

SILENCE IN RWANDA: RATIONALIZING INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE  
TWENTY YEARS LATER

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April 24, 2015

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### ABSTRACT

The small, central African country of Rwanda was the scene for the most brutal genocide since the Holocaust. Over 800,000 people were killed in three months while the rest of the world stood idly by. Since the Genocide Convention of 1948 and the subsequent international rally cry that Genocide would be “never again” the world has failed to stop genocide repeatedly. Looking back on Rwanda, it is now clear that the world knew about the killings, but failed to act to stop them. My research probes into the question of how genocide keeps occurring and points the blame towards the very international organizations that are supposed to prevent them.

**Keywords:** Rwanda, Genocide, Peacekeeping, Intervention, Politics, Humanitarian

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my advisor, Dr. Neal Caren for assisting and mentoring me through this process, I would also like to thank Dr. Howard Aldrich, Dr. Andrew Perrin,

Jessica Pearlman, Kari Kozlowski, Dr. Kenneth Andrews, Jennifer Denning, Emily Smith, Erin Arizzi, Dr. Kathleen Harris, Penny and Charles Tostoe, Jeffrey and Brenna Blake, my beautiful Godson Jon Deaglan Blake, Randolph Community College, and the Southern Sociological Society.

I also would like to thank the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Sociology Department, the Rachel Rosenfeld Fund for Teaching in the Department of Sociology, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Office of Undergraduate Research for providing me with invaluable funding to support this wonderful adventure.

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*For those in Rwanda that need a voice...*

*“I know there is a God because in Rwanda I shook hands with the devil. I have seen him, I have smelled him and I have touched him. I know the devil exists, and therefore I know there is a God. Peux ce que veux. Allons-y.”*

*– LGen Roméo Dallaire, July 2003*

In late 1993, United Nations General Romeo Dallaire received orders for the mission of a lifetime. He was instructed to command and coordinate a small United Nations peacekeeping force in the tiny, little known, central-African country of Rwanda. A result of past Belgian colonization, Rwanda had been assumed to be boiling over again with the long-standing continuation of a violent civil war between the two central ethnic groups within the country, the Hutu and the Tutsi. General Dallaire’s mission, named the United Nations Assistance Mission In Rwanda (UNAMIR), would be to maintain a small United Nations peacekeeping force in and around the capital city of Kigali, as well as to remind the two warring parties about the supposed peace agreement recently laid out under the recent ceasefire agreements.<sup>1</sup> Little did Dallaire know at the time, but there was a much more sinister plan unfolding. In January of 1994, a moderate Hutu informant approached General Dallaire with information reporting that the extremist Hutu group was planning to register and slaughter every Tutsi and moderate Hutu in Rwanda. Armed

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<sup>1</sup> The ceasefire, also known as the Arusha Accords were signed into place in Arusha, Tanzania on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1993. (Scorgie, 2004)

with this information, Dallaire immediately faxed the U.N headquarters to inform them of the dire situation and to request more troops, along with the authority to begin a more active mission, aimed at preventing a mass killing. Dallaire's request was all but ignored as he was commanded to just "stick to the mandate" that they were there for and most importantly to avoid any active engagement within Kigali or the surrounding areas.

Dallaire was shocked at the apparent lack of interest concerning the informant's news, but his orders had been given and it was his duty to follow them. Unfortunately, the informant was right and Gen. Dallaire, along with the small peacekeeping force at his side, were forced to sit idly by while nearly a million Rwandan civilians were slaughtered with machetes over the course of the next three months. Suffering extreme anxiety and remorse regarding his passivity during the genocide in Rwanda, Dallaire was ultimately relieved of his position and was left to deal with the deaths of a million people on his own as the weight of not stepping in to stop the killings crushed down on him. As General Dallaire knows and now, the rest of the world knows, the genocide in Rwanda could have and should have been prevented. The knowledge that was available to the international community was immense and fruitful, yet there was no official active intervention aimed at stopping the genocide.

All too often, instances of genocide go either unnoticed until far after the killings, or the killings are not noticed until extremely late in the genocide...thus limiting the availability of a viable international response. Compounding this is the fact that in the past, International Responses to atrocities such as genocides have been widely scrutinized due in part to the ineffectiveness caused by the political aspects of a humanitarian



intervention. The aftermath of the Holocaust brought genocide into public knowledge...the international community was in need of answers, not only about the atrocities surrounding the Holocaust, but also regarding how such an event could unfold among such secrecy. These questions were addressed by the United Nations General Assembly (1951) in their “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide”, which outlined a formal definition of genocide and also assigned certain situations under which agreeing nations would be obligated to intervene in attempts to prevent future genocides. The assembly adopted the resolution on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1948; three years after the end of World War II. The convention set a precedent for addressing crimes of genocide, and with the help of such phrases like “never again”, the international community had bound together to never let “another holocaust” happen.

