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THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND THE RWANDA GENOCIDE

by

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Introduction

On 6 April 1994, the plane of President Habyarimana of Rwanda was shot down and the president killed. A coup by extremists effectively ended the attempts to implement the Arusha Accords to end the four year civil war. Once again, war resumed between the Rwandan army and the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF). At the same time a second full-scale war of the government against the Tutsi and moderate Hutu civil population of Rwanda began, and by July of 1994, up to 800,000 civilians were intentionally slaughtered in a horrendous genocide at a time when United Nations peacekeepers were in the country and when those same peacekeepers controlled the airport in Kigali. Both the civil war and the genocide ended when the extremist government fled into exile in Zaire and the RPF defeated the Rwandan army in July 1994.

There is now an extensive scholarship and an overwhelming consensus on the facts and interpretations of - though not always on the explanations for - the actions of the United Nations in Rwanda. However, there is comparatively less detailed analysis of the Security Council's role even in Michael Barnett's (2002) general analysis of the role of the UN. This chapter is intended to fill some of that gap. We will summarize the scholarly consensus on the events that linked the Security Council to the Rwanda

genocide in 1994, adding an original dimension by analyzing in detail the early role of the Security Council that has been sketchily covered by others. This early phase standing aside and then becoming involved in a conditional mode as long as the parties to the peace agreement proved their commitment to peace revealed a pattern that was solidified as the crisis unfolded.

The Rwanda case invites further reflection on the material, intellectual and normative boundaries that support, but also limit, the operations of the Council in this type of situation. Why and under what norms did the Security Council become involved? Particulars of the historical context certainly had a limiting effect as did the behavior of certain individual members of the Security Council, particularly the United States and though less widely recognized – France. Relations with the relevant regional organization, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), entailed both limits and opportunities. More important, although murky in its details, was the role of the UN Secretariat, particularly the Secretary-General's office and the units most concerned (DPA and DPKO). Although the latter, as executive officers charged with carrying out the policies of the Security Council, were formally in charge, in this case the Secretary-General and his staff played an important role in initiating policy by defining the situation and policy options for the Council. Together, these resulted in the UN Security Council adopting an ambiguous mandate for its peacekeeping force and in the way the force was made operational. When the crisis erupted in April of 1994, troop-contributing countries not on the Security Council – particularly Belgium – had a definite impact on the Security Council's willingness to continue its peacekeeping operation and the form it would take.

This chapter will trace the interaction of the Security Council with these various parties and will try to explain the verdict of history on their performance that has generally been negative, including the assessment by the international commission established by the UN to examine its performance in relation to the genocide (Carlsson 1999 - UN 1999 Report of the Independent Inquiry). Whether for reasons of institutional culture (Barnett 2002), resource restraint (UN 1996), or personality factors (Melville 2000), the DPKO and the Secretary-General acted in a way that contributed to the UN's disastrous role in relation to the genocide.

Bystander to Civil War

When the RPF invaded Rwanda from Uganda in October 1990, the presidents of both Rwanda and Uganda were at the United Nations staying in the same hotel. Yoweri Museveni of Uganda woke up Juvenal Habyarimana and informed him that, to his surprise, the Rwandan Tutsis in the Ugandan army had deserted and invaded Rwanda. Habyarimana, however, always insisted that this was a foreign invasion sponsored and supported by Uganda, rather than a rebellion, but he did not call on the Security Council to take action. Instead, he flew home, stopping en route to obtain help from his long standing ally, France, and Rwanda's previous colonial ruler, Belgium, to repel the invaders. This was in sharp contrast to events only two months earlier when the Security Council quickly became engaged to consider the implications for "international peace and security" when Kuwait was invaded by Iraq. While often overlooked, this fact is noteworthy given that protection of the sanctity of states from foreign invasions is central to the Security Council's responsibility under the UN Charter.

The early indifference of the Council is symptomatic of a pattern that prevailed for almost three years while the belligerents fought their way towards a standstill and a peace agreement. The Security Council did not place the conflict on its agenda until March 1993. The UN Secretariat merely sent observers to the peace negotiations. Outside the Council, however, a number of states in the region (especially neighboring Congo, Zaire, Tanzania and Uganda) and in Europe (Belgium and France) became involved in varying capacities, alternatively to promote peace talks or to support one of the belligerents. France and Uganda at times did both. France, Belgium and the OAU helped initiate peace negotiations, and the OAU in mid-1992 sent a small military observer group to monitor a recently concluded cease-fire. At various times, other actors appeared on the stage as well, including Egypt (as a conduit for arms), the United States, Canada, the European Union, the Holy See, and Switzerland (to support mediation).

