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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE /COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES COURSE 2

03 December 1999

Ethical & Legal Dilemmas in Decision-Making

Rwanda: "Lest We Forget"

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Ethical & Legal Dilemmas in Decision-Making

(Rwanda: Lest we Forget)

"It has been quite rightly said that suffering, like light, knows no national boundaries. No matter when or where it erupts, every new conflict is a setback for civilization itself, and it is usually the weakest who pay the price."¹

-Cornelio Sommaruga
President

(International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC))

Introduction

Recently, in viewing several videos on the events leading up to the "genocide" that took place in Rwanda in 1994, I couldn't help being affected by the senseless slaughter of innocent men, women and children and how little was done by the International Community to intervene and to put a stop to these ghastly killings. This was even more disturbing considering that the events leading up to the crisis unequivocally demonstrated that a "genocide" was in the making. As the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Corelio Sommaruga has poignantly acknowledged: "every new conflict is a setback for civilization itself," but unfortunately, "it is usually the weakest who pay the price."² It is now up to the International Community to recover from this enormous '*setback to civilization*' and to put into place the necessary mechanisms to prevent a recurrence of such horrific events.

Aim

The purpose of this paper is to examine the ethical and legal issues relevant to the

¹ Jonathan Moore, ed. Hard Choices, *Moral Dilemmas In Humanitarian Intervention*. Forward, p.ix

² Ibid. p. ix.

deployment and employment of UN troops during the recent Rwandan crisis. Lessons from this experience will then be applied to the use of international troops on humanitarian operations in general. In addressing this subject, I will try to answer a number of difficult questions: What happened in Rwanda and how did this carnage occur when the world declared after World War II that it would never again tolerate such violence? Who was responsible and why did the international community fail to respond? What are the legal and ethical responsibilities of observing nations? How do nations reconcile differences between their legal and ethical responsibilities? Perhaps the most important question arising from any review of this magnitude is how can we prevent the escalation of these types of communal conflicts in the future?

What happened in Rwanda? (Chronology of Events Leading up to The Genocide)³

The background events leading up to the genocide are complex. An estimated one million Rwandans, the vast majority of them from the Tutsi tribe, were massacred between April and August 1994. An oversimplified explanation does not convey the complex interaction of political, cultural and economic forces that erupted into a "monstrous wave of wholesale ethnic slaughter."⁴ However, a history of primal violence, intra-elite struggles, a weak economy, proximity to conflict-ridden neighbors, and a lack of outside interest, set the conditions for the crisis of 1994. In fact, it resulted in "50

³ Steven Metz, *Disaster and Intervention in Sub-Saharan Africa: Learning from Rwanda*, pp. 2-9 & Jane's Intelligence Review, *Crisis in Central Africa*, pp. 4-6 were used to summarize the events leading up to the Genocide.

⁴ World Wide Web. Christopher Andrews, *Words Cannot describe: a trip into Rwanda's heart of darkness*, [<http://www.cma.ca/cmaj/vol-158/issue-1/0084.htm>] 1998.

years of misrule, repression, and violence."⁵

Rwanda was an established kingdom for several centuries before being absorbed by German East Africa in 1899. As a result of its geographic location, limited economic value and minimal strategic importance, the Germans and, after 1916 the Belgians, used "indirect rule" in Rwanda, leaving much of the administration to existing institutions and individuals. For years the Tutsi-Hutu distinction was based on a "caste or class" system whereby, it was possible to move from Tutsi to Hutu, or the reverse, based on the family's economic situation at the time. Under Belgian rule, a change of internal education systems to include "Hutus" enabled the Hutus to transcend their 'historic subordination' and produced a Hutu "elite". Many Rwandan intellectuals "blamed Belgian colonial policy for transforming class distinctions into more 'intractable ethnic' ones since under the educational system, they were taught that Tutsis and Hutus were separate tribes."⁶

In 1959, Hutu discontent exploded into outright rebellion. The Belgians, who sympathized with the Hutus, quickly restored order because they considered the Tutsi pro-Communist. The Belgians increased the pace of democratization and decolonization, which invariably benefited the more numerous Hutus at the expense of the Tutsis.

In July 1962, Rwanda attained independence under Hutu control. In the violence that followed, the Tutsi-dominated Union Nationale Rwandaise was repressed, resulting in the outright massacre of Tutsis. This led to a large migration of Tutsi refugees fleeing

⁵ Steven Metz, *Disaster and Intervention in Sub-Saharan Africa: Learning from Rwanda*, p. V.

⁶ *Ibid*, p 4.

to neighboring Uganda and Zaire. By 1964, "between 40 and 70 percent of Rwanda's Tutsis were refugees," however, few Tutsis gave up hope of eventually returning to their homeland.⁷ With Tutsi opposition crushed, conflict erupted within the Hutu elite as northerners resisted what they perceived as unfair economic advantages given to the southerners by the government. This intra-Hutu squabble exacerbated the Hutu-Tutsi conflict as both Hutu groups attempted to portray the other as Tutsi-influenced.

In 1973, regional events ignited violence that led to the massacre of Hutus by the Tutsi-dominated army of Burundi, which, in turn, sparked further massacres of Tutsis within Rwanda. During the ensuing disorder, Army Chief of Staff, Juvenal Habyarimana seized control. He immediately instigated reforms and commenced a reconciliation of Hutu-Tutsi relations. "For the next 15 years, [1973-1988] Rwanda under Habyarimana was relatively calm and competently administered."⁸

In 1989, a crisis shattered the stability. A combination of factors including population pressures, crop disease, degradation of soil and a drop in world prices for coffee [major source of export earnings] led to an economic crisis. Famine spread requiring substantial outside relief. In October of that year, a military force of between 7000 and 10,000 representing the exiled, Tutsi-dominated Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) entered from Uganda. While decades of resentment among the refugees formed the foundation of rebel support, the leaders believed that the discontent with the

⁷ Ibid. p.4

⁸ Ibid. p 5.

