

ABSTRACT

The aim of this essay is to find the reasons to why UNAMIR failed to prevent genocide in Rwanda between August 1993 and April 1994. The purpose is to try to explain why the United Nations failed to prevent yet another genocide to occur, despite the promise that such atrocities never should occur again following its creation in 1945. The investigation includes the general attitude and actions of the Security Council, and especially the United States. The mandate of UNAMIR is evaluated in order to see the effects it had on the amount of military resources available and the ability of the soldiers to intervene in conflicts. Furthermore, the role of the force commander of UNAMIR, Dallaire, was examined in order to establish if the failure was due to any kind of poor leadership. Ultimately, it was found that the failure of UNAMIR was due to reluctance of the Security Council towards another peacekeeping mission in light of a previous failure in Somalia. It was found that the lack of military resources and limitations put upon the mandate of UNAMIR resulted in an inefficient mission unable to successfully intervene and prevent the rise of violence. These factors gave rise to a power vacuum, which ultimately enabled Hutu extremists to gain power and initiate genocide in Rwanda 1994.

Word Count: 218

INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the 1940's, when the world was still in shock after the atrocities of the Second World War, the United Nations was formed, aimed at preserving peace and protecting human rights throughout the world.

However, it was not until the closure of the Cold War that the International Community began to regard the United Nations as an authoritative peacekeeping nation. The number of peacekeeping operations skyrocketed and wherever there was an international conflict, the United Nations' blue berets were most probably present within weeks. The United Nations' peacekeeping operation UNAMIR in Rwanda had been displaced in late October 1993. The aim of the mission was to aid the Rwandan parties in the implementation of the Arusha Peace Agreements following the end of a civil war in 1993. However, the security situation in Rwanda deteriorated rather than improved, and within months the UN faced its most prominent failure throughout its history. Disregarding the rise of violence in Rwanda allowed for the genocide to take place in 1994, ultimately marking the utter failure of their mission of peacekeeping in Rwanda. In this essay it will be discussed why the UNAMIR failed to preserve the Arusha Peace Agreement, presenting the main arguments of historians, journalists and diplomats.

BACKGROUND

The Arusha Peace agreement was signed between the Rwandan Patriotic Front¹ and the Government of Rwanda on the 3rd of August 1993². The signing marked the end of an ethnic conflict between two Rwandan tribes, the Hutus and Tutsis. The conflict was originating from the Belgian colonial times in the middle of the 1900's. According to the peace agreement, an "international neutral force"³ would aid the parties in implementing the terms of the agreement. More specifically, such tasks included clearing mine zones⁴ and providing sufficient security for the parties in Rwanda to establish a Broad Based Transitional Government⁵. The Secretary-General of the UN, Boutros-Ghali, dispatched a reconnaissance team to Rwanda in late August 1993 under the leadership of the Brigadier General Romeo Dallaire. The team was sent to examine the needs of Rwanda in terms of UN peacekeeping. Based on their findings, the Security Council voted for the establishment of United Nations' Assistance Mission in Rwanda⁶ on the 5th of October 1993. The

¹ A Tutsi dominated rebellion movement in Rwanda. Will from hereon be referred to as RPF

² [http://www.ucd.ie/ibis/filestore/Arusha%20\(Rwanda\)%20.pdf](http://www.ucd.ie/ibis/filestore/Arusha%20(Rwanda)%20.pdf) The Arusha Peace Agreement, p.3

³ This refers to a UN peacekeeping force;
[http://www.ucd.ie/ibis/filestore/Arusha%20\(Rwanda\)%20.pdf](http://www.ucd.ie/ibis/filestore/Arusha%20(Rwanda)%20.pdf) The Arusha Peace Agreement, Chapter 5

⁴ Arusha Peace Agreement: Article 36

⁵ Broad Based Transitional Government: A government temporarily set up to prepare the way for a permanent. Will from here on be referred to as a BBTG.