Unfortunately, genocide would happen again, and *had* happened already on a devastating level in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with the displacement and massacre of an estimated one million Armenian citizens at the hands of the Turks, but it had gone mostly unmentioned<sup>2</sup>. Then the 1970’s would see the largest genocide (in terms of percentage of a population killed) when the Khmer Rouge, under the leadership of Pol Pot, savagely murdered hundreds of thousands of innocent citizens in Cambodia. Then the 1990’s would see the breaking up of the Soviet Union and subsequently Yugoslavia, which would lead to the Bosnian genocide, committed by the majority Serbian population. These instances still do not cover all instances of mass murder, as Darfur, Sudan, Iraq, and most recently Yemen, should not go unnoticed. However, my research specifically

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<sup>2</sup> The genocide in Armenia had largely gone unnoticed at the time it happened.

revolves around Rwanda, which was arguably one of the most savage and brutal genocides committed yet, and according to Power (2013), the most efficient mass killing since the Atomic bombs were dropped on Japan. My research revolves around three months in the spring of 1994 and a genocide that took place without any outside intervention or help deep in the heart of central Africa.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Beginning in April of 1994, Rwanda was the scene of one of the most tragic mass killings since the Holocaust. Over the course of roughly 100 days, extremist Hutu systematically slaughtered an estimated 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu. As a result of more than a century of deeply-rooted ethnic distrust and distain for one another, which was largely the result of a Belgian colonization that arbitrarily assigned a higher “class status” to the Tutsi, the genocide in Rwanda serves as a reminder of the horrific ways in which ethnic differences can become dangerously polarized; thus creating a situation where genocide can arise. In the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, many individuals began to question why there was no response from the international community, most importantly from the United States<sup>3</sup> and the United Nations. Scholars now know that both the U.S and the U.N had substantial knowledge about the declining situation in Rwanda, including detailed reports of events as they unfolded from the few sources in Rwanda. (2013) The fact was that in the face of another horrific genocide, help had not come from the very places that could have (and many say should have) provided it, and the pleas for help from the Rwandan people were largely ignored. This fact has left people asking the

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<sup>3</sup> Many contend that the United States was in the best position both economically and militarily to offer outside assistance to Rwanda.

question: why did no one step in to stop the slaughter in Rwanda? Previous research on the act of genocide itself has substantial depth, and a great deal of effort has been given in developing a comprehensive understanding of why and how genocides occur.

Much less vigilant attention has been given in the realm of international responses (or lack thereof) to genocide, as many believe the Holocaust and the Cambodian genocide were, for the most part, out of the hands of the international community. However, the Rwandan genocide has seemed to ignite a new area of research into understanding how those outside of the genocide react and intervene. In her Pulitzer Prize winning book, “A Problem from Hell”, Samantha Power (2013) provides a powerful and in-depth review of the American responses to genocides and instances of ethnic cleansing. Power delivers a powerful review of U.S and U.N inaction, specifically citing concern over negative public opinion concerning failed past humanitarian efforts and a collective fear of “another Somalia”. The inaction on the part of the U.S and the U.N is examined in depth in an attempt to justify the decisions made by those involved, but ultimately, as explained in *Eyewitness to a Genocide*, bureaucratic interests prevailed over moral obligation. (Barnett, 2003) Moral obligation continued to be questioned regarding Rwanda and some researchers, such as Heinze (2007), placed responsibility almost directly in the hands of the United States, citing an obvious rhetorical avoidance regarding intervening.

Many researchers, such as Olesen (2012) have also given deeper meaning to the causes surrounding such atrocities citing issues involved with globalization. One such researcher suggests the genocide in Rwanda as being an issue of a “global injustice memory”, using political sociological theories to explain the transformative process of

creating such a collective memory. The problem, however, exists largely external to the genocide itself. The problem is a result of inaction on the part of the systems that were developed to aid in international crises (such as the United Nations) and nations that are capable, militarily and financially, of helping, but choose not to do so for certain reasons. It is the point of my research to illustrate, using the theories described below, how these institutions responded to the genocide in Rwanda and how those decisions drastically affected those in Rwanda that had no where else to turn.

### *International Politics and Peacekeeping*

The relationship between international politics and peacekeeping affairs is deeply steeped in political and global sociology, and within these relationships there exists an enormous amount of complex ideas and ideologies that are used in explaining the various roles of international relations. The development of the United Nations as a tool for peacekeeping and international relations has, by some accounts, been a contradictory one. Many have questioned whether or not the U.N has adequately stepped in to help in the very instances in which it bases its development. Some scholars, such as Oberschall (2000), attribute part of the issue to the “red-tape” that is created when an intervention or international assistance is required. The bureaucratic “order of things” not only helps to explain U.N and U.S failures, but also can help explain countries’ overall negative attitudes to the U.N when it comes to international relations. Bureaucratic failures and diplomatic concerns are also brought up by Kentish (2011) who attributes some of the failures of the international community to diplomatic reasons, citing concern over authority and avoiding conflicts in lieu of peacekeeping. Kentish, though, recalls back to

an unfortunate, but accurate, point surrounding the possibility of an international intervention...the fact that global politics has an enormous amount of influence when it comes to international intervention. Kentish recalls the former Yugoslavian ambassador Warren Zimmerman who stressed that often, forces external to genocide, such as the United Nations, require pressure to intervene. In reviewing the outside pressures to intervene it is also important to review the factors that put pressure on the different parties to intervene, what factors can cause outside factors to *not* intervene, and then, drawing on examples surrounding Rwanda, show how these factors inhibited the response to the genocide.