Habyarimana regime would generate public support for the rebels once they entered Rwanda. The Rwandan government was able to repel the invasion with the help of troops from Zaire. After near-defeat, the RPF shifted to guerrilla operations and soon thereafter, under the direction of Major Paul Kagame, controlled a strip of Rwandan territory along the Ugandan border.

By late 1991, the 'military balance' favored the Tutsi rebels. Mediation efforts by the other states of the region failed to end the conflict, so in an effort to undercut support for the RPF, Habyarimana implemented further political reforms and shuffled government ministries. The reforms gave Hutu hard-liners the impression that Habyarimana was soft on the RPF. This opposition to Habyarimana led to the formation of armed militias called the *interahamwe*, a step that contributed to the violence to come. By the end of 1992, the RPF had fought to a position of near invincibility. Further successes led to negotiations between the government and the RPF. The outcome was the Arusha Accords signed on 4 Aug 1993, which sought to end the war, demobilize both sides, move the nation toward multiparty democracy, and reintegrate the Tutsi refugees back into Rwandan life. The two sides agreed to the formation of a transition government to be followed by elections under the supervision of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR).

In November 1993, the first 450 of the 2500 peacekeepers arrived in Rwanda to work in the UNAMIR force. Their mandate was to ensure security and implement the Peace Accords signed in Arusha by President Habyarimana and the Rwandan Patriotic

Front (RPF).⁹ The Organization of African Unity (OAU) provided troops to monitor the cease-fire; however, the Accords were bitterly opposed by Hutu hard-liners. All the parties squabbled and maneuvered for political power in a transitional government. Hatred was prevalent throughout the region and Hutu hard-liners felt that the RPF had received concessions out of proportion to the 14 percent of the population that it represented. This further exacerbated the situation and fanned rumors that the Habyarimana government was Tutsi-influenced. Many of the extremist political leaders encouraged killing through underground or subversive links to the Coalition pour la Défense de la République (CDR) and the Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement et la Démocratie (MRND) parties and their militias, while many military deserters and thousands of disaffected youths turned to banditry. The strength of the armed militias, an atmosphere of instability, violence, recrimination, paranoia and accusation, became a 'stick of dynamite' waiting to be ignited. That ignition occurred on 6 April 1994, with the crash of Habyarimana's plane. The exact cause has not been determined; however, it is believed that a shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missile fired from Kigali downed the aircraft. One of the several hypotheses on the killings fell on extreme members of Habyarimana's own Presidential Guard, apparently concerned at the potential loss of their influence under the Arusha deal.¹⁰ However, the Hutu lead intrinsic government created on 9 April 1994 and its propaganda radio, RTLM blamed the Belgium contingent for the incident. The assassination unleashed an immediate and apparently "well-planned" wave of killing led by the elite Presidential Guard and the

⁹ National Film Board of Canada, The Rwanda Series, Vols 1-3, *Chronicle of a Genocide Foretold*, 1997.

¹⁰ Robert Hall & Peter Felstead, Eds. Jane's Intelligence Review, *Crisis In Central Africa*, Special Report No 13, p.6.

Hutu militias. This program of planned killing disintegrated into 'genocidal anarchy' over the following weeks.

When the genocide commenced, the peacekeepers were in place but not for very long. They had gone to Africa to keep the peace, under a perceived classic Chapter VI mission in a safe environment, but instead, witnessed "hell on earth." Without hope of quick outside intervention, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) launched an offensive to stop the massacres but progress was slow.¹¹ The decision to withdraw or reduce the UN force as the genocide was gathering speed had enormous practical and political consequences inside Rwanda. By 21 April 1994, the UN Force was reduced to 450 all ranks. It made it impossible for the existing troops to expand their efforts to protect the tens of thousands of Tutsi who had taken refuge in churches and schools throughout the country. As well, it sent an unmistakable message to the genocidal forces that there would not be any impediments to their finishing the job.¹² Within a three-month period, almost one million men, women and children were slaughtered with another one and a half million displaced from their homes.¹³ One missionary succinctly summed-up the situation in Rwanda by stating that "Hell doesn't exist anymore, because all the devils have come to Rwanda and brought hell with them."¹⁴

¹¹ Stephen Metz, *Disaster and Intervention in Sub-Saharan Africa*, p5-6. About 500 peacekeepers remained in theatre versus the reported 270 as reported by Metz.

¹² World Wide Web. *The 1994 Rwandan Genocide and U.S. Policy*, p. 2. [<http://www.africapolicy1.org/docs98/rwan9805.2.htm>].

¹³ Department of National Defence, *Witness the Evil- A CF Video*.1996.

¹⁴ National Film Board of Canada Video. *Hand of God, Hand of the Devil*. 1996.