⁶ Will from now on be referred to as UNAMIR

mission was present in Rwanda a few weeks later. The first killings in the presence of UN forces in Rwanda occurred on the 17th of November 1993, when 36 members of the Hutu tribe were killed⁷. In late November 25 more killings were reported, but UNAMIR remained clueless of the perpetrators. Killings were reported on a regular basis, and the security situation in Rwanda became increasingly unstable as time went on. The BBTG failed to meet several deadlines of its establishment and although the parties in Rwanda held the responsibility of its creation, the UN was blamed for the failure. On the 11th of January 1994, the UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations⁸ was forwarded a cable from Dallaire, issued by a former member of the security guard. He claimed that 1.700 trained personnel were spread in Kigali in groups of 40⁹ with the aim of assassinating members of the Tutsi tribe. In addition, the informant highlighted threats toward the UN, especially the Belgian forces. However, nothing was seemingly done, despite several pleas from Dallaire to the DPKO and the secretariat. Despite reports of increased violence on ethnical grounds, the Security Council renews the mandate of UNAMIR on the 5th of April 1994. The next day, the Presidents of Burundi and Rwanda were killed in a plane crash, shot down above the Kigali airport. The assassination sparked off genocide, as the violence progressed dramatically following the news of the dead President of Rwanda. Between April and July

⁷ Melvern; p.88

⁸ UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations, will from now on be referred to as DPKO

⁹ Outgoing cable from Dallaire to DPKO 11 January 1994: "Protection of informant", article 9.

1994, Hutu extremists killed over 800.000 members of the Tutsi tribe and almost 2 million Rwandans were dispatched from their homes. The international community and the UN especially have been severely criticized, believed to have failed to succeed its mission of UNAMIR.

1. THE SHADOW OF SOMALIA

According to the independent inquiry appointed by Kofi Annan¹⁰ in 1999, the main reason for the failure of UNAMIR was due to the lack of efficient economic, military, and organizational resources¹¹. In contrast, the inquirers¹² lay emphasis on the decisive role of the United States in the Security Council. According to the inquiry, the earlier peace-operation in Somalia, UNOSOM¹³, significantly affected the future attitude towards UN peace operations, especially the establishment of UNAMIR¹⁴. Michael Barnett¹⁵ develops the argument, claiming it is “virtually impossible to exaggerate the impact of Somalia on the UN”¹⁶.

¹⁰ Kofi Annan was appointed Secretary-General of the United Nations following Boutros-Ghali.

¹¹ UN document S/1999/1257 , taken from the document throughout.

¹² The inquirers were: Ingvar Carlsson, Han-Sung Joo and M.Kupolati

¹³ UNOSOM: A monitoring mission chiefly made up of U.S military personnel in Somalia. Functioned against the consent of the parties involved, according to chapter VII of the UN charter.

¹⁴ UN Document S/1999/1257 p. 41

¹⁵ An American professor in political science, author of the book *Eyewitness to a Genocide- The United Nations and Rwanda*.

¹⁶ M. Barnett; p. 39

Furthermore, he explains how the United States' population and administration were found increasingly hostile towards further engagement of U.S troops in operations of the United Nations, as they were seemingly doomed to fail. The Clinton administration and the Congress saw no reason to sacrifice the lives of American soldiers for the cause of peace in countries having no direct relation to the foreign policy of the United States. The United States' Congress started drafting a proposal preventing the possibility of future American involvement in UN peace missions¹⁷. Barnett argues that the coming inability of UNAMIR to prevent the outbreak of a general mass-murder in Rwanda can be clearly connected to the initial resentment of the United States. Following the affirmation of its mission on October 5th 1993, the inadequateness of UNAMIR was almost immediately apparent.

1.1 THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION TO UNAMIR

The United States was one of the members of the Security Council that affirmed the scope of the UNAMIR in October 1993¹⁸. Being one of the permanent members in the council, and an affluent state, the United States

¹⁷ M. Barnett; *Eyewitness to a Genocide – The United Nations and Rwanda*, p.40

¹⁸ United Nations Resolution 872

was obliged to finance almost 30% of the total peacekeeping budget¹⁹ of the Security Council. The journalist Linda Melvern suggests that as the DPKO and the Secretary-General are drafting a recommendation of the creation of UNAMIR, they are forced to consider the economic situation and attitude of the United States²⁰. This resulted in a reduction of the proposed troop strength from 4500 when fully deployed to 2,548²¹. Forced to spread out thin in the Rwandese area, the troops of UNAMIR would hence encounter troubles in maintaining security the mission progressed. Intense pressure from the American public and congress, she argues, were reasons for the U.S to have a hostile attitude towards potential high costs of UNAMIR. The independent inquiry of 1999 came to a different conclusion, arguing that the whole of the Security Council encouraged lower costs of peacekeeping, especially in Rwanda²².

