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Priorities of the International Community: Politics or People

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College Scholars Senior Thesis
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There is no new world order, not the kind President Bush tried to sell us. If the world was new and ordered, Saddam Hussein wouldn't have nerve-gassed his people, Slobodan Milosevic wouldn't have been elected, and Bill Clinton would have called the Rwandan massacres "genocide" sooner. Millions of people would be alive instead of slaughtered in the many pockets of 'disorder' where wars rage to forge identity through hate and oppression and violence. School children wouldn't recognize the names of shattered nations Bosnia and Rwanda. The world is no more ordered or new and moral than it was when Hitler presided over the bureaucratic system that designed the deaths of six million Jews. Indeed he was much more orderly than most of the little wars and small-scale genocides we see today. Perhaps instead the world has become more disorderly; the illusion of order in a few sterile governments only a half-truth in the face of the crumbling of much of the world. The leaders of the U.S., of the EU, of NATO, of the U.N., sit in their offices with the blinds shut, smoking their cigars, seemingly oblivious to the death and destruction and randomness that is tearing apart so many nations, lives, and lands and that will not stop until it has consumed the newly-paved streets, newly-built skyscrapers, and newly-bought Cuban cigars of those who did not wish to see it coming. So the way to deal with this problem is to accept that there is one, first of all. To want to know the truth, to want to see whether or not there is genocide being perpetrated here or

there, and want to stop it, not avoid it. What determines what causes problems? Internal or external pressures, or both, or a special confluence, forcing the combination to a critical mass? The cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, and Estonia illustrate the variety of answers that exist to this question, and by examining these countries one discovers different results (some tragedies and a few almost positives) of international involvement in countries with a history of occupation and artificially created ethnic tensions. The perceptions and interests of Western countries determine when and how often they choose to avoid seeing warning signs of conflict in these areas, and the contradictions of prioritizing by political interest instead of by human suffering can be easily explored through the cases of these three countries.

Throughout the history of Bosnia, Rwanda, and Estonia, foreign powers have played significant roles in determining the course of their history, and in each managed to exacerbate or sometimes even create ethnic and religious tensions. Bosnia-Herzegovina, which seceded from Yugoslavia in 1992, had not been an independent state before.[1] Throughout Bosnia's history one needs to keep the region in the context of what was happening in the other areas of what would become Yugoslavia, because the ethnic/religious/historical differences within Bosnia are sometimes related and sometimes stem from those of Serbia and Croatia and elsewhere. Ironically, in true ethnic terms, the three groups, plus Slovenes, Montenegrins, and Macedonians, are

all Yugoslavs (South Slavs).[2]

Since the sixteenth century, Bosnia has been the meeting place of many fault lines running across Europe, torn between great powers, ideologies, and religions. It has always been a prize sought after, never a people with interests of its own to be considered. The Habsburg empire of Austria and Hungary conquered most of what is now Slovenia and Croatia in the 1100s, and by the sixteenth century they also ruled over parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina.[3] The Ottoman Turks at the same time had control of Serbia, Macedonia, and most of Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina.[4] The struggle between these two polyglot empires and their different methods of rule was one of the first battles over Bosnia's lands and people. Great powers bickering over which would have influence in Bosnia has been a recurring theme in its history; this theme is found in the histories of Rwanda and Estonia as well.[5]

The Turks began to convert the nobility of their new territories, and concentrated on Bosnia and Herzegovina because it bordered Christian territories. To encourage Bosnians to convert to Islam, "the Turks applied pressure, along with economic and political advantages."[6] There were Serbs, Croats, and others in Bosnia at the time. Serbs had a strong Eastern Orthodox tradition, and Croats a commitment to Roman Catholicism, but many peasants of both faiths converted to gain favor under the new rulers.[7] The Bosnia-Herzegovinians also included followers of a separate Bosnian Church about which little is

known; it is thought to have derived from the influence of a twelfth century sect of heretical Christians called Bogomils. The Bogomils consistently worked to prevent domination of their people by either the Western Catholic or the Eastern Orthodox traditions; consequently, they proved the most receptive to conversion to Islam. Thus a completely new population group appeared in Yugoslavia: Slavic Muslims. Under the Ottoman system, the only way to be a free peasant family in Bosnia-Herzegovina was to become Muslim. Hence, the previous members of the landed aristocracy (Serb, Croat, and other non-Muslims) in the areas of occupation lost their status. A feudal system continued in Bosnia up until World War I.[8] Peasants, about seventy-five percent of whom were Serb, twenty percent Croat, and the rest Muslim, worked for Muslim landowners as kmets (similar to sharecroppers). These conditions fueled resentment and anti-Islamic tendencies throughout the twentieth century.[9] Bosnia's changes in social groupings and structure are examples of an artificially created religious and ethnic situation; the Turks were a ruling foreign power that altered the composition of its subject peoples. Because of this, the 400 years (16th century to 20th) of Ottoman rule in Bosnia has had tremendous consequences.

Most of Bosnia remained under Ottoman control while Serbia grew restless. Serbs began a period of revolt against the Turks in 1804 that, along with another major battle in 1815, heralded the weakening of Ottoman power in Europe. According to Dragnich, "By mid-century, after international treaties were affirmed,

Serbia gained de facto independence;" however, it was 1878 before the state was formally recognized by the international community.[10] Bosnia was not able to achieve similar status.

Bosnia-Herzegovina was placed under Austrian control at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, and annexed by Austria in 1908.[11] It remained, along with Croatia and Slovenia, a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the Empire's demise at the end of World War I.[12] Croatia and Slovenia had been subject to Western influences and adopted the Latin alphabet and Roman Catholicism, while Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia were subject to Eastern influences and adopted the Cyrillic alphabet and the Eastern Orthodox church.[13] By the mid-nineteenth century, then, Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians were already divided by history, culture, religion, and loyalties imposed upon them by outside forces. Bosnia was the meeting point of all these opposing ideas, with some Bosnians identifying with Croatia, and some with Serbia, and others with the religion of Islam and neither Croatia nor Serbia.[14]

While these differences fermented quietly, a conflict between Austria and Serbia was brewing that would send the world floundering toward war, and the line between the Allies and the Central powers would run through the middle of Bosnia. Austria-Hungary felt threatened by a strong, independent Serbia because Austria's Slavic subjects might begin to hope for their own independence, or simply want to leave the Empire and join the new Slavic state.[15] Austria also feared the intellectual movement

for Slavic unity, which, along with its companion movement of nationalistic pride, had gained fuel from a short Napoleonic occupation in the early 1800s.[16] As a result, Austria tried to find ways to keep Serbia weak, such as annexing Bosnia. The annexation was a blow to Serbia because the Serbs also wanted influence in Bosnia because it was a Slavic region which could perhaps unite with the Serb state. It was in Serbia's interests for Bosnia to remain mostly free at the least; Austria's moves to overtly control the region would only put the Austro-Hungarian Empire that much closer to Serbia's doorstep. Thus Bosnia-Herzegovina was a pawn in Austria's play for influence and Serbia's bid for survival in a hostile Europe.[17] Once again Bosnia was the object of a strategic struggle between two powers (as when Austria-Hungary was battling the Ottoman empire) in which the desires of the Bosnian people were never considered. The current power struggle has been a similar situation--Serbia was fighting Slovenia and Croatia, and Bosnia was in the middle, and few gave any thought to what the Bosnians wanted or what the consequences for them might be.

World Wars I and II can be seen as continuations of this theme of external influences interfering in the development of Bosnians, and all Yugoslavs. In 1914, it was with Serbian interests in mind that Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb Pan-Slavist, assassinated the heir to the Habsburg throne, Archduke Francis Ferdinand.[18] This assassination led to World War I, as Austria refused to back down from an ultimatum issued to Serbia,

and Serbia could not acquiesce and retain its sovereignty. In the ensuing conflict, Croats, Slovenes, Bosnian Muslims, and some Serbs from the Military Frontier regions (areas on the Habsburg-Ottoman border) of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Hungary fought on the side of Austria and the Central Powers, and the Serbs from Serbia and Montenegro fought with the Allies.[19] This war that so many Slavs participated in was another external factor that caused division among the Yugoslavs. They had lived together mostly peacefully for centuries before this, only to be forced into conflict because of a slowly crumbling Empire's bid to crush its rising Slavic rivals. Almost any small conflict could have sparked World War I during such an age of competing militarism in Europe, but the struggle over Bosnia provided the spark. World War I could be seen as a warning that arbitrary decisions about another country's destiny can have horrific consequences.