The current body of literature surrounding the factors behind humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping strategies offer some deep explanations, but these explanations are few in number and often call on theoretical viewpoints that are similar in nature. A substantial part of the research surrounding interventionist strategies comes out of the framework of International Relations (IR) theory, and it is in the IR theory framework that I develop a connection to what is referred to as “relational constructivism”. To provide a theoretical framework it is important to outline the areas of research outside of IR theories, and to bridge those to the IR theories that have been offered as of yet.

More so, while some scholars draw on international complexities as a “whole world” phenomenon, others aim to produce a more “situational” framework. Long and Mills (2008) offer a *post-colonial* analysis of the genocide. By situating events as being related to a long history of “colonialist” and “imperialist” development, they contend that

the western world has been largely influenced by a view of the world that is constructed from biases and preconceptions. Since organizations such as the United Nations and the U.S government rely heavily on western influence, Long and Mills argue that these organizations share the same biased lens; which has influenced decisions regarding international interventions. Furthermore, Long and Mills posit that, much like Edward Said's theories surrounding *Orientalism* that they use as supporting evidence, the way in which the "other world" is seen through the western lens also drives a discursive narrative that serves to inflate western hegemonic ideologies regarding the view of the "post-colonial" countries such as Rwanda. Where research such as the one mentioned above seeks to understand the ways in which cultural perceptions and ideologies affect the way the western world perceives the world as a binary, other research has focused on how the international community adopts peacekeeping strategies that are much more situation-based...understanding peacekeeping as problem-solving. Perhaps the most substantive research comes from Cox, (1981) who presents two different ways of viewing these global relations: *problem-solving theory* and *critical theory*. Problem-solving theory, as Cox describes, views the world as being dependent on power-relations and social orders, providing different sectors that take the position of solving certain problems; this allows conflicts to be handled by the appropriate channels, thus lessening the burden of the system as a whole. Critical theory, however, asks how the world came to arrive in its current states, and sees the world as a whole in terms of international and relational affairs. Critical theory leans heavily on the history of change as presupposing

present-day issues. For Cox, the state of international relations is no doubt dependent on outside forces as well as the internal, or organizational, viewpoints that align with them.

### *Political Concerns*

Several distinct areas of research have given insight on non-intervention strategies used by the international community as a whole, but given that the U.S and the U.N were deemed to be in the best position to provide a worthwhile intervention in Rwanda, my research will refer specifically to the United Nations and the United States, and the strategies employed by them. Perhaps the most important and deepest analysis regarding the international responses to the genocide comes by way of Power's *A Problem From Hell*, and *Eyewitness to a Genocide* by Michael Barnett. Barnett, as well as Power, point out how the U.S had information regarding the genocide before it started, and both authors place blame on the U.S and the U.N. In his work, Barnett (2002) outlines some important details regarding the situation in Somalia that occurred several months before the Rwandan genocide. Barnett points out the impact that the United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM) had on officials regarding the decisions that would be made about Rwanda. Barnett shows how the failed mission in Somalia by the U.S and U.N, which resulted in the deaths of several American troops, produced a sense of reluctance when presented with the idea of going into another incident in an African nation without full political support. Not only does Barnett present the reader with background on the political context surrounding the events, he also presents the idea of the U.S government as seeing the situation in Rwanda as connected to other events and not as a separate instance. It is this disconnect that Barnett attributes to much of the distancing by the U.S

government. Other researchers, who also drew from background events impacting the ways in which governments intervened, support Barnett's interest in the way the past has effected the situation in Rwanda. While great importance has been placed also on the idea of international diplomacy, some suggest however that such failures like the one in Rwanda may be attributable to diplomatic misfortune. The diplomatic contributions to inaction are not necessarily accidental, as I will describe later, but a complex system of rhetorical acrobatics that skew responsibility, thus creating great ambiguity in terms of a rhetorical response.

#### *Rhetorical Aspects Connecting to Genocide*

It is within the discourse surrounding the Rwandan genocide that the rhetorical strategies being used had a significant impact on international relations, especially when referring to international peacekeeping strategies. For the purpose of my study, it is important to outline the overall rhetorical strategies adopted under certain political circumstances and the theoretical approaches to these strategies that supply a background for the rhetorical interpretation in my study. Much research that has been done regarding the Rwandan genocide has in fact brought up the different rhetorical strategies employed by the U.S. government and the United Nations, and this is because the connection between interventionist strategies and political discourse are interwoven. Arguments such as Powers' drew heavily on the discourse surrounding the genocide and point to how the rhetorical strategies drove the intervention efforts towards a non-interventionist strategy. Some researchers, such as Susan Woodard, (1996) offer insight into specific rhetoric involved, not only in Rwanda, but also among genocide as a whole. Woodard's research



