

Review Article:

Bystanders to Genocide in Rwanda

BRUCE D. JONES. *Peacemaking in Rwanda: The Dynamics of Failure*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2001. Pp. 209. \$49.95 (US); ALAN J. KUPERMAN. *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2001. Pp. 176. \$38.95 (US), cloth; \$16.95 (US), paper; MAHMOOD MAMDANI. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001. Pp. 380. \$45.00 (US), cloth; \$16.95 (US), paper; LINDA R. MELVERN. *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide*. London: Zed Books, 2000. Pp. x, 272. £49.95, cloth; £14.95, paper; SAMANTHA POWER. *'A Problem from Hell': America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: Basic Books, 2002. Pp. 640. \$30.00 (US); PETER RONAYNE. *Never Again? The United States and the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide since the Holocaust*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001. Pp. 240. \$65.00 (US); MICHAEL BARNETT. *Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002. Pp. xiii, 215. \$25.00 (US); JOHAN POTTIER. *Re-imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival, and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. xvii, 251. \$24.00 (US), paper.

RWANDA IN 1994 WAS the scene of genocide against Tutsi and moderate Hutu in which 800,000 people were killed despite the presence of UN peacekeepers supposedly there to protect them. Rather than analyse the actions of perpetrators or victims, this article examines why bystanders – states and international actors with the mandate and/or the power to prevent or mitigate the genocide – failed to do so.

After the First World War, Rwanda became a colony of Belgium. In 1933, the Belgian colonial authorities issued identity cards to Hutu (85% of the population), Tutsi (14%, and the historically dominant group), and Twa (1%) on the mistaken assumption that these were distinct racial groups (the Tutsi royal family, owing to selective breeding, were indeed very tall and thin and distinctive looking). The Belgians applied the Hamitic hypothesis that Tutsi, unlike Hutu, were a Nilotic people, quasi-Arians who had invaded and conquered the Hutu, assumed to be Bantu, who had already colonized the Twa.

The hypothesis exacerbated the existing social divisions among the three groups. In 1959, at the dawn of independence, a Hutu revolt overthrew the predominantly Tutsi ruling body, leading to the first major outflow of Tutsi:

an estimated 10,000 were killed and approximately 150,000 fled, most of them to Uganda and Zaire. Their attempts to use organized guerilla bands (*Inyenzi* – cockroaches) to regain power failed. On 21 December 1963, following an *Inyenzi* attack from Burundi, the Hutu rulers of Rwanda killed 10,000 Tutsi and executed 20,000 others as traitors. By 1965, Tutsi expatriate militant opposition to the new regime had ended.

Having staged a coup d'état in 1973, Major-General Juvénal Habyarimana, the chief of the Rwandan army, put an end to ethnic conflict even as he favoured Hutu northerners like himself and continued to marginalize Tutsi. He also became a favourite of donor countries because he provided stability, limited corruption, and maintained only a small army. Nonetheless, by 1987 Rwanda was in economic and political trouble owing to the fall in the price of coffee, its main export. The Tutsi diaspora, by then numbering 350,000, taking advantage of the economic downturn and a demand for democracy, and pushed by Uganda's unwillingness to integrate them, demanded the right of return to Rwanda. On 1 October 1990, after Habyarimana had rejected the demand on the grounds that Rwanda was over-populated, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded from Uganda. Habyarimana solicited Belgian and French military aid and, in the next week, 1,100 troops arrived from Zaire, 600 from Belgium, and 300 from France. The French and Zairean troops helped to stop the RPF's advance.

Despite repeated attempts to negotiate a ceasefire, by the spring of 1993 the RPF were within twenty-five kilometres of the capital, Kigali, and 900,000 people had fled or been driven from their homes. Both sides agreed to a new ceasefire and to negotiate peace based on agreements made at N'sele in March 1991, Gbadolite on 12 September 1991, and Arusha on 12 July 1992, and the RPF's declaration of a ceasefire on 21 February 1993, when it stated its willingness to withdraw to its former positions and to allow the displaced to return to their homes. The Arusha accords signed on 4 August 1993 incorporated a number of the previously signed agreements, such as the peace protocols of 9 January that called for a new power-sharing agreement based on national unity, democracy, pluralism, and respect for human rights; specific provisions for a broad-based transitional government with positions in the cabinet assigned to various parties; an agreement of 10 June on the repatriation of refugees; and an agreement of 3 August to integrate the two armies and the gendarmerie. An interpositional United Nations peacekeeping force would monitor the peace.

In August 1993, a Canadian, Brigadier General Romeo Dallaire, arrived at the head of a UN reconnaissance team and, in October, the security council named him to command the UN peacekeeping force and authorized the United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR). Only 2,500 troops, mostly Belgian, were deployed, and then only gradually, in spite of evidence that a small group of extremists within the government had organized slaughters of Tutsi.

In a Tutsi coup in neighbouring Burundi in October 1993 against the first elected Hutu-led government, 100,000-150,000 Hutu were killed. Hundreds of

thousands of refugees had fled to Rwanda by the time the UN secretary-general's special representative to Rwanda, Jacques-Roger Booh Booh, arrived in November. After investigating a series of massacres, Dallaire, who suspected a conspiracy to murder civilians and sabotage the peace process, asked the United Nations for permission to take offensive military operations. His requests were rejected, even after he reported on 11 January 1994 a plan to murder Belgian peacekeepers and systematically kill all Tutsi living in Kigali.

The attempts to form a broad-based transitional government for Rwanda failed. On 6 April 1994, the day after Habyarimana finally agreed to the Arusha accords, a plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi and the chief of staff of the Rwandan army was shot down. A small extremist group seized control of the government, and murdered a number of ministers and officials, including the prime minister, the ministers of finance and agriculture, the president of the constitutional court, and the vice-president of parliament. After ten Belgian soldiers, who had tried to defend the prime minister, were also killed, the Belgian peacekeepers withdrew. In the next ten weeks, 800,000 Tutsi died at the hands of Hutu militias.