After World War I, Bosnia was incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, later to be renamed "Yugoslavia." The unity implied by statehood didn't last long, as World War II brought external pressures too great for the new state to handle. A war within a war raged in Yugoslavia, and Bosnia was the site of most of the atrocities committed in the clash of external and internal forces. Hitler set up a Fascist puppet state in Croatia whose troops (German and Croat, and some others) killed about 200,000 Serb civilians, and tens of thousands of Muslims, Jews, and Gypsies as well.[20] The Serbian armed forces were mostly

scattered in the initial Axis invasion and split into factions of royalists and Communists (to simplify the distinctions), fighting each other and the German and Croatian troops.[21]

At the end of the war, Marshall Josip Broz Tito, leader of the Communist Partisan fighters, came to power with help from Russian troops. Tito was responsible for setting up the modern Yugoslavia: the six republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia, and two autonomous provinces in the area of Serbia, Vojvodina and Kosovo. This arrangement lasted until the wars of this decade.[22] The most pressing issue facing Tito was how to quell the violence that had been unleashed across the country, and avoid a backlash of Serb reprisals against the Croats. To that end, he severely punished nationalists and separatists, and basically froze religious, historical, and cultural divisions in a system of Communist authoritarianism. In the government of the state, Tito tried to maintain a balance of power between the republics by diffusing what he saw as Serbian hegemony. To that end, he placed Serbian Communists in offices outside of Belgrade, so there was a disproportionate number of Serbs in power in other republics, and of non-Serbs in power in Serbia.[23] Although the Communist solutions kept nationalistic passions and hatreds in check, they failed to establish an alternative, supranational, Yugoslav movement which the people actually believed in. Because of Communist rule and Tito's use of repression, in Yugoslavia "the spirit of critical, rational inquiry could not develop,

[and] the nations of Yugoslavia failed to free themselves from pseudoromantic images of themselves and negative stereotypes of each other."[24]

Thus Yugoslavia entered the 1980's after Tito's death facing the crippling realities of unresolved fears and unanswered stereotypes. Tito had given Yugoslavia some short term gains. Slovenia and Croatia had benefitted under Tito's programs of economic development, but the eastern republics (Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia) had been largely left out. People lived together in peace for nearly fifty years; in the urban areas especially, nationalities were fairly well integrated, tolerant of each other, and frequently intermarried. However, in rural, isolated areas, the lack of opportunity to address what had happened during the war would come back to haunt Yugoslavia in the long run.[25] If its rural population had a picture of itself and other nationalities that was limited to grandparents' stories of heroism and atrocities, how could such a state be expected to sail smoothly into modern, cohesive, and democratic statehood? It simply couldn't, and with the fall of Communism and the rise of Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic, presidents of Croatia and Serbia respectively, nationalism was slowly thawed out of its Titoist deep freeze. Tudjman and Milosevic both had designs on Bosnia, as each considered the Bosnians really just mislabeled Serbs or Croats.

Tudjman and especially Milosevic continued to try and carve out a destiny for Bosnia. This led to violence, the warning

signs of which were ignored by the international community. Other nations, like Rwanda and Estonia, have similarly complex histories of external influence and interference in the development of social and ethnic divisions in their societies. For Rwanda, it was the imperialism of the Germans, and then the Belgians, which began a cycle of interference and machinations that would not only become policies of divide and rule, but eventually divide and destroy.

Germans who came to explore the region that would become Rwanda, the indigenous peoples consisted of three groups: the Twa, a pygmy people who only made up about one percent of the population; the Hutu, who were mainly peasant cultivators, and the Tutsi, who generally were cattle owners. The social system in place used the village, usually based around a hill, as the basic political unit of the country. There were usually two local chiefs, one each for the farmers and the herders, and there were army chiefs over larger areas who tended to be Tutsi.[26] The distinction at this point between Hutu and Tutsi was not clearly defined in ethnic or racial terms. The groups were generally distinguished through a sort of social caste system, in which the Tutsis (about 14 percent of the population) had a higher status associated with wealth and cattle ownership, and the Hutus (about 85 percent of the people) had a lower status because of their roles as farmers; the Twa occupied the very lowest position, and their role in Rwandan society, alone among the other groups, has not changed much over the years. In this system, there was some

potential for social ladder-climbing, as a Hutu who gained wealth or prestige, or perhaps married into a Tutsi family, could achieve Tutsi status. Likewise, if a Tutsi lost wealth, he or she could be lose status and "become" a Hutu.[27]

This way of life, although Hutus were generally subordinate to Tutsis and lived under a Tutsi monarchy, did grant the Hutu some say in their governance, and in some areas of Rwanda there was a power structure of Hutu princes. Thus, by the late 19th century, Rwanda was not a model of equality, but most people did have some political rights and the potential for moving up in society, and one might have eventually seen a systemic evolution toward greater democracy.[28]

However, the late nineteenth century was also the time of the great "scramble for Africa" by colony-hungry European powers. The Germans acquired Rwanda in 1896. Here the Rwandans ceased to be in control of their own destiny, victims of a stripping away of their right to self-determination that would have deadly consequences for future generations.[29] The Germans only had control of the area from 1896 to 1916; Belgium took over the colony during World War I, continuing and expanding German systems of control. The Belgians slowly phased in a system of bureaucratic governance in which only Tutsis were allowed to hold positions. Both the Germans and the Belgians had immediately favored the Tutsis, in part because of appearance (although not uniform by any means, there are racial stereotypes of what physical characteristics Tutsis and Hutus generally have), as the

Tutsis were thought to be taller and lighter-skinned, and partly because they already seemed to run things. The Europeans developed elaborate racial theories to connect their favored group to Aryan descent in order to justify establishing it as dominant (and probably to make themselves feel better about associating with Africans). One of these myths was called the "'Hamitic hypothesis'" and it maintained "that all pre-colonial civilization in Africa was brought by outsiders, specifically the Hamitic branch of the Caucasian race." Scholar Alex de Waal asserts that this theory "is no longer academically respectable."[30] Such a baseless and biased perception, the norm for European thinking about Africa, was the kind of foundation upon which the Belgians built their regime in Rwanda and it illustrates the dangers of outside control by ignorant leaders, as well as the power of perception in general to distort the reality of a situation.

Although they constructed these justifications to let themselves believe they were rightly supporting some kind of inherently socially and politically superior race, the Europeans were in reality just taking away the political and civil rights of Hutus. Only those who went through the new European education system could hold government office; only Tutsi men were allowed access to this education.[31] Therefore the Hutus and all women were phased out of political life in Rwanda. The whole of north-west Rwanda, which had been independently ruled by Hutu princes, was not fully brought under Tutsi-Belgian control until 1931.[32]

The continuing conquest showed a total disregard for the indigenous forms of government already set up, and dramatically altered the social customs and governing traditions of the area. The Belgians decided in 1933-34 that the distinction between Hutu and Tutsi, which they had already altered by colonial machinations, should be made even more strict and arbitrary. Belgian officials assigned every Rwandan an identity card which defined them as Tutsi, Hutu, or Twa for the rest of their lives. According to prominent Rwandan human rights activist Monique Mujawamariya, when the Belgians wanted to do a census of the population, they found they couldn't tell Hutu and Tutsi citizens apart, and so instituted an arbitrary and problematic rule. For the sake of simplicity they decreed that if one had five cows one would be considered a Tutsi. Mujawamariya said this created many problems because some people tried to buy or borrow cattle in order to be counted as members of the favored group.[33]

This was a blatant form of interference--the Belgians invented rigid definitions of Hutu and Tutsi that simply hadn't existed before. Since Belgian officials preferred to govern through Tutsis, and only Tutsis were to have access to educational services and other privileges, they must have wanted a way of identifying who was Tutsi and who was not. Therefore they imposed an unchangeable label on every Rwandan in a society which had originally allowed for social mobility. The Belgians assigned Rwandans an ethnicity much as one assigns young children roles in a school play, with patronizing disregard for their own

customs. The officials tried to mold the African society into a shape that met their needs.