shows that the term “genocide” itself is a commanding term and can, in itself, “invoke an obligation to act”. Woodard goes on to make the claim the rhetoric involved in genocide is political in itself, thus justifying political action of some kind. Woodard constructs an idea that the rhetoric behind genocide is, and has been, used by certain individuals surrounding such events to promote a specific political agenda. The idea that individuals use certain practices in their rhetoric is exactly what I will show as one of the issues surrounding the non-intervention strategy in Rwanda. General Romeo Dallaire’s correspondence with officials in Washington, D.C and New York, and also provide many of the primary sources I use, as they show the efforts that were taken to avoid entering into a conflict within Rwanda. Other documents, such as the Clinton administrations’ “Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations”, which came out in May of 1994, give a framework for drawing conclusions about the rhetorical practices. These documents also provide a framework for a major point in my research, that is, they provide arguments for *not* intervening. So much research regarding the genocide in Rwanda poses questions regarding why no one stepped in to offer a helping hand, but it is within the documents themselves that the answer is hidden. These documents serve as an official correspondence, therefore, any decisions that were deliberated about or made, would be detailed within them. Barnett provides the detailed description of this as he attempts to show how officials rationalized their motives, but leaves the window open for future research to review these specific rhetorical and discursive attitudes regarding Rwanda. One such hypothesis that nicely explains these rhetorical strategies comes from Lipson (2007) who brings up the idea of “organized hypocrisy” in his attempts to detail

the failure of modern peacekeeping and intervention; largely occurring through speech and rhetoric. Lipson uses Rwanda as well as the genocide in Bosnia as examples of how organizations such as the U.N fail to deliver on the tenets by which they were developed, thus becoming hypocritical. Lipson offers an explanation defending the hypocrisy by suggesting it can sometimes be necessary to retain stability internationally, but in the end he fails to suggest that this can outweigh the detriments regarding the hypocrisy behind the organization.

### *Rhetorical Attributes Surrounding Rwanda*

To create a framework for my analysis I use a Relational-Constructivist approach to explain why there was no intervention in Rwanda during the genocide. I then draw from primary documents to examine the rhetorical strategies used by those involved to support my argument. I suggest that socio-political frameworks do not entirely explain the lack of a response in Rwanda and I show how the rhetorical strategies, when added to socio-political factors give a more accurate interpretation of the situation in Rwanda. Lerstad (2013) provides a basic question regarding the process of viewing genocide under a relational-constructivist frame in asking how the responsibilities to protect other countries plays out in terms of humanitarian responses. Lerstad's view of Rwanda is of particular interest in my study as she takes into account the view that the United States had an "unprecedented" chance to take charge in the form of an international leader, both politically and morally. Michael Lipson's work on peacekeeping will also provide valuable insight into my analysis as he presents an argument for what he terms "organized hypocrisy", which are bureaucratic failures that, according to Lipson, refer to

“inconsistent rhetoric and inaction” resulting from “...conflicting material and normative pressures” (2007). Looking beyond the organization, to a more *macro* level of understanding, is a crucial element in my research design, as I believe that many researchers have isolated only the micro or only the macro and not drawn the lines between the two that need to exist. Paris (2003) offers a view of understanding such efforts of peacekeeping and intervention as a “global” issue, depending on the global view of “world polity” theory by connecting the theory to peacekeeping in specific. Paris’s is similar in style to my research, but I hope to draw more clear connections with the “micro” processes through my analysis of rhetorical acts surrounding the crisis in Rwanda.

Where the lines of humanitarian efforts begin and end there is a question of when to step in regarding international issues. It is clear looking back that the lines regarding the Rwanda genocide became blurred, with no international response ever becoming actualized. In trying to justify the lack of response to the Rwandan genocide, many scholars have pointed to the bureaucratic factors, which added to the red-tape feel already surrounding the United Nations and the United States government. Where this fails to explain all of the inaction, many scholars point to other genocides in insinuating that the international relations regarding these instances are a product of past memories and history. I bring all of this to mind by utilizing a relational-constructivist view to show how the events surrounding the Rwandan genocide can be considered a product of internationally constructed norms under the umbrella of international relations theory. Furthermore, I bring in the rhetoric used at the time, such as “constructive ambiguity”,

and strategies used to avoid “g word” to show how these relations were taking place. Leaning heavily on the research regarding international and peacekeeping theories as well as the great narratives provided by Power, Dallaire, and Barnett, I connect the lines between rhetoric and practice and ultimately offer theoretical insight into how the Rwandan genocide was faced with such complacency.

## METHODS

For the purpose of this research I decided to conduct a qualitative research study, while also using a mixed methods approach with a focus on grounded theory and qualitative data analysis. The resource(s) that I used to gather the data for my research were primary source documents originating within the United Nations Security Council (U.N.S.C) during the Rwandan Genocide and range from the dates January to June of 1994. For the sake of a comprehensive view, I used all of the documents regarding the situation in Rwanda and the United Nations Assistance Mission In Rwanda (UNAMIR). The documents used for my study are the entirety of the documents that originated within both the United Nations and the United States in that time span.<sup>4</sup> There *are* documents that also exist as a part of the Rwandan Genocide from the other countries that were involved in the decision making process, mainly New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Nigeria and China, but these documents are out of the scope of the target of this study, which is to examine the United States and the United Nations role in the lack of an intervention in Rwanda.

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that by originating in the United Nations is referring to documents that were specifically sent out via the UN Security Council headquarters in New York City, NY.