Given this considerable activity to promote a peace settlement, it could be argued that the Security Council could justifiably absent itself. Rwanda, claiming to have been

invaded, moreover, never formally appealed to the Security Council for support. This was evidently a joint decision by Habyarimana and his close allies in the French government that initially preferred to keep the matter outside the Security Council. Instead, France sent a small military force (*Force Noroît*) as well as increased military assistance to help Habyarimana repel the RPF. On the other hand, the unfolding civil war had all the hallmarks of external involvement on both sides. Uganda's indirect support was widely suspected at the time and has been documented in retrospect (Jones, 2001:69; Otunuga, 1999). The Security Council accepted the possibility in March 1993 when it authorized in principle the deployment of UN observers to monitor the border between Uganda and Rwanda (ONUMUR). The foreign involvement on behalf of the Rwandan government was more obvious: until the cease fire took effect and UN forces arrived, France retained its military force in support of the Habyarimana regime; France also provided military assistance at least until the civil war resumed in April of 1994.

The nature of the conflict further linked events in Rwanda intimately with neighboring Burundi, which had a similar Hutu-Tutsi ethnic proportional split of 85:15. The point became painfully obvious in October 1993 when ethnic massacres in Burundi set off spiraling tensions in Rwanda and gravely undermined the newly concluded Arusha Peace Agreement. Clearly, the conflict had implications for "international peace and security" and justifiably invited attention from the Security Council from the outset.

Over the Threshold of Attention

By early 1993 the situation in Rwanda had clearly worsened. Information about systematic killings of civilians started to be publicized. At this time, the Security Council for the first time formally engaged itself in Rwanda. In response to allegations that Uganda was behind the new RPF renewal of hostilities and the denial by the Permanent Representative of Uganda on 22 February 1993 (UN 1996, p. 151 S/25356), the Ugandan government asked the UN to send an observer mission to verify that Uganda was not involved. The Permanent Representative of the Rwandan government (UN 1996, p. 151 S/25355) on 28 February 1993 formally requested that the Security Council take up the matter and provide an Observer/Monitor force on the Uganda/Rwanda border in the future.

of the rapid and devastating advance by the RPF in February 1993. When the R responded on 4 March by calling for an expanded OAU force to monitor the newly concluded cease-fire (OAU observers had been deployed the previous year) and authorize “an international force to maintain the cease-fire” *between the belligerent forces of the RPF and the Rwandan government* as well as monitor the border area (UN Doc. S/1996/153-4, S/25363), the Rwandan and French governments also requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council to discuss the issue, the Rwandan government noting that, “deterioration of conditions in my country is a threat to peace and security in the region”.

In contrast to the RPF request, France and Rwanda wanted the UN and not the OAU to freeze the military situation and preempt a larger OAU role. The OAU was widely considered partial to the RPF. This predisposition, plus evident weaknesses in its early deployment, suggested to France and Rwanda that the OAU would not effectively monitor the cease-fire and the buffer zone established between the two Rwandan parties. Another concern was the likelihood that French forces would have to be withdrawn as part of the cease-fire agreement and, certainly, as part of the final peace agreement currently under discussion. The RPF’s demand to this effect was foreshadowed in its earlier cease-fire agreement of July 1992, and explicitly stated in the Dar-es-Salaam agreement in early March between the two Rwandan parties. To the French and Rwandese governments, a UN force was more likely to safeguard their joint interests than a possibly weak and probably pro-RPF force led by the OAU. If the UN organized an interpositional force, France’s role on the Security Council provided some assurance that French-Rwandan concerns would be taken into account in the formation and deployment of the force.

The OAU’s Secretary-General, Salim A. Salim, had traveled to the Dar-es-Salaam summit to promote the role of OAU in the peace process given that the OAU already had a small contingent of military observers in Rwanda and was actively involved in the Arusha talks as well. At the summit he received agreement to expand the existing OAU monitoring force, and to give NMOG alone the task of monitoring the cease-fire. Monitoring, Salim argued, was essential to confidence building and hence the peace process. A joint communiqué from the Dar-es-Salaam summit meeting requesting U

support for the recently concluded cease-fire, called for the establishment of “a neutral international force which shall be organized under the aegis of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations.” (S/25385, UN, 1996:155) Three days after, the separate requests of France and Rwanda made it possible for the UN to play an active role in shaping that force.