This policy of assigning ethnicity and elevating the Tutsis to a higher status was a policy of divide and rule. Some Tutsis were happy to cooperate to get the benefits of collaboration, but as in any such situation, those out of power became extremely resentful. Some Tutsis also began to feel superior to Hutus, just as they had been told they were, and in any event, most wanted to keep their powerful status; the way to do that was to keep Hutus subservient.[34]

Although the histories of Bosnia and Rwanda are of course quite different, one can already see parallels. In Bosnia the Turks "created" a population of Muslims and granted them social privileges. Sometimes conversions were voluntary, and sometimes they were forced, but it was only converts who could own land, and have any chance of escaping the harsh life of a peasant. Foreign powers would continue, for the most part, to dictate the destiny of the country. In Rwanda as in Bosnia, a foreign regime "created" distinct populations where there had been none. Hutu and Tutsi had been rather fluid groups. Belgium granted one group privileges and higher status, and Belgian interference and later that of other powers would continue in Rwanda's history. The foreign rulers were different in the two countries, and no one handed out identity cards in Bosnia, but the influence of foreign control and the ignoring of the needs and wants of the indigenous peoples are clearly shared experiences, ones that

would later have tragic impacts in both countries.

In the 1950s when Catholic missionaries from Belgium began to help educate and raise the social consciences of Hutus, Tutsis began to clamor for independence and demanded an end to this new European interference in their affairs which now threatened their hold on power.[35] This of course did not sit well with the Belgians. However, in the midst of this, violence broke out in 1959 among Tutsis and Hutus. Tutsi leaders moved to put down what they saw as a rebellion, and Belgium responded by stopping Tutsi retaliation, shifting its policies from that point to favor Hutu enfranchisement and inclusion in politics. The Catholic missionaries had been successful in pleading the case of the oppressed Hutus to the Belgian government. But the toll of the violence that occurred between 1959 and 1962 was large, and "a horrendous precedent had been set" that would haunt Rwanda up to the present.[36] In those three years, Hutu had expelled "in the cruelest fashion, perhaps 100,000 Tutsi," and both sides destroyed homes and killed hundreds.[37] The refugees play an important role in the recent history of Rwanda.

The Hutu held elections in 1960, and as they comprised 85% of the population, Hutu candidates under party leader Gregoire Kayabanda won overwhelmingly. Over the next few years there was much external involvement in Rwandan affairs, this time at the request of Rwandans themselves. The United Nations monitored and postponed some election processes at the request of Tutsis. The U.N. also condemned Belgian favoritism, at this point regarding

the Hutus. By placing their support behind Hutus now, Belgium was holding on to its influence in the country; the imperialists were still practicing divide and rule. Hutu leaders then felt that the rest of the world was pro-Tutsi; this may help account for their strict guarding of power over the next 30 years. There were instances of sporadic violence as Hutu chiefs' repressions would force more Tutsis into leaving home, and some refugees would commit terrorist acts against Hutu officials, perpetuating a cycle of repression, expulsion, and violence.[38]

In 1962, the U.N. agreed to support Rwandan independence largely because of assurances like an agreement to guarantee Tutsis two ministerial posts. However, Kayabanda appointed Hutus to fill the Tutsi positions 18 months after the Belgians left.[39] Thus Rwanda went from one-party colonial rule to one-party indigenous rule. The identity cards the Belgians had issued were kept current (and were used as long as the Hutu held power, in the 1990s often marking one for life or death), and many other aspects of the colonial bureaucracy were retained.[40] The Hutu government became overtly anti-Tutsi, simply reversing roles in society instead of building a nation-state of parity and justice. Philip Gourevitch writes in the New Yorker that "Rwanda's revolutionaries had become what V.S. Naipaul calls postcolonial 'mimic men,' who reproduce the abuses against which they rebelled, while ignoring the fact that their past-masters were ultimately banished by those they enchained."[41]

Thus the impact of external forces, such as Belgian rule or

the dictates of the U.N., was extensive. However, it was also complicated, for at times Rwandans actually wanted foreign involvement. In part the perceptions of the international community about who was being oppressed by whom determined some reactions. For the Belgians it seems to have been more who could give them the support they needed to stay in power. The Hutus gained in power, they were an 85 percent majority, and the Belgians backed them up. In the end it is most often interests that motivate international political actors. The Belgians ended up abandoning the Tutsis to support the Hutus, but the U.N. then rushed in to protect Tutsi rights, in part because it wanted to protect stability in the region. It became a situation each group (Hutus and Tutsis) felt it had to dominate the other to ensure its own security. This feeling illustrates the difficulty of restoring a balance once the pendulum has been swung one way or the other, especially in such an artificially created situation. After Belgium set up Tutsis as the superior class, the Hutus would naturally want to retake power, especially as they make up the majority of the population. They might have a tendency to want to rule too harshly, however, because that is what they suffered under the Tutsis. Once power is just given, it is clung to, and when one group succeeds in wresting it away from the unjust, it will be more likely to be unjust in reaction, not just out of revenge, but out of fear. No one wants to be subjugated twice.

To avoid any possibility of a Tutsi takeover, Hutus did

exclude them from the political system. The consequences of power politics would be genocide. Rwanda's complex history provides some explanation, but the final steps toward mass murder would be those taken by contemporary leaders, in Rwanda and in the international community.

In Estonia, one can find early historical parallels with both Bosnia and Rwanda. The Estonian people had a variety of foreign rulers over the years; though most all were quite harsh masters, the variety may be one reason the Estonians have managed to keep their problems with minority groups non-violent. Historian Rein Taagepera has said Estonia benefitted at times from larger powers' competition over its population and territory.[42] This occasional positive effect is not found in most of Rwandan and Bosnian history, in which both countries generally suffered more from the power struggles waged over their lands.

From the 13th century until after World War I, Estonia was ruled by outsiders. The lands that would become Estonia were first conquered by the Germans, who came to the Baltic region after failures in the Crusades. German rule introduced feudalism to a land that had been structured around federations of small village groups. The hierarchical feudal structure was quite new to the Estonians, who were forced to become serfs to German landholders. The Estonians faced numerous invasions and raids throughout their history, though German rule was a constant for about 300 years. Sweden took control of northern Estonia in

1561.[43] The southern part of Estonia was then part of a Lithuanian-Polish duchy.[44] Little changed for the Estonian peasants, although the famine, plague and war before and after the Swedish rule fixed that era in memory as "the good old... times." Russian forces then established themselves in Estonia over the period of years 1704-1710 during the Great Northern War (1700-1721). Russian rule lasted until the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. The Baltic Germans had remained landowners after the end of German rule but had carried little influence. After giving some aid in the Russian takeover, and because they were generally more educated than the average Russian at that time, the Baltic Germans were able to reach a high level of political and social influence under Russian governance.[45]

The Estonians were able to take some refuge from their conquerors through their language. A Finno-Ugric language, Estonian is in the same family as Finnish and Hungarian, but all are very different than the Indo-European languages of most of the rest of Europe. The language barrier made the lines between the peasants and everyone else--the Baltic Germans, the rulers of the moment, Christian missionaries--much clearer.[46]

Russian rule was hard on the Estonians but it provided some benefits. The Estonians had been ruled by Germans and subject to influence from German culture for so long that the new influence of Russian culture was almost a balance. The Swedish competition with Poland-Lithuania over religious converts in the sixteenth century may have improved Estonian access to schooling as both

Catholic and Lutheran priests tried to learn the language. Estonians were thus spared an overwhelming imperial influence. This helped preserve the Estonian identity and language in spite of the small size of the population.[47]

Serfdom was abolished in 1816 in the Baltic provinces, but not in Russia. This 'freedom' ended up more dangerous for the peasants than feudalism, however. Peasants were no longer property, and therefore the land owners would not lose anything if they worked a peasant to death.[48]

By the mid nineteenth century there were peasant revolts because of harsh conditions. By 1905, the Russian revolution altered conditions. Martial law was declared after the Estonians called for autonomy within the Russian empire. By 1906 some actual progress was being made, and officials set up some Estonian language schools. However, World War I interrupted whatever further reforms might have been possible.[49]

The Estonians generally viewed the war as a Russian-German conflict, and they definitely favored the Russians after their long servitude to the Baltic barons of the German upper class. Thus 100,000 men joined up, about 20 percent of the population at the time. World War I was an external struggle in which the Estonians were able to play a real part. They felt they were fighting against years of German domination, and that they would be able to earn autonomy from the Russians in the end.[50] In some ways this was an external conflict which would become a fight over who would control Estonia; more foreign bickering over a

place with its own people whose desires were disregarded.