All of these documents were copies of original faxes that were sent between the United Nations and the United States and they were originally collected and categorized by the 1995-2004 National Security Archives. I accessed the documents through the George Washington University National Security Archive website. The GWU website has all of the Security Council documents listed in order of date and addressee and, using this, I was able to order and collect all of the documents that I used for my project. I downloaded each facsimile from the site above and used Adobe to convert the documents from their original PDF format to a rich-text format (RTF) so that I could then import them into different qualitative data analysis software. Furthermore, I also have a printed out copy of each of the documents that I used to compare notes with and to help with sorting the documents.

For my data analysis, I used the software Dedoose, which is an online, and downloadable software designed for collecting and analyzing qualitative data. On Dedoose, I imported each of the documents from a RTF format and then organized each document by date. Once organized, I used Dedoose to create the codes for which I was to analyze the data. Codes that were created were based both on frequency and importance toward my research. Although I did not have a clear independent/dependent variable system, my initial hypothesis was that, *through coding of the data, I would find a linguistic or rhetorical trend that I could pick out as being a core reason for the lack of any substantial international humanitarian response in Rwanda*. I did not initially set out for any controls, however it should be noted again that my documents of choice were solely provided by the National Security Archive and were either via United Nations or

United States so, my data set was initially controlled by document source. Currently, the Freedom of Information Act is being used to release many more documents pertaining to the genocide in Rwanda, but I do not think that any documents were withheld specifically from my source. During my data collection, I did notice that there were several faxes that I could not retrieve for unknown reasons...more specifically, these faxes were U.N cable number 1050 from April 8<sup>th</sup> by Kofi Annan, and U.S cables numbered 01503, 01607, and 01748 from Madeline Albright dated April 12<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup>, respectively. Almost all of the faxes were complete except for a couple that had redacted sections. Once I retrieved all of the documents that I wanted to use, I downloaded them and sorted them onto my computer for storage throughout the research process.

## RESULTS

The units of analysis and the context from which they came from provided a unique project for me to dissect. This study could fall under many different research categories, but the uniqueness of the situation allowed me more freedom by which I could construct certain ways of analyzing my data that other, more formal research, could possibly hinder or restrict in some ways. My complete data set included 71 copies of original faxes in PDF form that were split with 27 originating from the United States and 44 coming from the United Nations. The distribution breakdown of the documents by month and source can be seen below in table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of document by month and source, 1994.

	January	February	March	April	May	June
U.N.	1	3	1	17	11	10
U.S.	1	-	1	14	5	7

The measures upon which I analyzed my data were based off of an initial grounded theory coding and driven by an inquiry into the rhetorical strategies employed throughout the documents. The result of my coding and subsequent analysis was the emergence of several distinct themes within the data. The four themes that I identified are as follows: (1) *Distancing efforts*, (2) *Concerns regarding self-interest and political motivations*, (3) *Deflection*, and (4) *Downplay*. I will now further develop and clarify each theme, giving a more in-depth analysis of each one below.

#### *Theme I: Distancing*

The emergence of my first theme began to come through very early in my analysis of the data. What I initially discovered was a repetition of certain phrases, themes, and words that I initially grouped into various parent codes, but were later separated into more general, thematic codes. The distancing efforts came across several categories, including political rhetoric and logistical talks. The main point about this first theme is that they serve as a means of “distancing” the political parties from the actual ongoing situation in Rwanda. Key themes that I looked for under “distancing” included referencing to the cost and/or deadlines as well as logistical concerns. Within the theme of distancing, I chose several codes that all account for what I termed as representative of distancing. For example, one of the sub-codes, which are codes that fall under the

umbrella term of distancing, that I chose for this, was named “logistical concerns”. Under this code, there were several descriptive codes that were used in choosing my various excerpts. Also among these were instances of talking about troop deployment, requests from other parties involved on certain political issues, and waiting on decisions from other parties involved before any action was taken on a specific subject. Codes that were chosen to represent distancing reflect a change in, or reversion to, bureaucratic elements that allowed the parties involved to get “bogged down in details” forcing a sense of detachment from the genocide. Here I will provide a couple examples of what I have coded as “distancing”.

First, we will look at an excerpt selected and coded under “distancing”. This is a document sent by the United States by the then U.N Ambassador Madeline Albright that was dated January 24<sup>th</sup>, 1994 where she discusses the financial concern shared by the U.N Department of Peacekeeping Operations Head Hedi Annabi over any assistance mission to Rwanda: “The timetable for political reconciliation is already behind schedule, and Annabi is concerned that further delays will only jeopardize the successful implementation of the Arusha Accords and ultimately add to the financial cost of the operation”. This selected passage was coded under two different sub codes under the umbrella of distancing: cost issues and deadlines, which in this case reflect how the Arusha Accords reflect distancing by repetition of the concern over logistics and how this kept the U.N from facing the problem head on. Another example of distancing will be shown here, from April 23<sup>rd</sup>, and also sent from the United States via Madeline Albright



who here is discussing the drawdown of the number of U.N troops in Rwanda and the logistics behind that:

In accordance with the new resolution, the remaining forces will support the SRSG in his mandate to monitor and report on developments in Rwanda. Also, the Secretariat will ask the council to keep the situation under close review to adjust remaining force levels (1994).

