



international UPDATE

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PEACE-KEEPING IN RWANDA

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INTRODUCTION

Rwanda, which until independence in 1962 was part of the Belgian Trusteeship Ruanda-Urundi, is once more under the focus of the international community. For the current campaign of violence in Rwanda is a continuation of previous ethnic conflicts which centred on a struggle for political power. The fact that the conflicting Hutu and Tutsi groups speak the same language, share common social structures and religious beliefs has failed to inspire a national consciousness. As in the previous outbreaks of violence in Rwanda in 1959, 1963, 1967 and 1990, ethnic politics is the determining factor. Yet the difference between the present conflict and previous ones is that violence is not only directed against the Tutsi but equally against moderate elements in the Hutu government, dominant on the political scene since 1960.

The present bloodbath is by far the worst in the history of Rwanda. Within a period of two months it is estimated that half a million lives have been lost and millions more displaced or fled to the neighbouring states of Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Zaire. With a population of 7,2 million people, consisting of 90% Hutus, 9% Tutsis and 1% Twa, one wonders how many people will be left after the conflict. Minorities made up of missionaries and aid workers have been saved, since they were evacuated in the early stages of the conflict. Asian merchants and Swahili-speaking Zairians and Tanzanians may have fled, but no exact details as to their fate has yet been forthcoming.

The spill-over effect of the conflict is another cause of concern at a time when efforts are aimed at creating a new environment to enhance stability and co-operation on the continent. The refugee problem, in the neighbouring countries could have a ripple effect on the security of the

region, particularly Burundi. For security and stability could be undermined by new threats posed *inter alia* by the proliferation of small arms, cross-border crime and human rights violations.

In economic terms, the 1992 level of Rwanda's GDP of \$2,157 million and a GNP/capita at \$310 will be difficult to restore after the conflict. Activities like crop farming, forestry and fishing will require huge investments to revive them which will be impossible, in the present circumstances, to attract.

THE ETHNIC DIMENSION

The ethnic divisions were allegedly a colonial economic stratification: those people with more than ten cattle were classified Tutsi, those with fewer as Hutu. Yet tribalism is a major destabilising factor in the struggle for political power in Rwanda. These colonial policies were pursued with vigour after independence. Even today, every Rwandese still carries an Identity Card on which the ethnic origin of the holder is noted, a system introduced originally by the Belgians.

Both Hutu and Tutsi have had their share in dominating the political life of their country: the Tutsi during the transition of traditional societies into a colonial era, the Hutu in the post-colonial life. To confuse matters further, power has changed hands between northern and southern Hutus.

In the era of traditional societies the Tutsi, although a minority, used their economic wealth and superior military skills to subdue the Hutu and other minorities. The Hutu became a subordinated majority of subsistence farmers, whose economic activity was largely to produce

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food for an aristocrat minority of landowners and cattle raisers.

Colonial authorities also played a supportive role to enhance Tutsi hegemony. When they took over Rwanda they ruled through the traditional Tutsi Kings and re-established the traditional feudal structure which allowed the Tutsi to hold onto their dominant role in society. The Tutsi were given preference with regard to education which became a further source of empowerment.

The party for Hutu emancipation (*Party du Mouvement de l' Emancipation du Peuple Hutu - PARMEHUTU*), under the leadership of Gregoire Kayibanda, became the political home of Hutu aspirations and interests. On the announcement of Belgium's withdrawal from the territory in November 1959, there was a 'brief but viciously pursued' civil war which led to the overthrow of the 'feudal monarchy', vesting political power in Hutu hands.

Though large numbers of Tutsis were exiled in the process, their resolve to return to Rwanda and regain their lost status was strong. In exile they enjoyed the support of their kinsmen in Burundi, who had successfully retained their position at the expense of the Hutu. From this position of advantage they managed to regroup and launch an offensive on Rwanda in 1963, which was followed by decades of retaliation and counter-retaliation.