By February 1918, with Russia floundering and the Germans invading, Estonia declared independence. February 24 is still celebrated as Independence Day. The Germans occupied Estonia until their surrender to the allies in November 1918. The Bolshevik forces almost immediately tried to move back onto Estonian territory. A new war ensued between Estonian and these Russian forces. With a little luck, a little money from Finland, and a little naval maneuvering by Britain, the Estonians drove the Bolsheviks out. A peace treaty was signed in Tartu on 2 February, 1920, recognizing Estonian independence and fixing its borders. In 1919, there were also brief pitched battles with German mercenary forces. The German army was still trying to keep some control over the Baltics, and had mercenaries on the side of the "Whites" in Latvia, where initially Latvian "Red" forces backed the Bolsheviks. In the end, Estonian troops helped win the long final battle at Cesis on June 23, 1919 for a democratic Latvian government. This is celebrated as victory day, even though an armistice with the Russians wasn't signed until 31 December, 1919--indicative of the huge symbolic significance that the June victory had as revenge against their old oppressors.[51]

An important consequence of Estonian victory was the chance to set its own borders. Estonia had a distinct advantage over both Bosnia (within Yugoslavia) and Rwanda because it was a small, distinct area of one ethnic group and one language, and

had fairly clear borders on three sides (a sea on two, a lake on one other). There were Estonians in other areas of course, but few concentrated or concerned enough with rejoining Estonia to cause problems. An area beyond the Narva river that was mostly Russian was given back to Estonia because it had historically been part of Estonia. However, there was an area of Estonians in one nearby Russian province that was not ceded to the new country. Coincidentally the numbers mostly balanced out.[52]

Perhaps Estonia was thus less an artificial creation than Yugoslavia or Rwanda, because the Estonian people were basically homogenous, for the most part all were Estonians culturally and linguistically.[53] Yugoslavia was created from a movement for Slavic unity, but it was a lofty, intellectual movement at best. Thus Yugoslavia was more "created" by the Versailles treaty than one can say of Estonia. Rwanda was invented by the European imperialists and mapmakers, and did not conform to much of any traditional border or social or ethnic distinction. Europeans delineated African borders according to where they had sent explorers, and what could be agreed upon in conferences in European capitals like Berlin.

Thus Estonia was in better shape than most new states in the interwar years: clear boundaries, stable government (democratic with authoritarian interlude 1934-1938), mostly homogenous population, and good trade. International recognition came first from the Soviets with the Tartu treaty. European recognition came about a year later, in January 1921; Estonia joined the

League of Nations in 1921 as well. The U.S. did not recognize Estonia until 1922.[54]

It is important to note the situation of minorities in Estonia. The new nation was 8 percent Russian, 1.5 percent German, .5 percent Jewish, and .5 percent Swedish. The Estonian government set up programs of cultural autonomy, both for concentrated groupings of minorities and for those more spread out. This "non-territorial cultural autonomy" system allowed the Russian and Swedish populations to have schools run in Russian or Swedish and to have local self-government. It worked out very well. Minority groups were not completely integrated into the society, but it was a good start, and much better than some countries.[55]

However, the onset of World War II interrupted the natural course of national development. Estonia and the other Baltic nations tried to remain neutral, but their geopolitical situation did not permit such a straightforward course. The Molotov-Ribbentrop nonaggression pact signed in August 1939 by Germany and the Soviet Union included secret protocols that divided Eastern Europe between them in the event of war. The USSR was to get part of Poland and all of Estonia, among other things. The protocol read:

> "'In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement in the areas belonging to the Baltic states (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern boundary of Lithuania shall represent the boundary of the spheres of influence of Germany and the USSR.'"[56]

The unemotional carving up of Estonia and the other Eastern

Europeans countries is an ultimate example of blatant foreign interference. The aims were purely territorial and strategic, with no concern for the peoples involved.

Consequently, World War II cast a shadow across Estonia's future. First, in 1939 after the German invasion of Poland, part of Poland and then most of Lithuania was given to the U.S.S.R. by Germany. Then Soviet army forces marched to the Estonian border and demanded army bases. Estonia was outnumbered ten to one and hadn't mobilized. Therefore leaders chose to accept a "pact of defense and mutual assistance with the USSR." on 28 September 1939.[57] This symbolized the end of Estonian independence for the next 50 years.

Estonia faced a rapid yet subtle takeover in 1940, as the Soviets tried to paint their actions as justified because the Estonians had supposedly gone back on an important treaty.[58] The Soviets deported Estonia's former head of state. This incident was a great insult because Estonia was still technically independent. Estonia was formally annexed in August 1940.[59] Mass deportations began in 1941--over 6,000 at once in one area. Men took to the forests in a guerrilla campaign to resist the Soviets and to escape a similar fate. Then the Germans returned, taking Tallinn on 28 August 1941. They were welcomed by some Estonians because of the harshness of Soviet rule, but not for long. 5,000 Estonians were murdered or sent to camps. Perhaps 15,000 were sent off to forced labor in Germany; some chose instead to serve in the military, and some were forced to do so.

do so. Estonian political leaders organized a provisional government as the German war machine began to break down in order to be prepared for liberation.[60]

Unfortunately, the Soviets were not moved by this display of nationhood when they returned as the Germans retreated. They quickly re-established control, and Estonia was again a Soviet Socialist Republic. A wave of Soviet immigration ensued because of Soviet encouragement in some cases, but also because of better living conditions and job opportunities (since the Soviets gave out administrative jobs to Russians in Estonia). The Estonians naturally resented these immigrants, whom many characterize as colonists, because they were essentially moving in and claiming alien territory as their own.[61]

The Estonians lived in terror of the purges and deportations that were all too consistent between 1945-1953; they feared losing their lives, their houses, their jobs, their farms, their loved ones. Stalin made a point of making his violence widespread enough to inspire fear everywhere. An alien imperial power had come in and set up a colonial state in Estonia.[62]

In March 1949 Stalin had about 20,000 Estonian farmers deported because they weren't collectivizing fast enough. There were widespread injustices in housing allocation, etc. in favor of Russian "colonists." In 1945, 94 percent of Estonia was native Estonian. In 1953, 72 percent was Estonian, and that number included an extra group: Estonians who had gone to Russia between 1850 and 1920 and then come back in the 1940s because of

better conditions--"Russian Estonians."[63] The new minority of Russians, artificially injected into Estonia, set up the potential for conflict in the 1980s and 1990s when Estonia began to press for autonomy and then independence from the Soviet Union.

Many countries, then, have been colonized or ruled by some external power. Why is it that only some explode in horrific violence as Yugoslavia and Rwanda did? The deciding element is a mixture of internal factors and external factors. In examining these countries, common themes emerge, and differences become clear as well. Each had to struggle throughout its history against the designs of outside forces, and each has been the victim of significant interference in its ethnic, social, and/or religious composition and traditions. Other nations, sometimes the international community in the form of the U.N., have often acted on misperceptions in each country as well, and have sometimes defined their priorities according to political expediency rather than in the interest of the people in question. More examples of this can be found in the more recent history of these three areas.

