.”<sup>262</sup> Occasionally the media grouped the failure with Rwanda with other failures by the United Nations. “Mortification is painfully familiar to the United Nations these days.” The following paragraph described all of the United Nations recently botched jobs such as Bosnia and Angola. The article continued with “But never has the shame been sharper than in the past few weeks in Rwanda...If it can do nothing in Rwanda, what is the world’s policeman able to do?”<sup>263</sup> The media also expressed sympathy for the Tutsi to contrast the lack of action by the United Nations. “The best hope for the Tutsi is a victory by the RPF, not the United Nations.”<sup>264</sup> An article in *Le Monde* directly quoted a Tutsi in Kigali after the reduction of UNAMIR, “Now that the Blue

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<sup>259</sup> “No End in Sight: Rwanda,” *The Economist*, April 23, 1994.

<sup>260</sup> Michael Binyon, “America Offers to Finance African Force in Rwanda,” *The Times*, May 2, 1994.

<sup>261</sup> Paul Lewis, “Security Council Votes to Cut Rwanda Peacekeeping Force,” *The New York Times*, April 22, 1994.

<sup>262</sup> Tahar Ben Jelloun, “Rwanda: un siècle laid.” *Le Monde*, June 15, 1994.

<sup>263</sup> “Shamed are the Peacekeepers,” *The Economist*, April 30, 1994.

<sup>264</sup> “The Art of Death,” *The Economist*, May 28, 1994.

Helmets are about to leave, they will be able to kill us alone.’”<sup>265</sup> The media remained very critical of the United Nations and their actions throughout the genocide.

The international media also used the United Nations as a scapegoat for their own country’s inaction. The United States media continually reiterated that the Clinton administration is “wary” to put American troops at the hands of the United Nations for fear that they will not be used properly.<sup>266</sup> *The New York Times* also quotes State Department Spokesperson Michael McCurry in the discussion of where humanitarian intervention will take place. “[It] will be under review at the United Nations, and that’s appropriately the place where that discussion will occur.”<sup>267</sup> By continually shifting the United States responsibility of action into the hands of the United Nations, the media was able to take direct responsibility away from the United States government.

The French media also used the United Nations as an excuse for France’s inaction. The media perpetuated the illusion that the United Nations purposely tried to block French initiative within Rwanda. On 15 May, a report in *Le Monde* made it clear that France was willing to respond to any request by the UN Security Council for intervention.<sup>268</sup> Later, when France did take the initiative to intervene with Operation Turquoise, the media ridiculed the UN for trying to stop their plans. On 18 June, a front-page headline read, “The French project of intervention to Rwanda hit with diplomatic obstacles.” The article that followed explains how the UN attempted to stop any French initiative to aid in Rwanda.<sup>269</sup> Those “diplomatic obstacles” refer to the UN blocking French efforts to intervene within Rwanda.

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<sup>265</sup> “Les ‘casques bleus’ belges s’apprentent a quitter Kigali, malgre la poursuite des combats” *Le Monde*, April 17, 1994.

<sup>266</sup> “US Troops in UN peacekeeping,” *The New York Times*, April 25, 1994.

<sup>267</sup> Elaine Sciolino, “For West, Rwanda is not worth the political candle,” *The New York Times*, April 15, 1994.

<sup>268</sup> “Plus de deux cent mille morts en six semaines” *Le Monde*, May 15, 1994.

<sup>269</sup> “Le projet d’intervention francaise au Rwanda se heurte a des obstacles diplomatiques” *Le Monde*, June 18, 1994.

“So long as that is true, governments will increasingly dump problems in the UN’s lap only when they want an excuse to do nothing.”<sup>270</sup> The criticism of the United Nations by the media of all three countries helps to contextualize the situation in Rwanda. By making the genocide the United Nations problem, the international community escaped direct responsibility for letting genocide take place. This shift in responsibility exacerbates the pitfalls of human rights legislation within in the international community.

### ***Conclusion***

The Western media took two different approaches to the role of international intervention during the Rwandan genocide. The media from all three countries recognized throughout the genocide that the international community held a responsibility to intervene in Rwanda and protect against humanitarian violations. And when intervention did happen, such as the case of Operation Turquoise, the media celebrated the effort. But in response to the recognition of responsibility, the media also turned the genocide into a blame-game. By pointing fingers at what others were not doing, the media took the attention off of their own country. Or, in the case of the United States, the media showed how the Clinton administration was to blame for the lack of intervention by the international community.

The media’s reactions to international responsibility demonstrated how the Rwandan genocide became more than just an isolated event. The genocide came to show the problems and contradictions with human rights legislation and regulation in a world where human rights is supposedly so highly protected. The long-standing problems with human rights legislation, dating back to its inception, still existed in the Rwandan genocide. The problems with colonial

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<sup>270</sup> “Mercenaries of Mercy,” *The Times*, May 4, 1994.

legacies concerning racism and Western dominance, combined with the ambiguity of international human rights legislation led to a confusing and complex environment that the reporters attempted to make sense of in the summer of 1994.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE TERM GENOCIDE

The term genocide, much like the concept of human rights, comes with much complexity. The international community during the time of the genocide, from its start in April of 1994 and even into the months following the official end in July, shied away from acknowledging that genocide was taking place. The outside world portrayed the genocide as something else, “a senseless civil war, a tribal conflict between Hutu and Tutsi, in which old conflicts and bitter rivalries led to an almost primitive savagery.”<sup>271</sup> For the international community and leadership to call the situation genocide was an admission that they had a responsibility to intervene as agreed upon in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The international community acknowledged genocide only in order to attack other countries and governments and their lack of inaction, or in order to glorify their own action in helping stop the genocide.