Discussion

How did this carnage occur when the world declared after World War II that it would never again tolerate such violence? When the international community attempts to understand African conflicts, they often over-emphasize the primal dimension (i.e. "the idea that Africa is a place of darkness, where furious savages clobber each other on the head to assuage their dark ancestral bloodlusts"),¹⁵ a view that is shared even amongst many liberal minded individuals. According to Stephen Metz in his *Disaster and Intervention in Sub-Saharan Africa*, "tribes, castes, clans, and cliques are important, but are not the sole determinant of conflict and often not even the most important one." In African conflicts, primalism often begins as a secondary consideration and only increases in importance when it is manipulated. Politics are normally at the root of the problem since "the winners of political competition not only have the right to govern, but also control the economy and the distribution of jobs, contracts and other resources. To lose a political struggle is often to lose all."¹⁶ It is also noteworthy, as pointed out by Lieutenant-General Dallaire that there is no history of 'Power-sharing' in this region, thus further complicating the situation. Regional elements are equally important. Conflict in neighboring states, often creates refugees. Bloodshed and repression in Burundi and Uganda led to new refugee flows and altered the existing refugee communities, thus shaping the events in Rwanda. As well, conflicts in neighboring states sometimes create antagonisms, which generate external support for insurgents or rebels. Two decades of war in Uganda provided valuable military experience to the senior leadership of the RPF.

¹⁵ Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*, New York: Columbia University Press 1995, p. xii (Forward).

¹⁶ Steven Metz, *Disaster and Intervention In Sub-Saharan Africa: Learning from Rwanda*. P 16.

In short, Mentz sees the Rwandan conflict as the consequence of "high-stakes political machinations, economic stagnation, population pressure, ecological decay, refugees, the absence of peaceful means of conflict resolution, and primal violence that spawns human disasters".¹⁷ Extremely difficult moral choices arise from the complexity of these situations since they transcend political, military and humanitarian needs. As you will see, turning our backs to these situations is neither ethical nor legally feasible.

Who was responsible? The slaughter in Rwanda was planned by a "privileged clique of extremist political and military leaders who were determined to block political reforms that would loosen their grip on power."¹⁸ The Presidential Guard launched the executions on the evening of the 6th of April 1994. They started killing during the night and managed to eliminate most of the priority targets such as politicians, journalists and civil rights activists within the first 36 hours of the civil war. The Presidential Guard had a force of about 1500 which was sufficient to terrorize the capital within a short time. They immediately solicited the assistance of the *Interhamwe* and *Impuzamugambi* militias, which had waited for an opportunity to participate in these events. Their numbers were estimated at 4,000 and they also acted as the executioners. As well, the key culprits of the genocide were the ordinary peasants. The degree of compulsion exercised on them varied greatly from place to place, but the influence of the government movement to "kill the

¹⁷ Ibid. p.16.

¹⁸ Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Africa of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, one hundred Third Congress, Second Session, May 4, 1994. P.2

enemy Tutsi" undeniably played a key element in encouraging the massacres of Tutsis.¹⁹ Finally, while members of the international community did not physically 'pull the trigger' or 'swing the machete' that killed all these people, from a moral viewpoint, they must share in the burden of guilt for failing to put a stop to these ruthless killings in a timely fashion.

Why did the International Community fail to respond? The brutality of the Hutu attacks against Tutsi citizens and the clearly defined aims of such attacks should have left no doubt in the minds of the international community of the severity of this "ethnic cleansing." It seems that such destruction of human life should have solicited some form of intervention or given rise to legal questions in international law. Did the international community know what was taking place? It would be difficult in this world of advanced technology and instant 'CNN media coverage' to argue that the international community didn't know about it. Similarly, there appears to have been sufficient warning to the UN to suggest that a "genocide" was in the making, including a number of cables to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). Why didn't people like Kofi Annan, head of the DPKO at the time, ensure these reports were brought to the attention of the Security Council? Why did the concerns of the UN Force Commander, Lieutenant-General Dallaire go unheard, particularly, when his superior and former colleague was the senior Canadian military advisor to the UN Headquarters at the time? Examining the legal responsibilities of observing nations with respect to their intervention into the

¹⁹ Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*, pp. 242-248

affairs of another sovereign nation may help to shed some light on the situation and explain why the International Community failed to respond.

What are the legal responsibilities of observing Nations? One of the failings of the UN reflects the concern of member states regarding "unwanted intrusion into national sovereignty."²⁰ These concerns apparently have inhibited efforts to anticipate and respond to initial violence, especially within states. Why? There is tension between two important elements of International Law. On one hand, we have sovereignty and on the other, the protection of human rights and rule of law. According to Patrick O' Halloran, no international legal concept has been so central to current controversies as the 'nonintervention into the domestic jurisdiction of nation-states... an ongoing ethical and legal debate rages over the validity of so-called humanitarian intervention."²¹ Furthermore, he sees humanitarian intervention as a relatively recent phenomenon "whose increasing occurrence is attributable to international law, empowered regional and international organizations, and a popular concern with common security given global economic, societal and ecological interdependencies."²² Consider what Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter has to say about sovereignty:

Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

Article 2 (7) of the UN Charter reads:

²⁰ World Wide Web. Compton's Encyclopedia. 'Sovereignty' is defined as the supreme power of a state over its subjects, vested in the king in an absolute monarchy and in the people in a democracy: in a wider sense, the power of a state to declare war, negotiate treaties, administer its own internal laws. [http://www.optonline.com/comtons/ceo/33850_Q.html].