Starting with Bosnia, one can follow the disintegration of Yugoslavia and see many instances of misunderstandings, interference, and attempts at aid by other nations. In 1987, Slobodan Milosevic took power in the Serbian Communist Party. His rise is important because the revival of nationalisms and divisions that would tear Bosnia apart really started with him.

He was a fiery politician who won popularity by criticizing the Serbian Communist Party leadership's policy on Kosovo.[64] Kosovo was the site of the Serbs' defeat at the hands of the Ottoman Turks on June 28, 1389 (the beginning of the 450 year Ottoman occupation of Serbia), and the day remains sacred to Serbs.[65]

Tito's Yugoslavia only worked by consensus, and if leaders didn't use nationalism or populist activism to appeal to the people. By raising the flag of nationalism, Milosevic broke the first of Tito's taboos. He wanted to gain power in the party, and his method worked well. The Serbs began to follow him, believing his stories of the oppression of Kosovo's Serbian minority. The Kosovo province is about 90 percent ethnic Albanian, the rest Serbian. His success was fueled by his next step, the breaking of Tito's second taboo, when he began to mobilize the Serbian masses. To do this, he orchestrated a network of demonstrations in various towns in around Serbia. This network was "part of a well-organized plan, designed to intimidate the non-Serb peoples of Yugoslavia, instill among Serbs the idea that their fellow Serbs were being... discriminated against," and to stress the position of Milosevic as "the undisputed master of post-Tito Yugoslavia."[66] On the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, Milosevic spoke at a rally on the site of the ancient battle, "the Field of Blackbirds" in Kosovo; he had over one million Serbs gathered in the middle of a largely Albanian province. His message to the other republics was hardly one of tolerance, as he spoke of present battles becoming violent.[67]

This kind of demonstration of power was immediately recognized as a potential threat by the other republics of Yugoslavia, although the international community was either unaware or hoping to ignore its significance. Thus Yugoslav politics descended into nationalism and propaganda-fueled accusations.

The Slovenes were the first to raise a protest to Milosevic's policies, foreshadowing the rivalries of the next few years.[68] Franjo Tudjman was elected president of Croatia in April of 1990, and after that, Milosevic made the small leap from championing the cause of the Serb minority in Kosovo to that of the Serb minority in Croatia.[69] From this point things could only get worse. In response to the position of Milosevic, the other Yugoslav republics began to adopt more nationalistic agendas as well. The Muslim President of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegovic, faced a particularly difficult situation, because his republic was in-between Serbia and Croatia, homes of the most intense feelings--in addition Bosnia had many Serbs and Croats inside its borders. He tried to stay out of the arguing between Serbia and Croatia, believing that modernity and the cosmopolitan nature of Bosnia and especially Sarajevo would triumph in the end, but that would not prove to be enough. The other republics believed their only alternative to verbally attacking Serbia was to accept Serbian dominance over areas that were not legally Serbian and they refused to let that happen.[70]

In 1989, Milosevic abolished the autonomy of Kosovo and

Vojvodina. He had staged demonstrations in each, supposedly of people clamoring for new governments. In reality these were controlled by Milosevic himself, and he put his allies in power in each province.[71] The conflict in Kosovo today dates from this institution of Serbian control. In April of 1998 Milosevic sent in armed policemen into Kosovo to crack down on alleged supporters of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), an anti-Serbian, pro-independence terrorist group. About 80 ethnic Albanians were killed in the initial clashes, and since then sporadic violence has continued. The situation is much like the beginning of the war in Bosnia in 1992.

What does Milosevic have to do with Bosnia? Everything, because the pressure that Milosevic put on Kosovo over the Serb minority he then put on Croatia because of its Serb minority, and eventually he backed the minority of the Bosnian Serbs as well. He began Yugoslavia's breakup, the animosity, the fear. Milosevic wanted to make Yugoslavia a centralized state (a greater Serbia) instead of a federation, and after talks the other republics became so frustrated that they considered secession. This is what Slovenia and Croatia did in 1991. Various moves had been made by the U.S. and others in 1990 to show support for the governmental negotiations, and to advocate unity for the Yugoslav state.[72]

Secretary of State James Baker III's last minute trip to Belgrade on the eve of Slovenia and Croatia's secession was to advocate unity. Baker remarked to some reporters that a possible

conflict in Balkans could be the source of World War III.[73] This is an indication that the U.S. government did appreciate the serious consequences of a conflict in the Balkans. If that is true, however, one would have thought that Baker would not have made the trip; many have said Milosevic took Baker's plea for unity as a license to use force.[74] Judging from Milosevic's track record, however, he didn't need a great deal of justification; he doesn't usually attempt to court much international approval unless he is hurting at home. So this action by the U.S. probably did not push Milosevic to his decision to send tanks and soldiers into Slovenia and Croatia to keep them from leaving Yugoslavia.

However, the international community may be more responsible for the eventual atrocities in Bosnia. The West pursued confusing policies toward Yugoslavia. Initially, the U.S. and most of the European Union wanted to move slowly in recognizing Slovenia and Croatia's independence. Germany pushed hard for quick recognition to be given by the end of 1991, even though it was uncertain whether or not Croatia had met important human rights requirements assigned to it. Germany went ahead and announced in December it would recognize the two new states unconditionally in January of 1992. The EU had little leverage to get compliance from Croatia after that, and so it followed suit shortly after. The U.S. did as well, but somewhat later.[75] Bosnia was put in a terrible position because of all of this.

Germany forced early recognition mainly because of domestic

concerns. These included a Croat population of 500,000 in Germany which was a powerful lobby, and a desire to promote the ideal of self-determination after successfully using it themselves to unify East and West Germany.[76]

This is another example of disregard of the needs of the Bosnian people--because international obligations are usually dropped in favor of domestic concerns when there is no security issue at stake. It is also a question of perception and priority, because Germany believed that the Slovenes, Croats, and even Bosnians would be able to "self-determine" their status fairly and peacefully. The German leaders also believed that this was best; secession was good for the breakaway republics. German priority was on domestic reasonings and on the value of choice.[77] The dangers to Bosnia, because of the complexity of the Yugoslav situation, were not fully considered.

President Izetbegovic went to Germany to discuss his fears for the survival of Bosnia, so the Germans could not plead ignorance of the dangers to Bosnia. They simply didn't want to see them or believe them, and probably its other goals previously discussed were more important to them than Bosnia's survival. The problem was that Bosnia had a substantial Serb minority, which was opposed to independence and thus the feeling was that either Bosnia would stay in a Serbian dominated Yugoslavia or it could secede and face war from its minority.[78]

And in the end, the Bosnians chose the latter, and the war that ensued was more terrible than anyone could have imagined.

Rape used as a weapon, concentration camps set up, mass graves again marred European soil. No government wanted to understand any of this because it is much easier to ignore difficult things, especially when they cry out for action that one wants to avoid taking. Wanting to know is very important, as is perception in such complicated conflicts. It wasn't until so many television stations began broadcasting footage of the suffering that Americans did anything to help the Bosnian people. President Clinton favored a policy of lifting the arms embargo and launching air strikes on Bosnian Serb positions that he seemed to forget to discuss with the allies before trying to pitch it to them. He also didn't seem to realize he needed to pitch it enthusiastically to get their support. He then returned to the American people and told them that we wanted to **do** something, but now the allies won't let us. If he'd really wanted to do it, surely he knew the proper way to get it done. Author Patrick Glynn suggests that again, the U.S. knew a lot more about the situation in Bosnia than they appeared to. He says that officials toned down statements because they didn't really want to get involved in the conflict.[79]

It was easy for U.S. officials to feign ignorance of the troubles because there was a lot of misinformation floating about. Glynn cites intelligence reports that predicted the possible violent collapse of the country as early as 1990. He quotes George Kenney, the acting head of the Yugoslav section of the State Department who resigned in protest in 1992, as saying,

"'We knew perfectly well what was going on over there.'"[80] This may all be true, but if people don't want to know something, they can be very persistent in not facing the evidence. It is more convenient to think of the Balkans as a land of ancient hatreds and hopeless, endless violence, even if one should understand events as contemporary political maneuvering. If facts don't match one's impressions, one's perceptions, one can always decide the facts are wrong. This is what top level U.S. officials did, to a great extent.