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In the books reviewed here, the authors look at this tragedy from different perspectives to try to explain the roles of different players. Michael Barnett focuses on the role of the United Nations and its decision-making within the context of its officials' own time, place, and goals, informal and formal rules and norms, and beliefs and expected outcomes. He claims to apply Wilhelm Dilthey's and R. G. Collingwood's empathetic method of re-enactment to the thoughts of the decision-makers in order to 'reconstruct the moral architecture of the period under scrutiny' (p. 5). Intent on avoiding the moralizing characteristic of Linda Melvern and Samantha Power, nonetheless he unabashedly condemns the United States and the UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. His analysis shows how UN and security council officials came to believe that indifference was the correct response; he roots the indifference in a principled concern for the life of the United Nations as a whole and in the principle of neutrality. The result was a series of expedient steps which included a propensity to focus on exit strategies, failures in communication with the security council, and Boutros-Ghali's silence on the genocide until after the withdrawal. Although Barnett suggests that the decisions were personally expedient, he places greater stress on higher universal and cosmopolitan norms: 'The UN's actions were guided by situated responsibilities and grounded in ethical considerations' (p. 4).

Bruce D. Jones counters the widespread belief that the international community was insufficiently engaged in Rwanda before the genocide by contending that it made strenuous efforts to monitor, contain, and mitigate the effects of the civil war.¹ The failure to prevent or mitigate the genocide was less

¹ For a succinct account, see A. Suhrke and B. D. Jones, 'Preventive Diplomacy in Rwanda: Failure to Act, or Failure of Actions', in *Opportunities Missed and Opportunities Seized*, ed. B. W. Jentleson (Lanham, 2000), pp. 238-65.

the result of unwillingness to implement the Arusha accords, he argues, than the failure of the actions taken to ensure the intended outcome (p. 5). Jones follows the line laid out by Alan J. Kuperman,¹ who claims that preventive diplomacy is more effective than intervention. Kuperman is the prime proponent of the thesis that, by the time the slaughter in Rwanda was recognized to be genocide, it was too late for effective intervention, as a large proportion of Tutsi had already been killed at the fastest rate of mass slaughter recorded, yet in a manner that escaped the notice of international observers by hiding under the cover of the civil war. Kuperman concedes, nonetheless, that the genocide could have been averted if Dallaire's request for troops had immediately been granted.

Kuperman is refuted by Alison L. Des Forges.² In addition to correcting obvious errors, for example that Dallaire's cable of 11 January 1993 'was the first and last' to warn of massive slaughters; that it took three weeks to recognize the killings as genocide; and that the civil war and the genocide were indistinguishable, Des Forges provides an effective rejoinder to Kuperman's claims that the United Nations could not have mitigated the genocide, by showing how quickly the French, Belgians, and Italians deployed troops in April 1994 to evacuate their nationals. Her earlier work shows that Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, the director of services in the ministry of defence under Habyarimana, and believed to be the co-ordinator of both the April coup and the genocide, and now under indictment at Arusha, took some time to consolidate his control and to spread the genocide beyond Kigali.³

Mahmood Mamdani starts from the assumption that the identities of Hutu and Tutsi, constructed by and through colonialism, were reproduced in the post-colonial state. The initial genocidal impulse was created by settlers and directed at natives: the genocide of Tutsi organized by Hutu extremists was directed by natives – victims turned into perpetrators – against a population perceived as settlers. He applies Frantz Fanon's theory of native violence as an expression of a willingness to risk one's own life in a response to prior violence, the 'violence of yesterday's victims who have turned around and decided to cast aside their victimhood and become masters of their own lives' (p. 13).⁴ To cleanse the land, the cultivators took part in the racial cleansing of a perceived foreigner rather than a neighbour, a cycle that began with the rebellion in 1959 against the Belgian regime and was revived by the Hutu regime after the RPF invasion in 1990. The institutionalization of the racial bipolarity of Hutu and Tutsi, reified in the colonial state's political institutions and adopted by the post-colonial state, survived the second republic's attempt in 1973 to redefine Tutsi in terms of ethnicity rather than race.

¹ See A. J. Kuperman, 'Rwanda in Retrospect', *Foreign Affairs*, lxxix (Jan.-Feb., 2000), 94-118 and 'Reply to des Forges', *Foreign Affairs*, lxxix (May-June 2000), 142-4.

² A. L. Des Forges, 'Shame: Rationalizing Western Apathy on Rwanda', *Foreign Affairs*, lxxix (May-June 2000), 141-2.

³ A. L. Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York, 1999).

⁴ Cf. F. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952; *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York, 1967) and *Les Damnés de la terre* (1961; *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, 1963).

Linda Melvern's well-paced, readable, and scholarly work focuses on the period beginning with the RPF invasion in 1990 and culminating in the genocide in Rwanda and the Western powers' failure to deal with the perpetrators when they fled to Zaire. This tale of failure and betrayal – by the United States and the United Nations' secretariat and security council, by France and Egypt who supplied arms, by Boutros-Ghali who ignored and then misrepresented the crisis until the end of April 1994 – also has heroes: Ghana, for one, and the head of the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation to Rwanda, Philippe Gaillard, and Dallaire for others.

Power includes Rwanda in an ambitious and well-written study of the United States's response to genocide, from Turkey, Cambodia, and Iraq to Bosnia and Kosovo. She demonstrates that the William J. Clinton administration not only failed to supply troops, but also refused to consider other options. Presidential Direction 25 (PD-25) of May 1994 placed severe restraints even on US support for intervention by others, despite a report from a secret special forces reconnaissance mission to Kigali, immediately after the genocide began, on the systematic slaughter of civilians. Power analyses the misrepresentations in the media, the United States's misplaced attempts to use the threat of the withdrawal of the peacekeepers as a lever with which to expedite the peace process, and its emphasis on re-establishing the ceasefire in the civil war: 'a tendency toward blindness bred by familiarity' (p. 347) attributable to the expectations of large-scale ethnic violence in the region.