The initiative was essential to get the Rwanda conflict over the Security Council threshold of significance and onto the agenda. The threshold was mainly determined by the marginal importance of Rwanda to all of the Permanent Five except France, and the preoccupation of the Council with other conflicts that on a grim scale of comparison seemed more violent (notably war and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, and civil war and famine in Somalia). Moreover, in a low-priority case like Rwanda, the Council was evidently reluctant to engage itself until there were clear signs that the parties themselves were willing to settle though since mid-1992, France had vainly attempted to table the Rwanda conflict before the Security Council. Now, with yet another cease-fire and dramatic changes on the ground that were likely to accelerate the peace talks, the Council accepted the case. The timing suggests a limited vision of the Council's role in support of international peace and security in cases that at the outset had a low-priority imprint. The Council seemed to be prepared to engage only when the conflict had virtually ended, or when a peace agreement had been concluded, rather than undertake preventive or mediation measures under Chapter VI. Dependent upon prior progress on the ground, the Security Council adopted an essentially reactive and contingent mode of engagement.

An Ambiguous Resolution

The contingent mode, as it turned out, became dominant. When deliberating its response to the conflict in March 1993, the Security Council resolution opted for the deployment of an international force that would interpose itself to monitor the cease-fire, safeguard humanitarian assistance, allow the return of the internally displaced, and *possibly* protect civilians perhaps along the lines of the mandate authorized for UNPROFOR in Bosnia the previous year (Res. 812/1993, para 2). The resolution did *not* take into account the terms and conditions articulated in the Dar-es-Salaam 7 March agreement concerning the cessation of inciteful propaganda and importation of weapons by the Rwandese government, perha

because the Security Council was not fully briefed by the Secretariat.¹ Two days later, France effectively upstaged the OAU by initiating a resolution in the Security Council that called for a UN force in Rwanda that would operate "in conjunction with" the OAU (S/25400). The draft resolution was subsequently watered down by non-aligned members of the Council and some European representatives who cautioned that the text might be viewed as an attempt by Paris to salvage its influence in Rwanda, and warned against sidelining the OAU (Adelman and Suhrke, 1996:27). The language in the final resolution was softened, but at the same time made more ambiguous. The resolution provided three apparently simultaneous measures:

- a) deployment of UN observers on the Rwanda-Ugandan border, (art 3);
- b) possible UN support to the OAU force "for the monitoring of the cease-fire" (art 2) ;
- c) "possible establishment, under the aegis of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations, of an international force entrusted, *inter alia*, with humanitarian assistance and the protection of the civilian population." (art 2).

The critical points regarding areas of operation, as well as the relationships between the OAU and the UN that were at the heart of disagreement between Rwandan parties and their supporters, were not specified, but explicitly left for the Secretary-General to work out in consultation with his OAU counterpart. This provided an entry point for Boutros Boutros-Ghali to effectively undermine the OAU in the monitoring process and firmly place the UN in the lead of the peace operations. Boutros Ghali did not favor an UNPROFOR model for Rwanda, nor UN support for an OAU observer force. Rather, his strategy followed a conventional and contingent peacekeeping model of inserting a UN force only when the parties already had made peace. This strategy sharply limited the role of both the UN and the OAU in using a military presence to promote the peace negotiations through monitoring and other confidence building measures, as Salim had strongly promoted. Most important, the external responsibility for supporting the peace process was moved from an admittedly weak OAU to the UN, which possessed a potentially formidable collective capacity but, as it turned out, one which was unwilling to exercise.

The UN mission (UNAMIR) became a classic peacekeeping operation that would commence only *after* the parties had signed a peace agreement. The contingent mission subsequently shaped the Council's strategy in a consistent manner. In early 1994, Rwandan parties stalled in implementing the peace agreement they had concluded in Arusha the previous August, and the fragile peace was punctuated by increasing violence. When renewing UNAMIR's mandate in January, and again on 5 April - a day before the genocide started - the Security Council endorsed the policy outlined by the Secretary-General. The response was *not* to engage the UN with greater determination (e.g. strengthening the modest UN peacekeeping force in place); rather, the Council threatened to withdraw UNAMIR if the Rwandan parties failed to implement the Arusha agreement (UN 1996, 242; Barnett 2002, 76). The UN force presence was made contingent upon an already successful peace process, rather than seen as an instrument to promote such a process. This line of thinking was brought to its logical conclusion when the genocide started and the Security Council voted to withdraw all but a token contingent of the UN force.