During the months of the genocide, the media took a critical yet sometimes complex stance on defining the situation in Rwanda as genocide. Two stances emerged within the news media during the time. Those two stances were the one that avoided the use of the word genocide and the other which was neither afraid nor hesitant to call the situation in Rwanda genocide. The emergence of two stances reflected the complexities of defining genocide and human rights in general. These two stances comingled with each other during the months of reporting and often times the position of the news source changed daily. The complexity and confused nature of the reporting concerning the use of the word genocide reflects the larger issue of human rights legislation. By defining the situation in Rwanda as genocide, or shying away from the term and maintaining that the situation was a civil war, the media perpetuated the difficulty in how the world understood, and still understands, human rights violations. And in turn, how the

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<sup>271</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 4.

international community can protect against those violations.

The first stance that the media took shied away from the use of the word genocide and reflected the views of international leaders. While media from all three countries remained quick to describe the events in Rwanda horrifically and graphically to bring attention to the atrocities taking place, the media portrayed those events as products of a civil war. This stance of the news media acknowledged genocidal aspects, both outright and with word choice, but danced around the actual use of the term genocide. With this, the news media was able to make the situation in Rwanda more recognizable and familiar to the international community. Civil war is something that the average newsreader could understand and familiarize with. Genocide is complex and often inconceivable.

The other stance the media took sought to show the severity of the situation. This side of the reporting used shock value. These reporters were willing to describe the horrors that were taking place. They were willing to describe the bodies, the killings, and the mass graves. This side of the media was willing to use the word genocide. They used graphic verbal imagery in order to shock the reader, and perhaps initiate international action within Rwanda to stop the violence.

Troops and humanitarian workers in the country continually put out visual images to television media, but verbal imagery was also common within the written news media as well. Romeo Dallaire knew the importance of the media in order to gain support for a relief effort. He shuttled journalists and news reporters around Kigali whenever possible in the hopes that they would relay the horrors to the public. “‘At that point,’ he recalls, ‘the journalists were really all I had.’”<sup>272</sup> And those journalists did take those images that they saw and use them within their reporting in order to make the public understand the magnitude of the situation in Rwanda. They

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<sup>272</sup> Quote from Power, *“A Problem from Hell,”* 355.

used that imagery to describe the situation as what it was, genocide.

This outlook of the media also related the genocide in Rwanda to something very recognizable to the international community, the Nazi Holocaust. By using language reminiscent of the Holocaust, the news media made the situation in Rwanda more understandable to the international readership. People knew the horrors of the Holocaust from education, books, and movies, and could relate that knowledge to the events in Rwanda.

These two different stances, the one that recognized genocide and the one that shied away from it did not exist in a vacuum. The media represented the larger complexities of human rights. Not one media source remained true to solely one variation of the reporting. Especially, as time went on, and as the violence escalated and the death toll rose, the media became much more critical of the situation. The word genocide became much harder to shy away from, the severity of the situation became harder to ignore. But, ultimately, the media's multiple stances and inconsistency demonstrate the problems with the use of the word genocide. They understood that genocide was a loaded word, and the media, much like the international community, were not entirely sure the appropriate time to use that word.

### ***A History of the Term "Genocide"***

Genocide, much like the concept of human rights, is a difficult word in terms of definition. It is a term that has only existed since the 1940s. Even the Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not mention the word genocide anywhere in its thirty articles. The word genocide, like any other word, does in fact have a definition, but, like the term human rights, the definition is fluid and changing to fit the needs of its user. Defining genocide is complex and does not come with the best connotations. In essence, it is very controversial.

The international community created the word after World War II. When the world finally realized the full horror of the Holocaust, Winston Churchill stated that the world was being faced with a “crime that has no name.”<sup>273</sup> Shortly after Raphael Lemkin, a Polish born advisor to the United States War Ministry, in his book, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, published in 1944, defined the Holocaust as “genocide.” The word derived from the Greek *genos* (race of tribe) and the Latin suffix *cide* (to kill).<sup>274</sup> He defined “genocide” as “a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.”<sup>275</sup> He believed that “mass murder” did not account for the motive behind such a horrific act therefore a new word had to be created.<sup>276</sup> And from its creation, the word was controversial. Many people had a hard time conceptualizing a word that would describe such a horrible action.<sup>277</sup>

Lemkin’s term became law on 9 December 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.<sup>278</sup> This law stipulates a responsibility to try to prevent and protect against genocide and to alleviate the suffering of genocidal victims.<sup>279</sup> The text of the Convention does have many shortcomings. For example, Article I, which pledges prevention of genocide, offers very little on how to actually prevent genocide.<sup>280</sup> The very definition of genocide is also disputed within the

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<sup>273</sup> Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, 2.

<sup>274</sup> Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, 3.

<sup>275</sup> Power, “*A Problem from Hell*,” 43.

<sup>276</sup> Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, 3.

<sup>277</sup> Power, “*A Problem from Hell*,” 43.

<sup>278</sup> For the Convention’s full definition of genocide see Powers, “*A Problem from Hell*,” 57.