Occupied in twelve different operations at a total cost of \$3 billion, the UN resources were strained²³, and the independent inquiry therefore argues that the wish to oblige the least amount of finances possible to Rwanda was constructed by all the members of the Security Council, not solely by the

¹⁹ L R Melvern; *A People Betrayed – The role of the West in Rwanda’s Genocide*, p.77

²⁰ Melvern: p.79

²¹ United Nations and Rwanda, document 23, page 230.

²² UN document S/1999/1257 p.39

²³ Melvern: *The Role of the West in Rwanda’s Genocide*, p. 77

U.S²⁴. It may be argued that the Security Council was characterized by the fear of losing the support of the United States in the matter, as they expressed their desire to reduce the economic costs of the mission as early as in resolution 872²⁵. The independent inquiry considers the unyielding focus of the Security Council to save finances as a major contributing factor of not being able to successfully prevent the outbreak of genocide in Rwanda²⁶.

2. UNAMIR

2.1 THE ABSENCE OF SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE

The Canadian Brigadier General Roméo Dallaire had been appointed as the force commander of UNAMIR. Trained in the organization of NATO and traditional warfare, he has been viewed as an inappropriate leader for a UN peacekeeping mission. Barnett emphasizes Dallaire's lack of knowledge of Rwandan History and argues that it significantly halted the UN in their aim for a successful peacekeeping mission in Rwanda²⁷. The support for this argument was found in the work of Dallaire prior to his work with UNAMIR. This is seen in his report to the Secretary-General, when he concludes that

²⁴ The Independent Inquiry: p.32

²⁵ The resolution 872: Establishing the forming of UNAMIR on the 5th of October 1993. S/RES/872

²⁶ The independent Inquiry: p.30

²⁷ M.Barnett; p. 25

“[t]he people do not want war anymore[...]the situation is calm and everybody has a clear desire for peace”²⁸. Based on the reconnaissance team’s findings, therefore, Dallaire suggested a force with a maximum of 4.500 troops and a minimum of 2.600²⁹. In the independent inquiry of 1999’s findings, they conclude that the initial proposition of the reconnaissance team was insufficient³⁰. The miscalculation of troops therefore was due to the lack of historical background information of the situation in Rwanda³¹. According to both Barnett and Melvern, the lack of knowledge concerning the political situation in Rwanda was a direct result of the lacking information of the reconnaissance team. Barnett argues that the DPKO was highly responsible for the scarce understanding among the members of the reconnaissance team, since the informational meeting in August 1993 prior to its dispatch was too brief and did not provide a broad and sound understanding of the security situation in Rwanda³². In return, he claims, UNAMIR was unable to spot the early signs of ethnic violence and was in return unable to prevent the outbreak of the genocide. Alan J. Kuperman argues that the genocide could have been prevented if the troop strength would have been 5.000 as originally proposed

²⁸ Organization of African Unity: Rwanda, ch. 13, p.4.

²⁹ A.Suhrke, H.Adelman: p. 232.

³⁰ Independent Inquiry: p.32

³¹ UN Document S/1999/1257 p. 42

³² M.Barnett; p.65

to the General-Secretary³³. Such hypothetical statement was not made in the other sources studied, and Kuperman is the only one claiming this could have prevented the outbreak of genocide.

2.2 LACK OF MILITARY RESOURCES

Melvern³⁴ considers the lack of effective military resources as a prominent cause to the outbreak of the mass-killings in Rwanda. In resolution 872, UNAMIR had been assigned 22 Armed Personnel Carriers³⁵, and eight military helicopters. No military helicopters were provided, and merely eight APCs - five of these operable³⁶. According to Melvern, this heavily disabled a quick reaction to a possible outbreak of violence in Rwanda. The Hutu extremists were able to build up their power in the absence of UNAMIR forces, since the deployment of such were slow and severely inefficient³⁷.