Peter Ronayne examines the same subject in a more restricted context: comparing the United States's response to the events in Rwanda with Cambodia and Bosnia. While struggling to maintain its own commitment to suppress genocide, the United States not only failed to save lives itself but also refused to help others to act, owing to its unwillingness to support strategies, both diplomatic and military, other than the use of its own troops, and did not even speak out in timely fashion. Although a majority of Americans support intervention to prevent and mitigate genocide, even at the cost of American casualties, the government failed to exercise moral leadership. It was constrained by its geopolitical priorities and lack of a strategic interest in Rwanda, and by its political opponents at home, especially the Republican-controlled congress, which criticized the United Nations, influenced by a misapplied analogy with the failed intervention in Somalia. Ronayne sees hope, nonetheless, in Clinton's subsequent if self-serving apology of 25 March 1998, the United States's humanitarian efforts on behalf of the Rwandan refugees, and its support for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. In contrast, Johan Pottier believes that the United States (and others) have all been manipulated by the post-genocide regime in Rwanda, which uses its victim status as a cover for its aggression in Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

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The Rwanda genocide was not only a human disaster but also a failure on the part of the international community. But was the failure a moral one, as Melvern and Des Forges claim; an institutionalized normative one, as Ronayne,

Power, and Barnett claim; a failure of strategic and tactical decision-making, particularly of those participating in the peace process, as Jones and Kuperman claim, and as Pottier too believes, and also applies to the post-genocide period; or was the failure rooted in a larger theoretical, historical, and political context, as Mamdani claims? None of the works reviewed here offers an economic explanation of the role of bystanders, drawing upon the work of Peter Uvin, who assigns responsibility to the 'structural violence' perpetrated by the aid agencies which targeted Rwanda as the ideal recipient of aid until the late 1980s.¹

Though the scale and intensity of the genocide makes for compelling reading, the moral assessments are simple: they treat the international community's failure as the product of immoral choices to be avoided elsewhere: in Melvern's words, 'only by exposing how and why it happened' and 'by revealing the failures, both individual and organizational' of Western states and the United Nations to share information and to act (p. 236).

Institutional normative explanations go a step deeper. According to Ronayne (pp. 188-9):

The United States faced an unparalleled ethical leadership moment to invigorate its human rights rhetoric with action and through that action save hundreds of thousands of lives. Instead, the United States emerged not as a world leader committed to an important norm of human rights and international law but as an unexpected stumbling block to effective action to stop the genocide ... The evidence that emerges from the US response to genocide in Rwanda suggests a still weak norm of genocide prevention. The preventive side of the norm lacked the 'bite' and internationalization to force the administration's hand. Realist-related concerns, such as lack of traditional strategic interest in Rwanda and domestic political self-interest in the United States, bolstered by a misapplied analogy drawn from the Somalia experience, undermined a fertile moment for ethical leadership on the world stage.

Perhaps it was not a fertile moment, and the US performance of the role of a stumbling block should not have been unexpected. As Power explains, the United States's 'consistent policy of nonintervention in the face of genocide offers sad testimony not to a broken American political system but to one that is ruthlessly effective. The system, as it stands now, is working. No US president has ever made genocide prevention a priority, and no US president has ever suffered politically for his indifference' (p. xxi).

Yet Power, in the end, is a moralist and places her faith in the ability of individuals such as Dallaire to overcome such institutional shortcomings. By contrast, Ronayne finds hope in alternative, if still weak, institutionalized ethical norms, as evidenced by the United States's refusal to use the term 'genocide', lest pressure and criticism force it to abandon its policy of inaction, a norm operative, though at a weak level, among decision-makers.

Barnett, himself one of the decision-makers, was probably as committed an opponent of genocide as anyone. He took a year away from the academy to work for the US government as a member of its UN delegation that assigned

¹ P. Uvin, *Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Africa* (West Hartford, 1998).

him to the low-priority Rwanda desk. Though horrified by the news of the genocide, he opposed intervention, given the United Nations' lack of capability and the threat to the peacekeepers' lives. Barnett now places the politics of indifference within a cultural and historical context in which the United Nations worried less about victims and more that failure would fatally damage it in the eyes of US decision-makers. He views the efforts at reversing policy after the evidence of genocide became undeniable as a sham motivated by public relations. Troubled by the United Nations' self-absorption, and the lack of real debate about the feasibility and desirability of intervention, he concludes that a bureaucratic culture, shaped by norms of neutrality, impartiality, and consent, dictated the depiction of reality and of organizationally situated and defined knowledge in a way that made non-intervention legitimate and proper. Norms did not just determine policy: they also determined what was perceived.

In contrast to scholars who see the need to overcome normative institutional barriers either through the moral courage of individuals, strengthening competing ethical norms, or developing institutional cognitive practices that will allow reality to penetrate the constructed portraits we paint through the eyes of our predominant institutional norms, other scholars, without presuming that we are culturally conditioned, view the problem strategically. The failure to act in Rwanda was not attributable to norms, but to a failure in strategic thinking; not ensuring the proper fit between intended outcomes and the means put in place to achieve them. Such explanations allow for both the opportunities and the obstacles; either because a series of cascading misperceptions resulted in poorly co-ordinated and contradictory policies that undermined the peace effort (Jones, p. 4), or because ill-conceived and counter-productive policies led to an understandable failure given the strategic priorities of the powers, the speed of the genocide, the misleading media coverage, and the size, strength, and speed of the military intervention needed to make a significant impact (Kuperman, introduction).

The solution was to be found in making sure that the peace plan developed and the actions taken to implement it were coherent and effective, given both a realistic appraisal of the threats and the limited capabilities of the institutions involved. The problem was not the lack of action, but the wrong actions taken; the problem was not moral or cultural, but a rational failure rooted in the ill-conceived actions required by the political solution developed and the peace-keeping plan designed to implement it. However, the key failure may not have been lack of moral sensitivity or malfunctioning institutionally and culturally based norms, nor a failure of rational instrumental calculation. If it is to be found in the historic and political development of membership in states, and the misunderstanding of politics and history, better understanding might lead to revisions of our political priorities, norms, and even moral outlook.