<sup>279</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 2.

<sup>280</sup> Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 11.

document.<sup>281</sup> Because of these ambiguities, the term has become both very commonplace and overused<sup>282</sup> and also easily avoidable, as in the case of Rwanda.<sup>283</sup>

One of the first historians to focus on the situation in Rwanda, as a genocide, was Alain Destexhe. In his monograph, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, published in 1995, just the year after the Rwandan genocide, Destexhe calls Rwanda one of the “three genuine examples of genocide during the course of the twentieth century” along with the Armenians by the Turks in 1915 and the Jews by the Nazis during the early 1940s.<sup>284</sup> Destexhe argues that the term genocide has progressively lost its meaning through misuse and has become “dangerously commonplace,”<sup>285</sup> but the situation in Rwanda adequately follows Lemkin’s original definition and meaning of the term.<sup>286</sup> Even only a year after the genocide ended in Rwanda, Destexhe realized the complications with deeming the situation in Rwanda genocide and acknowledged that the international community failed to thoroughly explore the events in the country in the scope of possible genocide.

Following suit, other historians and authors of the Rwandan genocide argue that the situation in Rwanda was genocide. Historian Linda Melvern, in her seminal work, blamed the international community by helping “create the conditions that made it [genocide] possible” in *A People Betrayed: The role of the West in Rwanda’s genocide*.<sup>287</sup> Other historians, such as Mamhood Mamdani, have looked at the conditions that made genocide possible within the tiny

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<sup>281</sup> Daniela Krosiak acknowledges three problems: 1. The issue of intent. How can intent to exterminate be proven? 2. Possible victims does not include political groups. 3. The wording “in whole or in part” is vague and can be used to include all kinds of atrocities. Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 12-13.

<sup>282</sup> Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, 6.

<sup>283</sup> Linda Melvern summarizes how the outside world saw the problem as a tribal war and therefore was able to overlook the use of the word genocide, Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 4-5. Daniela Krosiak addresses how the United States avoided the term genocide, Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, 13.

<sup>284</sup> Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, 20.

<sup>285</sup> Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, 6.

<sup>286</sup> Destexhe utilizes the Lemkin’s definition as it stands today in identifying Rwanda as genocide. That argument rests on four constituent factors. Genocide is a criminal act, with the intention of destroying, an ethnic, national, or religious group, targeted as such. Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, 5.

<sup>287</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 4.

African country; what made neighbor kill neighbor?<sup>288</sup> There is also a trend in the historiography of specializing on certain countries and their relationship to the genocide and how those different Western countries understood the situation in terms of genocide and how they turned their backs on Rwanda when it became obvious that genocide was taking place.<sup>289</sup> These historians and authors, as well as many others, recognize what happened in Rwanda as genocide and critically analyze the situation and the international response in that manner.

### ***Making the Situation Relatable: “Civil War” and Genocidal Implications***

The first aspect of the media coverage of Rwanda mirrored the flawed interpretations of the international leadership. This side of the coverage portrayed Rwanda as a civil war and downplayed the genocide. In essence, this side of the media reporting tended to dance around the issue by just focusing on the civil war that was taking place, relating the mass killings to products of war. This stance of the media reflects the difficulties in recognizing human rights issues and violations. Instead of acknowledging the genocide that was taking place, this side of the media focused on the aspects that were easier to understand. The idea of civil war is not uncommon when it comes to Africa. The public understands civil war and unrest in the continent. It is easier to digest than something so monumental as genocide. By only focusing on the civil war, this side of the media eliminated the confusion and uncertainty of what constitutes genocide.

This side of the press coverage did little to help mobilization of responsive public opinion. “There were no headlines about genocide. There were graphic reports about corpses piling up on the streets and news stories about the scale of the killing, but there was little

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<sup>288</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

<sup>289</sup> See Daniela Krosiak, *The French Betrayal of Rwanda* and Samantha Power “‘A Problem from Hell:’ America and the Age of Genocide.

explanation in the commentary.”<sup>290</sup> This side of the media went along with the idea that this was tribal bloodletting and age-old conflict that was unable to be stopped by outside force. The first international inquiry into the media reported that the media had failed to adequately report the genocide and therefore gain public support and pressure on international governments for intervention.<sup>291</sup>

### *Genocide versus civil war*

Continually the news media referred to the situation in Rwanda as just a civil war. The situation in Rwanda was indeed part a civil war. The Rwandan Patriotic Front and the Hutu government were fighting a civil war for control of the country. But there are many instances within the news media where the genocide became lumped in as just a byproduct of the civil war. Casualties and death became just a result of the fighting. The news media did not recognize these deaths as part of the genocide that the Hutu were waging on the Tutsi, but rather, as a product of the civil war that the RPF and the Rwandan government fought.

The international leadership perpetuated the idea of Rwanda being merely a civil war throughout the world. This misguided the international community in their responsibility to step in and help save innocent lives. “Preoccupation with that [the civil war] blinded most commentators, governments, the UN Secretariat and Security Council to the fact of the genocidal killing perpetuated by one of the parties of the civil war.”<sup>292</sup> Distinctions between the Rwandan military and the Interahamwe, the Hutu killing squads, became blurred and the two were often grouped together. Ultimately, confusion between the simultaneous civil war and genocide led to hundreds of thousands of Tutsi to lose their lives as the international community looked on.

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<sup>290</sup> Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 235.