The limited amount of military resources that were deployed was either hand-me-downs from other missions or had instructions in incomprehensible languages. In the absence of the BBTG, Rwanda was in a

³³ A.J Kuperman: Rwanda in Retrospect

³⁴ A journalist and author of the book *The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide*

³⁵ Will from now on be referred to as APC

³⁶ Melvern: p.85ff

³⁷ Melvern: *ibid*

power-vacuum, providing opportunity for extremists to seize power. Melvern emphasizes that UNAMIR did not provide measures necessary to take control in this vacuum, ultimately affirming the grip of the Hutus' hidden power in Rwanda³⁸. Already scarce, the UNAMIR troops were forced to spread out thin in the Rwandan terrain as violence occurred in the north³⁹. Not only disabled by the scarce amount of troops, the UN forces were severely crippled by the insufficient military material provided.

2.3 THE INEXPERIENCE OF THE SOLDIERS INVOLVED

Not only was the deployment of the assigned troops and military resources inefficient. The soldiers had either none, or a limited amount of training for a peacekeeping operation. Like Dallaire, many of the UN soldiers involved in UNAMIR were not trained to meet the requirements for peace operations under chapter VI of the UN charter⁴⁰. Dallaire had been trained in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization⁴¹ and traditional warfare, which contributed to the general view of him as an inappropriate leader of the mission

Barnett also highlights the belief of Rwandan moderate politicians view of UNAMIR as a protection against Hutu extremists⁴². When expressing

³⁸ Melvern: ibid

³⁹ Melvern.: p.87

⁴⁰ Barnett; p.90

⁴¹ Will from now on be referred to as NATO

⁴² Barnett: p.90

their criticism towards Hutu power, consequently, they expected protection from the soldiers of UNAMIR. The increased volume of political opposition resulted in two things; firstly, the Hutu leaders feared to lose power. Second, they came to the conclusion that violence was the accurate measure to stop such opposition. Evidently, their previous acts of violence had seemingly been unnoticed by the peace force and the Hutus hence accelerated their plans⁴³. The violence arose in a power vacuum, and grew therefrom due to the inability of the UNAMIR to, once again, act accordingly as violence progressed. Based on these facts, therefore, Barnett argues that UNAMIR became a “paper tiger”⁴⁴. The Hutu extremists saw the evident flaws of UNAMIR and believed their malevolent acts could remain unnoticed.

3. THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS’ OFFICIALS AND INSTITUTIONS

Despite not having experience in peacekeeping missions, Roméo Dallaire was, according to the independent inquiry of 1999, dedicated to his cause and determined to catch the attention of a seemingly apathetic United Nations once violations of the Arusha Accords began⁴⁵. The United Nations’ had an

⁴³ Barnett: p.90

⁴⁴ M.Barnett: p. 167.

⁴⁵ Independent Inquiry: p.33

apparent inability to respond as the reports of violence continued. The bureaucracy and inefficiency of the United Nations contributed to the inability to efficiently cease the rise of a genocide.

3.1 DALLAIRE AND THE DPKO

When Dallaire was reached by disturbing information regarding a malevolent scheme planning to eradicate the Tutsi population and UN troops, he instantly sent off a cable to the DPKO⁴⁶, pleading for protection of the informant. In addition, he informed the DPKO of the measures he planned to take in order to cease such plans being realized by Hutu extremists. The response of the DPKO has been stated by almost all sources studied as a prevalent evidence for the apathetic behaviour of the UN⁴⁷. Kuperman, on the other hand, claims that UNAMIR would not have been able to cease the genocide even if they had had the acceptance of the DPKO⁴⁸. The DPKO responds urgently, only in reaction to the violent actions Dallaire wished to take in order to prevent the realization of the

⁴⁶ Cable 11 January: "Protection of the informant"

⁴⁷ Barnett: p.156 (continuing on the next page)

³⁸ Melvern p.93

Independent Inquiry: p.33

⁴⁸ Kuperman: p.21

plans outlined in the cable on 11th of January⁴⁹. As the Security Council had affirmed the scope of the mandate under chapter VI of the UN charter, UNAMIR had no right to intervene without the consent of the political parties in Rwanda⁵⁰. According to Melvern, the United Nations still relied upon UNAMIR to solve the problems among the member states. The secretariat was therefore cautious of allowing Dallaire to perform actions challenging the neutrality of the peacekeeping mission in Rwanda⁵¹.