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The competing explanations offer different interpretations of key facts. Different moral sensitivities, different institutionally based norms and practices,

different forms of strategic rational calculation, and different historical and political frameworks lead to different perceptions and misperceptions.

Mamdani, who focuses on the actions of the perpetrators, nonetheless explains the role of bystanders at a greater distance. In arguing that the genocide in Rwanda must be seen, following Hannah Arendt, as a byproduct of modernity and imperialism, the work undermines the conception of Western states as bystanders even as it implicitly explains their refusal to accept responsibility for intervening.¹ In Arendt's original plan for *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the final chapter was to have been on 'Race-Imperialism: Nazism', and race-imperialism is a central theme of Mamdani's work.²

Mamdani, who claims to be Arendt's intellectual heir, abandons her theory of bureaucratic detachment as central to racism and genocide. The genocide of Tutsi was not impersonal, a case of an industrialized killing machine, but relied on the use of machetes and clubs and the involvement of significant numbers of the general population. Second, Mamdani historicizes the genocide within Africa by telling the story of the German General Lothar von Trotha's slaughter of 80 per cent of the Herero of South-West Africa in 1904, which he calls the first settler genocide of the twentieth century.³ Although Mamdani accepts Arendt's explanation of the Nazi Holocaust, he argues that she 'erred when she presumed a relatively uncomplicated relationship between settlers' genocide in the colonies and the Nazi Holocaust at home. When Nazis set out to annihilate Jews, it is far more likely that they thought of themselves as natives and Jews as settlers' (pp. 12-13). Nonetheless, 'Arendt's great merit was to locate it [the Holocaust] within the context of a wider history, that of Europe's global conquest and expansion' (p. 76). According to Mamdani's interpretation of Arendt, Western ideas of race and bureaucracy, developed in the imperial conquest of Africa, came back to Europe in the genocide of the Jews.

For Mamdani, the colonial powers planted the seeds of the genocide in the imperial system that racialized the differences between foreign settler populations and indigenous inhabitants, and identified with some of the indigenous population by characterizing them as earlier settlers from the north. Once the settlers left, the various cultures among the indigenous populations competed for power; the indigenous viewed residents whom they perceived to be foreign, and therefore racially distinct, as threatening, justifying their exclusion and even extermination. Modernity's theory of democracy is rooted in the self-determination of culturally distinct peoples, and implicitly, the states that represent them, responsible only for their own destinies, may disclaim responsibility for the well-being of others.

In addition, Mamdani not only emphasizes membership theory, but adopts the historical and geographical approach to regional development with which I

¹ H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, orig. 1951; 3rd ed., 1958).

² Quoted in M. Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 19-20.

³ Cf. H. Bley, *South West Africa under German Rule, 1894-1914* (trans., London, 1971) and D. Soggot, *Namibia: The Violent Heritage* (New York, 1986).

agree.¹ In Mamdani's view, if membership in a society is linked to ethnicity, massacres can occur but not genocide; if the society is linked with territory, and membership in the state is obtained through citizenship, massacres and genocide can be avoided; but if membership is linked with race, the ground is set for genocide, particularly when one group defines itself as indigenous and others as immigrants or refugees. The colonial powers, with their racist division between settlers and natives, provided the foundation for genocide in Rwanda, where, unlike other parts of Africa, they divided the resident population into races. During the post-colonial revolution in Rwanda, Hutu revolutionaries who adopted the racist construction of the colonial powers construed Tutsi, racially, as migrants from the north who were not part of the Hutu nation that constituted Rwanda: they were a settler population no different from the former European colonists.

Although Habyarimana tried, after the bloodless coup in 1973 that brought him to power, to reconstruct the conception of Tutsi as an ethnic group, the attempt failed. The Tutsi-led RPF invasion in 1990 raised the spectre of what was readily constructed as, and gradually perceived by the general population to be, a neo-colonial conquest by a new settler population in a bid to re-enslave 'indigenous' Hutu. The invasion itself was impelled by the refusal of Yoweri Museveni's revolutionary regime in Uganda to give citizenship and land rights to Tutsi refugees who had helped him in 1986 to defeat Milton Obote. As history and geography combined in Rwanda, the racist logic of settler and native developed in the colonial period was reproduced in the logic of a populist native genocide against perceived settlers. The fact that yesterday's victims perpetrated the violence created a moral ambiguity for outsiders.

Except for Mamdani, who begins his book with the genocide in South-West Africa, the works under review stress that the pre-meditated attempt in 1994 to kill all Tutsi in Rwanda was the most intense genocide of the twentieth century; all agree that it was unspeakably cruel, characterized by torture, sexual mutilation, and dismemberment. All agree that the colonial powers constructed Tutsi and Hutu as racial groups, a binary division institutionalized and reified by Belgium, and that the Belgians' cruelty led many Rwandans to migrate to Uganda and the Congo. Mamdani alone, however, offers a structural explanation for the genocide that links the history of colonialism with the racist Rwandan genocidal regime.

Mamdani applies and develops Catherine Newbury's thesis that Hutu and Tutsi identities changed over time in a complex interplay of economics, culture, and politics.² He surveys the scholarly accounts of differences between Hutu and Tutsi as expressed in genetics, phenotypes, oral history, archaeology, and linguistics, and he explains the intensity of the racism among northern

¹ See *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*, ed. H. Adelman and A. Suhrke (New Brunswick, NJ, 1999).

² C. Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960* (New York, 1989). For a similar but less adequate analysis, see J. D. Eller, 'Rwanda and Burundi: When Two Tribes Go to War?', ch. 5 of *From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict: An Anthropological Perspective on International Ethnic Conflict* (Ann Arbor, 1999).