<sup>291</sup> Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 236.

<sup>292</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 5.

And the media played an important role in grouping the civil war and the genocide into one event. By calling the events in Rwanda a civil war, the media made the situation more relatable to the public. Even when the reporters portrayed the violence as extensive, they also tended to treat it as typical.<sup>293</sup> The term genocide is easily confused and not an idea that is easily understandable to the average newspaper reader. As seen above, the last real genocide that the world has seen was the Nazi Holocaust and that was fifty years prior to the Rwandan genocide. The Nazi Holocaust took place outside of the average newspaper reader in 1994's lifetime or at least memory. Civil war, especially when related to Africa, became much more understandable and accepted in the international community in 1994. And while the imagery, both verbal and pictorial, coming from all news media outlets was horrific and gruesome; the public understood those images much better in the realm of civil war.

Throughout the media Rwanda is simply called a "civil war." In a 1 May article from *The New York Times*, Rwanda is a "civil war" and the article relates the violence to other countries in which civil conflict has occurred.<sup>294</sup> In a later article, the reporter referred to Rwanda simply as "war-torn"<sup>295</sup> and that is why the United States did not want to enter the country. Even at the end of the genocide, *New York Times* reporters still perpetuated the reference. "The civil war in Rwanda has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives over the last three months."<sup>296</sup> A 7 May article in *The Economist* relates Rwanda to other African countries, stating, "African civil wars are as hard to settle as any other."<sup>297</sup> And *The Times* began their coverage of the situation in Rwanda by writing of how "the central African state lurched back into civil war" after the plane

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<sup>293</sup> Power, "A Problem from Hell," 355.

<sup>294</sup> Paul Lewis, "US Examines Way to Assist Rwanda Without Troops," *The New York Times*, May 1, 1994.

<sup>295</sup> "France Says It will Send Intervention Force," *The New York Times*, June 19, 1994.

<sup>296</sup> Paul Lewis, "UN Issues New Appeal," *The New York Times*, July 15, 1994.

<sup>297</sup> "Wretched Rwanda," *The Economist*, May 7, 1994.

crash on 6 April.<sup>298</sup> Later, the paper describes the dead as simply “victims of the civil war.”<sup>299</sup> An article in *The New York Times* also discusses the victims in terms related to war. “An estimated 100,000 to 200,000 people, mostly civilian, have been killed.”<sup>300</sup> The term “civilian” directly references war thereby relating the deaths with the civil war. By relating the deaths to civil war, the media makes them no less tragic but much more relatable. The international community understands civil war, especially in the context of the African continent.

This stance by the media does acknowledge the genocidal aspect of the situation in Rwanda, it is often treaded upon lightly. Phrases such as “the stench of genocide”<sup>301</sup> acknowledge what is happening in Rwanda could be genocide but avoided calling it genocide outright. Many times, the news media states things such as “acts of genocide may have occurred”<sup>302</sup> or “the signs of genocide are everywhere.”<sup>303</sup> Phrases and statements such as these do give light to the severity of the situation in Rwanda while still keeping the newsreader friendly and reader comprehensible.

Ironically, as the media shied away from defining the situation in Rwanda as genocide, the news media continually criticized the international leadership for doing exactly the same thing. In most cases, the country attacked is the United States. Official State documentation from the Secretary of Defense dated 1 May sums up the Clinton Administration’s view on the use of the word genocide. In a report, next to the definition of “Genocide Investigation,” a note was made stating, “*Be Careful. Legal at State was worried about this yesterday – Genocide finding could commit [the U.S. government] to actually ‘do something.’*”<sup>304</sup> Throughout the months of

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<sup>298</sup> “Mobs kill Rwandan premier and UN soldiers,” *The Times*, April 8, 1994.

<sup>299</sup> “UN halts mission after Rwanda mortar death,” *The Times*, June 1, 1994.

<sup>300</sup> “Lull in Rwanda Fighting Allows Aid Deliveries,” *The New York Times*, May 13, 1994.

<sup>301</sup> Sam Kiley, “Sound of silence as the killers rule in Rwanda,” *The Times*, May 14, 1994.

<sup>302</sup> “Officials told to Avoid Calling Rwanda killings ‘Genocide’” *The New York Times*, June 10, 1994.

<sup>303</sup> “Genocide in Rwanda,” *The Economist*, May 21, 1994.

<sup>304</sup> Quote from Power, “*A Problem from Hell*,” 359. Italics not my own.

the genocide, the Clinton Administration, more than any other international government or organization, shunned the term genocide.

And the media was highly critical of the United States government for doing so, even when the news media also turned away from direct use of the term. An 11 May article from *The New York Times* states “Governments hesitate to call the horror by its name, for to do so would oblige them to act.”<sup>305</sup> Another article from 10 June criticized the Clinton administration because they had instructed spokespeople to not use the word “genocide” because ending the killing might not be worth American lives. The article later states “The Administrations cautious language nevertheless mirrors the standoffishness the United States has adopted.”<sup>306</sup> The British media too attacked the United States government for their denial of genocide. “Mr. Clinton’s administration had taken months before it would even admit that genocide had occurred.”<sup>307</sup>

The French news media criticized others in their denial and use of the word genocide. Very rarely do the French papers studied deny that genocide is taking place within Rwanda. For example, an article from 19 June puts forth that “no man of good can ignore the ongoing genocide” in an article discussing how the United Nations is shying away from recognizing the true nature of the situation in Rwanda.<sup>308</sup> The French media also continually reiterated that the United States “officials have been asked not to use the term genocide to escape obligation in such case by the UN Charter.”<sup>309</sup> The French media, whether as an act of self-promotion or simply a strive for accurate reporting, coincides much more with the other stance taken by the media.