²¹ Patrick O'Halloran, *Humanitarian Intervention and the Genocide in Rwanda*, London: The Research

Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the member to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter: but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII.²³

Article 2 of the United Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide reads:

The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law, which they undertake to prevent and to punish.²⁴

:
As one can see, international military intervention in support of the UN Charter and international law requires a willingness on the part of member states, to acknowledge the presence of malicious acts such as genocide and gross violations of human rights, over the sovereign rights of statehood. Only under these circumstances, can action under Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide be authorized to prevent or stop such violations. Hence, this may explain the UN's hesitation to intervene, despite the obvious genocide and mutual abuse of humanitarian rights that occurred in Rwanda. As well, given the clause in the UN Charter concerning non-interference into a state's internal affairs, one could understand UN reluctance to intervene into the affairs of Rwanda.²⁵ This contradiction between respecting national sovereignty and the moral and ethical imperative to stop slaughter within states poses a real and difficult dilemma. To illustrate this point, Patrick O'Halloran, correctly points out that there is "no consensus on the legality of international

²³ World Wide Web. *Charter of the United Nations*, Chapter 1, art 2-7, [<http://www.un.org/Overview/Charter/chapter1.html>].

²⁴ World Wide Web. *United Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, Dec 9, 1948. [http://www.armenian-genocide.org/conventions/genocide_convention.htm]

²⁵ Patrick J. O'Halloran, *Humanitarian Intervention and the Genocide in Rwanda*, p5.

intervention by human rights." The right of a regional grouping of states or the UN to perpetrate an act of aggression or a direct military intervention against others' is not authorized under international law. The International Court of Justice established this principle in the Straits of Corfu decision.²⁶ O'Halloran recognizes; however, that the nature of the international community's responsibility to uphold certain fundamental rights for all citizens regardless of state or origin has also undergone a certain evolution.

Notwithstanding the ambiguity of these laws, one should be reminded that the Jewish Holocaust provided the impetus for the formulation of the Genocide Convention, and "the right of humanitarian intervention on behalf of populations persecuted in a manner shocking to mankind".²⁷ The punishment of genocide was an "international concern" by the General Assembly in 1946, and the Genocide Convention adopted in 1948. The case of Rwanda would appear to fall into this category. The brutality of the Hutu attacks against Tutsi citizens and the clearly defined aims of such attacks should have left no doubt in the minds of the international community of the severity of this 'ethnic cleansing'. It seems logical that such destruction of human life should have solicited some form of intervention on humanitarian/moral grounds. Then, why didn't it? According to Alain Destexhe in *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, no international action could be taken without the leading role of the United States (US) who, at that time, was unwilling to act as a police force to the world because of recent events in Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia. In Somalia, the 30 American soldiers who

²⁶ Ibid, p.12.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 6

were killed served as a crucial factor in the formulation of new American policy on UN operations. US potential involvement was further complicated by the added condition to this new policy that future operations would have to have a *direct* bearing on *US national interests*. Perhaps this explains why the US became involved in Kosovo, yet refused to be drawn into the Rwanda or East Timor conflicts. However, Alain Destexhe contends the real motive for this position was "a determination to progressively reduce the amount that the US was contributing to peacekeeping operations which stood at 30 percent of the total budget."²⁸ According to the Secretary of Defense, Charles W. Freeman, Jr., US concerns must be "primarily moral and symbolic." The limits of US interest must shape US goals: the immediate objective should be to ameliorate catastrophe and meet basic human needs. The US military's long-term objective should be to establish or re-establish civilian control that meets minimum standards of human rights.²⁹ It was unfortunate, as Destexhe points out, that the Tutsis were the first victims of this new policy. Notwithstanding this, even if the United States were unwilling to participate in a "humanitarian" effort, how could the rest of the World ignore the events in Rwanda, particularly with their obligation to respond under Article 1 of the UN Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide which again states:

The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law, which they undertake to prevent and to punish.³⁰

²⁸ Alain Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, New York: New York University Press, 1995, p. 50.

²⁹ Charles W. Freeman, Jr., "U.S. Military Interests in Post-Apartheid South Africa," CSIS Africa Notes, No 160, May 1994, p. A6

³⁰ World Wide Web. *United Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. Art.1 [http://www.armenian-genocide.org/conventions/genocide_convention.htm]

Patrick O'Holloran insists that it was not "a simple case of collective violence promoted by the collapse of a popular regime and years of continuous inter-ethnic violence, but one that was 'centrally planned and purposeful' whose intent was total destruction." He adds, "beneath the killing frenzy, something more systematic and sinister was happening. Moderate members of the Hutu government, those who had favored making some accommodation with the Tutsi, were among the first to be hunted down."³¹ Destexhe contends that there were numerous similarities between Hitler's grand plan and the Hutu government. Hitler's plan was founded on an engrained European anti-Semitism, which he played on by singling out the Jews as the source of all Germany's ills, while the Hutus singled out the Tutsis as the root cause of all of Rwanda's problems. While the Nazis called the Jews "vermin", the Hutus called the Tutsis 'invenzi' [cockroaches], who had to be crushed. The plot to exterminate the Tutsis was conceived within the close circle of government officials surrounding President Juvenal Habyarimana. From 1990, at the instigation, and with the active complicity of Habyarimana and his government, massacres of Tutsis increased and went unpunished. A racist ideology was promoted by two of the Hutu parties of government. They developed a simple strategy for retaining control through the formation of militias and the manipulation of the media, both of which later became tools of the genocide itself.³²

Radio Mille Collines, a private radio station, broadcast unceasing messages of hate, such as 'the grave is only half full. Who will help us to fill it?' Hence, the radio became the basic instrument of propaganda for the Hutu extremists, and the militias

³¹ Patrick O'Halloran, *Humanitarian Intervention and the Genocide in Rwanda*, p. 8

³² Alain Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, New York: NY University Press, 1994, pp.28-33

rallied in support of its slogans. The monthly journal *Kangura* also contributed to spreading anti-Tutsi racism. Intent on bringing the ethnic question into the political process, the *Kangura* called for all means to be used to prevent a successful conclusion to the negotiations with the RPF. From the perspective of the racist Hutu parties, the President had betrayed his people by signing the Arusha Accords.³³ The media encouraged the violence with statements that 'the country must be completely cleansed of Tutsis.' The genocide spread quickly in certain regions of the Country, but it took almost three weeks for news to appear in foreign newspapers and for them to start comparing the situation in Rwanda to Nazi Germany.³⁴ It was clearly evident that the world reaction to the genocide in Rwanda, by anyone's standard, was ineffectual.