Explaining the Ambiguity

Part of the explanation for Resolution 812 of 12 March 1993, which formalized UN entry into the conflict, appears to have been its source in an uneasy compromise. Resolution 812 was a partial response to the joint communiqué issued after the Dar-Salaam meeting by the two Rwandan parties, and which clearly had the imprint of the RPF and the OAU. That communiqué called for a neutral international force to replace French troops. France and Rwanda, on the other hand and as noted, wanted the UN to interpose itself to safeguard their interests in a peace process that was increasingly shaped by the RPF's military advance and the weakening position of the government. The UN force was to have a humanitarian mission only, and would be based in Kigali in order to allay fears and, "particularly, ensure the security of expatriates." The force was not to be confused with the OAU's military observers (NMOG), whose functions were potentially much more significant - monitoring the cease-fire, includi

the mapping of the positions of the respective armed forces and the buffer zone between the two forces.

A second part of the explanation is to be found in the actions of Boutros Boutros Ghali. His strategy was simple but effective. He refused to intercede for Salim in the Security Council to ask for support to NMOG, arguing that the Council would be unlikely to assist an operation that was outside UN control (UN 1996, Doc 11: 159). As a result, the best option was for the UN and the OAU to cooperate "with the United Nations exercising command and control." (Ibid) At the same time, he let Salim know that he himself preferred to wait for the outcome of the Arusha peace talks before deciding on the details of the envisaged force (UN 1996, Doc 9:158). Given the OAU's admitted weakness, Salim took note of "institutional difficulties" and, lacking any allies among the Permanent 5, bowed out of any further discussion on how the two organizations could collaborate on a future force to promote or keep the peace. He kept hoping for more assistance for his more limited NMOG, although mostly in vain (UN 1996, Doc 11:160). The 55 NMOG observers were later merged with the UNAMIR structure. The international force envisaged "under the aegis" of both UN and OAU never materialized and UNAMIR, which appeared instead, was not mandated to protect civilians.

Boutros-Ghali's policy made him a *de facto* ally of the strategy that France and the government of Rwanda pursued in the Security Council, although his motives are less obvious. Organizational interests and distrust of the OAU's effectiveness might have been important, as might more partisan concerns. Some observers recalled that as Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Boutros Ghali, had been instrumental in facilitating arms transfers to Rwanda after the RPF's invasion, thereby reversing Egypt's policy of not supplying arms to Rwanda (Melvern, 2000:31-2).

Establishing UNAMIR

The next phase of the Security Council's involvement included three critical stages of events: a) preparations for and authorization of UNAMIR; b) delays in implementation

of the peace agreement, and c) cumulative evidence that a genocide was being planned, all of which have been critically examined by scholars, journalists and two commissions of inquiry (Carlsson 1999; OAU 2000).

As for (a), there is general agreement that UNAMIR's design was heavily influenced by the negative experiences of the UN/US operations in the Somalia operation as well as by resource constraints that reflected the explosion of UN peacekeeping activities in the immediate post-Cold War world as well as the newly pronounced PDD 25 doctrine (PDD 25) to limit its support for such operations (Barnett, 2002:66; Powell 2002:340-1; Des Forges, 1999:199; Jones, 2001:106; Wheeler, 2000:241). Under the PDD formula for assessed contributions, the US was required to pay over one-fourth of the costs of UN peacekeeping operations. The Clinton Administration was particularly sensitive to Congressional criticism of the cost of the US share of UN peacekeeping which had increased a stunning 370% from 1992 to 1993 (Adelman and Suhr 1996:36). These factors were played out against the background of the relative indifference to Rwanda that had characterized the Council's initial position. France's crusade to get the Council involved was a two-edged sword since its motives were suspect and, being an ally of the government, France could not contribute a UN force that was supposed to be neutral (Callamard, 1999). That left the proposed UNAMIR with a powerful "patron" on the Council. The Secretariat, which in March-April 1994 had championed a UN role over the OAU, had by the fall firmly settled on a low-cost, low-risk operation. The UN leadership wanted command and control, but not sufficient control to assume a major responsibility for implementing the agreement.

The decision-making role of the Secretariat in relation to the Security Council becomes more important in this period because of its statutory role in the planning of a UN operation, and because the Council members, apart from France and possibly the UK, had little independent information from the field. The Secretariat, particularly the DPI, that undertook the planning with guidance from the office of the Secretary-General, must therefore take considerable responsibility for the process that gave UNAMIR its final shape. Two aspects are critical in this regard:

First, the Secretariat recommended a much narrower mandate for UNAMIR than that called for in the Arusha Peace Agreement and what the parties to the agreement

considered necessary to sustain the peace. That applies to three important geographic areas to be secured, protection of civilians, and confiscation of illegal arms. The Arusha Agreement called for a "neutral international force" to *inter alia* "guarantee the overall security of the country", "assist in catering for the security of civilians", "assist in tracking of arms caches and neutralization of armed gangs throughout the country", and "assist in the recovery of all weapons distributed to, or illegally acquired by, the civilians"(Art. 54, B). These provisions were watered down somewhat by the UN Reconnaissance Mission to Rwanda in late August, headed by the subsequent force commander, General Romeo Dallaire, but even more decisively reduced to a minimal mandate in the proposals forwarded by the Secretariat to the Security Council and finally approved (Adelman and Suhrke, 1996:89).