Rwandans who were the last to be conquered, incorporated into the Rwandan state, and constructed as Hutu, and also the least intermarried with Tutsi. Shifts in identities matched political developments at the time. Mamdani dismisses the common simplifications repeated by Melvern (p. 8) that Tutsi were tall, thin, and cattle-herders while Hutu were cultivators with typical Bantu features, and by Jones (p. 1) that Tutsi and Hutu were ethnic groups. But none of the authors makes the more serious mistakes of identifying Hutu and Tutsi as 'tribes' or of attributing the violence to the revival of atavistic hatred between primordially distinct groups.

The analysis of Hutu/Tutsi differences affects the characterization of the RPF as either a Tutsi-dominated military force or as a multi-ethnic political movement even if Tutsi predominated in the rebel army. For Power (p. 336), the RPF was a group of armed exiles, mainly Tutsi rebels, whom she incorrectly describes as invading 'Rwanda in February 1993 for a second time' (p. 348); in fact, the RPF simply broke the ceasefire and advanced nearer to Kigali. Melvern depicts the RPF as a multi-ethnic movement seeking to depose a corrupt regime; 'its twenty-six-member executive committee was composed of eleven Tutsi and fifteen Hutu' (p. 26). Mamdani, focusing on power and control, depicts the RPF as predominantly Tutsi (p. 175).

Mamdani documents in detail Melvern's sketch of the fears of Ugandans, particularly of the Acholi and Lango, that the Rwandan refugees would compete for land, and of their jealousy of the Rwandans' success in obtaining high office. Nevertheless, Melvern and Mamdani take different perspectives on the motivation and timing of the invasion in 1990. For Melvern, the circumstances in Uganda only set the stage for the decision by the multi-ethnic RPF to use force to overthrow a corrupt regime, whereas, for Mamdani, Uganda exported a political crisis over citizenship to Rwanda, where the citizenship crisis became more lethal owing to a history of internal racism. Mamdani places prime responsibility on the state of which Tutsi were residents rather than on the state from which they originated, a stance consistent with his normative stress on the peaceful character of states that define citizenship by residency rather than by ethnicity or race.

Mamdani also paints a more benign portrait of Habyarimana's regime. He argues that, before 1990, Habyarimana had moved from a racial to an ethnic definition of citizenship; though his reforms preceded the invasion and, for a while, were accelerated by it, they were eventually stymied by the tensions and greed for power within the RPF, rather than by the regime's corruption or its refusal to repatriate refugees. Habyarimana, however, acknowledged in principle the right of refugees to return (Mamdani, p. 153). In a speech to the United Nations two days before the invasion, he offered citizenship cards and travel documents to anyone who did not want citizenship in the states of asylum, as well repatriation for limited numbers (p. 159). This favourable view of Habyarimana is dismissed by the other authors, who regard his actions as duplicitous and view him a tyrant desperately clinging to power, a leader who used race to manipulate those who held racist beliefs until they turned against him.

Differences in chronology affect the characterization of the RPF. For Melvern (p. 57), the RPF breached the ceasefire in February 1993 to stop the killings of Tutsi, whereas for Mamdani (pp. 189, 192) the killings were responses to RPF military initiatives to win territory, rather than to liberate the people, as well as political advances by the opposition. Although the accounts can be complementary, stressing one or another component assigns responsibility to a different party, especially if the RPF is characterized as driven by the quest for power and capable of gross human rights abuses (pillage and displacement, and forced labour and recruitment of Hutu); though Mamdani found no evidence that the RPF perpetrated widespread slaughter (p. 192).

A key issue is the RPF's attitude to the extremists during the talks held at Arusha: whether it backed the extremists into a corner by denying the Coalition pour la Défense de la République (CDR) any share in power, by the RPF insisting on control of the ministry of the interior, and demanding such a prominent role in the proposed new national army (40% of enlisted men and 50% of the officer core). Melvern (p. 53) merely notes that Tanzania, the United States, and France criticized the RPF position.

So did Uganda. None of the authors discusses the issue of whether Uganda could have prevented or mitigated the genocide: Uganda had a powerful army, took part in the talks at Arusha, and served as the RPF's guarantor (Jones, p. 74). Though Museveni insisted that he had no prior knowledge of the invasion, he admitted that Uganda had given the RPF matériel, as its defeat would have destabilized Uganda as well as Rwanda (Mamdani, p. 183). None of the authors even questions Uganda's failure to act, or Tanzania's, while they chastise France and the United States. Perhaps the reason is obvious: open support for the RPF by Uganda would have been interpreted as verifying the Habyarimana regime's claim that the invasion was an exercise in Ugandan imperialism.

Mamdani (p. 211) suggests that a government containing the CDR was a possible alternative outcome of the talks. To Jones, however, the outcome appears certain: 'the final result proved to be a recipe for disaster because it pushed well beyond what was acceptable in key sectors in Kigali on distribution of command posts and the distribution of seats in the BBTG (the Broad-Based Transitional Government)' (p. 95), and thereby violated key tenets of conflict resolution that insist that one party *not* be given a significantly disproportionate role in government and that the various groups be represented in the army, particularly in command posts, roughly in proportion to their percentage of the population. Jones regrets that France did not back the government against the RPF more effectively (p. 78), but concedes that, as the CDR's supporters were spoilers determined to violate the peace agreement, containment was an alternative strategy not adopted.

The books give different answers to the questions whether the RPF made a mistake in excluding the CDR from military and political power, and whether its mistake lay in relying on the international community to neutralize the spoilers, as allowing committed racists and spoilers to join the government would not have neutralized but empowered them. Jones (p. 82) implies that

either possibility would have been preferable but, in the absence of anyone able and willing to neutralize the spoilers, inclusion would have been the better option, even if inclusion enhances their opportunities.