What are the ethical responsibilities of observing Nations? As previously noted, intervention across national borders by use of military force has long been a source of controversy and strong opinions.³⁵ Like all uses of power, the question of intervention is not simply a political or military matter, but one, which must also be addressed from the perspective of ethical values. The spheres include the moral life of the individual citizen, the individual in military service, military commanders, policy makers, and heads of states. To what degree should the ethical debate reach even farther? The Nation, after all, does not exist in isolation but interacts with others. Unless one is a complete relativist, where there are no binding obligations, ethical values and the principles that express them have a universal claim: they do not stop at the border, or even at the border of one's own

³³ Alain Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*, p 29-30.

³⁴ Ibid. 32-33

³⁵ James Turner Johnson, *The Just War Idea and The Ethics of Intervention* p 4.

culture.³⁶ Accordingly, the United Nations as a framework for multilateral peace must act morally in responding to a world, which appears beset with an increasing number of "ethnic" conflicts. Not everyone shares this view for moral intervention. William Zartman, in his notion of a conflict being "ripe for resolution" poses an opposite viewpoint when contemplating intervention. He states that just as the horrors of WW II made the problems of Western Europe 'ripe for resolution', the bloodbath in Rwanda may set the stage for an ultimate solution to that nation's conflict. A similar view is shared by Metz, who insists that "if the US or a multinational force had stopped the war before the RPF victory, a stockpile of hate may have remained and festered, only to explode again in the near future."³⁷ As morally agonizing and unethical as this may appear to some people, Stephen Metz also insists that there "are conflicts where hate must be exhausted before resolution can begin."³⁸ From a humanitarian perspective, Michael Ignatieff in *Warriors' Honor* contends that humanitarian intervention may even help to keep war going. According to him, conflicts in the past burned themselves out as they used up soldiers, supplies and food. Now war is able to outrun the carrying capacity of the local ecology. This means, of course, "accepting that war may be an unavoidable solution to ethnic conflict" and "accepting a moral pact with the devil of war, seeking to use its flames to burn a path to peace."³⁹ As a Canadian citizen and a member of the Canadian Forces, these viewpoints are considered morally repugnant and rather barbaric.

Nevertheless, such views reflect the need for an organization such as the United Nations

³⁶ Ibid. p.6.

³⁷ William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, pp.220-251.

³⁸ Stephen Metz, *Disaster and Intervention in Sub-Saharan Africa: Learning from Rwanda*, p11.

³⁹ Michael Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor: Ethnic war and the Modern Conscience*, Toronto: Penquin Group, 1998. pp. 158-160.

that can intervene to prevent or halt genocide when societal control is lost, circumvented or repressed by internal state organs. The onus should be on the UN to act; however, in cases where the will is not there to declare these crises for what they are, individual nations must be prepared to act, either unilaterally or in conjunction with neighboring states to put an end to human right abuses. Having established a moral/ethical justification to intervene, the next critical question is when to intervene?

According to Metz, no decision is harder yet more central to ultimate success than the timing of an intervention. Many analysts insist that the "sooner the better" approach would have the greatest impact and minimize the loss of lives. President Clinton, has stated, "We should help the nations of Africa identify and solve problems before they erupt".⁴⁰ While such comments are noble, where was the U.S. when it was most needed? It is suggested that obtaining a consensus within the UN before a "crisis" has occurred would be even more difficult than after the "crisis" has happened. Nevertheless, intervention into a country's affairs might best be tied to a loss of control in government. So when does a government cease to be a government? Perhaps when the government has lost control such as losing control of the population and civil order thus justifying intervention under the UN Charter. A similar situation exists when a government ceases to be respected as one (gross violation of human rights, which contradicts its responsibilities towards all the citizens within its boundaries), which would once give the UN justification to intervene. The period between the outbreak of hostilities on 6 April 1994, in Rwanda, until the establishment of a government by the RPF in July 1994,

⁴⁰ President Clinton, *Remarks from a White House Conference on Africa*, Washington DC, June 27, 1994

would have an optimum opportunity for UN intervention under this interpretation of the law. At some point in time between these two events, which also marked the brutal genocide of Tutsis, the Rwandan government ceased to be effective. It was at this point that the UN or individual countries could have intervened without having endless discussions on international law and its application in promoting democratic values. One of the factors that precluded intervention on these grounds is that the interim government had a representative on the Security Council, so the UN recognized its semi-official government status.⁴¹

Another dilemma in this whole tragedy evolved around UNAMIR's performance while in Rwanda. The military leaders in this peacekeeping mission often found themselves in extremely demanding and complex situations that required independent action and carried an enormous moral responsibility, which could have had potentially far-reaching political implications. In this case, UNAMIR's ability to provide the necessary security for Rwanda civilians and aid operations was "undercut by the lack of timely political, financial, and materiel support from the UN Security Council and UN member governments."⁴² Moreover, its most obvious failure was to stop the killings and prevent the spread of violence. One can't imagine what thoughts were going through the minds of the Belgium and French *quick reaction forces* tasked with extracting their foreign nationals from an area where innocent Tutsi men, woman and children were denied assistance. Hours later, these abandoned Tutsis were slaughtered by the ruling Hutus. In the words of Alain Destexhe, "rarely has there been an episode in history when

⁴¹ This interpretation was provided by LGen Dallaire during his review of my paper.