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<sup>305</sup> Alison Des Forges, “Genocide: It’s a Fact in Rwanda,” *The New York Times*, May 11, 1994.

<sup>306</sup> “Officials Told to Avoid Calling Rwanda Killings ‘Genocide,’” *The New York Times*, June 10, 1994.

<sup>307</sup> “Land of the Dead and Dying,” *The Economist*, July 30, 1994.

<sup>308</sup> Marie-Pierre Subtil, “Mille a deux mille soldats francais pourraient participer a l’operation humanitaire,” *Le Monde*, June 19, 1994.

<sup>309</sup> Christian Hoche, “La France attend la relève,” *L’Express*, July 14, 1994.

*Shock Value: The use of verbal imagery and emphasis on genocide*

Major media outlets, including the ones studied here, did continually describe the brutal images coming out of Rwanda during the time.<sup>310</sup> This stance by the media was not afraid to use the word genocide, even with its murky and unclear implications. The use of verbal imagery, as well as photographs, showed the horrific nature of the situation in Rwanda and made clear that the situation was much more than just a civil war. A lot of this reporting began as more reporters and journalists entered into the country and saw for themselves the severity of the situation. One example is journalist Aiden Hartley of Reuters News Agency from Nairobi. He stated, “suddenly the truth dawned on me that there was a mad logic about it. The point was not to win the war but to wipe out the Tutsi,” after he witnessed massacres taking place within a church in Kigali.<sup>311</sup>

This paralleled with the United Nations realization of the difference between the genocide and the civil war. It was not until the International Community of the Red Cross (ICRC) issued a statement to the Security Council that stated the severity of the massacres on 29 April 1994. At that point Boutros Boutros-Ghali finally issued a letter to the Council President demanding that “forceful action” take place in order to “restore law and order and put an end to the massacres.” While he does not mention genocide outright, this is the first instance of the Security Council separating the civil war and the massacres.<sup>312</sup> It was not until 31 May that the Security Council officially acknowledged Rwanda as genocide in a report based on information from Iqbal Riza and Maurice Baril, the Secretary-General’s military adviser, which was gathered

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<sup>310</sup> Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 336.

<sup>311</sup> Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 237.

<sup>312</sup> Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 225.

during a trip to Rwanda between 22-27 May. The report recognized the failure of the international community and the United Nations in a situation of genocide.<sup>313</sup>

Besides the outright use of the word genocide, which can be seen throughout all of the news media sources, the media used two other techniques to show the public the truth about the situation in Rwanda. The media used verbal imagery in order to give the news about Rwanda realism. By graphically describing events in Rwanda, the reporters evoked sympathy and outrage from the public. Imagery made the horrors of the violence real. The media also used another technique to show that Rwanda was indeed genocide. Reporters and journalists related Rwanda to the most understood and recognizable genocide, the Nazi Holocaust. They related Rwanda to Nazi Germany both outright and with the use of language that is reminiscent of the Holocaust.

#### *The Use of Imagery*

“God, no death is ok but to be killed like this, or to look like the living dead is unbelievable.”<sup>314</sup> This statement came from a French soldier in Rwanda under Operation Turquoise. An article on 1 July from *The Times* states how “the tough French soldiers were clearly unprepared for the scale of the slaughter they saw.”<sup>315</sup> When the French did arrive in Rwanda, they witnessed the extent of the situation. A report from *The New York Times* mentions that French soldiers urged reporters to film corpses. One French soldier told *The New York Times* reporter, “People need to see this.”<sup>316</sup> Those that experienced the violence and death first hand played a large role in passing along the actuality of the situation in Rwanda. They felt the need to

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<sup>313</sup> Melver, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 244.

<sup>314</sup> Sam Kiley, “Injured Tutsi stagger from forest hideouts,” *The Times*, July 1, 1994.

<sup>315</sup> Sam Kiley, “Injured Tutsi stagger from forest hideouts,” *The Times*, July 1, 1994.

<sup>316</sup> Raymond Bonners, “As French Aid the Tutsi, Backlash Grows,” *The New York Times*, July 2, 1994.

show the outside world the horror of the atrocities that took place within Rwanda in order to gain public support for relief efforts by the international leadership.

Even before the French arrived in Rwanda, images and reports of the severity of what was happening in Rwanda flowed out of the country. One huge difference between Rwanda and other genocides, such as the Holocaust, is that the killing in Rwanda did not take place in gas chambers hidden from the public. The genocide in Rwanda took place on the streets and right in the public eye. The Hutu did not hide their intent or action, often times killing Tutsi right in front of foreigners and international relief. And radio stations, news networks, and the printed media broadcast the killing. “The images of crude barbarity relayed across the world, the machete attacks, the bodies floating down the river, corpses piled by the roadside, seemed to confirm the atavistic nature of the killing.”<sup>317</sup> The news media used graphic verbal imagery in order to relay the severity of the situation in Rwanda and try and gain public support for intervention.