Here I have coded for use of the term “mandate”, which is vague in that it is not referring to a specific plan, and I also chose this passage because of the overall nonspecific way of speaking. One of the main parts of the use of distancing was not only the use of specific terms, but also the vagueness that, for example, can be found in the above excerpt. By remaining unclear about certain details in the documents, the involved parties were able to retain a certain level of non-commitment that proved detrimental to the overall degradation of the situation in Rwanda. I will come back to this in the discussion as being part of what is called constructive ambiguity.

One of the most important factors driving my data analysis was the discovery of this deeper level content and the development of its meaning in my analysis. At first glance, the reader can easily flip through these documents without noticing any real important information, but under the surface of what is going on we see a different story. For example, in the above reference from April 23<sup>rd</sup> via Ambassador Albright we see that her concern at the time was in regard to drawing down forces and waiting on others’ status updates about their position. However, when one remembers that April 23<sup>rd</sup> was several weeks into the middle of the genocide...a time when tens of thousands were being slaughtered daily, one can not help but wonder why her concern seemed to be focused on smaller issues, such as logistics and deadlines, and not on the broader issue at

hand; namely, stopping a genocide. In fact, throughout that whole document dating from the 23<sup>rd</sup>, there is not mentioned one time any concern at all over the deteriorating problem in Rwanda, only a couple instances of her talking about logistical issues. When a systematic effort that is aimed at avoiding entry into an international crisis is operationalized in this manner, small recurrences such as avoiding certain words can have, as shown, enormous rhetorical impacts.

*Theme II: Concerns Regarding Self-Interest and Political Motivations*

The second major theme that stood out during my data analysis was one that did not immediately stand out in the text, partly because it is very broad, but it ended up becoming a major part of the linguistic structure of the documents...leading me to begin to code for it. This code was identified as “political/political concerns” and under this are several different sub codes and child codes that make up the parent code set under the umbrella of “political”. What I mean when I say “political concerns” is specifically any time that there was a stated motive of interest involving one of the sides or in one of the parties. So, under political concerns specifically, I split up into two categories: political interest of others (mainly the parties involved directly in the genocide), and political self-interest (meaning interest either in the U.S specifically or more broad self-interest regarding the United Nations). For example, here is an excerpt from another Albright fax sent on April 13<sup>th</sup> regarding the future of UNAMIR under its current mandate:

There was some considerable uniformity of opinion that the UN and UNAMIR should maintain some role in Rwanda; The UN can still help facilitate a cease-fire and the process of political reconciliation. Others also noted that a total UN withdrawal would hurt the UN’s credibility (1994).

The codes here, as far as self-interests are concerned, are clear as the Ambassador speaks about the UN's credibility. Concerns over self-interests here are of importance because they begin to outline what others, namely Dallaire and Power, noticed during the genocide itself, which is that the parties that were in a position to step in and help were really not so much concerned with helping as they were with protecting their own image.<sup>5</sup> This theme came up throughout the documents very frequently, however, mentions of the past U.N missions or other past conflicts barely came up in any of the documents, though I fully expected them to. Keeping with this trend, the next codes were also developed under this heading. The next sub-code that I developed was one that I titled "implications", and this represented any case in which there was a clear concern over any implications regarding decisions made; meaning implications of self-interest. I did not include implications regarding the mission in Rwanda pertaining to the Rwandan mission in this code as it is brought up in a later code set. An example of "implications" is seen here, taken from an April 5<sup>th</sup> fax from Assistant Secretary of State Edward Walker regarding the UNSC's vote to extend the UNAMIR mandate: "The

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<sup>5</sup> There is a very important detail here that must not go overlooked, as it plays a major role in the decisions that the international community would make concerning the genocide. In 1993, the United Nations and the United States sent a peacekeeping mission into the heart of an embattled Somalia, which backfired on the United States and the United Nations with the end result being the deaths of 18 U.S soldiers and a downed helicopter in the capital city of Mogadishu. (The name of the mission was the United Nations Operation in Somalia I & II, or UNOSOM) The battle of Mogadishu and the subsequent attack of the U.S helicopter acted as a slap in the face as the United States treated it like a consequence of trying to help where it didn't need to and the U.N faced embarrassment internationally for the same reasons. It is as a result of these reasons that, when only a few months later, the motivation to get involved in Rwanda (or also smugly referred to at the time "another African country") was lacking and this explains the great hesitation to get directly involved. Although it is for our consideration whether or not these forces acted appropriately or not, for the idea of human rights should not be only applicable when "is best suited" so to speak, but that is another issue altogether.

prolonged delay in putting the transitional institutions in place ... pose(s) a threat to the peace process.” (1994) This shows how concerns over implications regarding Rwanda served as a rhetorical device that could have possibly swayed political decisions. Of course political groups and organizations are always going to have a certain level of self-interest in mind, but major international institutions that are built on the foundation of human rights, such as the U.N, should operate under, and I would dare say are bound by, an altruistic duty.