The issues of not wanting to know were just as involved in how the U.S. dealt with the 1994 crisis in Rwanda. Foreign involvement in Rwanda has been significant ever since the Germans journeyed to Africa; to explore reaction to the most recent crisis we must step back first. The first president of independent Rwanda was Gregoire Kayabanda. His grip on power did not last very long however, as General Juvenal Habyarimana, then Defense Minister, seized power in 1973. Writer Frank Smyth says that Habyarimana "promised to be fair to both Hutu and Tutsi; instead he distributed most of the resources and key positions to family, friends and associates from the region of his birthplace in northwestern Rwanda." He continued with the tradition of one-party rule, and he did not allow Hutus who did not agree with him, or any Tutsis, to serve in his government.[81] There were many forms of external influences in Rwanda. Besides his internal systems of control and support, Habyarimana also enjoyed the support of foreign governments. He and his family had close

ties with French President Mitterand and his family.[82] A profitable arms trade existed between Rwanda and both France and Belgium, as well as with South Africa and some Middle Eastern states.[83] Both France and Belgium were strong supporters of Habyarimana's regime. France and Belgium's influence in Rwandan affairs, especially that of France, is a good study of how people are affected by forces outside of their domestic government.

The thousands of Tutsi refugees who fled Rwanda in 1959 and 1960 could be considered another external factor. Refugees did not play such a role in Bosnia, but as I have said, Yugoslav emigres and others who supported one nationalist cause or another could be found in the U.S. and elsewhere, as in Germany (the Croatian population there was a huge supporter for early recognition). Known as Banyarwanda, these Rwandans ended up scattered throughout Tanzania, Burundi, Zaire, but concentrated in Uganda, and would become the "largest and longest-standing unresolved refugee problem in Africa" by 1990.[84] This problem was something no one in the international community was really monitoring. Upon seeing the "Hutu Power" (the name for the Rwandan state ideology and power junta) forces take over their country, the Tutsi refugees' feelings of exclusion were reinforced--it seemed impossible to go home. Many Tutsi men joined the Ugandan army and fought against Idi Amin and his regime's human rights violations. Thus the Tutsis naturally gained favor with the Ugandans. When the children of these exiles reached fighting age, many of them joined the military as

well.[85]

The exiles were waiting for the civil and political rights situation to improve, but according to Gourevitch, Habyarimana insisted repeatedly that there wasn't any more room in Rwanda anyway since ninety-five percent of the land was already tied up in farming. In 1986 Habyarimana announced with an air of finality that the debate was pointless because the country was just too crowded, and no amount of negotiation was going to change that. The next year, a group called the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was formed, mainly from the pool of Tutsi officers in the Ugandan army. By 1990 their aim was to overthrow the Hutu Power governing system, and so they ended up launching a military invasion against their home country; in this way the first of the expelled Tutsis came home. This began a complicated war. Was it a civil war, or an external invasion? The Ugandans obviously gave some supplies, but not direct military aid. The Tutsis invading considered themselves Rwandan. The reasons they fled in the first place were the fault of the colonial government--the artificial divisions and power structure that the Belgians had set up sparked the violence of the 1960s and the outflow of refugees.[86]

Among purely internal issues were the problems Habyarimana's government faced in the late 1980s. Rwandan citizens began calling for a pluralistic political system. Various Hutu opposition parties and groups that had formed began clamoring to be included in real elections. There was also a huge ongoing

economic crisis, and for a country that is among the poorest in Africa and whose population has one of the world's highest percentages of HIV-positive people, these new crises bordered on disaster.[87] Habyarimana seemed fated to open the doors of his tight political house. However, it was also at this point that the RPF, the Tutsi-dominated force of refugees from Uganda, decided it was time to take back its share of its country: the RPF invaded Rwanda on October 1, 1990. The invasion was to be a temporary salvation for Habyarimana; there is nothing like a common enemy to unite opposing groups. Suddenly all Tutsis were under suspicion of supporting the invasion, and even the few rights they had been accorded before were now taken from them.[88] Arbitrary detainment, executions, beatings, and rapes were methods used by both the guerrillas and the Rwandan government, though more so by government forces.[89]

France also sent troops to show its solidarity with the Habyarimana regime and oppose the RPF invasion. At least 300 troops were sent in 1990, and there is some disagreement over whether they actually fought with the Rwandan army or just observed and advised.[90] David Rieff writes that they intervened again in 1992 after peace talks broke down and it looked like "the political settlement in Rwanda would be achieved by massacre."[91] France upped its troop numbers to 680 in 1993 to contain a new offensive by the RPF.[92] In light of all of these actions, one Belgian official wished that France would "'take a more outspoken policy on democracy and human rights,'" because,

as other officials remarked, French efforts as they stood "were undermining collective diplomatic efforts to influence the regime."[93]

Frank Smyth, author of a Human Rights Watch report on arms deals and human rights abuses in Rwanda, says that "the militias organized mobs of agitated Hutu that went to villages and fields in search of Tutsi," killing in total about 2000 people. According to Smyth, the government of Rwanda also had at least 8,000 Tutsi arrested with little if any pretense of evidence. The RPF was ruthless as well, and Smyth states that in the course of the war they executed some military prisoners and hundreds of Hutu citizens they believed to be supporters of Habyarimana; perhaps thousands were "forcibly dislocated," and soldiers took some civilians to use as servants.[94]

After peace terms were negotiated in late 1992, there was a renewal of hostilities in February 1993, and then agreements were finally signed in Arusha, Tanzania that ended the war.[95] An international commission came to Rwanda in 1993 to investigate human rights violations during the war and documented such abuses as those described above. "The... commission was created, funded, and fully sponsored by international nongovernmental organizations," and because it was an international effort, "its report gained a high level of credibility."[96] The commission is important because its report was available to all states in late 1993, and those like France and the United States who would say that human rights violations had not occurred between 1990 and

1993 could only do so by knowingly ignoring the facts.

The report did help alter some policies, however, showing that international action can have a positive impact. France ended up complying with a cease-fire that asked for the removal of French troops.[97] Belgium, already repentant about its support of either side in the conflict, recalled its Ambassador for consultation after the report's release. Clearly, Belgium was concerned about not making the Rwanda situation worse, unlike most other countries who were still profiting from arms sales. A Belgian official called a meeting with the commission's co-chair, in order to ask for advice, saying, "'We accept your report. What should we do?'"[98]

The policies of Belgium and France played other important and contrasting roles in the unfolding of the civil war that need to be explored in detail to illustrate some complex issues of international roles in one country's conflicts. Belgium tended to be responsive to the human rights violations it saw, whereas France generally exacerbated problems. Belgium and France had both been strong supporters and influences for Rwanda since its independence in 1962, but as Belgian influence decreased over the 1980's after traditionally being Rwanda's closest ally and trade partner, France began to pick up the slack.[99] When the RPF invaded Rwanda, Belgium stopped all arms sales and "lethal aid" because of its unusual policy of not selling arms to any belligerent nation at war. France, however, did not let morality interfere with economics, and continued a lively trade with the

Rwandan government even as it committed human rights violations against the rebels and its own citizens.[100]