There are countless mentions of the magnitude of the violence throughout the news media studied here. One trick that the news media used in order to make the violence more relatable was to focus on single events or victims among the thousands. This technique made the reader able to connect with the violence on a personal level. And many times, the articles focused on women and children due to their reputation of vulnerability. An article in *L'Express* focuses on sixteen-year-old Fred Mullisa “rotting in the swamp, feeding himself with grass. The militias cut off his hand. A gaping wound on his right leg, swollen with gangrene. Fred speaks. A thin voice out of this bruised body.”<sup>318</sup> A *Time Magazine* article focuses on Rayontina Mukansonera, a nineteen-year-old Tutsi girl that describes being raped repeatedly by the Hutu

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<sup>317</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 5.

<sup>318</sup> Vincent Hugeux, “Rwanda: la mort crie victoire,” *L'Express*, June 9, 1994 .

militiamen. “They showed no mercy,” she told reporters.<sup>319</sup> These are just a few of the multitude of stories focusing on women and children within the news media. The news media was able to gain sympathy and attention by using the vulnerability of the women and children victims.

The news media also used the verbal imagery of severed bodies and the multitude of corpses in order to help the reader understand the magnitude of the situation. “There were too many dead bodies: too many on the roads, too many corpses sharing beds with the living, too many scattered among the banana groves.”<sup>320</sup> A *Time Magazine* article describes “Severed heads and limbs piled up on street corners, the smell of decay fouling the air. No matter how many bodies Red Cross workers collected, more appeared.”<sup>321</sup> Many times, graphic images of corpses accompanied these articles, especially in the weekly periodicals. By describing the numbers of bodies, and showing them as “piles” or in “mass graves,” the reporters are able to relay the magnitude of the death that took place within Rwanda, and therefore garner public support.

The news media also used vivid verbal imagery of the Hutu militias. The descriptions make the militiamen animalistic. The reporters dehumanized them in order to portray them as barbaric. By dehumanizing the militiamen, the reporters were able to make their horrific deeds understandable to the public because their acts were so unimaginable that people could not fathom how humans could do this to one another. “And just round the corner, glassy-eyed, hostile young men operate an impromptu road-block. Some wear the uniform of the Rwandan army; many do not. They wield machetes, clubs or automatic weapons. They use them without mercy or second thoughts, fuelled by cane liquor and banana beer, greed and tribal hatred.”<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Andrew Purvis, “All the Hatred in the World,” *Time Magazine*, June 13, 1994.

<sup>320</sup> “Relief Operations for Rwanda’s refugees came almost to a halt,” *The Economist*, July 30, 1994.

<sup>321</sup> Marguerite Michaels, “Streets of Slaughter,” *Time Magazine*, April 25, 1994.

<sup>322</sup> “No end in sight: Rwanda,” *The Economist*, April 23, 1994.

An *L'Express* article stated “only youth militia, armed to the teeth, patrolling, set up roadblocks when they are not needed for pillaging. Often drenched in beer, with bloodshot eyes, they are unpredictable.”<sup>323</sup> The militiamen are made out as bloodthirsty animals in order for the international public community to hate them and garner support for international intervention.

And the media’s use of imagery did have its effect on the public. The news media from all three countries acknowledged that the images coming from Rwanda moved the public. “The public, seeing horrors on its television screen, feels strongly that someone ought to do something when thousands of people are being killed or are starving to death.”<sup>324</sup> Pictures and imagery coming out of Rwanda also pushed the international public to donate money for aid reliefs. An article in *The Times* focused solely on how harrowing pictures touched British hearts and purses and there were large donations being made to relief organizations.<sup>325</sup>

By the end of the genocide, public opinion had affected international effort. “In April, when the disaster in Rwanda was already in the making, the United Nations did little and the Western powers, nothing at all.” But at the end of the genocide, the West was vying to do all it could because “people have seen the pictures, and want action to be taken.”<sup>326</sup> Images and imagery caused public outrage when it came to the situation in Rwanda. Public opinion toward the United Nations and international governments at the end of the genocide was very unfavorable and outraged that the Western world could sit back and watch genocide unfold before their eyes.

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<sup>323</sup> Christian Hoche, “Rwanda: Les Raisons d’un Massacre,” *L'Express*, April 21, 1994.

<sup>324</sup> Brian Urquhart, “Whose fight is it?” *The New York Times*, May 22, 1994.

<sup>325</sup> Catherine Milton, “Harrowing pictures touch British hearts and purses,” *The Times*, July 23, 1994.

<sup>326</sup> John Simpson, “When reporters act on their own conscience,” *The Times*, July 25, 1994.

### *Relation to the Holocaust*

Besides the outright use of the word genocide, the media also used the best-known genocide as a source of comparison. The term genocide came out of the Nazi Holocaust during World War II. So it is only expected that the Rwandan genocide become contextualized within that frame. “The Tutsi were killed as a group, recalling German designs to extinguish the country’s Jewish population. This explicit goal is why the killings of Tutsi between March and July of 1994 must be termed ‘genocide.’ This single fact underlines a crucial similarity between the Rwandan genocide and the Nazi Holocaust.”<sup>327</sup> There is a contrast with the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide that makes their relationship much more gruesome and inexcusable from the standpoint of the international community’s lack of intervention. “But, unlike the Holocaust, far from trying to conceal what was happening, the killing took place in broad daylight.”<sup>328</sup> The media relating the Rwandan genocide to the Holocaust and the methods used in the Holocaust help contextualize the situation in Rwanda as genocide.