⁴² Larry Minear and Phillipe Guillot, *Soldiers To the Rescue*, Paris: Brown University, 1996, p89.

differences in status and destiny of groups of human beings has been so obvious."⁴³ In watching the CBC Journal account of the Belgium and French evacuation of their Foreign Nationals, one could immediately observe the 'haunted' look in the eyes of the quick reaction forces. How will they cope with the 'memories' and 'nightmares' of having abandoned helpless and innocent people because of a lack of authority and the means to intervene? As Lieutenant-General Dallaire recalls, "throughout most of this carnage, UNAMIR's hands were essentially tied."⁴⁴

Dilemmas between morals and professional and institutional demands are generally rationalized away by reference to the deeply ingrained concept of obedience and professional loyalty. One could contend that Lieutenant-General Dallaire, as a professional soldier was anxious to use military force to 'take the initiative away' from the Hutus, but without a UN Mandate to do so and the necessary resources in terms of troop and equipment 'contributing countries support', any offensive measures would have proved futile. While such 'heroic' and 'pluralistic' moral actions on part of the UNAMIR may have had a marginal impact on the Rwanda situation, it is more probable, because of the availability of so few troops in theatre, the mission would have resulted in even greater UN personnel losses. Despite these significant limitations, UNAMIR was still able to protect 30,000 Hutus and Tutsis (lot of elite) and evacuate nearly 5000 others.⁴⁵ Ethical 'Pluralists' offer the view that moral obligations are normally binding but may be

⁴³ Alain Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide*, p.48.

⁴⁴ Larry Minear and Phillipe Guillot, *Soldiers To the Rescue*, Paris: Brown University, 1996, p. 89.

⁴⁵ This account of protected and evacuated personnel was by provided by LGen Dallaire, the UNAMIR Force Commander at the time of the Genocide.

validly over-ridden in some circumstances. Just as every rule has its exceptions, a *prima facie* obligation is considered normally right and binding unless it conflicts with an equal or stronger moral obligation. I would submit that the duty with the greater weight in this situation was the protection of life and the eradication of human rights violations. Hence, from a purely moral perspective, UNAMIR intervention and use of force would have been deemed morally acceptable.

Study and reflection show that moral and ethical dilemmas are commonly resolved within the intellect and conscience of the individual.⁴⁶ I would suggest that the Rwanda mission has 'etched' horrific images in the minds of those involved in UNAMIR, which will probably last a lifetime. As General Dallaire has openly admitted, "it would have been better to have dealt with the loss of a leg than have the 'grey ware' [brain cells] all screwed up from this mission." A lesson to be learned from this mission is that Forces should never be deployed without the ability to adequately defend themselves and accomplish the mission. In the case of Rwanda, UNAMIR was established under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which pertains solely to peacekeeping. Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which deals with "peace enforcement," and includes intervention without the consent of the warring parties, must be given more favorable consideration when recommended by the Force Commander, who is much more attuned to the local situation. In this case, if Chapter VII had been authorized as requested by the Force Commander, it is highly probable that numerous lives could have been spared.

⁴⁶ James Brown and Michael J. Collins, *Military Ethics and Professionalism*, p. 15

Another moral dilemma worth examining evolves around Lieutenant-General Dallaire's refusal to comply with a UN Security Council order to shut down the mission. As reported by General Anni-Doho, the former second-in-command to the UMAMIR Force Commander, via telephone in the CBC special on Rwanda, Lieutenant-General's Dallaire's response was one of defiance. In General Anni-Doho's words, Lieutenant-General Dallaire responded that:

We would not accept any closure of this mission because history would associate our names with this failure. The order has to be lawful and I thought what they [Security Council] were telling us at that moment, by the dictates of my conscience was not lawful, was not the right thing and if we have to disobey that [order] to save lives- that was it and we were prepared to face the consequences.⁴⁷

There are two theoretical approaches from the study of ethics that can be used in determining the 'rightness' of the Force Commander's decision: Deontological and Consequentialist approaches to decision-making.⁴⁸ **Deontological** theory is rule and duty oriented and focuses on the nature of the act and not by the consequences. One form of this theory, *deontological absolutism*, holds that "moral rules are binding and cannot be suspended or broken, even if some harm will result." The other form of this theory, *deontological pluralism*, "maintains that moral obligations are normally right and binding but may be validly overridden if, and only if, they compete with a stronger obligation." **Consequentialist** or utilitarian theory takes the position that the rightness or wrongness of an act is determined by the result that flows from it. In general, consequentialists judge an act as right if it can be expected to yield the greatest balance of good versus harm. One form of this theory, *act utilitarianism*, "seeks to maximize utility for each

⁴⁷ Canadian Broadcasting Corp, *The Journal, Dallaire-Rwanda*.