The independent inquiry argues that the dramatic increase of the instances of violence could have been ceased if the Secretariat or the Security Council had adjusted the scope of the mandate to reality. Instead, the leader of the mission and the secretariat were caught up in an administrative battle, arguing over details in the formulation of UNAMIR's mandate⁵².

3.2 THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The role of UNAMIR in the genocide in Rwanda cannot be distinguished from the decisions taken by the Security Council at the end of 1993 and 1994. According to Barnett, the work of UNAMIR was hindered by the Security Council's unyielding focus on the establishment of the Broad Based

⁴⁹ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil/warning/unresponse.html> the DPKO's response to Dallaire's cable

⁵⁰ Security Council Resolution 872

⁵¹ L. Melvern: p. 100-103

⁵² Independent Inquiry.32

Transitional Government⁵³. The role of UNAMIR was not to implement the Arusha Accords and set up a transitional government, but its mandate stated that the mission was present in Rwanda to aid the parties in doing so⁵⁴. Since the parties in Rwanda failed to meet the deadline of the BBTG several times, the Security Council became increasingly anxious. Barnett argues that UNAMIR and the situation in Rwanda now were in a “chicken and egg dilemma”⁵⁵. Unable to start the second phase of the mandate and increase the troop strength of UNAMIR, the Security Council became too absorbed by the failure to establish the BBTG that it began to view it as the only solution to the increased violence⁵⁶. The difficulties faced by UNAMIR, such as the lack of military resources, were assumed to be solved as the BBTG was established. No active measures were taken in order to solve these problems they were faced with. Barnett considers the ignorance of the Security Council as one of the most prevalent causes to the outbreak of the genocide in Rwanda a few months later⁵⁷. The responsibility of the failure to prevent the genocide therefore was not mainly the one of UNAMIR, but also for the Security Council. In addition, the independent inquiry suggests the responsibility of the

⁵³ Will from now on be referred to as BBTG

⁵⁴ Security Council Resolution 872

⁵⁵ M.Barnett: p.76

⁵⁶ M.Barnett; *ibid*

⁵⁷ M.Barnett: p.77

lay with the Secretariat and the leadership of UNAMIR⁵⁸. A. J. Klinghoffer also brings up the focus on the BBTG but puts less emphasis on its contribution to the outbreak of genocide.⁵⁹ He agrees with the statement that the Security Council relied upon the formation of the transitional government, but that this was due to the inherent inconsistency of the mission. In comparison to Barnett, he concentrates on the limitations of the mandate itself in his interpretation of the events.

4. THE MANDATE OF UNAMIR

When investigating the inability of UNAMIR to prevent the outbreak of violence in Rwanda, many sources reach a common consensus regarding a general limitation of the mandate.

4.1 THE LIMITATIONS OF CHAPTER VI

According to Security Council resolution 872, UNAMIR would operate with the consent of the parties involved and aid them in their implementation of the Arusha Peace Agreement. Chapter VI prevents the UN mission to intervene against the mutual consent of the parties involved in case of a conflict⁶⁰. Such

⁵⁸ UN Document: S/1999/1257 p. 41.

⁵⁹ Klinghoffer; p.138f

⁶⁰ The UN charter

limitation on the mandate of UNAMIR was, according to the independent inquiry of 1999, crucial, as it prevented the desired actions of Dallaire following the 11 January cable⁶¹. As DPKO received the cable, they responded quickly, preventing him to intervene by military means, since this would go against the mandate of UNAMIR. The mission was working with the consent of the parties and would violate its own mandate if the troops were intervening in the matter⁶². Barnett argues that the DPKO reacted so strongly because of their fear of a reoccurring situation of Somalia; consequently resulting in further disbelief of UN peacekeeping⁶³. The Secretariat and the DPKO only allowed Dallaire to inform the President of the information he had received, despite his attempts to rephrase his intentions of intervention. Similarly, following the assassination of the Rwandan President, Dallaire was unable to order the troops of UNAMIR to intervene by force. Ultimately, many of the sources studied claim that the limitations of the mandate was a direct cause of the failure to prevent the outbreak of the genocide⁶⁴.