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Power restates the conventional view that France was 'the least appropriate country to intervene because of its warm relationship with the genocidal Hutu regime' (p. 380). In June 1994, it launched the militarily substantial Operation *Turquoise* extremely quickly, if very late, only for domestic public relations reasons and to protect its own political interests (Barnett, p. 147), and although the operation saved lives, it did not interfere with the hate radio broadcasts or try to stop the genocide and the escape of those responsible for it.¹ Mamdani and Melvern claim that France created the protected corridors by which those politically responsible for the genocide escaped to Zaire.²

Melvorn attributes France's support for the Habyarimana regime to a small powerful group in the Elysée Palace surrounding the president, François Mitterand, and his son Jean-Christophe who enjoyed close personal ties with the Habyarimana clique.³ Further, Melvern seems to support Paul Kagame's charge that France's provision of training and arms for the Habyarimana regime prolonged the conflict and allowed the extremists to consolidate their hold on power. Barnett charges France with protecting and continuing to supply arms to the genocidaires (p. 171) after the genocide began, and both Mamdani (p. 254) and Melvern (p. 183) insist that France continued to supply the defeated Rwandan government in the refugee camps at Goma and, according to Mamdani, conspired with Sese Seko (Joseph-Désiré) Mobutu, to ensure that the extremists who controlled the camps were not disarmed. Jones, while supporting the harsh criticism of France, concedes that French diplomats did play a constructive role during the Arusha talks (pp. 76-7); in fact, documents found at Goma show that the arms had been supplied by a British firm with an office in the Isle of Wight, which employed Israeli arms merchants who obtained arms from eastern European countries and stamped the cartons with markings in French.⁴

Jones characterizes the United States's role at the talks as governed simply by a desire to end a conflict in which it had no strategic or economic interest, and was trusted, as a result, by both the RPF and the government of Rwanda delegations, serving as a source of creative ideas, friendly persuasion, and leverage (p. 75). The other side of the story is that when the crunch came, as Barnett, Melvin, Power, and Ronayne all show, the United States insisted on a weak mandate which undermined the Arusha accords from the start, by limiting any independent arms enforcement actions; gave weak support to a UN peacekeeping force limited in size owing to the hostility of congress;

¹ Power, *'A Problem from Hell'*, p. 380; Jones, *Peacemaking in Rwanda*, p. 125.

² Madami, *When Victims Become Killers*, pp. 254-5; Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p. 214.

³ Cf. G. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York, 1995).

⁴ Copies of these documents were sent to me by an Italian journalist.

supported phased deployment only after no other state supported its proposal of a tiny force of 500 peacekeepers; blocked the supply of armoured personnel carriers and helicopters promised; advocated complete withdrawal once the genocide began, on the grounds that intervention in an active civil war was deadly; feared redeployment once genocide was undeniable, fearing the slippery slope of involvement (Power, p. 170); and contended that the other signatories were not committed to abiding by the Arusha accords. In fact, the United States showed the greatest lack of commitment; obfuscated the identities of the parties to the agreement by collapsing the extremist spoilers into their enemies, the moderate Hutus, whom the extremists regarded as traitors and eliminated first; confused the civil war with the war against the civilian population; and, when finally deciding in May 1994 to support UNAMIR II, after the genocide was well under way, tangled the provision of the authorized fifty armoured personnel carriers in a bureaucratic web of debates about capital and transportation costs and insurance cost recovery.

Power, even more scathing of the United States, notes Clinton's failure to consult the US political officer in Rwanda, Joyce Leader, after her return in April 1994, and to assemble his senior political advisers to consider diplomatic intervention. Power does document the belated and ineffective efforts to send reinforcements to Dallaire of Senator Paul Simon (D-Illinois), the chairman of the foreign relations committee on Africa, and Senator James (Jim) Jeffords (R-Vermont), the ranking Republican on the committee, who retrospectively blamed the lack of public support (pp. 176-7).

However, while Melvin blames the United States alone, Barnett finds UN bureaucratic procedures equally blameworthy and 'simply unconscionable' (p. 20). Whereas he stresses the political, ideational, and economic constraints, Ronayne (pp. 166-7) stresses the constraints of the PD-25 mind-set, seen (as Power, pp. 381-2, documents) in the support in July/August 1994 for safe zones on the border that Dallaire called a mission 'to put on a show at no risk', and which undermined his efforts to make UNAMIR II effective. Power and Melvin stress what the United States knew and could have known. Although Barnett admits that the excuse of ignorance wore thin as April 1994 progressed, he and Kuperman claim that US officials learned only 'by the latter part of April that the killings were the product of not simply a civil war but rather a genocidal campaign', ironically citing Power to support the claim (p. 161) - without citing the page - despite Power's revelation that the Special Forces mission sent to Kigali after 6 April reported on the slaughter under way. She thus refutes Kuperman's claim that US intelligence remained ignorant of the extent of the slaughters and that 'President Clinton could not have known that a nationwide genocide was under way in Rwanda until about April 20' (Kuperman, p. 101).

Boutros-Ghali made enormous efforts to place the blame for the non-intervention on the United States.¹ The scholarship suggests that his actions

¹ See B. Boutros-Ghali, Introduction, *The United Nations and Rwanda: 1993-6* (New York, 1996), p. 39. See also, B. Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished: A US-UN Saga* (London, 1999).

were self-serving exercises in displacement, and he had a major responsibility for facilitating the genocide by arranging to supply Egyptian arms to the Habyarimana regime after the RPF invasion when he was in the Egyptian foreign service. According to Melvern, he also maintained 'an unholy alliance' (Melvern, pp. 32-5) with France, the prime supporter of the Habyarimana regime, after France supported his candidature for secretary-general. His campaign to expand the United Nations' role into the realm of 'human security' exceeded its capability (Barnett, pp. 26, 32) and led to the quarrel with the United States (Melvern, p. 75). When he sent Dallaire on a reconnaissance mission to Rwanda in August 1993, the secretariat failed to provide political, military, economic, or human rights analysis, even though UN representatives participated in the discussions (Melvern, p. 82). Boutros-Ghali lobbied hard for the first UN peacekeeping mission to Rwanda, UNAMIR I, in October 1993 but only with a peacekeeping rather than peace enforcement mandate; he failed to prevent the watering down of Dallaire's recommendations (Melvern, p. 79); he failed to ensure that UNAMIR I was given enough troops or a mandate consistent with the Arusha accords (Barnett p. 43); he interpreted Dallaire's mandate and the mission's rules of engagement very narrowly; and he vetoed attempts to verify the existence of hidden weapons, despite the recommendations of his friend Booh-Booh (Melvern, pp. 94-5), whose ill-considered appointment as his special representative he engineered in November 1993, even though Booh-Booh, a former foreign minister of Cameroon, was thought to be a friend of Habyarimana (Melvern, p. 94).