⁴⁸ Tom Beauchamp, *Philosophical Ethics: An Introduction to Moral Philosophy*. 2nd ed. Toronto, On: McGraw-Hill, pp.127-299.

particular situation, even if doing so requires violating a general moral principle."⁴⁹ This is the rationale that was used to justify the use of nuclear weapons in Japan in 1945. The other form of this theory, *rule utilitarianism*, "argues that moral rules should not necessarily be set aside for particular situations because consistent observance of them better maximizes social utility in the long run."⁵⁰ Examining Lieutenant-General Dallaire's refusal to shut down his mission from a deontological perspective, it is clear he was confronted with two competing moral obligations - one to his UN supervisors that he obey Security Council orders to shut down the mission and one to the Rwandan refugees to defend the lives of those Rwandans under his protection. One can only surmise that he found the latter obligation as the over-riding obligation of the two, and thus decided to refuse to comply with orders. Examining the same dilemma from a purely utilitarian perspective, the greatest good for the greatest number would also have led him to afford protection to the threatened Rwandans, who numbered in the thousands. Thus, both the deontological and utilitarian approaches to ethical reasoning support Lieutenant-General Dallaire's decision to close down his mission.

How do Nations reconcile differences between their legal and ethical responsibilities?

William Hitt in *Ethics and Leadership* suggests that if ethics were only a matter of choosing between right and wrong, a manager or leader's life would be fairly simple. Unfortunately, the choice is between two wrongs. And often it is a matter of choosing between an alternative that is "good" from an economic or business standpoint and one

⁴⁹ AMSC Handout "*Ethics Series Guide*" pp. 4-6

⁵⁰ Ibid. p.4

that is "right" from an ethics standpoint.⁵¹ As with international affairs, businesses use legality as the criterion for morality. For example, to sell cigarettes is legal, therefore, from a business perspective, it is "ethical" to sell cigarettes.⁵² However, how "ethical" is it when unequivocal evidence suggests that smoking is a leading cause of cancer, heart disease, stroke, etc? Similarly, ethical dilemmas arise as a result of a conflict in values. One may act from grounds of compulsion (jurisprudence) or from those of the intrinsic goodness of action (ethics). According to this principle as enunciated by William Hitt, the civil law represents the bare minimum of ethics. The "truly ethical is at a much higher level than the merely legal." A country, for instance, could comply with international law but nevertheless, its actions could be considered unethical, as was the case for Rwanda. On the other hand, another country might question and challenge specific international laws, because they are inhumane laws, but be considered "ethical." The second country, under Hitt's hypothesis would be guided by "higher laws," that is, moral principles that transcend civil laws. Within this context, it is obvious that ethics and the law, sometimes, make incompatible bedmates whose victims are often the weakest and without a voice. As Arthur Jay Klinghoffer says in his summary of the situation in Rwanda: "Moral concern has been heightened, but supportive legal structures remain weak".⁵³ So, what does the International Community do to reconcile ethical and legal differences? Perh



Professor Walzer describes "emergency ethics" as moments in human history that cannot be governed by moral rules and when the rules can be and perhaps should be overridden i.e. during a supreme emergency. Supreme emergency describes those "rare moments when the negative value that is assigned to a disaster that looms before society devalues morality itself and leaves the international community free, so long as it doesn't produce an even worse disaster."⁵⁴ . Overriding the rules leaves guilt behind, as recognition of the enormity of what has to be done and a commitment not to set an easy precedent for the future. The evil of Nazism suggests the positive form of the supreme emergency argument. It is that sort of evil, uncommon even in the long history of human violence that pushes society beyond 'rights normality.' Moreover, 'supreme emergency' strengthens 'rights normality' by guaranteeing its possession of the greater part of the moral dimension. In Walzer's view, the duty to uphold the rights of the innocent must be paramount.⁵⁵ Few could argue that intervention in Rwanda could not have been justified on this basis. So, if the international community resorted to "emergency ethics" what international mechanisms would have to be established to permit Nations to act? The international community would have to qualify those conditions under which "emergency ethics" would apply. Firstly, a decision to resort to "emergency ethics" would have to be a political one. Next, the framework for such action could be established within the UN under the auspices of the UN Security Council or perhaps a neutral organization such as the ICRC. Moreover, while any Nation could put forth a proposal for intervention on the basis of "emergency crisis", it is suggested that only the members of the Security Council

⁵³ Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The International Dimension of Genocide in Rwanda*, New York: NY University Press, 1998, p.164.

⁵⁴ Michael Walzer, *Emergency Ethics*, Colorado: U.S. Air Force Academy. pp 6-12.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.13-15

or a similar body within the ICRC hold the right of approval. No great precision is required here: a 51% vote would provide the required authorization. However, it is important that Nations do not become overzealous in the use of this approach to intervene into the affairs of another sovereign nation. To this end, "ethics emergency" should only be declared when the *very existence* of a community is in jeopardy i.e. when a disaster looms before the international community which devalues morality itself thus leaving the international community free to do whatever is militarily necessary to avoid the disaster. Furthermore, the action cannot produce an even worse disaster.⁵⁶

With the increasing number of conflicts within states, the international community must develop a new concept of the relationship between national sovereignty and international responsibility. As former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali has observed:

Respect for [states'] fundamental sovereignty and integrity [is] crucial to any common international progress. The time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty, however, has passed; its theory was never matched by reality. It's the task of leaders of states today to understand this and to find a balance between the needs of good internal governance and the requirements of an ever more interdependent world.⁵⁷

Echoing this theme, the Commission on Global Governance has noted:

Where people are subjected to massive suffering and distress... there is a need to weigh a state's right to autonomy against its people's right to security. Recent history shows that extreme circumstances can arise within countries when the security of people is so extensively imperiled that external collective action under international law becomes justified.⁵⁸

The Commission on Global Governance has proposed a specific UN Charter

⁵⁶ Ibid. p.10-15.