Within the news media, there is some direct comparison to the Holocaust. But mostly, the media uses the language and wordage that is most commonly associated with the Holocaust. Words such as “extermination” conjure images of the Nazi Holocaust and have been popularized by seminal works in Nazi historiography. Calling the Hutu “executioners” and describing the killings as “executions” also helps visualize the situation in Rwanda in terms of the Holocaust.<sup>329</sup> The use of verbal imagery was also effective in the media representation of Rwanda as another Holocaust. Descriptions of mass graves and concentration camps stir up the memories of the Nazi Holocaust.

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<sup>327</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 5.

<sup>328</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 4.

<sup>329</sup> Here I am referring to the popularization of Nazi “executioners” by Daniel Goldhagen and his seminal work entitled *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*.

The media recognized the systematic nature of the killing in Rwanda of the Tutsi, much like the Jews by the Nazis. A *New York Times* article from 3 June described the death of Tutsi as a “campaign to exterminate” and stated, “they [Tutsi] were methodically hunted down.”<sup>330</sup> *Time Magazine* recognized early on the ethnic quality to the murders. An article from 25 April mentions that “many of the 20,000 victims died simply because they were Tutsi.”<sup>331</sup> Murder based on ethnicity or race relates directly with how the Holocaust unfolded. And while the American media recognized these comparisons to the methodology of the Holocaust, the United States government continued to deny the genocide was taking place.

The British media also continued the imagery of the Holocaust within the reporting. An *Economist* report from 21 May described “mass graves” and “Hutu death squads” in an article that opens with the statement, “The signs of genocide are everywhere.”<sup>332</sup> In the following issue, a reporter states, “this was no spontaneous explosion of tribal violence, but a calculated attempt to get rid of an entire people.”<sup>333</sup> The daily British media also acknowledged the relation to the Holocaust. As early as April, just three weeks after the genocide began, *The Times* recognized that “an extermination” was taking place.<sup>334</sup> And throughout the articles during the months of violence, *The Times* reporters make references to such things as “concentration camps”<sup>335</sup> and the Tutsi looking like “the living dead.”<sup>336</sup> The *Times* even went as far as to mock the international community’s promises made after the Holocaust in a 4 May advertisement titled

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<sup>330</sup> Donatella Lorch, “Heart of Rwanda’s Darkness,” *The New York Times*, June 3, 1994.

<sup>331</sup> Marguerite Michaels, “Streets of Slaughter,” *Time Magazine*, April 25, 1994.

<sup>332</sup> “Genocide in Rwanda,” *The Economist*, May 21, 1994.

<sup>333</sup> “The Art of Death,” *The Economist*, May 28, 1994.

<sup>334</sup> Michael Binyon, “Oxfam warning of Rwanda Genocide,” *The Times*, April 29, 1994.

<sup>335</sup> Sam Kiley, “UN dooms its Rwanda peace force to failure,” *The Times*, May 21, 1994.

<sup>336</sup> Sam Kiley, “Injured Tutsi stagger from forest hideouts,” *The Times*, July 1, 1994.

“Never Again?”<sup>337</sup> The British media, out of the three Western nations, was the most liberal with the term genocide and the relations between Rwanda and the Nazi Holocaust.

The French media also used the relationship between the Rwandan genocide and the Nazi Holocaust to describe the situation in Rwanda. And the French had a unique position on the topic because they had French troops on the ground during the genocide under Operation Turquoise. *L'Express* described “mass graves”<sup>338</sup> and often times featured photography of those graves. The killing was often times described as “execution” and stories of Hutu “executioners”<sup>339</sup> and “death squads”<sup>340</sup> ran throughout the articles featured in the news magazine. *Le Monde* also perpetuated the language of genocide by the usage of words such as “extermination”<sup>341</sup> and featured ads within the paper entitled “Help Rwanda” which discussed “methodological extermination plans” and “kill lists.”<sup>342</sup> The French had a unique role in the situation in Rwanda due to their past relationship and Operation Turquoise, but their media followed suit with British and American media when it came to contextualizing the situation in Rwanda with the Nazi Holocaust.

### **Conclusion**

The term genocide in reference to Rwanda was, in itself, controversial. That one word determined and justified international response and action in Rwanda during those four months. The media took on a complex role when it came to the idea and implementation of reporting Rwanda as genocide. Two stances emerged within the reports. The first followed along with the international leadership. This side did not use the word genocide and instead focused on Rwanda as a civil war. By calling the situation in Rwanda a civil war, made Rwanda more relatable to the

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<sup>337</sup> Oxfam, “Never Again?” *The Times*, May 4, 1994.

<sup>338</sup> Christian Hoche, “Rwanda: Les Raisons D’un Massacre,” *L’Express*, April 14, 1994.

<sup>339</sup> Jean Lesieur, “Qui arretera le massacre?” *L’Express*, June 16, 1994.

<sup>340</sup> Vincent Hugeux, “France: operation rachat” *L’Express*, June 23, 1994.

<sup>341</sup> Marie-Pierre Subtil, “Agir mais comment?” *Le Monde*, June 17, 1994.

<sup>342</sup> “Appel Rwanda,” *Le Monde*, June 18, 1994.

public readership. This side of the media was the side that wanted to leave Rwanda alone and stay uninvolved, much like the Western powers.

