

What were the international dimensions of the Rwandan genocide? In your answer, be sure to analyze the roles of local and external actors in historical context, and to situate these within the lead-up to the event; the genocide itself; as well as its aftermath.

The Rwandan genocide happened in 1994 as a result of an explosion of political and ethnic violence between the majority Hutu and minority Tutsi ethnic groups. The genocide saw the international involvement of the United Nations as well as the United States and France. However, there was international involvement in Rwanda long before the genocide. Rwanda was first colonized by Germans but was later awarded to Belgium after World War I. The Belgians weaponized ethnicity, by promoting the Tutsi minority as elite over the Hutu majority. This was a divide and conquer tactic that was common under colonizing powers as it formed distrust and hate between groups. In 1959, the Belgian government reversed their policy to empower Hutus. The Belgians encouraged them to protest and overthrow the Tutsis. It was important to note that prior to 1959, there were no incidents of political or ethnic violence between Hutus and Tutsis. However, starting in 1959, Hutu extremists began violently protesting the Tutsis. As the violence increased well into the 1960s, many Tutsis fled into the neighboring states. These refugees formed rebel groups, most notably the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

The end of the Rwandan Civil War in the early 1990s saw the involvement of the United Nations. The UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was a multinational force of 500 commanded by Canadian LGen Romeo Dallaire to oversee the implementation of the 1993 Arusha Accord which was a treaty to end the civil war. There were Western embassies that knew that a hardline faction in the Rwandan

government was planning a genocide. On January 1994, Dallaire received intelligence reports that genocide was planned by the extremists within the Rwandan government. However, the UN Headquarters rejected his repeated pleas and efforts for troop reinforcements. This proved to be significant as Dallaire maintained for years that he could have saved more people if there had been more troops.

The genocide began in April of 1994 when Rwandan President Habyarimana's plane shot down over Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. There were no survivors. While there is no clear evidence as to who shot the plane down, there was overwhelming evidence that the Rwandan government was responsible. There was a small faction of the Rwandan government called Akazu which was an extremist group of Hutus. Akazu leader Colonel Théoneste Bagosora was a major local player who seized power of the interim government in the aftermath of the plane crash. The genocide began as soon as Bagosora was in power, directing linking him to the extreme violence. The lack of international attention continued as the genocide unfolded. The French and American governments insisted that there was no genocide despite the evidence of mounting death tolls. Prior to the genocide, the French government supported the Rwandan government. The French government worked throughout the African continent to cultivate and maintain close relationships with various African leaders. The Rwandan President Habyarimana was a reliable French ally and client. The French wanted to maintain their influence in the region. In addition to that, France wanted to maintain the French language on the African continent. The RPF was an anglophone organization, based in the English speaking Uganda. Their leader, Major General Kagame, was trained at US military schools. The French saw this expansion of the English-speaking

world as a threat to their influence. The US's UN Ambassador, Madeleine Albright, stalled for weeks as genocide unfolded. The US feared an obligation to intervene under the 1948 UN Genocide Convention. US President Clinton was afraid of committing US troops to Rwanda because of the US's failed intervention in Somalia in 1993. In the aftermath, it was clear that international actors, particularly US President Bill Clinton, had made a grave mistake in allowing the violence to go on as long as it did. Clinton did apologize in 1998 to the Rwandan government and people for his lack of action.

A clear example of failed international involvement was the French "Operation Turquoise." The operation lasted 2 months. France claimed this operation was a humanitarian mission to stop the genocide. However, in reality, it protected the French allies in Rwanda. The operation began when France got UN approval to send troops to establish a "safe zone" in Southwestern Rwanda. The Hutus extremists were emboldened by French arrival. Despite what France claimed, the killing continued in "safe zone." There was such damage done by this international intervention that Dallaire threatened to shoot down French planes if they landed in Kigali. He did this in attempts to stop the French from allowing more and more civilians to die.