⁵⁷ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Nations, 1995), p.44

⁵⁸ Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighborhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.71

amendment to authorize such action, however, there has been a greater tendency by member nations to rely on the more liberal provisions of the Charter language of 'threats to international security', and placing particular emphasis on 'human rights' responsibilities. It is obvious that the questions of sovereignty and the role of external parties remain a sensitive issue in many countries.⁵⁹ However, this issue has been receiving a great deal more attention within the UN. For example, at the annual session of the UN General Assembly in New York, last September, the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, gave his thoughts on international intervention in humanitarian crises, and the changes needed for the next century. In his assessment, "the tragedy of East Timor, coming so soon after that of Kosovo, has focused attention once again on the need for timely intervention by the international community when death and suffering are being inflicted on large numbers of people, and when the state nominally in charge is unable or unwilling to stop it."⁶⁰ As well, Antonio Cassese, a respected international law jurist, has argued that the action against Yugoslavia may be part of an emerging trend in international customary law where the use of force is justified, even without the authorization of the Security Council, under certain circumstances. The conditions he sets forth include the following:

First, violations of human rights must have reached the state where loss of life, amounting to crimes against humanity are being carried out on the territory of a sovereign state, either by the central government authorities or with their connivance and support. Second, where such crimes are the work of the central authorities, it must be shown that those authorities have consistently withheld their cooperation from the UN or other international organizations, or have systematically refused to comply with appeals, recommendations or decisions of such organizations. Third, the UN Security Council either refrains from any action or only confines itself to deploring or condemning the massacres. Fourth, all peaceful avenues, consistent with the urgency of the situation, must have been explored to achieve a solution based on negotiation. Fifth, a group of states, not a single Power, must decide to halt the atrocities, with at least the non-opposition of the majority of Member States of the UN (this would mean that the General Assembly

⁵⁹ Carnegie Commission, *Preventing Deadly Conflict*, p 136.

⁶⁰ World Wide Web. Kofi Annan, *Two Concepts of Sovereignty* [<http://www.un.org/overview/sg/kaecon.htm>].

had not passed a Resolution condemning the intervention). Sixth, the armed force must exclusively been used for the limited purpose of stopping the atrocities and restoring respect for human rights.⁶¹

Hopefully, discussions and renewed interest in this area of sovereignty and human rights will bring about positive changes, and at the very least demonstrate that the international community is "less willing than in the past to tolerate suffering in its midst, and more willing to do something about it."⁶² As a matter of interest, the Universal Declaration of Rights bans all forms of discrimination, slavery, torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment and guarantees every human's right to life, liberty, nationality, of movement, religion, asylum, marriage, assembly, and many other fundamental rights and liberties. One hundred and thirty states have become signatories to the Universal Declaration since its adoption by the General Assembly on December 10, 1948.⁶³

How can we prevent the escalation of these types of communal conflicts in the future?

To prevent a recurrence of the Rwandan "genocide", the UN needs to develop multinational mechanisms for responding to disasters in the early stages before they turn into an outright "crises." This could include early intervention to resolve conflict and the creation of a multinational or multi-agency response, once a potential disaster is identified or does occur. In the case of an African disaster, an effort of this nature must

⁶¹ Antonio Cassese. *Ex Muurta uis oritur: Are We Moving towards International legitimization of Forcible Humanitarian Countermeasures in the World Community*, European Journal of International Law. Vol. 10, No. 1.

⁶² Ibid. p. 3

⁶³ World Wide Web. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Magna Carta for all Humanity*. [<http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/miscinfo/carta.htm>].

include participation by African states in order to legitimize the effort and to help them resolve their own problems. Only in this manner will such states learn from their mistakes and begin to resort to peaceful means as a way of resolving their internal problems. As well, International Laws on human rights abuse must be clarified, and membership in the genocide convention broadened. The relationship between sovereignty, human rights and intervention must also be defined in clearer and intelligible terms to permit legally justified intervention and regional peace and security.

Conclusion

As noted in the aim of this paper, numerous ethical and legal issues surface when discussing the events that occurred in Rwanda. This essay has only scratched the surface, but in doing so, has addressed some of the more critical ethical and legal considerations pertaining to the Rwanda situation- the intervention of the international community into sovereign states on humanitarian grounds and dilemmas facing UN Troops whilst so employed. Evidence presented here on the failure of the international community to act against the genocide in Rwanda also reflects the fragility of this evolutionary humanitarian intervention process. Notwithstanding the shortfalls associated with the UNAMIR mission, it is believed that when the full story of Rwanda finally unfolds, the international community will find out, in spite of all overwhelming impediments which UN forces faced during this peace-keeping mission, that the men and women who served with UNAMIR were, indeed, heroes.

To conclude, it is imperative that individual states and international security organizations share in the important co-operative role of promoting the evolution and redefinition of human rights, sovereignty and democracy and improving global awareness of their implications for peace and security. There is also a need to revisit the criteria for humanitarian intervention to prevent or stop gross violations of human rights. Out of all this, it is possible that a new rule will emerge- "There are circumstances in which the world community can, in the defence of common humanity, interfere in the national affairs of a sovereign nation-state"⁶⁴ As Patrick O' Halloran succinctly points out "The international community has a chance to heal the 'weeping sore of genocide' with legally and morally justified coercive action."⁶⁵ This represents a major shift in international affairs and *'lest we forget,'* the next conflict will, indeed, be another *'setback for civilization.'*

⁶⁴ Patrick O'Halloran, *Humanitarian Intervention and The Genocide in Rwanda.* p.1.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p 25.

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