The mandate proposed by the Secretariat and approved by the Council (5 October Res. 872/1993) had no provisions for protecting civilians, collecting illegal arms, or taking actions against armed gangs. Securing "the country" was now limited to securing the capital city, Kigali. The principal function of the force had been narrowed primarily to monitoring the compliance of the two parties with regard to the military aspects of the agreement (demobilization, demining and integration of their armed forces), and supporting the formation of a transitional government by securing a weapons-free zone around the capital. A small CivPol force (of 60) was to verify maintenance of law and order.

Second, and as a result of the narrowed-down mandate, the size of the force was reduced correspondingly, ending up with a little over 2500. By contrast, General Dallaire had originally envisaged 8000 peacekeepers, hoped for 5,000, but finally agreed to request only 2500 as a feasible number that might be approved (Jones, 2001:105; Barnet, 2002:66; Power, 2002:340-1).

From a decision-making perspective, the significant aspect of this process is that the Secretariat did not formally forward to the Security Council the contradictory information in the larger picture and the different policy options this might entail. The omissions are striking in the two main reports in this period, the Secretary-General's August report on the Arusha Agreement (S/26350), and the report of 24 September recommending the establishment of UNAMIR (S/26488). The latter report was quite technical, focusing on details (including specifying the number of CivPol), but lacking

broader political analysis. The Secretariat did not mention that the proposed UN mission differed from that envisaged in the Arusha Agreement on several critical points, and the implications of this discrepancy were therefore not discussed. Human rights concerns were not integrated with an analysis of deployment; there was no reference to the report of the UN Special Rapporteur, completed in August 1993, which concluded that the civilian Tutsi population was subject to genocidal violence (E/CN.4/1994/Add.1), nor to a similar report publicized earlier in the year by a panel of international human rights groups (FIDH 1993). The Secretariat recommended deployment without reiterating the concern expressed in Kigali, *inter alia* to the Secretary-General's Reconnaissance Mission, that inter-ethnic tension and opposition to the agreement by a militant, Hutu party posed serious obstacles to implementation. As subsequent scholarship has established, these concerns were widespread at the time (des Forges, 1999:125; Mamdani, 2002:189-91; Melvern, 2000:62-5). Indeed, they were reflected in the clause of the Arusha Agreement that called for an international peacekeeping force with a comprehensive mandate, above all to collect illegal arms, neutralize armed gangs, and protect civilians.

The impression conveyed by the 24 September report was that implementation of the mission merely depended on two conditions: that the two sides complied with their commitments and that UN members provided the human and financial resources specified. If either party were out to spoil the agreement, UNAMIR's role as a mere facilitator would be insufficient. This possibility and related consequences were not spelled out for the Security Council. Of course, Council members could make their own assessment based on analysis of the Arusha Agreement, but this was legitimately the function of the Secretariat.

While it is unclear what information passed by informal channels, the available documentation indicates that the Secretariat saw its role as forwarding only one deployment option to the Security Council. It was, moreover, an option that the Council clearly would like to accept. The main evidence that the Council at this point favored a slightly more interventionist role than did the Secretariat was its decision to add to the authorization that UNAMIR investigate "on its own initiative, instances of alleged non-compliance with the provisions of the Arusha Agreement" (UN 1996, 237, S/26927,

December 1993; Dallaire "End of Innocence", Melvern 2000:86). Finally, there were unresolved discussions concerning the rules of engagement governing UNAMIR. General Romeo Dallaire was never provided with rules of engagement. When he drafted his order that gave him wide flexibility in responding to problems, they were neither formally approved nor rejected by UN headquarters. Instead, UNDPKO continually sent Dallaire a series of specific warnings not to become pro-active, and vetoed each and every proposal initiative Dallaire asked to take that might help him learn more about the undermining of the peace agreement or the planning and implementation of the genocide.