Boutros-Ghali deliberately withheld from the security council critical information supplied by Booh-Booh and Dallaire (Melvern, pp. 113, 231) that, put together, pointed towards plans for the slaughter of Tutsi, if not necessarily genocide. When the secretariat threatened the Habyarimana government with the withdrawal of the UN peacekeepers unless the Arusha accords were carried out (Melvern, p. 90), it encouraged the extremists in their efforts to forestall the establishment of the broad-base government in order to instigate the withdrawal. After the genocide began on 6 April, ten Belgian peacekeepers were killed, and Belgium threatened to withdraw its troops from UNAMIR unless the mandate was revised and its troops were reinforced, 'Boutros-Ghali rejected any change in the mandate' (Melvern, p. 139); 'failed to provide leadership within the UN secretariat and security council' (Jones, p. 121); and, without consultation, insisted that the 'security council had no stomach for intervention' (Barnett, p. 104). Boutros-Ghali, 'an early advocate of withdrawal' (Barnett, p. 166; Melvern, pp. 139, 146, 158), compelled the UN department of peacekeeping operations to toe the line, a claim directly contrary to Mamdani's unsupported assertion (p. 213) that 'the secretary-general requested more than a doubling of the size of the contingent, from the original 2,500 to 5,500,' though this mistake should not surprise the reader, as Mamdani does not even know how to spell Dallaire's name: he spells it Dellaire, and thinks he was Belgian.

In addition, when Boutros-Ghali returned to New York from Europe in April 1994, he failed to pass on critical information to the security council after

the genocide began (Barnett, p. 18), and his long-delayed report to the council contained little substance or appreciation of the role UNAMIR was playing in protecting civilians (Melvern, p. 161). He portrayed the violence as a civil war (Melvern, p. 173); failed to suggest strategic alternatives; and implicitly endorsed shrinking the peacekeeping force to 240 (Barnett, p. 107). Though Barnett (p. 172) credits Boutros-Ghali with being the first person to label what was happening in Rwanda a genocide in May 1994, he is contradicted by Melvern's evidence that Maurice Herson of OXFAM, MSF-Belgium, and the RPF in a dispatch to the United Nations demanding that it act under the genocide convention (Melvern, p. 177) all used the term, while Boutros-Ghali, who avoided using it, characterized the conflict in his report from January 1994 as 'armed banditry' (Melvern, p. 113), and later as an ethnic conflict between Hutu and Tutsi rather than a centrally directed genocidal conspiracy (Barnett, p. 120). When, in May, he finally labelled the events as genocide, he failed to suggest how to deal with the representative of the genocidal government of Rwanda who sat on the security council during and even after the events (Barnett, p. 147).

Finally, in an effort to rewrite history, Boutros-Ghali remained haughty and unapologetic (Barnett, p. 153), placed the blame on the United States (Melvern, p. 228), and covered up his role by suppressing information and providing false information in the official UN report on Rwanda. In claiming that he had advocated intervention from the outset of the genocide (Barnett, p. 158), he rewrote history in a manner consistent with his and the secretariat's duplicity in telling Dallaire that the information he supplied was being passed on to the security council (which it was not: Melvern, pp. 113, 153) while telling the council that they had received none (Barnett, p. 119). The UN Blue Book on Rwanda, for example, includes a version of Boutros-Ghali's letter to the president of the security council, Colin Keating of New Zealand, different from the one he received, which substitutes the phrase 'civilian staff' for UNAMIR in the recommendation to evacuate (Melvern, endnote 10, p. 149). Similarly, whereas Boutros-Ghali claims that he argued against the Belgians' withdrawal, the Belgian foreign minister, Willy Claes, claimed that Boutros-Ghali supported it.¹

Would it have made a difference if a more perceptive and morally committed secretariat and secretary-general had kept the security council accurately and fully informed? The security council's report of October 1994² on the events in Somalia in 1993 concluded that 'the council had lost control of the mission. There had been a false assessment of the capability of the Somali fighters, and a lack of intelligence-gathering capability. The council report recommended that never again should the UN undertake enforcement action within internal conflicts of states; force should be applied only as the ultimate means after all peaceful remedies have been exhausted' (Melvern, p. 79). The

¹ Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p. 148; Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p. 621. The claim was made at the Belgian Senate Commission d'enquête, Rapport, Brussels, 18 Dec. 1999, p. 546.

² *Report of the Security Council Mission to Somalia*, 26, 27 Oct. 1994, New York, United Nations, S/1994/1039.

'Mogadishu Syndrome' helps to explain the United Nations' conduct in Rwanda and the constraints under which the secretary-general and the secretariat operated: the inadequacies of the latter fed the propensities of the former. 'With the exception of those who argued for intervention, namely, Nigeria, New Zealand, and the Czech Republic, members of the Security Council bear some moral responsibility' (Barnett, p. 20) for failing to recognize the genocide, for failing to ensure that an intervention force was organized in time, and for authorizing the withdrawal of the bulk of the force.