There was also a coding category that I set up to capture a common occurrence that would fall under this sub-code. This code described concern over safety in two ways: 1) safety of Rwandan people, and 2) safety of non-Rwandan people. Throughout the documents, the narrator suggests at certain times that safety needs to be top priority in any endeavor. However, over half of the time, the concern shown is over the safety of the peacekeeping presence and not on the Rwandan people. Though this code was hard to definitively trace back to the broader theme, it is important to note that the ratio of the discussion over non-Rwandan people over Rwandan people was about 1:2, meaning that an ample amount of time was spent discussing the safety of non-Rwandan people over others, reflecting a trend that now should be more clearly emerging: concern about self-interest at almost the same rate as concern about Rwanda. The last two themes are somewhat different from the first two in that they are primarily concerned with the linguistic and rhetorical aspects that make them important.

*Theme III: Deflection*

The third theme that arose in my data analysis was one that was a constant topic throughout every document and every date. I titled this third theme “deflection” and though it shares some of the similar characteristics of “distancing”, it is different in the context. When I refer to deflection I am speaking of times where the speaker or author of the document is, in a way, trying to avoid addressing the genocide in Rwanda by pointing the discussion towards another topic or direction, effectively dodging commitment to any question regarding an international response. These organizations manage to do this in several ways and I have split up these different ways into separate sub-codes.

This first form of deflection that I will be describing refers to times in the documents where there is a blatant referral to “the mandate” and the “peace agreement”. This is important because these individuals used this idea of recalling, in a sense, “the original plan”, which they seemed politically unwilling to deviate from, rhetorically speaking, to benefit them. In context, this often came about when discussion came up about the UNAMIR mission. Here is an example of an excerpt which I believe shows this well from April 11<sup>th</sup> via the United States discussing the recent U.N secretariat briefing: “If political agreement and a cease-fire is reached, bringing a return to order and the peace process, then UNAMIR could resume its mandate.” (1994) This is an example of where, instead of discussing a way to end the violence, the discussion was deflected to a matter of how the U.N would be impacted, taking away from the importance of an intervention.

Similar to this, I also noted a recurring trend of referring back to the “agreement”, or what they also called the “peacekeeping mission” and/or the “Arusha Accords”. I am not saying here that referring to these is at all a negative, but once I saw a trend emerging of a constant deflecting pattern, I noted that this deflection was, in fact, an important rhetorical pattern. As you will see, there is a constant overall trend of using rhetoric to evade any responsibility to act in anyway that could be effective, and in the last section I will speak more to this and describe an even more serious trend that emerged within the document analysis.

*Theme IV: Word Repetition and Direct Linguistic & Rhetorical Strategies of Downplay*

The final theme that I noted is perhaps the most important theme in my research, in fact so important that I could probably write a whole research project based off of this *one* theme. This theme I defined in several ways, but it describes the use of single word-repetition, word-avoidance, and the direct and indirect rhetorical and linguistic strategies employed throughout the documents. I set this final theme to fit under an overarching umbrella of what is referred to in communication studies as downplay. There were several forms of downplaying going on throughout the documents and they are each equally important.

The first form of downplay that emerged in the data was evident in the pattern of ambiguous talk that was recurrent. Often times in the data I would recognize places where individuals would be discussing Rwanda, but would either minimize the conflict directly, or not give or disclose all of the facts present. Here is an example of conflict minimization from April 23<sup>rd</sup>, a mere two weeks into the genocide, by Albright

concerning the safety of Rwandan civilians: “According to the UN HQ, fighting continues in the city and they are reluctant to declare the civilians “safe” – but they are not in any immediate danger.” (1994) During this same time, Dallaire was reporting back widespread conflict and killings in and around Kigali and requesting more troops to combat the killings, so not knowing about the genocide was not the issue here. This was clearly a direct move to avoid discussing Rwanda at that time by Ambassador Albright.

The other part of downplay that I recorded as recurring in the data was a direct avoidance in using the term “genocide” by the discussing parties. Throughout the data, there was reference to the genocide more than 100 times in the documents, but not until the genocide was almost over did they ever actually refer to it as “genocide”. Table 2 below shows the frequency of avoiding the usage of “genocide”. The table shows how there was a distinct trend with regards to the word, with the most avoiding occurring in April and early May and a drop-off in frequency towards the beginning of June.

Table 2. Frequency by month and source of using distancing terms in effort to avoid using the word “genocide”.

	January	February	March	April	May	June	Total
U.N	1	3	10	73	69	21	177
U.S	-	-	-	24	31	31	86

In fact, the length that was gone to in an effort to avoid this word was remarkable and damning. Here is an example from one of the outside “supplemental” documents<sup>6</sup> from the Office of the Deputy Assistant for Middle East/Africa Region, Department of Defense dated May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994 discussing Rwanda and the legal implications of the use of the term “genocide”, under the sub-heading “Issues for Discussion”: Genocide Investigation: Language that calls for an international investigation of human rights abuses and possible violations of the genocide convention. Be Careful. Legal at State was worried about this yesterday—Genocide finding could commit USG to actually ‘do something’. This warning about using the word “genocide” did not go unnoticed either, as it was rarely used at all in the text throughout the course of the documents. I give, in Table 3 below, a month-by-month breakdown of how often the word “genocide” was actually used by each source.

Table 3. Frequency breakdown by source and month of using the term “genocide” to refer to the situation in Rwanda.