Once UNAMIR was established, the Security Council received regular reports from the Secretariat on the mission. Yet the reporting was generally of poor quality. There was little analysis of the implications of core issues and events. When offered assessments were first overly optimistic. At the end of 1993, the Secretariat reported that the installation of the transitional government was likely "by the end of the month" (S/26927, December 1993, para 12), although in fact it was "nowhere in sight" (Barnett 2002:75). The massacres and massive displacement of Hutu in neighboring Burundi were characterized as a "potentially destabilizing situation" (para 16), although it was evident to even casual observers in Kigali that the destabilization was actual and instant. UN personnel, for instance, recognized it as a decisive turning point (in interviews with Adelman and Suhrke, 1996). The December report noted the intention of a "well-armed and reportedly ruthless group" to disrupt and even derail the peace process" (para. 1) but did not discuss the implications with respect to UNAMIR's mandate and force. The deteriorating situation on the ground in Rwanda was not contrasted with the slow and inadequate deployment of the mission. Possibly, the report represented a tightrope walk. Given the short mandate periods (four months) and the fact that mandates automatically expire unless there is a renewal resolution, Boutros Ghali may not have wanted to alarm donors (Barnett, 2002:76), providing just enough information to stress the urgency of staying while holding out the prospect for success.

During the next three months - in what turned out to be the countdown to the start of the genocide and the resumption of civil war - there is a striking contrast between internal and external communications in the United Nations. The details have since been presented in the scholarly literature and can be briefly summarized here (Barnett, 2002:76).

Adelman and Suhrke, 2000; des Forges, 1999; Carlsson 1999). The reporting from the Secretariat to the Council that was in the public domain (external) differs sharply from the information that passed from the field to the headquarters (internal). In particular, the increasingly desperate calls from the Force Commander to exercise his mandate to the limit (and possibly beyond) in order to recover illegal arms, and for rapid transfer of equipment promised for his bare-bones force, were not shared with the Security Council through formal reporting channels. Nor was evidence that surfaced in early 1996 regarding a planned genocide, notably the famous cable from Dallaire to DPKO on January 11 (reproduced in Adelman and Suhrke, 1999). On the whole, the external reporting has a reasonably optimistic tone with respect to what the UN mission is doing and by implication its offices at headquarters - although there is concern that the Rwandan parties may not be doing their part by keeping to the implementation schedule.

The Security Council nevertheless had other channels of information within the UN system. Kofi Annan, then the head of DPKO, shared the 11 January cable with some members of the Security Council outside the Council chamber. While the Force Commander could not go outside channels, the Belgian Foreign Minister on 11 February formally echoed his request by asking the Security Council to authorize "a firmer stance on the part of UNAMIR with respect to security" in view of increasing violence on the ground and the failure of the Rwandan parties to form a transitional government (UN Doc. 1996:244, doc.34). In addition, the major Western powers all had embassies in Kigali; did the principal African country on the Council, Nigeria. All the African countries could draw on OAU channels as well. The Council clearly was capable of making demands of the Secretariat for better options (as it did in mid-April, after the crisis had erupted), and for criticizing its judgment (as it did when the Secretary-General in mid-April blamed Belgium for jeopardizing UNAMIR) (Adelman and Suhrke, 1996, 43-44).

The continued low-priority assigned to the Rwanda conflict was reflected in the Council's generally passive role. The Council did not request further information regarding the possibility that the militant third party might "spoil" the Arusha Agreement nor did it ask for options to strengthen UNAMIR's stance in response to the Belgian request. The Council continued to operate in a contingent and generally passive mode.

this period. When crisis struck in April 1994, the Council moved to an active stance, but remained within the contingent mode.

Crisis

As evidence of large-scale violence mounted during the first week of crisis (6-7 April), the Council responded to the tone set by the US and the UK and opted for de facto withdrawal. Other members on the Council questioned this response. The non-aligned states, led by Nigeria, argued for strengthening UNAMIR, and on April 13 circulated a draft proposal to that effect. By that time, however, only a rapid offer of new troops could have made the resolution meaningful. Belgium, which had provided one of the two working functioning contingents of UNAMIR, had announced the previous day that it would withdraw its troops in view of the murder of ten of its peacekeepers. Bangladesh evidently probed withdrawing its ill-equipped and poorly trained force in the capital. It left a Ghanaian battalion (posted outside Kigali). Only the US had the capacity for immediate and large-scale deployment of troops (or the lift capacity to provide logistical support to deploy other troops). Italy, Belgium and France sent expeditionary forces only in order to evacuate their nationals and had the lift capacity to do so; none of the latter offered troops to stabilize the situation or deter further violence. The US, supported by the UK and urged on by Belgium, strongly argued against further commitment.