Not only did France sell arms to Rwanda, it also helped facilitate Rwanda's purchases of arms from other countries. In 1992, Credit Lyonnais, a nationalized French bank, guaranteed a six million dollar weapons and equipment purchase by Rwanda of Egyptian merchandise in a "secret military assistance credit" that "has since become a subsidy." The Rwandan government was supposed to pay the Egyptians one million dollars up front, one million after a large tea crop was harvested, and the other four million dollars over the next four years. Credit Lyonnais would be responsible, as the guarantor, for any unpaid portions. Smyth writes that most private banks would never commit to such a risky backing. And by 1994, it appeared to have backfired for France--when the civil war in Rwanda re-escalated in February 1993, the economy took a turn for the worse, and the tea field mentioned in the repayment plan was taken over by the Tutsi rebels, leaving little left to pay Egypt and only gratitude to give France.[101]

Why did France feel such a strong connection with Habyarimana? As I have mentioned, a personal relationship had grown up between the French President and the Rwandan President, probably itself stemming from France's economic interests in Rwanda with its arms trade, and the countries remained close through the changes in French leadership. France also wanted to "maintain its credibility in French-speaking Africa."[102] The Tutsis from Uganda were more likely to speak English than French,

whereas in Rwanda both French and the native Kinyarwanda are official languages[103] All of these interests may have been products of (or secondary to) strategic interests, however, as one author points out that France believed "preserving a French-speaking zone in Africa... would, along with a nuclear arsenal, secure France's status as a major power and also secure its permanent seat on the Security Council."[104] Again, one can see that most nations go after their own interests first, ignoring any unpleasant facts about brutality or atrocities, and others pay with their lives.

Is France complicit in the regime's abuses of human rights because it sold the arms used in the acts? A French colonel in Rwanda responded to some of Frank Smyth's questions about French military aid and activity in Rwanda by saying, "Are you saying that the providing of military assistance is a human rights violation?"[105] This question is provocative. Since Rwanda has a history of having authoritarian, one-party, one-"ethnic" group governments, either imposed by foreign powers or, if a home-grown regime, enjoying the fairly unconditional endorsement of the same foreign powers (along with a few others), many in the population of Rwanda have often had their lives shaped by the will or influence of others. France is simply playing a variation on those themes of Rwandan history, and like a colonialist or dictator or other past offender, it must accept some blame.

To fault a state for supporting a regime violating human rights would necessitate definite documentations or obvious signs

that a regime was doing so and the supportive state knew about it. Did France and the rest of the international community have such knowledge during the 1990-1993 civil war about the Rwandan government? Should they have seen these and later signs as warnings of the genocide to come? Evidence indicates they should have.

In 1992, as the civil war raged on, a close friend of Habyarimana made a speech that became instantly infamous. Leon Mugesera, vice president of a city chapter of Habyarimana's National Revolutionary Movement for Development party (MRND is the French acronym), basically said that Tutsis are evil and should be purged from the great country of Rwanda. Author David Rieff cites the following remarks from the speech:

> The fatal mistake we made in 1959 was to let them [the Tutsis] get out... They belong in Ethiopia and we are going to find a shortcut to get there by throwing them into the Nyabarongo river.... We have to act. Wipe them all out![106]

Philip Gourevitch quotes Mugesera further, "We the people are obliged to take responsibility ourselves and wipe out this scum."[107]

The government-run radio was equally inflammatory; it broadcast news-like warnings of Tutsis coming to kill all Hutus. Radio des Milles Collines, "owned by members of Habyarimana's inner circle," seems to have been the main offender, although Radio Rwanda is also mentioned as another source of hate propaganda.[108] Other forms of media incited hatred as well; the newspaper Kangura published the "'Hutu Ten Commandments'" soon

after the RPF attack in 1990. Number Eight was "The Hutus should stop having mercy on the Tutsis."[109] Number Ten was "'We shall consider a traitor any Hutu who will persecute his Hutu brother for having read, spread, and taught this ideology,'" which effectively condemned all moderate Hutus.[110] Clearly, France must have known the kind of regime it was sending its troops to aid and for which it was subsidizing arms sales. United States officials, despite the violent human rights abuses during the civil war discussed earlier and these propaganda machinations, still could be found saying in a 1992 report to Congress that "'there is no evidence of any systematic human rights abuses by the military or any other element of the government of Rwanda.'"[111] It is probable that the U.S., France, and others ignored these signs because they did not wish to see them. For France, they might have interfered with its economic and political relationship with Rwanda and its leaders. For the U.S., accepting the reality of problems fomenting in Rwanda could have meant accepting the need to intervene, or send more aid and development money.

All of this hate-inspiring speech and propaganda was going on in the context of a civil war, and Habyarimana's fear of losing power to either the Tutsis or to other Hutus. Rwanda's recent history might have been very different had this hate campaign ended when hostilities did. However, after a peace treaty was signed in 1993, tensions in Rwanda were still running high, and the divisive public broadcasts and speeches didn't

stop. Radio des Milles Collines broadcast statements "terrorizing the Hutu with warnings about the evil Tutsi-led RPF and Hutu oppositionists, who were labeled 'enemies' or 'traitors' and who 'deserved to die.'"[112] Rieff writes that the radio stations "had called upon the militants to kill everyone, even the children," and that Radio des Milles Collines reminded the Hutu that "'the grave is only half full'" of Tutsis, as half fled after the Hutu uprising in 1959, and asked "'Who will help us fill it?'"[113]

According to several scholars, there is plenty of evidence that Habyarimana and the coterie of individuals keeping him in power had been planning for years a systematic campaign to get rid of all Tutsis.[114] A regime enjoying the full support of many foreign governments, and the special friendship of France, was planning genocide right under their noses. Although this information is recent, there were yet more signs at the time, in early 1994, that warned of the summer's violence to come that the international community overlooked or ignored. Canadian General Romio Dallaire commanded the 2,500 troops that were the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), and he received distressing information through a Rwandan informant about Hutu plans to kill Tutsis. Dallaire sent a cable in January 1994 in which he said that the Hutu informant had orders to "'register all Tutsis in Kigali. He suspects it is for their extermination. Example he gave was that in twenty minutes his personnel could kill up to ten thousand Tutsis.'"[115] This was a clear indication

of the massacres that were to come, a suggestion of mass murder. The Hutu informant was a military official who worked in Hutu military training camps; but the camps were not shut down nor their arms confiscated, and the U.N. would not even agree to protect the informant. Belgian officials unquestionably knew about all of this, but did nothing; the U.N. decided not to bring the informant's information before the Security Council. It was to become one more missed opportunity to prevent or lessen the tragedy to come in April 1994.[116] It has not been explained why nothing was done; the note seems like a clear warning. Perhaps it was discounted, or perhaps the source was unreliable. Or perhaps the matter was simply not perceived as important enough to be concerned with.

The catalyst for putting this plan, which Habyarimana had surely helped design, into action was his death. On April 6, President Habyarimana was flying back from Tanzania after meeting with the President of Burundi and others to discuss his compliance with the Arusha peace accords. The plane was shot down, apparently by surface-to-air missiles, upon its approach to the Kigali airport, and all on board were killed. The speed with which Habyarimana's Presidential Guard and the Rwandan Army reacted after the tragedy is more evidence that plans had been formulated for just such an event. The missiles came from the area around Kigali airport; one writer states they came from the Kanombe army base next to the airport.[117] Soldiers from the Rwandan Army immediately surrounded this area, forestalling any

attempt at investigation, which suggests that they had something to hide. Thus it could be that Hutu Power extremists shot down the plane because they were angry at Habyarimana's softening on power-sharing and agreeing to implement other aspects of the peace accords. However, the incident remains a mystery. The immediate response of Hutu leaders was that the RPF had done it, and that remained their assertion.[118]

The massacres of moderate Hutus and any Tutsis that could be found began that night. Again, the coordination of effort and speedy mobilization of forces suggest that this was not a spontaneous reaction, but an execution of orders. All Rwanda's previous human rights abuses pale in comparison, as the greater tragedy they were hinting at finally unfolded in the deaths of somewhere between 500,000 to 1 million people over three months.[119] The Hutu Presidential Guard mobilized village militias and the formally trained Interhamwe (those who attack together) and Impuzamugambi (those who have the same goal) militia groups; all of these then proceeded to track down Hutu opposition leaders, and to indiscriminate slaughter Tutsis by the hundreds.[120] Murders were committed with guns, machetes, even artillery rounds were fired at times. Ten Belgian peacekeepers were killed the first day while trying to protect the Hutu Prime Minister of Habyarimana's government Agathe Uwilingiyimana; she had come into office under a new rule that the prime minister should be from another party, and thus she was singled out for assassination.[121] And this was only the beginning. The genocide

(the U.N. had acknowledged it as such by July of 1994) was only stopped because RPF forces were able to defeat the Rwandan Army and the bands of militias in a military campaign.[122]

Besides the creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, how did the international community cope with the unthinkable reality of the human rights disaster in Rwanda? At first it simply **didn't** think about it, and thus didn't have to try to cope. Then it seemed to cope in entirely the wrong ways. A few examples illustrate the tragic flaws and bitter, costly irony of the international response.