Following a military coup on 5 July 1973 which overthrew Kayibanda, the late President General Juvénal Habyarimana seized power. Although Hutu-dominated, this government was largely successful in dampening ethnic tensions. Single-party elections were held in 1978, although by 1989 the pressures of the refugee problem led to a *political adjournment*, in which a decision was taken to adopt a multi-party system of government.

The mostly Tutsi exiles (there are an estimated 2 million Rwandese in the neighbouring states), under the leadership of Colonel Alex Kanyanengwe, formed the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) in Uganda, strengthened by support from Yoweri Museveni's government. Indeed, many RPF fighters had fought in Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) during the Ugandan civil war. According to Rwandan government sources, it is alleged that Museveni, Commander in Chief of the NRA Bon Mbonye, the Army Commander, the Chief of Intelligence Services, Director of Military Intelligence and many other senior NRA commanders were themselves ethnically Tutsi and (Museveni excluded) members of the RPF. From Ugandan bases, an estimated 10,000 guerillas waged war from October 1990 until the signing of a cease-fire in July 1992. This had been preceded in October 1991 by the drafting of a constitution providing for electoral competition, the lifting of restrictions on

political parties and the installation of a Transitional Government.¹

A peace accord between Government and the rebels was finally signed at Arusha in April 1993, and the Transitional Government reconstituted that September. In terms of this power-sharing agreement, the RPF was guaranteed 5 out of 19 ministerial posts; 50% of the command and 40% of the troops in the new army; and 11 of some 70 seats in the new parliament. Following the signing of this arrangement, the RPF leadership arrived in Kigali with a self-protection detachment of 600 troops, though a Belgian contingent (who were later involved in the evacuation of foreign nationals) was deployed to safeguard the democratic process. The Rwandan government, however, allege that some 1,400 additional RPF cadres were illegally deployed in the capital, and it was these forces which sparked off the current crisis. For Rwanda plunged back into civil war this April after the deaths of the 56-year old President Habyarimana and Burundi's President Cyprien Ntaryamia in a plane crash.

As reprisals against Tutsis were unleashed in the aftermath of this incident, the RPF advanced from their northern stronghold towards the capital, Kigali, in an effort to end the carnage. The RPF now appears to control virtually the entire country, having met only limited resistance from the 5,000-strong (and South African armed) government army. The massive loss of life has prompted a somewhat reluctant international community to organise a UN peace-keeping operation. Yet this has met with only a limited response: Zimbabwe, Ghana, Tanzania, Nigeria, Namibia, Senegal, Zambia and the Congo have expressed a willingness to contribute troops, but all have stressed that they cannot bear the costs, financially or logistically. With seven international peace-keeping operations underway in Africa in 1994 alone, as a result, many have looked to South Africa for assistance.

A WORD OF CAUTION ON PEACE-KEEPING

The moment fighting and brutality in any country explodes on the global television network, the world has increasingly looked to the United Nations for help. As a result, over the years, UN peacekeepers have taken on, albeit reluctantly, the role of global policeman. There are currently more than 80,000 UN troops committed to some 18 peace-keeping operations, at a cost of more than R10 billion each year. These range from the relatively uneventful in Cyprus and the Lebanon, to those more deadly in the former Yugoslavia. But although the fortunes of the Blue Berets are lower perhaps now than any time since their inception in 1948, the number of man hours devoted to UN peace-keeping matters by generals and bureaucrats alike has ballooned - an indication of sorts, perhaps, of the willingness of the international community to accept the need for an

impartial observation body - unfortunately like all such, the willingness to concede sufficient autonomy lags well behind, nullifying its effectiveness.

The UN Protection Force efforts in Bosnia, for example, have been blighted by a debilitating combination of wavering political conviction and insufficient military resources. As a result of these actions, the UN force in the former Yugoslavia is no longer either an effective military power nor a credible honest broker, and 'even its role as a distributor of aid has been compromised'. UN Secretary-General Mr. Boutros-Ghali, the man who sought to raise the UN's profile with his ideas for preventing civil wars, cross-border conflicts and humanitarian disasters which he elucidated as long ago as 1992, now faces calls for his resignation from Muslim countries because the airstrikes against the Serbs have not worked.