Luckily, there was another stance of the media that was present during the genocide in Rwanda. And that side was not afraid to call the situation in Rwanda by its rightful name. Besides outright using the term genocide, this side of the media also portrayed the horrors of Rwanda with vivid imagery and graphic description, even relating it to the most recognizable occurrences of genocide. This side of the media was able to sway public opinion and create a public force that demanded for intervention and action by the international leadership. And, within the news media studied, this side of the media overshadowed the side that denied genocide.

The fact that two different sides of reporting came out during the Rwandan genocide mirrors the larger problems with understanding genocide, and human rights. Because the concept of human rights is fluid and hard to define, genocide and response to it are complex. The Western world had a reason to shy away from outright proclaiming Rwanda as genocide. Deeming the situation genocide would have required international action and response. But even defining genocide just to label a situation is tricky and complex due to the ambiguity of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights legislation. And the media fell prey to that and demonstrated the complicated nature of protecting human rights.

## CONCLUSION

On 18 July, the last Hutu stronghold fell to RPF troops and the civil war was declared over. But, the country was in shambles. In Kigali, an estimated 50,000 people remained from a pre-genocide population of 300,000, and over half of those that remained had been displaced. And their conditions were disastrous. The perpetrators of genocide had ransacked the entire country. There was no clean water, no medical supplies, and few adequate food sources. There was also the problem of rotting bodies piled throughout the country.<sup>343</sup> In the months following the genocide, the media attention concerning Rwanda turned to the refugee problem. As the RPF gained control of the country, the Hutu fled in fear of retribution. Over two million Hutu crossed into the neighboring countries of Congo and Tanzania in the final days of the genocide and the first days of the Kagame regime.<sup>344</sup> The media focused heavily on the worsening conditions in refugee camps and the outbreak of disease. The refugee crisis in itself was a humanitarian nightmare adamantly covered by news sources.

It was not until the years following the genocide that the international community began to come to terms with the Rwandan genocide. In 1998, United States President Bill Clinton visited Kigali. During a speech given to genocide survivors at the Kigali airport on 25 March, President 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 haven for the killers. We did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide.<sup>345</sup>

Six weeks later, in a speech directed at the Parliament of Rwanda, United Nations Secretary

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<sup>343</sup> Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 222.

<sup>344</sup> Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 234.

<sup>345</sup> Text of speech found at <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/text-of-clintons-rwanda-speech/>

General Kofi Annan stated,

Rwanda's tragedy was the world's tragedy. All of us who cared about Rwanda, all of us who witnessed its suffering, fervently wish that we could have prevented the genocide... We will not deny that, in their greatest hour of need, the world failed the people of Rwanda.<sup>346</sup>

International guilt continued years after the genocide ended. The genocide still heavily affects Rwanda and the international community into the present day.

The summer of 2014 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide. All the media sources analyzed above featured commemorative pieces about the event. While those articles fall outside the scope of this thesis, their adherence to commemorating Rwanda demonstrate how the Western world is still engaged with the genocide. The Western media played a very important role during the summer of 1994 in bringing the genocide to the public. The Rwandan genocide happened in an age of technology, where the international community could be directly engaged in the action. The way the media portrayed the genocide influenced how the international public understood and contextualized such a horrific event.

The media from France, Britain, and the United States did vary by country. For instance, the British media was much more liberal with the term genocide whereas the American media, for reasons of their own, shied away from it. The French media used their accomplishments with Operation Turquoise in order to bolster the country's psyche while other countries' media pushed their responsibility onto the shoulders of the UN as a whole. But, while each country's media differed slightly, the media sources from all three countries shared larger themes.

Larger issues heavily influenced the media from all three countries during the months of the genocide. Those larger issues – the legacies of colonialism and the complexities of human rights – were woven into the media reports on Rwanda. The legacies of colonialism helped

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<sup>346</sup> Text of speech found at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/1998/19980506.SGSM6552.html>

reporters define the events taking place within Rwanda in a larger context that made those events understandable. Rwanda is not a country ridden of its colonial past, and the Western reporters used colonial and neo-colonial connections to interpret and portray the reasons behind the genocide and civil war. The reporters themselves also became part of the larger colonial narrative by perpetuating the notion of Western dominance over Africa through the use of racist language and imagery. They perpetuated the racism that they claimed to reject. The reporting also shows how complicated the issue of colonialism remains even years after decolonization. The Rwandan Genocide envenomed the problems between the Western world and formerly colonized countries.

The Western media also exacerbated the difficulties and intricacies of human rights legislation and implementation. The complicated nature of allotting blame and assigning responsibility by the media demonstrated how fluid the responsibility of human rights protection is upon the world stage. The media used human rights protection both as a badge of honor and as ammunition in regard to the need for intervention. Part of this multifaceted entity became the use of the word “genocide” by the Western media. Often times, the Western media, like the international leadership, met difficulties and ambiguities in using the loaded word. The word genocide equates responsibility. The word within the media became both a source of denial and reckoning. The Rwandan Genocide demonstrated the complex nature of human rights protection within the media and the international community.

The media sources examined in this thesis demonstrate how the Rwandan genocide needs to be understood in the larger context of the West’s relationship with Africa. In order to understand and aid in future conflicts on the African continent, the West needs to acknowledge

the larger issues of racial legacies and ambiguities of international human rights legislation. In doing so, the Western world may be able to save millions of innocent lives.

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