The United Nations delayed in labeling the tragedy genocide for more than a month after the killings began, which many believe was to avoid the obligations of intervention that the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide entails. The United States issued statements cautioning against official use of the term in public statements.[123] General Dallaire, the commander of UNAMIR, said on April 21 that he could halt the slaughter if he had five to eight thousand troops, but nothing was done.[124] By May the U.N. Secretariat was trying to mobilize support for more troops, but no member states would volunteer the needed men and materials.[125]

France, with characteristic passion, launched Operation Turquoise in June ostensibly to set up a safe zone to protect civilians and allow humanitarian assistance access. Some have written that its real purpose was to prop up the Rwandan Army and France's Hutu allies in the areas they still controlled.[126]

Gourevitch writes that Interhamwe groups celebrated the troops' presence with a sign that said "'Welcome French Hutus.'"[127] The safe zone that the French set up did accept "militia members,... propagandists from the ex-government, and... Radio des Milles Collines' spewing out its anti-RPF messages." However, it is hard to blame the French for not providing an ideal political and human rights situation in the conditions of disorder that characterized Rwanda at the time; one author writes that probably several thousand Tutsis were saved because of their presence, and that means a great deal--if they continue to survive the turmoil in their country.[128] One can, however, blame the French for continuing to sell arms to the Hutus while the killings went on, as the Arms Project of Human Rights Watch reported.[129]

What are some of the underlying reasons for these responses --or lack thereof, to be more accurate. Rwanda was not a vital security interest to any Western country except France, hence the high degree of French involvement. And the U.S. was not interested in Rwanda, because, like Bosnia, whatever happened there would not directly affect us. There were no Rwandan immigrants lobbying Congress, no interest groups giving money, and Rwanda's warfare was often labeled "tribal." There does seem to be some racism involved. Americans sometimes think very little of African governments in general, and one country descending into random violence does not surprise us. There were similar things said about Bosnia, but less so. In both countries political issues were rejected as motivations for violence in

favor of simple ancient ethnic hatreds and ignorant stereotyping.

A cycle of violence was begun in Rwanda with colonial repression, and it continued as one group of Rwandans would periodically attack the other, and when the smaller violations of human rights were continually ignored, they built up over the years a situation that was exploited by the genocidal organizers of the Habyarimana regime. The early inconsistencies of Belgian policy, the almost uniformly harmful policies of the French, and the general indifference or ignorance of the rest of the world helped keep an authoritarian government in power in Rwanda. World leaders also managed to let themselves miss all the danger signals that flashed ever-brighter as the conflicts within Rwandan society grew ever more unsolvable. Rwanda and Bosnia both exhibit many unusual and tragic human rights issues that have their roots in the complicated political and social history of each; their tragedy is that few international actors wanted to deal with complexity--they preferred to wait until the "simple" horrors of mass murder would finally force them to act.

Post-World War II Estonia was actually more like occupied Rwanda than Titoist Yugoslavia. Estonia was under communist rule for 45 years. Its people were subject to deportations, imprisonments, and executions; it was treated much as a colony. It was a conquered territory, a conquered people. The communist party was of course in complete control of electoral processes. At first the majority of members were Russians, or Russian Estonians who had recently returned to Estonia. In 1946,

Estonians only made up 17 percent of the Estonian Communist Party (CPE).[130] Russian was established as the national language.[131] By 1954 the purges eased and Estonians began to feel at least a sense of stability. In 1960 there began a "resurgence of Estonian culture," which started with literary arts. But still, in freedom of expression, living standards, and economic growth, in nearly every facet of measurement, Estonia lagged far behind the Western European countries, though in many ways ahead of the rest of the Soviet Union.[132] By 1980, Estonians dissenters had begun to make waves. After one prominent activist died in prison, pictures of his grave marked only by a numbered stake made the international press and stirred up much support. The fledgling movement which had spawned him was crushed in 1982, but remained an underground force.[133]

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became head of the Soviet Union, and the crackdown eased considerably. In 1987, many dissidents were released from prison; opposition was becoming acceptable. In 1986 and 1987 the first major protests were about environmental issues, including media reports on workers sent to clean up Chernobyl under dangerous conditions. Estonians then began to demand economic autonomy from Moscow. In 1988, the "singing revolution" began; Estonians gathered in June for an established festival, but people stayed up all night singing and waving the flags of independent Estonia. This is a different kind of protest than one saw in the former Yugoslavia or Rwanda. Here there were no politicians preaching hatred of group against

group, and the thought of singing against one's opponents, instead of vilifying them or fearing them, was conceivable.[134]

Western leaders were cautious in their support of Estonia and the other Baltic states' bids for independence from the Soviet Union. But Estonia was recognized on 2 September 1991.[135] Though Estonian citizenship laws have been criticized by some human rights groups, they have not kept Estonia from joining the Council of Europe or gaining associate membership to the European Union.[136] The international community was watching more carefully as Estonia made the transition to an independent nation. Because of Russia nearby, Estonia's relationship with its minority Russians is important for stability. Hanne-Margret Birckenbach has written a paper on ways the international community acted to foster non-violence in Estonia. Estonian leaders very much wanted to be a part of Europe; they got in the Council of Europe in 1993, they wanted to join the European Union, eventually NATO as well.[137] For the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, there were few countries with a real interest in them--they are not so close to a large country with nuclear weapons, and economically they were not a large asset to any world power. And so Estonia was watched more carefully, and it worked.

But Bosnia is still not healed, and neither is Rwanda. The international community has placed an arms embargo on Yugoslavia for its actions in Kosovo. That kind of measure didn't work before and won't now. As if the record of the international community did not speak for itself, world leaders seem determined

to repeat the same patterns of behavior in Kosovo. As one has seen, high level officials can talk about doing the right thing while selling arms to genocidaires, and they can avoid talking at all, but they cannot be persuaded to act unless absolutely forced to. Like Bosnia, there is sporadic violence in Kosovo, not between armies, but armed groups. And like Bosnia, it is difficult to get accurate information, there is a propaganda war raging, and reciprocal violence is the norm. On the internet one can find pages defending the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Muslims, the Kosovo Serbs, and the Kosovo movement for independence. All are perfectly contradictory, of course. Hutu genocidaires in Rwanda walk up to judges on their hearing dates and plead not guilty, because they feel they were trying to help their country. It is not the job, nor is it possible even if one considers it the job, of the international community to erase hatred, self-righteousness, and bloodthirstiness. It is, however, the job of the international community, of leaders like Clinton, Chirac, Annan, and Yeltsin to make **some kind** of effort to stop the worst effects of these characteristics when they appear so blatantly on the world stage. Estonia may have been helped to avoid ethnic violence because of the more prominent role of external actors in monitoring its situation, the more inclusive attitude of those actors, and the more positive perceptions that they had of Estonia. In the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, however, other countries either tried to stay away, or (as at times in the case of Rwanda) were too involved. After violence broke out, few

countries wanted to see what was going on--that might mean politically risky action could be required--so they simply ignored any indication of the truth until it was much too late. Perceptions and priorities became self-fulfilling prophecies as warning signs went unheeded and human suffering remained second place to political expediency. The world may have become more disorderly, but humans have become no more moral.

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