Although the UN's soldiers may justifiably argue that the Bosnian failure was not their fault as they were given inadequate resources and incoherent mandates, this humiliation is a landmark in a process that began in 1993 with a decline in UN popularity and support in the United States especially as a result of the failure of these peace-keeping missions.

These difficulties have also raised questions about the theory behind UN peace-keeping operations. As General Sir Michael Rose, the UN commander in Bosnia, has insisted, a distinction should be made between peace-brokering, peace-keeping (guarding a peace to which all parties have agreed) and enforcing peace against the will of some of the parties.

Traditionally, of course, peace-keepers were sent only after the cease-fire was concluded and all sides had accepted their presence. Their job was to monitor the accord with minimal personnel and weapons. Today, however, they may have to intervene in civil wars, where they are expected to disarm combatants. It has thus become a risky job involving, as General Rose has pointed out, peace-making, peace-enforcement, reconciliation and nation-building - an impossible job if left to soldiers skilled only in fighting.

South Africa is now being asked to assist in a peace-keeping effort in Rwanda. Yet the unconditional acceptance of this role by a new SA National Defence Force (SANDF) eager to establish their credentials both domestically and internationally, contains dangers which need to be heeded.

Many of the problems inherent in similar peace-keeping operations were outlined by President Clinton in his signing, early in May, of Presidential Decision Directive-25 (PDD-25), a 'statement of fundamental principles' on which the US would work with the UN in future. Such guidelines steer US foreign policy: the criteria by which

Washington becomes involved and later disengages. Indeed, it is debatable whether Pretoria's policy-makers should issue similar guidelines for the conduct of foreign relations.

PDD-25 notes clearly that the US does not support a standing UN army and does not seek to expand either the number of UN peace operations or US involvement in such operations. The directive also lays down a number of strict conditions which have to be met before Washington will consider joining international peace-keeping operations. These include:

- * the establishment of a clear military mission;
- * the consent of all the partners involved;
- * the availability of sufficient money and troops;
- * a clear exit strategy;
- * the crisis must be a threat to international security

It is ironic that PDD-25 has come from the office of a President who, as a candidate, 'gushed' with enthusiasm for the idea of a rapid deployment force and whose brief showed a touching faith in the resolution of conflict. This force was to guard borders, prevent atrocities against civilians, distribute aid and deter terrorism.

The onset of US disenchantment began of course when in August 1993 the first US soldiers were killed in Somalia. The swing from enthusiastic support to Clinton's realism in PDD-25 is illustrative both of the difficulties of peace-keeping operations, but also that 'US policy is flawed by swings between idealism and overhasty disappointment'.

SANDF PARTICIPATION IN PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS

The South African government and the SANDF commanders have correctly stressed that the SANDF is not ready at this time to participate in a peace-keeping operation to Rwanda. There must be no doubts of the difficulties Pretoria would face. UN Blue Beret operations have often stretched on without an end in sight, with the soldiers or peace-keepers being forgotten or ignored once the media are attracted to some other sensation.

The logistics of involvement in military operations in Central Africa are staggering. Rwanda's nearest major harbour would be either Dar-es-Salaam or Mombassa and there are no direct road or rail links to the PWV, our main base. South African forces would have to move heavy equipment such as trucks, bulldozers, *Ratels* or *Casspirs* for armoured protection, helicopters, mobile surgical operating theatres, etc., over more than 3,000 kilometers before they could deploy. The experience of the South African Army in both World Wars of

campaigning in East and Central Africa has proven that only highly-trained troops should be employed. Also, health hazards must be considered as a crucial element of planning. The local supplies of food, water and fuel, which are being flown in or provided by the US, along with medical aid to succour the refugees, are already strained to their limits. Eight African countries have already agreed to provide troops but all have stressed that they cannot bear, as noted earlier, the costs financially or logistically. The SANDF would probably be in a similar situation.