The minutes of the informal consultations in the Secretariat show how the US and the UK decisively weighted the debate in favor of disengagement. On 12 April, when the Belgian withdrawal became known, the American Ambassador expressed serious doubts about the viability of UNAMIR in the new circumstances, and feared that it might even be a destabilizing factor. There was no hint of responding by strengthening the force. That proposal came the next day, but from Nigeria on behalf of the NAM Caucus. The Nigerian draft resolution proposed increasing the strength of UNAMIR and enlarging its mandate to “enable it to contribute to the restoration of law and order”.ⁱⁱⁱ The US and the UK expressed skepticism. According to the minutes of the meeting, “the US suggested leaving a ‘small skeletal’ operation to show the will of the international community.” The UK declared that UNAMIR would not be in a position to protect civilians “either now

in the foreseeable future”. With the Bosnian experience clearly in mind, the UK deleg warned that the Council “should not lend itself to a ‘tragic fiction’ whereby it mer declared that something would be done.”^{iv} France wanted a continued UN presence “exert pressure on the RPF”. Not surprisingly, China and Russia were noncommit Given that a prime requirement was the ability of the peacekeepers to protect its o soldiers and not subject them to significant risk, given the absence of ready options strengthening the force, and given that the large scale slaughters already underway h not yet been labeled a genocide but were readily accepted as normal for the region, w the political line-up in place at the Security Council, the draft resolution did not ev come to a vote and died quietly.

The issue was no longer a question of withdrawing or strengthening the U presence, but the extent of the withdrawal. The Secretariat on 14 April presented t options: (i) keeping a reduced mission place, i.e. UNAMIR without the Belg contingent, and (ii) reduce the UN presence to a very small level (200 in all), on r assumption that there would be no quick resumption of the peace process. Both opti made continued presence contingent upon a cease-fire, instead of seeing UNAMIR a force for helping to create that condition (as the Nigerian delegate pointed out) let al assuming a responsibility for protecting civilians. The UK and the US again spoke out favor of disengagement and the UK delegate indicated a preference for the second opti over the first. The US delegate said the Council “needed a resolution that talked of orderly evacuation.” Nigeria registered the reservations of the NAM Caucus, but did n make a formal statement, evidently recognizing the futility given the direction of r debate.^v The next day, the US expressed firm opposition to keeping UNAMIR in place

Considerable discussion later focused on what kind of reinforcement would ha been necessary to halt the genocide. Some observers have argued that a small but raj reinforcement would have been a significant deterrence (des Forges, 1999; Feil 199 others disagree (Kuperman 2001). At the time, however, this issue was barely raised the Council. The British call for pragmatism set narrow limits to the discussion, includi only some options as “realistic” and ruling out the rest as “tragic fiction”. Nigeri attempt to create a counterpoint and enlarge the realm of “realistic” options prov

insufficient so long as it failed to get support from the major powers, and NAM its lacked the capacity for immediate intervention. When the Secretariat a week later (April) presented options of response to the Security Council – and for the first time outlining more than one option – it was likewise in terms that clearly favored withdraw

It may be correct that the Council at that time was not aware that the genocide was being planned (Jones 2001:115); during the first week the fog of renewed civil war clouded the genocide underway. Yet lack of awareness on this point certainly does not explain why the Council's first response after April 6 was to disengage. The more evidence of an unfolding genocide accumulated, the more anxious two of the major players – the US and the UK - became to deny that the violence indeed constituted genocide and thus a ground for intervention (Burkhalter, 1994-95; Power, 2002; Ronay and Rosenthal, 2001; Suhrke and Jones, 2000).

Conclusions

Much of the retrospective analysis of the UN in the Rwanda conflict has focused on assigning responsibility and sharing the blame for the failure. This was evident as well in the dialogue between the Secretariat and the Council that went into the institutional “lessons learned” exercise in 1996 (UN/DPKO, 1996). This chapter has approached the subject from a somewhat different angle.

The Rwanda case highlights numerous issues for the Security Council:

- the need to prioritize among conflicts while still paying attention to potentially serious threats to international peace and security but to human security as well;
- the need to avoid micro-managing while remaining sufficiently engaged to obtain sufficient information and analysis of the conflicts with which it is seized”;
- the need to uphold standards of responsibility under the Charter while avoiding “tragic fictions” of passing resolutions that are neither implementable nor implemented.

In theory, the Council could have decided to engage itself in Rwanda from 1992 and onwards under Chapter VI provisions for conflict regulation and prevent diplomacy. For the same reasons, the Council could have undertaken a more active peace-promoting role in early 1993. It did not do so because of the marginal importance of the country to all but one of the Permanent 5, i.e. France, which for various reasons later took a low profile. In a world teeming with conflict and small civil wars, the Council necessarily has to prioritize. A key determinant of priorities for such conflicts is having a patron on the Council, preferably among the Permanent 5, and that was indeed a major reason why Rwanda eventually made it to the Security Council agenda and later received a UN peacekeeping force.