⁶¹ The January 11 Cable: "Protection of the Informant"

⁶² Security Council Resolution 872

⁶³ Barnett: p.80

⁶⁴ Barnett: p.83

The Independent Inquiry: p.32

Kuperman: p.115

EVALUATION

When investigating the reasons for the failure of UNAMIR, the sources used all have similar focal points; the lack of military resources and finances, limitations of the mandate and the apathy of the United Nations member states. The independent inquiry, Kuperman, Barnett and Melvern all state that the lack of military resources and the limitations of the mandate inhibited UNAMIR to prevent the outbreak of a genocide. The independent inquiry suggests that the main reason for the failure of UNAMIR was the member states' lack of dedication and apathy towards the Rwandan conflict, and their obsession with rebuilding the international community's trust towards them. Melvern, on the other hand, suggests that the main responsibility of not providing UNAMIR with sufficient amount of resources stems back to the United States. She argues that other permanent members in the Security Council were cautious of arguing against the United States, believing it would make the United States even more reluctant towards devoting finances to Rwanda. The other members of the Security Council, like the DPKO drafting the mandate of UNAMIR, acted to please the United States in order to prevent them from withdrawing from the negotiations all in all. In the middle of these viewpoints stands Barnett, who argues that United States did have power to influence the decisions made, but the other member states had the same financial troubles as the United States and were equally reluctant. The benefits of using the independent inquiry's report as a source is that it was written within five years following the end to the genocide in Rwanda and it

thoroughly examines the decisions made by the UN. Still, this is also the limitation of the source, as it merely evaluates the actions of the UN and not any other individual country. Even though the institutions of the UN had made countless questionable decisions, this could have been the result of individual countries' actions towards the situation in Rwanda. The country had been colonized several times throughout its history, so both France and Belgium would therefore have interests in the events in the area.

CONCLUSION

Why UNAMIR was unable to prevent the outbreak of genocide in Rwanda in 1994 was due to several reasons originating in the unwillingness of the members of the Security Council to devote finances and troops to the peacekeeping cause. Due to previous failures, especially in Somalia, the United States were reluctant towards yet another failed expensive peacekeeping mission. This, in addition to lack of economic resources among other member states forced the DPKO to downsize the proposed strength of UNAMIR in Resolution 872. Therefore, once on Rwandan soil, UNAMIR lacked basic resources necessary for successful performances of tasks. The inefficiency arising from this contributed to a power vacuum, which enabled Hutu extremists to gain power, and once violence broke out and murders began, UNAMIR's mandate prevented an effective intervention to cease the rise of violence. The assassinations of the Rwandan and Ugandan Presidents were

the sparks that lit the fire of a modern genocide, marking the utter failure of UNAMIR to prevent its creation had promised to cease. Genocide had yet again become a reality.

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The DPKO's response to the 11th January Cable

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	FEL! BOKMÄRKET ÄR INTE DEFINIERAT.
INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND	2
1. THE SHADOW OF SOMALIA	4
1.1 THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION TO UNAMIR	5
2. UNAMIR	7
2.1 THE ABSENCE OF SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE	7
2.2 LACK OF MILITARY RESOURCES	9
2.3 THE INEXPERIENCE OF THE SOLDIERS INVOLVED	10
3. THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS' OFFICIALS AND INSTITUTIONS	11
3.1 DALLAIRE AND THE DPKO	12
3.2 THE SECURITY COUNCIL.....	13
4. THE MANDATE OF UNAMIR	15
4.1 THE LIMITATIONS OF CHAPTER VI	15
EVALUATION	17
CONCLUSION	18
BIBLIOGRAPHY	20