It is moreover not clear what the UN forces are to achieve nor which side they are to support in what is essentially an ethnic or inter-tribal war. Everyone wants peace but are we prepared to use force to obtain it? The UN originally urged both sides to treat Kigali airport as a neutral zone but latest reports indicate that the rebels have overrun and captured it. What will be an acceptable end to the war or the operation for the UN? For Pretoria, South African participation is even more unclear. The Government of National Unity (GNU) has not had an opportunity to debate this aspect in Parliament - particularly when extra funds or an increased Defence Budget must be at the cost of development and reconstruction, something which must irrevocably happen even if the UN foots the bill for actual operations in Rwanda. A clear policy is needed not only in respect of participation in UN operations but also in respect of placing SANDF troops under foreign command or compensating dependents of soldiers killed in UN operations or even of being able to withdraw the troops if soldiers are needed at home.

Current SANDF priorities are and will remain, support of the police in internal peace-keeping operations, the performance of border control operations (especially in the Eastern Transvaal where gun-runners and poachers operate under the screen of Mozambican refugees) and to integrate the more than 30,000 members of the TBVC armies and MK into a reorganised, retrained defence force. In this regard, Parliament also needs to identify which troops, if any, should be sent. During the past election the Army and Police relied heavily on the call-up of thousands of part-time members to provide the necessary manpower. This call-up period has now ended. Besides, the type of operation envisaged in Rwanda is not suitable for part-time forces, particularly as there is no indication of how long it may last. Put simply, the SANDF does not currently have the manpower, the experience or training for this type of operation and its doctrine for participation in peace-keeping operations is not clear.

This all said, the constitution clearly provides that participation in international peace-keeping operations is a possible role for the SANDF. It would certainly provide valuable experience for the forces. And as the salaries of the soldiers and their rations could be paid by

the UN, the GNU could theoretically even save money by sending troops to Rwanda thereby easing the burden of a bloated SANDF resulting from integration.

Additionally, if South Africa is to be (and is to be seen as) a leader in Africa such involvement will have to commence. The international media have left us in no doubt that hundreds of thousands of women and children, the aged and the handicapped, are being slaughtered. It is debatable, whether we would have the same attitude and same excuses if this had been happening to Lesotho or Mozambique or Zambia. In the main, a need to reorganise and train would be unlikely if a flood of millions of pathetic refugees wounded, starving and helpless were streaming across South Africa's borders. The SANDF are busy with integration now and this will be followed by rationalization. There will never be a right time.

Perhaps a compromise solution would be most suitable at this time: such as the offering of humanitarian help to Burundi and Tanzania in handling the refugees by supplying medical and technical assistance as has now been promised. Food supplies could be an additional form of assistance. But as Franklin D. Roosevelt explained: when your neighbour's house is on fire use your hosepipe to put out the flames, not nice words to comfort or explain the value of insurance. A few months ago the possibility of civil war in South Africa was real. Through negotiations between true leaders, this was avoided. Rwanda's suffering illustrates the savings of this avoidance. It also calls for South African assistance. The last words on the South African position have already been uttered by both Foreign Minister Nzo at the OAU and elsewhere as well as by President Mandela on arrival in Tunis for the OAU summit. Both stressed, in effect, South Africa's inability to provide a panacea for Africa's woes, given overriding domestic needs.

ENDNOTES

1. Hutu-dominated parties are: *Coalition Pour La Defense de La Republique* (CDR); *Parti Republicain Rwandais* (PADER), *Parti Ecologiste* (PECO). These parties formed the Transitional Government. In March 1993 the CDR withdrew from the alliance.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The South African Institute of International Affairs is an independent organisation which aims to promote a wider and more informed understanding of international issues among South Africans.

It seeks also to educate, inform and facilitate contact between people concerned with South Africa's place in an interdependent world, and to contribute to the public debate on foreign policy.

ERRATA: Table corrections for Botswana & Namibia as follows:

Botswana

Public external debt (\$m)	516	545
Exchange rate (av) (P: \$1)	1,860	2,133

Namibia

Armed Forces ('000)	---	8,1
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