Once the UN peacekeeping force was deployed, the Security Council automatically became involved when large-scale violence erupted. At this point, a UN military intervention to support or strengthen UNAMIR was the only alternative to withdrawal. The response of the Council favoring withdrawal was again heavily shaped by the absence of a “patron” of intervention among the Permanent 5 – whether an advocate for humanitarian intervention on principle, or for intervention for other reasons that might have had positive humanitarian side effects. In the absence of such patronage, and in the absence of any in-depth and accurate analysis by the Secretariat, the strong arguments made for disengagement by the US and the UK decisively set the tone. Behind this development, of course, was the military and financial power of the United States, in particular, to make or break a UN intervention.

The Rwanda case suggests some general conclusions about the relationship between the Council and the Secretariat. When a generally low-priority conflict eventually gets the attention of the Security Council, the Secretariat becomes a principal decision-maker precisely because of the relatively low interest of the Council in the case. Yet the Secretariat reacts within the perceived guidelines of the Council for a low-priority conflict, which is to define the problem as manageable and the proposed option as low cost and low-risk. The Council is generally disinclined to micro-manage – especially in a low-priority conflict – and gladly accepts the recommendations. When problems facing the mission on the ground increase, the Secretariat becomes increasingly selective in the information it forwards to the Council. As crisis strikes, however, the pattern becomes

less clear. On the one hand, the Council became more demanding and critical of the Secretariat; on the other hand, there were signs that a mutually reinforcing feedback loop between the Council and the Secretariat became stronger. In the end, both lock into the modus operandi of earlier phases when a UN presence was seen as contingent upon progress towards peace, hence the UN Secretariat emphasis through all of April on restoring the cease-fire while effectively ignoring the genocide until it reversed course.

This analysis rests heavily on the position of eminent power held by the Permanent 5 on the Security Council, and on the mutually reinforcing relationships between the Secretariat and the Council. The latter appears in retrospect as a variable rather than a firmly embedded institutional factor. Thus, the weakness of the Secretariat reporting to the Council – especially the preference for providing limited analysis and welcome options – partly reflected practices and personalities that since have changed. Human rights considerations, for instance, have routinely been included as a matter of reporting on UN peacekeeping. Peacekeeping itself has undergone a conceptual change and become subsumed under the broader category of “peace operations”. Even a cursory examination of recent reports on UN missions suggests a liberal dosage of “bad news” (e.g. in reporting on UNAMET in mid-1999, and UNAMA in mid-2002). The UN subsequently instituted procedures to strengthen the Secretariat and its functions in what by the early 2000s was called “peace operations”. Norms that facilitated humanitarian intervention have been strengthened as well, and the Security Council has broadened its agenda and concept of security to include “human security”. Proposals to form a UN rapid deployment capability to enforce or keep the peace were discussed, but shelved. Altogether, the initiatives reflected a self-assessment inside the organization as well as outside that the UN's abandonment of Rwanda represented “a worst case”, revealing fundamental weaknesses of the organization that needed to be addressed in light of the new, post-Cold War world.

Parallel calls for reform of the Security Council, by contrast, were not particularly related to Rwanda, although the Council's indifferent response partly reflected its archaic structure; that is, the extraordinary influence of the United States and the other states that had emerged as victors in 1945, but most of whom had very little interest in Central Africa in the 1990s. The distribution of power in the Security Council reflected

institutional structures that are more difficult to change. Short of such changes – and the absence of a structural formula for more rational decision-making – the simple “lesson” from the Rwanda conflict is for the Council to act as a more critical customer information and policy options prepared for it in low-priority cases as well as the high profile conflicts.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ Since Security Council deliberations mostly are closed, documentary evidence of the Council role is fragmented though it has been possible to document in detail the role of the Secretariat. This imbalance is

documentation may give the impression to the outside analyst that the Secretariat played a greater role in the decision-making process than in fact it did. Yet considerable information from oral sources about the Security Council's role in the Rwanda case makes it easier to arrive at a balanced assessment.

ⁱⁱ Communication between the two secretary-generals in the form of letters only later became public; at the time, the Security Council was not formally briefed about the important decisions entailed in the exchange.

ⁱⁱⁱ Typescript document, 13 April 1994, 1645, para 5.

^{iv} *Proceedings of the Security Council*, Wednesday 13 April 1994, p. 3. Typescript document.

^v *Proceedings of the Security Council*, Thursday 14 April 1994, pp. 2.3. Typescript document.