	Jan – Mar	April	May	June	Total
U.N	0	3	3	8	14
U.S	0	5	4	4	13

As you can see in the table, the word was rarely used; in fact, it was only referred to as “genocide” 27 times over the course of 6 months. This is a clear and powerful attempt to avoid getting involved in any direct action aimed at stopping the genocide and as you can

<sup>6</sup> Throughout my research I referred to other documents as well that were pertaining to the genocide, but came from a different source. Most of these came from United States government offices such as the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, and others, which will be noted when used.



see in table 3, “genocide” was not even used until April and then there is a slow increase in the usage of the term, which coincides with the decrease of avoiding the term as seen in table 2.

This goal of avoiding “genocide” worked in terms of existing in the documents as a result. Throughout the documents, officials referred to the genocide in ways such as “killings”, “conflict”, and most often “situation in Rwanda”. It does not take much explanation here as to how this could impact any attempts at an intervention and no description of these is needed to show how awful this appears to be. When rhetoric is used in this way, it can be of incredibly bad results, but when downplay is intentionally used, it clearly undermines the goal of humanitarian groups such as the U.N and contradicts any semblance of international affairs directed at human rights and world justice.

## DISCUSSION

The development of these themes begins to show a distinct trend towards non-intervention. It is also interesting to note the trends in the data through the duration of the genocide. For example, the observation that the term genocide was not used regularly until later on inversely follows the trend that distancing by avoiding the term genocide decreased sharply entering into late May and early June. On top of this, there is the recurring theme of “distancing” which is a form of constructive ambiguity. Politicians use this term in reference to when they deliberately “beat around the bush” so to speak so as to avoid a definitive answer. When done on a small level, this form of deception has

small consequences, but when transferred to a global humanitarian crisis response, constructive ambiguity has devastating results.

Ultimately, these themes that I have provided above in no way account for all of the different rhetorical and otherwise interesting patterns that were in these documents, but I maintain that I have provided the most important trends for the context of my study. However, it is extremely important to understand what these trends mean in the larger context of genocide and humanitarian interventions, especially under the scope of international politics. There was a broader question underlying my study and that was the question: why do these international agencies feel the reason to avoid getting involved in certain affairs in order to maintain some political agenda? I have shown above that these international agencies go through great rhetorical lengths to avoid getting involved in certain conflicts, but we must ask why this is. In my literature review I spoke about what is called relational constructivism, which the way that the international community, much like the social world of today, is constructed based on certain interactions and historical processes.

One the assumptions that I went into this study with was the assumption that part of the reason nobody wanted to get involved was that Africa had been constructed as a “third-world” issue and that, especially based on the past events in Somalia, getting involved with Rwanda would end up with a bad result politically. We see that the data certainly suggests a hesitation to get involved with Rwanda, but I did not see a clear reference back to this idea of “relational construction”. Although there was no clear return to this idea, I do not think that it should be discounted. The idea of relational

constructivism is not an idea that would be readily described or one that would show through brightly in the text, but that should not discount the idea that it did not indeed exist. Much like social construction, it is not an obvious and clear trend. There has been hundreds of years of sociology aimed at describing this phenomenon, so I must suggest that future research aim at delving deeper into studying relational construction, but more specifically there must be a closer look at the way the international community uses politics to make decisions. With the emergence of international agencies such as the United Nations and the sub-structure under the U.N, and great, leading countries like the United States, there is clearly a demand for some sort of global leadership. However, these communities are being shaped by politics in a way that contradicts their origin and goals. Unless there is a strong push to research and understand these institutions and their place in the world, we are doing a strong disservice to the people that depend on us for the restoration of basic human rights and for the future of global affairs.

## CONCLUSION

There is so much that my research could not cover. The Rwandan genocide has produced over 5,000 documents to date and the FOIA keeps providing more and more. It would almost be an impossibility to analyze each of these documents, let alone the documents of say the Holocaust, but breaking these large packs of data into smaller parts can, and has, given researchers the chance to shed light on a dark subject. In other words, much more must be done in order to prevent something like this from happening in the future.

As for General Dallaire, he now looks back on his time in Rwanda as being the most significant time of his life and one that plays a huge role in his life now. Although many scholars have connected with Dallaire, and twenty years later, there are many different reports surfacing about the situation in Rwanda including a powerful insight into the political failures authored by now United States ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power, Dallaire and many others still are left blank when it comes to the question so often asked in regards to Rwanda: How did we let this happen?

That is the question that many people still seek to answer and that question forms the basis of my research. By looking into the text of the primary documents inside of the security council at the time of the genocide, I set out to bring the question to a smaller level and ask specifically what role the United States played in the failure to stop the genocide. Samantha Power correctly described the problem in the title of her book by referring to it as “a problem from hell” because the result of these tragic humanitarian disasters is so profoundly impactful in a negative way, and there is such a strong resistance to the idea of genocide, yet genocide is a problem that the world has for the most part, failed to stop. Just quickly thinking one can name several: Armenia is the early 1900’s, the Holocaust in the late 1930’s and early 1940’s, the genocide in Cambodia in the 1970’s, Rwanda in 1994, Bosnia in 1995, not to mention the awful situations in Darfur, Mexico, Sudan, Iraq, Syria...the list is too long. So what I hoped to grab through my research was a picture of the world that shows that, in order to stop genocidal acts, we must look through the average and mundane political decisions that are made in the world.

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