* * *

Johan Pottier, an admirer of Edward Said and his post-colonial thesis concerning constructed narratives, has written books on food security and was part of the team under John Borton that undertook the research for the third volume of the international study, 'The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience', entitled *Humanitarian Aid and Its Effects* (Astri Suhrke and I headed the team and wrote the second volume on *The International Role in the Rwanda Genocide*). Pottier has now written a book charging the post-genocide regime in Rwanda with engaging in a masterful effort at creating a singular (and false) post-genocide historical narrative that has disguised its aggressive role in Zaire/DRC. This narrative lifts events out of the context of the process of identity formation, class, the north-south divide in Rwanda and Kivu, war, economic catastrophe, and deliberate exploitation. It has been adopted by the United States and Britain generally and, more specifically, a wide variety of scholars, diplomats, media, non-governmental organizations, and those in the development business because the regime played on the guilt for the inaction of the international community, its failure to stop or significantly mitigate the genocide, and because these countries were 'cowed' and uncritical. As Pottier puts it, Rwanda and eastern Zaire were 're-imagined' from 1994 to 1996 (p. 39).

Pottier is correct in asserting that, during the genocide, the Western media propagated a false narrative of an age-old inter-ethnic conflict between Hutu and Tutsi 'tribes'. In the new imagined and falsely constructed post-genocide narrative, the strife between Hutu and Tutsi was only a product of colonialism; prior to the arrival of European (German, then Belgian) colonizers, Hutu and Tutsi lived in harmony. The problem is that, whatever the flaws of each of the many books written in English and published mostly in the United States, none presents the story in this simplified way, save perhaps the journalistic account which seems to be the basis of the claim, Fergal Keane's *Season of Blood* (1995). The media in general have been more responsible in their reporting, although, as Pottier illustrates, all over the map in their interpretations of post-genocide history.

Pottier adopts (and acknowledges doing so) Newbury's economic and class account of the evolving issue of identity in nineteenth-century Rwanda, one that virtually all authorities on Rwanda have accepted and to which only Mamdani has added greater depth. Pottier extends that analysis to Zaire, by

interweaving the various stages of migration with the process of identity formation and reformation largely adapted from Odenga Ottunu's account.¹ However, in reporting the violent conflict in eastern Zaire, according to Pottier, media reports tended to reduce the conflict into a clash simply between Hutu and Tutsi and ignored the Hunde, Nyanga, and autochthones killed and displaced at Masisi, and the involvement of the Bangilimia and Mayi-Mayi in the fighting as well as the Zairean military, the ex-FAR (the military forces of the Rwanda government defeated in 1994), and the troops sent by Rwanda and Uganda and, to a small extent, by Burundi. The propensity to simplify this multi-sided war may be correct, but the conclusion is stated rather than confirmed, as Pottier does not systematically survey media reports and uses only selected illustrative references. The simplification rarely portrayed the war as 'entirely a local product' (p. 43) supported by Rwanda, notwithstanding Pottier's construction that it was masterminded by Rwanda and, in particular, by Kagame.

In addition to doubting Pottier's large interpretative claims, one may dispute some of his facts and interpretations. Thus, although I agree with him that many thousands and not hundreds were killed at Kibeho in 1995, I do not conclude that the 'carnage had been rational, calculated, deliberate', and vengeful, as did *The Guardian*, an interpretation Pottier endorses. It was a product of misunderstanding, panic, breakdown in communications, and terrible weather. Pottier evidently has not read my account.² Further, according to Pottier, the claim that 700,000 Rwandan refugees repatriated voluntarily in November 1996 is a gross exaggeration both of the numbers (he quotes only correspondence from the African Great Lakes scholar, René Lemarchand, to support the claim of exaggerated figures) and the willingness. I claim that 642,000 were repatriated; one of the few figures with some degree of accuracy because multiple counts by those who actually counted the refugees streaming across the border at Goma into Zaire produced similar results. Pottier claims the refugees were 'forcefully repatriated' from Zaire, a conclusion I and the majority of NGOs dispute. Lastly, Pottier argues that hundreds of thousands of genuine refugees who fled westwards were made invisible by the reporting (p. 56). Contradictorily, he supports the conclusions and widely publicized claims of the majority of NGOs who insisted that these 'invisible' people were also subjected to genocidal slaughter, a contention I dispute, though undoubtedly tens of thousands but not hundreds of thousands were killed. He often quotes my work when it supports his, but never directly addresses my radically different narrative.

Pottier has read widely but not well, has often read into rather than from other works to buttress his thesis, and makes so many mistakes that the credibility of his claims is undermined, such as saying that Barnett 'assumed primary responsibilities for US peacekeeping operations' in Rwanda (p. 214).

¹ O. Ottunu, 'An Historical Analysis of the Invasion by the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA)', in *Path of a Genocide*, ed. Adelman and Suhrke.

² H. Adelman, 'Humanitarian Intervention and the Slaughter at Kibeho', Centre for Refugee Studies, York University.

Ironically, Pottier is the one 'snowed' by US media propaganda when he writes that Clinton sent '2,000 US troops to reopen Kigali's airport for relief flights' (p. 71), a message that CNN coverage conveyed (by flying a plane into the supposedly closed airport the day before) when it televised the American troops 'capturing' the airport, without noting what everyone knew: that the airport that had been held and controlled throughout the war by Canadian and Ghanaian UNAMIR troops. The current Rwanda regime is unquestionably engaged in a propaganda battle. However, Pottier's claim, that it has constructed a distorted picture of Rwandan history that has been swallowed uncritically by the West, is not supported by the evidence provided in the book.

* * *

The Rwanda case highlights the United Nations' failure at preventive diplomacy, its failure to adopt a pro-active stance in relation to promoting security, its failure to heed early warning signs and to deal effectively with spoilers, its failure to provide the leadership stipulated by the Charter, and its undermining of international law by narrowing the interpretation of the genocide convention in the early stages of the Rwanda genocide. Its actions reflected the instrumental use of the United Nations by the major powers and their reluctance to involve themselves, except when it serves their own political or economic interests. Nor did the middle powers demonstrate a serious commitment to peacekeeping by backing up rhetoric with troops. The failures of the international community were not only moral, institutional, and strategic, but are attributable to the deep structures within the international system. Nonetheless, one should be wary lest transforming a system from one based on a combination of Realpolitik with liberal internationalism under a patina of international law, to one led by a morally crusading hyper-power, should be a leap from the frying pan into the fire.